

**Special Issue Proposal**  
**Preventing Counterproductive Work Behavior**  
Roberta Fida, Rosalind Searle and Deanne den Hartog

**Guest Editors' contact information, including phone, e-mail, and postal addresses.**

- Roberta Fida, Associate Professor in Work Psychology, Norwich Business School, University of East Anglia, Norwich Research Park, Norwich, NR4 7TJ, UK. Email: [r.fida@uea.ac.uk](mailto:r.fida@uea.ac.uk); Tel: +44 (0)160359117
- Rosalind H. Searle, Professor of HRM & Organisational Psychology, Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow, Gilbert Scott Building, University Avenue, Glasgow, G12 8QQ, UK. Email: [rosalind.searle@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:rosalind.searle@glasgow.ac.uk); Tel: +44 (0) 141 330 1781
- Deanne N. Den Hartog, Professor of Organizational Behavior, University of Amsterdam Business School, Postbox 15953, 1001 NL Amsterdam, The Netherlands, Email: [d.n.denhartog@uva.nl](mailto:d.n.denhartog@uva.nl); Tel: +31 20 525 5287.

**Qualifications of Guest Editors, including previous editorial experience**

Roberta Fida is associated editor of *Frontiers in Psychology* and *International Journal of Workplace Health Management*. For these journals she has handled more than 50 manuscripts. She is an active reviewers for several journals including *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*; *Journal of Occupational and Health Psychology*; *Work & Stress*; *Human Relations*; *British Journal of Management*; *Journal of Business Ethics*; *Business Ethics Quarterly*; *Business Ethics: a European Review*; *Ethics & Behavior*; *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology*; *Psychological Reports*; *Journal of Management & Organization*; *Personality and Individual Differences*; *Scientific Reports*; *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*; *Aggression and Violent Behavior*.

Rosalind Searle has guest edited four well received special issues: (2020 - *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* – Special edition *Living Wages*; *International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation* - Special edition - *Decent work*; 2013 - *Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* Special edition *Recruitment and Selection in Europe*; 2012 *Journal of HRM* - Special edition - *Trust and HRM*. She has also edited two books in 2018 *Routledge Companion to trust*. with A. Nienaber & S. Sitkin. (2018) (ISBN 9781138817593). And in 2011 for Edward Elgar. *Trust and HRM* with D. Skinner. (ISBN 0 – 781848444645.) She has been an associate editor for

Group and Organisation Management and long-standing associate editor for Journal of Trust Research. She also sits on the editorial boards of Human Relations, Journal of Management, Journal of Behavioral Science and International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation.

Deanne Den Hartog sits on the Editorial Committee of the Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior (2017-2022). Associate editor for Applied Psychology: An International Review (2011-2013). Associate editor of Leadership Quarterly (1998-2001). Action editor of Gedrag en Organisatie (1999-2007). Guest co-editor of a special issue on HRM and Leadership (Human Resource Management Review, 2018) and one on Person-environment Fit (EJWOP, 2019); one on proactive behavior (Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 2010), a Dutch special issue of on psychological contracts (2002) and series on leadership (2004-2005) both for Gedrag en Organisatie. Co-editor for the International Management Volume of Wiley's Encyclopedia of Management (3rd edn). She has served on many editorial boards, for example: Journal of Management (2011-current); The Leadership Quarterly (2004-current); Journal of Organizational Behavior (2007-2019); Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology (2007-current), European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology (2009-2012), Journal of Business and Psychology (2009-current), Journal of Personnel Psychology (2015-2019), Human Resource Management Review (2016-current). Ad hoc reviewer for many journals in the field.

### **Overview of the proposed theme**

Counterproductive and misbehaviors in the workplace are topics that resonates across a number of sectors. They are a widespread phenomenon, which creates serious consequences for organizations across the globe. Several studies have highlighted that these types of behaviors are clearly not simply the prerogative of ruthless and unprincipled individuals (Bandura, 2016; Moore & Gino, 2013; Newman et al., 2020), instead, evidence reveals how under certain conditions, “ordinary” people can also engage in counterproductive work behavior (Bandura, 2016; Moore & Gino, 2013; Newman et al., 2020; Welsh et al., 2020; Xi et al., 2021). In addition, extant literature also reveals these so called “bad apples” do not necessarily engage in misbehaviors (Belschak et al., 2015; De Hoogh et al., 2021) and how the routinization of counterproductive work behavior is not a linear process (Chugh & Kern, 2016; Gaspar et al., 2015; Zhong & Robinson, 2021). While recent research has identified key social and psychological processes that can explain the engagement and routinization of

counterproductive work behavior (Belschak et al., 2018; Chugh & Kern, 2016; Fida et al., 2015, 2018; Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018; Moore & Gino, 2013; Searle & Rice, 2020; Welsh et al., 2015), less is known about the processes, practices and conditions that might deter, prevent or even ameliorate such processes.

Current work has highlighted the importance of both contextual and personal deterrents. For example, ethical leaders reduce their followers' engagement in counterproductive work behavior and moral disengagement (Moore et al., 2019; Ogunfowora, Nguyen, et al., 2021; Peng & Kim, 2020) and can promote morally courageous behaviors in response to misconduct being witnessed in the workplace (Ogunfowora, Maerz, et al., 2021). Moral identity is also found to be an important individual dimension that is negatively associated with moral disengagement and misbehavior (Detert et al., 2008; Vadera & Pathki, 2021).

Given the complexity of counterproductive work behavior there is the need to further understand the roles played by both contextual and individual characteristics in preventing the occurrence of these behaviors, and how to better mitigate the susceptibility of the counterproductive work behavior becoming more routine through the legitimizing processes including moral disengagement.

This proposed special issue aims to advance knowledge about these prevention processes at micro, meso, and macro levels to identify how they can mitigate and avert the enactment, but also the routinization, of counterproductive work behavior. We are particularly interested in understanding these processes from multi-disciplinary and multi-method perspectives. We welcome submissions which consider the complexity of the phenomenon, to provide a more nuanced examination of how to thwart and diminish these behaviors. We are interested in work that explores the antecedence of their early development and offer approaches to their detection and de-railment before they become more habitual. We strive to develop novel conceptualizations, and provide fresh empirical perspectives and advance methodological approaches that can enrich our insights and understandings of these behaviors through (but not limited to) the following questions:

- How can we detect events (triggers) leading up to the enactment of counterproductive work behavior before they become more serious and costly? and what we can do to prevent the emergence of a slippery slope?
- What role do emotions play in the enactment, diffusion and prevention of counterproductive work behavior? And how do they interact with the broader social context?

- How do the characteristics and activities leaders contribute to the development, and mitigation of counterproductive work behavior in a workplace? What role does relationship quality between leader and followers play in this process?
- What are the micro processes of moral disengagement and moral licensing that contribute to, or ameliorate the enactment of counterproductive work behavior? Are there additional mechanisms that also play a role?
- What are the group factors and processes that deter the enactment of individuals' counterproductive work behavior, and how can these group-level dimensions buffer the effect of moral disengagement?
- What part does Human Resource Management policies and practices have in reducing counterproductive work behaviors? Are there other contextual factors that need to be considered?
- How does counterproductive work behavior become routinized in social and organizational contexts? What can be done to stop “the rot” from spreading?
- How can we better reduce the enactment of counterproductive work behavior at micro, meso and or macro levels? Which policies and practices can assist? What are the significant factors that can could stop the “slippery slope” phenomenon?

### **Plans for publicizing the special issue, and for recruiting a qualified reviewing team**

The special issue will be launched during a Small Group Meeting supported by the European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology that focuses on “Why people engage in counterproductive work behavior and what can prevent this? Understanding the underlying psychological and social processes” (<https://www.eawopimpact.org/amsterdam-event-march-2022>). The SGM is planned for the 21-23 of March 2022 in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Confirmed keynotes are: Prof Celia Moore (Imperial College London, UK), and Prof. Karen Renaud (Strathclyde University, UK). In addition, this EAWOP SGM has been already supported by a number of colleagues including the following:

<b>Canada</b>	Marjo-Riitta Diehl	Franco Fraccaroli
Laurie Barclay	Ute-Christina Klehe	Alessandro Lo Presti
<b>Finland</b>	Michael Knoll	<b>Poland</b>
Mari Huhtala	Jürgen Wegge	Lukasz Baka
<b>France</b>		<b>Portugal</b>
Nikos Bozionelos	<b>Italy</b>	Pedro Neves
Birgit Schyns	Claudio Barbaranelli	<b>Spain</b>
<b>Germany</b>	Maria Luisa Farnese	Jose M Peiro

**The Netherlands**  
Yannick Griep  
Joanna Sosnowska

Wendelien van Eerde  
**United Kingdom**  
Rob Briner  
Neil Conway  
Catherine Conolly

Celia Moore  
Karen Niven  
Karen Renaud

While March 2022 maybe too early to share full details of the special issue, it provides an important impetus to developing this area. Further since its inception the EAWOP impact Incubator has had a number of well attended events, plus created a library of resources to engage with and inform a growing community of interested scholars with whom an upcoming call can be shared. In addition to its publicization across the wider EAWOP community at its forthcoming conference (Jan 2022) and via its newsletter, the EAWOP impact incubator website is connected to a number of securities and cyber research networks. We would also raise awareness through key Academy of Management groups, including OB, MOC, HRM, Conflict management, and through the EMONET forums.

Our reviewers will be recruited among the EJWOP team, these aforementioned forums and our networks of personal contacts.

### **Suggested Timeline**

We plan to launch the special issue call in March 2022 with the submission deadline set for December 2022. We expect to be able to make the final decision on the submission by March 2023. The authors invited to revise and resubmit their work will have 3 months to resubmit their paper (June 2023). This should give enough time to have the final papers accepted by March 2024.



## **A draft Call for Papers.**

Counterproductive and misbehavior in the workplace are topics that resonates across the world. More extreme examples of corruption include Siemens, Airbus' and Boeing and the irregularities relating to 800,000 Volkswagen cars, culminating in extensive fines (Berghoff, 2018; Bushey, 2021; Katz & Dalton, 2020; Sharman & Brunsten, 2015). Academia itself has not been spared (<https://retractionwatch.com>) exemplified in profound fraud cases such as the well-known example of Stapel (Bhattacharjee, 2013). Not all counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) are as extreme in nature, however, even less severe transgressions can have significant consequences and sadly, the many examples of employees' CWB indicates these are far from rare incidents. Irrespective of their severity, CWB is a widespread phenomenon creating serious concerns for organizations across the globe.

Several studies have clearly highlighted that these types of behaviors are not the prerogative of ruthless and unprincipled individuals (Bandura, 2016; Moore & Gino, 2013; Newman et al., 2020), instead, evidence reveals how under certain conditions, "ordinary" people can also engage in counterproductive work behavior (Bandura, 2016; Moore & Gino, 2013; Newman et al., 2020; Rice & Searle, forthcoming; Welsh et al., 2020; Xi et al., 2021). In addition, extant literature also shows that so called "bad apples" do not necessarily engage in misbehavior (Belschak et al., 2015; De Hoogh et al., 2021) and how the routinization of counterproductive work behavior is not a linear process (Chugh & Kern, 2016; Gaspar et al., 2015; Zhong & Robinson, 2021).

While recent research has identified key social and psychological processes that explain the engagement and routinization of counterproductive work behavior (Belschak et al., 2018; Chugh & Kern, 2016; Fida et al., 2015, 2018; Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018; Moore & Gino, 2013; Ogunfowora, Nguyen, et al., 2021; Searle & Rice, 2020; Welsh et al., 2015), less is known about the processes, practices and conditions that might deter, prevent or ameliorate such processes.

Moral disengagement, for example, plays a key role in legitimizing misconduct (see the recent meta-analysis and literature review Newman et al., 2020; Ogunfowora, Nguyen, et al., 2021). It is a social-cognitive process that temporarily silences more typical moral standards. Through the use of moral disengagement strategies, such as moral justification, diffusion of responsibility and euphemistic language, misbehaviors become cognitively reframed to make them more palatable, enabling people to engage in deplorable behaviors without the usual feelings of guilt and requirement to make reparations (e.g., Bandura, 2016; Moore & Gino, 2013; Newman et al., 2019). Although most studies have focused on the effect of moral

disengagement, the question of how to mitigate the power of these types of processes has been largely overlooked. This is an important theoretical concern because processes including moral disengagement are powerful, progressive and personally transformative. Critically, they diminish the role of self-regulation, allowing misbehaviors to be routinely performed with little of the usual anguish (Bandura, 2002).

Current work has highlighted the importance of both contextual and personal deterrents. For example, ethical leaders can reduce followers' engagement in CWB and moral disengagement (Moore et al., 2019; Ogunfowora, Nguyen, et al., 2021; Peng & Kim, 2020), and can promote morally courageous behaviors when misconduct is witnessed at work (Ogunfowora, Maerz, et al., 2021). Moral identity is also an important individual dimension that is negatively associated with moral disengagement and misbehavior (Detert et al., 2008; Vadera & Pathki, 2021). Given the complexity of counterproductive work behavior there is the need to further understand the role played by both contextual and individual characteristics in preventing the occurrence of these behaviors and how to mitigate the susceptibility of the routinization of counterproductive work behavior through the legitimizing processes as moral disengagement

Our proposed special issue aims to advance knowledge about these prevention processes at micro, meso, and macro levels that can mitigate and avert the enactment but also the routinization of counterproductive work behavior. We are particularly interested in understanding these processes from multi-disciplinary and multi-method perspectives. We welcome submissions which consider the complexity of the phenomenon, to provide a more nuanced examination of how to thwart and diminish these behaviors. We are interested in work that explores the antecedence of their early development and offer approaches to their detection and de-railment before they become more habitual. We strive to develop novel conceptualizations, and provide fresh empirical perspectives and advance methodological approaches that can enrich our insights and understandings of these behaviors through (but not limited to) the following questions:

- How can we detect events (triggers) leading up to the enactment of counterproductive work behavior before they become more serious and costly? and what we can do to prevent the emergence of a slippery slope?
- What role do emotions play in the enactment, diffusion and prevention of counterproductive work behavior? And how do they interact with the broader social context?

- How do the characteristics and activities leaders contribute to the development, and mitigation of counterproductive work behavior in a workplace? What role does relationship quality between leader and followers play in this process?
- What are the micro processes of moral disengagement and moral licensing that contribute to, or ameliorate the enactment of counterproductive work behavior? Are there additional mechanisms that also play a role?
- What are the group factors and processes that deter the enactment of individuals' counterproductive work behavior, and how can these group-level dimensions buffer the effect of moral disengagement?
- What part does Human Resource Management policies and practices have in reducing counterproductive work behaviors? Are there other contextual factors that need to be considered?
- How does counterproductive work behavior become routinized in social and organizational contexts? What can be done to stop “the rot” from spreading?
- How can we better reduce the enactment of counterproductive work behavior at micro, meso and or macro levels? Which policies and practices can assist? What are the significant factors that can could stop the “slippery slope” phenomenon?

The above list is not exhaustive. We are welcoming papers which make a substantial contribution to understanding how to prevent misbehavior at work. We encourage submissions of empirical papers, but also EJWOP CWB Special issue strong conceptual and theoretical papers.

## References

- Bandura, A. (2002). Selective moral disengagement in the exercise of moral agency. *Journal of Moral Education, 31*(2), 101–119. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305724022014322>
- Bandura, A. (2016). *Moral disengagement: How people do harm and live with themselves*. Worth Publishers.
- Belschak, F. D., Den Hartog, D. N., & Kalshoven, K. (2015). Leading Machiavellians: How to translate Machiavellians' selfishness into pro-organizational behavior. *Journal of Management, 41*(7), 1934–1956.
- Belschak, F. D., Muhammad, R. S., & Den Hartog, D. N. (2018). Birds of a feather can butt heads: When Machiavellian employees work with Machiavellian leaders. *Journal of Business Ethics, 151*(3), 613–626.
- Chugh, D., & Kern, M. C. (2016). A dynamic and cyclical model of bounded ethicality. *Research in Organizational Behavior, 36*, 85–100.
- De Hoogh, A. H. B., Den Hartog, D. N., & Belschak, F. D. (2021). Showing one's true colors: Leader Machiavellianism, rules and instrumental climate, and abusive supervision. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 42*(7), 851–866. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2536>
- Detert, J. R., Treviño, L. K., & Sweitzer, V. L. (2008). Moral Disengagement in Ethical Decision Making: A Study of Antecedents and Outcomes. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 93*(2), 374–391. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.93.2.374>
- Fida, R., Paciello, M., Tramontano, C., Fontaine, R. G., Barbaranelli, C., & Farnese, M. L. (2015). An integrative approach to understanding counterproductive work behavior: The roles of stressors, negative emotions, and moral disengagement. *Journal of Business Ethics, 130*(1), 131–144. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-014-2209-5>
- Fida, R., Tramontano, C., Paciello, M., Ghezzi, V., & Barbaranelli, C. (2018). Understanding the Interplay Among Regulatory Self-Efficacy, Moral Disengagement, and Academic Cheating Behaviour During Vocational Education: A Three-Wave Study. *Journal of Business Ethics, 153*(3), 725–740. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3373-6>
- Gaspar, J. P., Seabright, M. A., Reynolds, S. J., & Yam, K. C. (2015). Counterfactual and factual reflection: The influence of past misdeeds on future immoral behavior. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 155*(4), 370–380.
- Griep, Y., & Vantilborgh, T. (2018). Let's get cynical about this! Recursive relationships between psychological contract breach and counterproductive work behaviour. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 91*(2), 421–429.

- Moore, C., & Gino, F. (2013). Ethically adrift: How others pull our moral compass from true North, and how we can fix it. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, *33*, 53–77. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.riob.2013.08.001>
- Moore, C., Mayer, D. M., Chiang, F. F. T., Crossley, C., Karlesky, M. J., & Birtch, T. A. (2019). Leaders matter morally: The role of ethical leadership in shaping employee moral cognition and misconduct. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *104*(1), 123–145. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000341>
- Newman, A., Le, H., North-Samardzic, A., & Cohen, M. (2020). Moral Disengagement at Work: A Review and Research Agenda. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *167*(3), 535–570. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04173-0>
- Ogunfowora, B., Maerz, A., & Varty, C. T. (2021). How do leaders foster morally courageous behavior in employees? Leader role modeling, moral ownership, and felt obligation. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *42*(4), 483–503. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2508>
- Ogunfowora, B., Nguyen, V. Q., Steel, P., & Hwang, C. C. (2021). A Meta-analytic Investigation of the Antecedents, Theoretical Correlates, and Consequences of Moral Disengagement at Work. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000912>
- Peng, A. C., & Kim, D. (2020). A meta-analytic test of the differential pathways linking ethical leadership to normative conduct. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2427>
- Searle, R. H., & Rice, C. (2020). Making an impact in healthcare contexts: insights from a mixed-methods study of professional misconduct. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 1–12.
- Vadera, A. K., & Pathki, C. S. (2021). Competition and cheating: Investigating the role of moral awareness, moral identity, and moral elevation. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2545>
- Welsh, D. T., Baer, M. D., Sessions, H., & Garud, N. (2020). Motivated to disengage: The ethical consequences of goal commitment and moral disengagement in goal setting. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *41*(7), 663–677. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2467>
- Welsh, D. T., Ordóñez, L. D., Snyder, D. G., & Christian, M. S. (2015). The slippery slope: How small ethical transgressions pave the way for larger future transgressions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *100*(1), 114–127. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036950>
- Xi, M., He, W., Fehr, R., & Zhao, S. (2021). Feeling anxious and abusing low performers: A

multilevel model of high performance work system and abusive supervision. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2558>

Zhong, R., & Robinson, S. L. (2021). What Happens to Bad Actors in Organizations? A Review of Actor-Centric Outcomes of Negative Behavior. *Journal of Management*, 47(6), 1430–1467.