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Organizations are complex social systems that sometimes perform well and sometimes fail miserably. Organizational psychology is a subfield within the larger domain of industrial/organizational psychology that seeks to facilitate a greater understanding of social processes in organizations. Organizational psychologists also seek to use these insights to enhance the effectiveness of organizations—a goal that is potentially beneficial to all.

This book is designed to provide students with a thorough overview of both the science and practice of organizational psychology. It was originally written to serve as the primary text for a course in organizational psychology (graduate, or upper-level undergraduate), but could also meet the needs of an organizational behavior course as well. Because this book will be used at the graduate level, we’ve invested considerable effort to provide a solid research base in all of the chapters. At the same time, we have also tried to write the book in a style that students will find enjoyable, accessible, and perhaps, at times, even entertaining.

NEW TO THE THIRD EDITION

Given the positive feedback we have received over the past 8 years, we did not feel it was necessary to introduce drastic changes in the third edition of this book. We did, however, want to keep up with important changes in both the field of organizational psychology and important trends in organizations. To that end, we have created a completely new chapter in this edition titled “The Work–Nonwork Interface.” In this chapter we examine how people initially transition into the work role, how they balance work with other aspects of their lives, and, ultimately, how they transition out of work through retirement. We felt this chapter was necessary for two reasons. First, the boundaries between work and other aspects of people’s lives are growing more and more permeable due to technology, and this impacts the way people behave in organizations. Second, we believe that youth employment and retirement are increasingly important topics and wanted to be one of the first textbooks to cover them in depth. We have also made a conscious effort to incorporate cross-cultural findings in each chapter because organizations are growing increasingly global in nature, and therefore it is vital to examine the generalizability of our knowledge base beyond U.S. borders. In Chapters 1 through 5 we provide an introduction to the field of organizational psychology, examination of the most common research methods used to study behavior in organizations, the processes by which employees are socialized into organizations, how people balance work with other aspects...
of their lives, and finally become productive members of organizations.

Chapters 6 through 8 offer an exploration of counterproductive behaviors that employees exhibit, how employees might come to view the workplace as stressful, but also how work may also evoke positive feelings such as satisfaction and commitment.

Chapters 9 and 10 examine motivation in the workplace; in Chapter 9 we examine motivational theories, and in Chapter 10 we describe how those theories are applied in organizations to influence employees' behavior. Chapters 11 and 12 deal with leadership processes in organizations and team dynamics and effectiveness, respectively. Those who have used previous editions of the book will note that we have eliminated the “general” chapter on group behavior, which drew more from the social psychological literature. This was a tough choice because we did have some positive feedback on that chapter over the years, but we ultimately felt that there were other good sources available on basic group processes. We note, however, that some of the material from that general groups chapter was retained and incorporated into the teams chapter.

Chapters 13 through 15 are focused on “macro” or organization-level processes. These include the design of organizations, organizational culture and climate, and organizational change and development.

In terms of content, the major changes involved updating the substantive material in the chapters. Since the second edition many new developments have occurred in the field of organizational psychology, and a great deal of new research has been conducted. We have worked hard to convey these new developments and summarize important new research findings. We have also continued the feature “People Behind the Research” in the third edition where we feature prominent researchers to describe how they became interested in a particular topic. We introduced this feature in the second edition because we felt it would be interesting to students, and more importantly, put a “human face” on some of the names that are cited in the text. Because we received a great deal of positive feedback about this feature in the second edition we have continued it in the third edition, although most of the individuals featured have changed.

CONTINUED UNIQUE FEATURES OF THE BOOK

In this third edition we’ve been careful to retain the features of previous editions of the book that we felt made it unique. For example, we still have a full chapter on research methodology and statistics. Furthermore, because the first edition came out, there have been even more methodological developments in the field—this further validates the decision to include such a chapter in previous editions.

The third edition also continues to cover many topics that are not traditionally part of organizational psychology such as recruitment, job performance, and compensation. This was and continues to be done largely because of the belief that there is considerable interrelationship between the “I” and the “O” sides of the broader field of industrial/organizational psychology.

A third and final unique feature that has not changed is the use of “Comment” boxes throughout the book. Although the content of many of these boxes has changed, the motivation behind them has stayed the same—to encourage students to think about and discuss the chapter material. We both strongly believe that students learn much more when they are highly engaged in the
material, and do not feel that reading is a chore. Some of the comments relate current events, some provide extended commentary on chapter material, and others are simply designed to help the reader get to know the authors a little better.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would first like to thank the reviewers who provided feedback on our initial proposal for the third edition of this book. We incorporated many of their suggestions and we appreciate their insights. We also wish to thank the many colleagues and students who have provided feedback on the second edition since it came out in 2008. Many of you have stopped by to chat about the book at conferences, and this feedback has been extremely valuable. Although we cannot guarantee that we’ve addressed every criticism of the second edition, we’ve certainly listened and made an effort to do so.

We would also like to thank Tisha Rossi, our editor at Wiley, for her help during the revision process. Tisha provided us with some very valuable editorial feedback, yet also allowed us a considerable amount of discretion on the content of the book. We also greatly appreciate Tisha’s flexibility on deadlines. We also thank Tisha’s assistant Amanda Orenstein for her help providing us with tables and figures from previous editions of the book.

The authors also thank especially Alison Bayne and Kelsey-Jo Ritter from Bowling Green State University, and Kristen Jennings, Janelle Cheung, and Kandice Goguen from Clemson University for all of their help during the revision process. Alison thoroughly went through every chapter and actually developed some of the new comment boxes in the chapters. She also did a tremendous job organizing the many new citations that were added to this edition, and basically just helping to keep this whole process organized. Kelsey-Jo was the first author on the new work–nonwork chapter, and did a tremendous job developing new material for the instructor and student websites. On the Clemson University front, Kristen Jennings and Janelle Cheung conducted extensive annotated bibliographies for many of the chapters in the book, and Kandice Goguen hunted down most of the new references for many of the chapters. In addition, all three students read over final versions of the chapters. They helped us complete the revision with their usual blend of a positive attitude and conscientiousness, two attributes I hope they know I do not take for granted.

A NOTE FROM TOM BRITT

I would first like to thank Steve for giving me the opportunity to jump on board and work with him on the second revision to the textbook, and to continue to work on this third revision. I have enjoyed collaborating with Steve on multiple projects, and working together definitely comes easy. I am blessed to have my wonderful wife Renea to spend my life with, and could not have completed the revision without her unconditional love and support. I would also like to thank my twin sons, Noah and Jordan, now 14, for their love and support. They are two incredible blessings in my life. I would also like to thank them for playing so well with each other when dad was on the computer working on the revision.

A NOTE FROM STEVE JEX

I would first like to thank Tom for initially agreeing to join me on the second edition and continuing into the third edition. Tom is a very talented researcher and writer, and
I am really pleased that he and I have become good friends working on this book.

Finally, I would like to provide the biggest acknowledgment to my wife Robin, and sons Garrett and Travis. Robin has been a constant source of love and support for the past 30 years, and there is no way this book could have been completed without her help. When the first edition of this book came out in 2002 Garrett was 9 and Travis was 7 years old, and since that time they have both grown up to be incredible young men. I also greatly appreciate the sacrifices they made while I was working on this book.
Chapter 1

Introduction to Organizational Psychology

The behavior of individuals acting as members of formal organizations has a tremendous impact on many aspects of our lives. Most things we need—the food we eat, the cars we drive, the houses we live in—depend on the coordinated effort of individuals in organizations. This impact, in fact, is so pervasive that we typically take it for granted. In most cases, we only take notice when the results are at the extremes. For example, we marvel at the coordinated effort of a surgical team that successfully performs a difficult procedure, and express disdain when corruption occurs in a government agency. In most instances, however, the impact of behavior in formal organizations goes relatively unnoticed.

Organizational psychology is a field that utilizes scientific methodology to better understand the behavior of individuals working in organizational settings. This knowledge is also used, in a variety of ways, to help make organizations more effective. Effective organizations are typically more productive, often provide higher-quality services to their constituents, and are usually more financially successful than less effective organizations. For private organizations, financial success often translates into higher wages and greater job security for employees, and increased shareholder wealth for investors. For public organizations such as police departments, municipal governments, and public universities, success means higher-quality services and cost savings to taxpayers.

Enhanced organizational effectiveness, and the success that often comes with it, often provides many indirect benefits as well. Successful organizations provide employment opportunities, which helps to foster the economic well-being of society as a whole. Also, in many instances, employees in successful organizations are more satisfied and fulfilled in their work than employees in less successful organizations. These positive attitudes may carry over to non-work roles such as parent and community member. Consumers also benefit from enhanced organizational effectiveness because well-managed, efficient organizations are often able to produce
products and provide services at a much lower cost than their less successful competitors. Such cost savings are often passed on to consumers in the form of lower prices. In sum, everyone is a potential winner when organizations function effectively. Organizational psychology seeks to enhance the effectiveness of organizations through scientific research and the application of research findings.

WHAT IS ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY?

This book provides students with a comprehensive treatment of the science and practice of organizational psychology. Organizational psychology is the scientific study of individual and group behavior in formal organizational settings. Katz and Kahn, in their classic work, *The Social Psychology of Organizations* (1978), stated that the primary defining characteristic of an organization is “patterned” human behavior. When behavior is patterned, this means that some structure is imposed on it. In organizations this structure typically comes from formal job descriptions and organizational policies. Most organizations also have a set of values that they want employees to abide by. Thus, an organization cannot exist when people just “do their own thing” without any consideration of the behavior of others.

Given Katz and Kahn’s (1978) defining characteristic of organizations (e.g., patterned behavior), it is easy to see that there are many organizations in this world. A group of 12 people who regularly play softball together on Friday nights would fit this definition, as would a major multinational corporation. Therefore, to further define the field of organizational psychology, it is important to distinguish between formal and informal organizations. A formal organization is one that exists to fulfill some explicitly stated purpose, and that purpose is often stated in writing. Formal organizations also typically exhibit some degree of continuity over time; that is, they often survive far longer than the founding members do. Business organizations obviously exhibit these defining characteristics of a formal organization, as do many other nonprofit organizations and government agencies.

An informal organization is one in which the purpose is typically less explicit than for a formal organization. Going back to our previous example of the softball team, these individuals are obviously spending time together because they enjoy playing softball and, in all likelihood, each other’s company. It is doubtful, though, that these reasons for playing softball are formally stated in writing, or even explicitly stated. It is also doubtful (though obviously not impossible) whether this group would continue to exist if half of the team members moved to another city or simply lost interest in playing softball.

The field of organizational psychology is concerned with the study of formal organizations. That is not to say that the formal organizations of interest to organizational psychologists are always business or profit-making organizations (a common misconception that we have noticed among many of our colleagues trained in other areas of psychology). Throughout the chapters in this book, many studies are described that have been conducted not only in businesses but also in government agencies, universities, and nonprofit social service agencies. In some cases, organizational psychologists even study “virtual” organizations where people never even interact face-to-face (Shin, 2004), yet these are still considered formal organizations according to the definition provided above (see Comment 1.1).

Another point worth noting is that the focus on formal organizations does not preclude the study of informal organizational
Imagine if you needed to buy food, or needed to complete some banking transaction. What's the first thing you would do? Most likely you would look for a grocery store or a bank—or would you? With increasing advances in information and telecommunications technology, however, organizations can be (and often are) created by linking people in different physical locations. The term for this organizational configuration is a virtual organization and it has been defined as “a collection of geographically distributed and culturally diverse people who are linked by electronic forms of communication (DeSanctis & Monge, 1999, p. 693). Really any organization that does not need to meet face-to-face with its people could use this type of organizational arrangement.

So what are the advantages of creating a virtual organization? The primary one is cost. For most “nonvirtual” organizations a major cost is physical space. Leasing office space is costly, and this is particularly true in large cities (try leasing any space in Manhattan!). Having a virtual organization also saves employees from long commutes to work, and having to uproot their families due to transfers.

Despite these advantages, which are certainly considerable, there may also be disadvantages to this type of organization. Employees in this type of organization must obviously be comfortable with computer and telecommunications technology—this is something we often take for granted now, but may not necessarily be the case for everyone. Another potential disadvantage is that employees may miss the face-to-face social interaction that comes with working in a traditional organization—as much as a pain other people can be at times, they do also provide comfort. Finally, all customers are not necessarily comfortable dealing with virtual environments. When some people invest they feel more comfortable meeting face-to-face with their investment broker as opposed to talking with them on the phone or communicating via e-mail.

Despite these potential disadvantages, virtual organizations are here to stay and will likely increase in number in the future. As with any form of organization, the key is to make sure that people are comfortable working in it and that it is appropriate given the nature of the business.

Introduction to Organizational Psychology

larger field. Psychology is the scientific study of individual human behavior and mental processes (Comer & Gould, 2013) Two things are important to note about this definition. First, like any other psychologist, organizational psychologists use methods of scientific inquiry. This simply means that organizational psychologists use a systematic, data-based approach to studying organizational processes and solving organizational problems. The “data” used by organizational psychologists may come in a variety of forms, including survey responses, interviews, observations, and, in some cases, organizational records.

The other important part of this definition is that psychology focuses on individual behavior. This may seem a bit odd, given that significant portions of this text are devoted to group and organizational-level processes. What it means is that regardless of the level at which some process may occur, psychologists view individual behavior as central to that process (Porras & Robertson, 1992). Thus, to understand the impact of group and organizational-level variables, we must focus on how they influence, and are influenced by, individual behavior. Groups and organizations don’t behave; people do. This strong focus on individual behavior also serves to distinguish organizational psychology from other social science disciplines (e.g., sociology, economics, and political science) that attempt to explain organizational processes but are less focused on individual behavior. It is also one, though certainly not the only, way that organizational psychology differs from the closely related field of organizational behavior (see Comment 1.2).

ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY IN CONTEXT

While organizational psychology represents a legitimate field of study in its own right, it is also part of the broader field of industrial/organizational (I/O) psychology. I/O psychology is defined as the application of the methods and principles of psychology to the workplace (Spector, 2012). Figure 1.1 provides a comparison of the topics that are typically of interest to those in the industrial and organizational portions of the field. Notice that the topics listed on the industrial side are those that are typically associated with the management of human resources in organizations. Contrast these with the topics on the organizational side, which are associated with the aim of understanding and predicting behavior within organizational settings.

Given this distinction between the industrial and organizational sides of the field, it is tempting to polarize into different “camps” based on one’s professional interests. Unfortunately, this “I” and “O” distinction underestimates the considerable interdependence among the topics that constitute each of these subfields.

To illustrate this point, let’s say a large retail organization wants to take steps to reduce the amount of theft among its hourly

FIGURE 1.1
A Breakdown of Topics Associated With the Industrial and Organizational Sides of the Field of I/O Psychology

- Industrial/Organizational Psychology
  - Industrial Side
    - Recruitment
    - Selection
    - Classification
    - Compensation
    - Performance Appraisal
    - Training
  - Organizational Side
    - Socialization
    - Motivation
    - Health and Well-Being
    - Leadership
    - Social Norms
    - Fairness
ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY VERSUS ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR: WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?

Many readers, particularly those who have received at least a portion of their training in a university business school, have heard of the field of organizational behavior. What is the difference between organizational psychology and organizational behavior? In all honesty, these two fields are quite similar—so much so, in fact, that many faculty who teach organizational behavior in business schools received their training in departments of psychology. Though less common, there have been some instances where faculty who teach organizational psychology received their training in business schools. Despite the outward similarities, there are actually subtle differences between organizational psychology and organizational behavior. Moorhead and Griffin (1995) define organizational behavior as “the study of human behavior in organizational settings, the interface between human behavior and the organization, and the organization itself” (p. 4). If we focus only on the first part of this definition, there is no appreciable difference between organizational psychology and organizational behavior. However, the differences lie in the portion of the definition stating that organizational behavior is concerned with “the organization itself.” Specifically, the field of organizational behavior is concerned not only with individual behavior in organizations, but macro-level processes and variables such as organizational structure and strategy are viewed as interesting and worthy of study in their own right.

The field of organizational psychology is also concerned with the impact of macro-level variables and processes, but only to the extent that such variables and processes have an impact on individual behavior. Much of the reason for this difference is that organizational behavior draws from a greater variety of disciplines than does organizational psychology. While organizational psychology draws primarily from various subfields within psychology, organizational behavior draws from a variety of disciplines including psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, and labor relations, to name a few. This greater variety provides organizational behavior with a somewhat more “eclectic” theoretical base than organizational psychology, although both fields largely study the same phenomena.

Perhaps the most tangible difference between organizational psychology behavior and organizational psychology is seen by those who are on the job market. Faculty in business schools who teach organizational behavior are typically paid significantly more than faculty who teach organizational psychology within psychology departments. In fact, in a salary survey conducted in 2012 by the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP), the average annual salary for SIOP members teaching in business schools was found to be approximately $142,000 compared to $91,000 for those in psychology departments. This explains why many who are trained in psychology want to teach organizational behavior in business schools; in fact, a perusal of the background of faculty at business schools shows that many have been trained in psychology either at the doctor or subdoctoral level. In recent years, however, the hiring of psychologists in business schools seems to have waned a bit. This is due in part to an overall stagnant job market, and the fact that business schools now produce more PhDs than they did 25 to 30 years ago.

employees. To do so, this organization might well give applicants some form of integrity test to screen out those who are most likely to steal (Van Iddekinge, Roth, Raymark, & Odle-Dusseau, 2012). This organization might also develop some type of training program designed to educate employees on the negative effects that employee theft may have on the organization (Greenberg, 2002). Because selection and training are both “I” activities, what relevance does the “O” side of the field have for the retail organization in this example? On first glance, it would appear to be very little. However, if you think about it, organizational topics are highly relevant. For example, even if “honest” people are hired, there may still be conditions on the job that could lead to theft. Specifically, social norms within work groups or departments may reinforce stealing, as they do other forms of negative behaviors (Flaherty & Moss, 2007). It is also possible that even if people are honest, they may steal as a way to get back at this retail organization if they feel they are treated unfairly (Greenberg, 1990). Thus, in addition to selecting honest employees and training them on the effects of stealing, this organization needs to understand the social norms associated with theft, and pay attention to the level of fairness with which they treat their employees. As we see, the impact of social norms and fairness are both important topics within organizational psychology.

This point can also be illustrated by taking an “O” topic and describing the relevance of the “I” side of the field. Let’s say the U.S. Army is interested in improving the mental health and well-being among its enlisted soldiers. Fortunately, in organizational psychology, there is a considerable amount of research on employee health and well-being and the Army could draw on these sources to help guide its efforts (e.g., Jex, Swanson, & Grubb, 2013). Can issues that are relevant to the “I” side of the field be ignored? Absolutely not. Although it is true that the health and well-being of employees is impacted by the conditions under which they work, some people are better able to tolerate adverse conditions than others (Jex, Kain, & Park, 2013). Thus, regardless of steps the Army might take to decrease soldiers’ exposure to adverse conditions, it is also important to select resilient individuals, or alternatively provide training in order to enhance resilience (Reivich, Seligman, & McBride, 2011). Selection and training, of course, are two of the major topics on the “I” side of the field.

THE SCIENTIST-PRACTITIONER APPROACH

Organizational psychology is a science. In fact, much of the content of this book is based on scientific studies of behavior in both organizational and laboratory settings. Organizational psychology, however, is also concerned with the application of scientific knowledge to enhance the effectiveness of individual employees, work groups, and entire organizations. The scientist-practitioner model captures this dynamic interaction between generating scientific knowledge and the application of that knowledge for some practical purpose. At a general level, the scientist-practitioner model states that science and practice are not independent and, in fact, often “feed off” each other.

To illustrate how the scientist-practitioner model works, let’s say the branch manager of a bank wants to improve the level of customer service provided to the bank’s customers. Fortunately, this individual may draw on the findings of many scientific investigations of customer service to guide his or her efforts to reduce it (e.g., Schneider,
The Scientist-Practitioner Approach

White, & Paul, 1998). Conversely, scientific investigations of organizational phenomena are often motivated by the practical concerns of organizations. For example, in the past decade there has been a considerable rise in research on the process older employees go through when they decide to retire (e.g., Jex & Grosch, 2013; Wang & Shultz, 2010). Although such research may certainly be useful from a purely scientific perspective, another important factor motivating this research is that organizations often want to influence the retirement decisions of older employees; in some cases to retire earlier, and other cases to put off retirement.

Within the broader field of I/O psychology, the scientist-practitioner model has become so important that it serves as the underlying philosophy for many if not most graduate training programs. Graduate training guided by the scientist-practitioner model suggests that, first and foremost, students need to learn the skills necessary to conduct scientific research. This explains why virtually all graduate programs in I/O psychology require training in statistics, research methodology, and psychological measurement. The other important implication of the scientist-practitioner model in graduate training is that students are typically provided with some opportunity, through internships, practica, or other field experiences, to apply what they have learned in “real world” settings (see Comment 1.3).

**COMMENT 1.3**

**TRAINING SCIENTIST-PRACTITIONERS: THE ROLE OF PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE**

Most graduate programs in I/O psychology, as well as other fields, incorporate some form of practical experience into their curriculum. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways. Most programs, for example, encourage students to participate in formal internship programs in corporations and consulting firms. Typically, internships span between 6 months and 1 year, and require that students work under the supervision of an experienced I/O psychologist. Other less formal ways that students obtain practical experience include class projects, working with faculty on research and consulting projects, and field-based practicum courses.

The major benefit of students participating in field experiences is that they gain a chance to put what they’ve learned in their courses into practice in a real organization. Students also benefit in a more subtle way: They develop a greater understanding of how the “real world” actually works. For example, students working on field projects are often surprised at how quickly organizations want things done, as well as the importance of building positive interpersonal relationships with “clients” in organizations. Many students are also surprised that their methodological and statistical training comes in quite handy as they work on these field projects.

Despite the many advantages of practical experience, there can be some disadvantages of incorporating it into graduate programs. The primary experience by many doctoral programs is that, in some cases, students who take internships never finish their degree. Other problems that can occur are lack of competent supervision, and in some cases, the projects organizations assigned to students are not meaningful. Despite these potential disadvantages, carefully monitored practical experience is usually a valuable component of graduate training. It is also an excellent way to teach the scientist-practitioner model to students.
The scientist-practitioner model is also relevant to the field of organizational psychology, and thus was chosen as the guiding theme for this book. As becomes evident through the chapters, research by organizational psychologists has greatly enhanced the understanding of behavior in organizations. For example, research by organizational psychologists has provided valuable insights into a variety of topics—group effectiveness, socialization of new employees, employee health and well-being, deviant employee behavior, and organizational culture are but a few examples. At the same time, findings generated from scientific research in these and many other topics have been used to guide interventions designed to make organizations more effective and make the lives of employees healthier and more fulfilling.

The impact of the scientist-practitioner model can also be seen in the work settings and activities of those trained in organizational psychology. Many hold academic positions—typically, in departments of psychology or management. The primary job duties of most academicians are: teaching, scientific research, and service to one’s academic department and university. However, many in academia also use their research skills to help organizations solve a variety of practical problems. The careers of both authors of this text have certainly contained this blend of science and practice (see Comment 1.4).

The training of organizational psychologists who pursue academic careers is not drastically different from the training of organizational psychologists who pursue nonacademic careers. Consistent with the scientist-practitioner model, students in graduate programs in I/O psychology and related fields typically receive coursework in research methodology, statistics, and measurement, as well as in specific content areas (e.g., motivation, leadership). It is also common for all students, regardless of their career plans, to conduct research and to obtain practical experience in some form.

There are, however, some important components that future academicians typically need to incorporate into their graduate training that are not as crucial for those planning to pursue applied careers. For example, students planning to pursue an academic career need to become involved in research early in their graduate training. This increases the chances of gaining authorship on journal articles, book chapters, and conference presentations—all of which definitely help in a competitive job market. Research involvement also facilitates the development of close working relationships with faculty. These relationships are crucial in learning how to do research.

Another essential component of the training of future academicians is teaching experience. Although the emphasis placed on teaching varies considerably according to the type of academic institution, teaching is still an important component of any academic position and all colleges and universities are looking for good teachers. Thus, graduate students who obtain significant teaching experience are much better prepared for academic positions than those with little or no experience. Also, given recent trends in the academic job market (Weir, 2011) it is becoming more common for new PhDs to become employed in smaller colleges and universities that traditionally have placed a higher value on teaching effectiveness compared to large research-intensive universities.

Typical nonacademic employment settings for organizational psychologists include business organizations, consulting firms, nonprofit research institutes, government
The Scientist-Practitioner Approach

Steve Jex: When I reflect on my own career, the science-practice theme is very evident. Since receiving my PhD in industrial/organizational psychology in 1988, I have carried on an active program of research and scholarship in the area of occupational stress. Thus, a good deal of what I do centers around scientific research and scholarship. However, in addition to my scholarly pursuits, I have conducted a number of projects in organizations that have been designed to solve practical problems. For example, not long after starting my first job out of graduate school, I was the assistant investigator on a project conducted for the U.S. Army Research Institute. This project involved conducting an organizational assessment of the recruiting operations branch of the U.S. Army. The Army was interested in ways that the recruiting branch could facilitate the training of field recruiters. Another major project, which I directed, involved the development of an internal customer service satisfaction survey for a large medical center in Ohio. Administrators at this facility were concerned with the level of service departments within the hospital (e.g., radiology, nursing) provided to each other—something that is crucial to effective patient care. In addition to these large projects, over the past 25 years I have worked with a number of organizations on a number of smaller applied research projects and occasionally the development training programs.

What have I learned from working on projects involving the application of organizational psychology in real organizations? Probably most important, I have developed a great deal of respect for those who do applied work on a full-time basis. As I stated earlier, I am primarily a researcher/author, but the few applied projects I have done over the years has convinced me that applying research findings in organizational settings is tough work that often requires a very broad skill set. Another thing I have learned is that good science has practical value; that is, when projects in organizations are conducted in a scientifically rigorous manner, organizations typically obtain much more useful information than when they are not. Finally, working in organizations has really convinced me of the viability of the scientist-practitioner model. The opportunity to do scientifically meaningful work that has practical value makes the field of I/O psychology very unique and exciting.

Thomas Britt: The further into my career I get, the more I realize the importance of the scientist-practitioner model. I received my PhD in social psychology in 1994, and then immediately started active duty in the U.S. Army as a research psychologist. I quickly realized that the Army was not necessarily interested in the identity regulation of romantic partners (the topic of my doctoral dissertation), but was interested in how soldiers could be motivated to perform well during stressful military operations. Therefore, I tried to conduct applied research “in the field” that met my own (and journal reviewer’s) standards for scientific rigor. I ended up having a great experience in the Army conducting research on how the identity images of soldiers as “warriors” and “peacekeepers” influenced motivation and health in different types of operations, how being personally engaged in work could serve as a buffer against many deployment stressors, and how soldiers could possibly derive benefits such as increased self-confidence and appreciation for life as a result of successfully handling the rigors of military operations.

Somewhat to my surprise, I also enjoyed communicating the importance of research findings to military leaders, and thinking

(continued)
about the applied relevance of the research I conducted. I found that leaders were much more likely to take recommendations to heart when they were backed by data collected using a sound research design. I also found that leaders in applied settings appreciated the utility of a well-supported theory in making sense of the findings. Like Steve, I was impressed with how leaders were really willing to devote the time and attention necessary to understand the implications of scientific research for the well-being and performance of their personnel. I find myself being guided by the scientist-practitioner even more as I have begun new programs of research on understanding the determinants of whether employees in high stress environments seek treatment for mental health problems and the factors that promote resilience to high-intensity work stressors.

agencies and research institutes, and even market research firms. Although actual job duties vary widely by setting, many organizational psychologists employed in nonacademic settings are involved in organizational change and development activities. This might involve assisting an organization in the development and implementation of an employee opinion survey program, designing and facilitating the implementation of team development activities, or perhaps even assisting top management with the strategic planning process.

The other major activity of organizational psychologists employed in nonacademic settings is research. This is particularly true of those employed in nonprofit research institutes, government research institutes, and market research firms. Given the diversity of these settings, it is difficult to pin down the exact nature of the research that is conducted. However, in the most general sense, these individuals conduct scientific research that is designed to have some practical benefit to the organization or even to society in general. Both authors, for example, have conducted research to help the Army better understand how soldiers cope with stressors (e.g., Britt, Adler, Bliese, & Moore, 2013; Jex, Bliese, Buzzell, & Primeau, 2003).

To prepare for a nonacademic career, graduate students need training in most of the same areas as those pursuing academic careers. These include courses in research methodology, statistics, measurement, and several substantive topical areas. There is one important difference, however: Compared to those seeking academic employment, it is more essential for students planning nonacademic careers to obtain practical experience during their graduate training. This experience can often be gained by assisting faculty with consulting projects, or, in some cases, through formal internship programs (see Comment 1.5). Obtaining practical experience is crucial not only because it enhances a student’s credentials, but because it provides valuable opportunities to apply what has been learned in graduate courses.

So how does a student decide on which career path they want to pursue? Given that PhD students are generally capable, most typically have the option of pursuing academic or nonacademic employment so this decision ultimately hinges on what students enjoy and value. In our experience, academic employment is typically favored by students who enjoy teaching and have developed a well-defined set of research interests. Academia is also well-suited for those who enjoy a great deal of autonomy and control.
THE INSTITUTE FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND APPLICATION (IPRA)

One of the most important features of the graduate program in I/O psychology at Bowling Green State University is the experience students receive working on projects through the Institute for Psychological Research and Application (IPRA). IPRA was created by the I/O faculty at Bowling Green in the late 1980s to provide graduate students with the opportunity to apply, in actual organizational settings and under the supervision of faculty, what they learn in the I/O program. A secondary purpose of IPRA is to provide graduate students with funding to attend professional conferences.

Typically, local organizations approach the IPRA director (or some other I/O faculty member) with some proposed organizational need that might match the expertise of the I/O faculty at Bowling Green. Examples of projects that have been done through IPRA include: employee opinion surveys, training needs assessment, customer service satisfaction surveys, and performance appraisal system development. After an organization has expressed a need, a faculty member is sought to serve as a supervisor on the project. Once a faculty member agrees to supervise a project, a meeting is typically set up with a representative from that organization to obtain more concrete information about the projects. This is typically followed by the submission to that organization of a formal proposal that includes the nature of the work to be done, the time frame under which the work will be done, the “deliverables” that the organization will receive at the conclusion of the project, and an itemized budget.

The vast majority of students who graduate from the I/O program at Bowling Green State University feel that their work on IPRA projects was one of the most valuable components of their education; this is particularly true for students who end up working for corporations and consulting firms. Students feel that work on these projects helped them to sharpen their technical skills, provided valuable opportunities to apply what they learn in their classes, and provided a realistic preview of the world of consulting.

over their time as opposed to a great deal of structure.

In contrast, nonacademic careers are typically favored by students who really enjoy working in organizational settings and seeing organizational psychology applied in a meaningful way. Applied careers are also well-suited to those who desire a little more structure, because those in applied settings typically have less freedom to decide what they work on; those decisions are usually determined by external factors such as client needs, government funding, and top management preference. Another factor that often determines the choice of one’s career path, and one that we don’t talk about a lot, is the reality of the job market (see Comment 1.6).

HISTORICAL INFLUENCES IN ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Compared to many other scientific disciplines, psychology is very young. In fact, the field as a whole is just a little more than 100 years old. Because much has been written about the history of the broader field of I/O psychology (Koppes, 1997; Koppes, 2007; Vinchur & Koppes, 2011, for a recent example) we do not attempt to provide a
As many readers know all too well, a stagnant economy in recent years has led to high levels of unemployment in the United States and many other countries (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011) and these trends certainly impact those in the field of organizational psychology. This has depressed the job market for organizational psychologists in both academic and nonacademic settings. On balance, though, academia has been hit harder because universities are under pressure not only to cut costs in general but also to keep the cost of tuition at moderate levels in order to make higher education affordable.

So how does the reality of the job market impact graduate students’ choice of careers? What we don’t see, and to a certain extent don’t expect to see, is graduate students rejecting a particular career path altogether based solely on the job market. Graduate students who are highly motivated to seek out a particular career path will continue to do so regardless of short-term trends in the job market. What we have seen, however, is that many graduate students are “hedging their bets” a bit when it comes to preparing for their career. For example, a graduate student who is pursuing an academic career may also pursue an internship or gain other applied experiences to make themselves competitive in case they decide to pursue nonacademic employment. Conversely, students pursuing nonacademic career paths may still try to publish and obtain teaching experience in case they decide to pursue an academic position. In our opinion, having a more flexible approach to career planning makes a great deal of sense, and in fact is a necessity given the current job market.


Historical Beginnings

As Katzell and Austin (1992) point out, interest in the behavior of individuals in organizational settings undoubtedly dates back to ancient times: “In the organizational field, perhaps the earliest recorded consultant was the Midianite priest, Jethro, who advised his son-in-law, Moses, on how to staff and organize the ancient Israelites (Exod. 18)” (p. 803). Formalized attempts to study and influence such behavior, however, have a much more recent history.

Based on most historical accounts of the development of the field of I/O psychology, the industrial side of the field was much quicker to develop than the organizational side. Chronologically, the beginnings of the field of I/O psychology can be traced to work in the United States, during the early part of the 20th century, by pioneers such as Hugo Munsterberg, Walter Dill Scott, and Walter Bingham (Vinchur & Koppes, 2011). The application of psychology to the workplace at that time was also beginning to occur simultaneously in Europe.

In the United States most of the work at that time dealt with topics such as skill
While teaching my first introductory to industrial and organizational (I-O) psychology course, I would spend the first two classes reviewing the history of the discipline. I believe that knowing our history deepens our understanding and broadens our perspectives when teaching, practicing, or researching I-O psychology. One day, while using a typical textbook, I presented the “fathers” of I-O psychology. There are different opinions about the original founders, but frequently cited individuals include Hugo Munsterberg and Walter Dill Scott. While writing the word “fathers” on the chalkboard, it occurred to me that I had not read any historical accounts of I-O psychology that included women who may have been involved early in the discipline. This observation led to over a decade of research, looking for women psychologists who contributed to I-O psychology during its inception.

It was unusual for a tenure-track faculty member early in her career to study history. In fact, one tenured professor told me to quit the research because it would jeopardize my tenure decision. He wanted me to conduct traditional empirical research. He said that only senior level professionals later in their careers are interested in history. Because I highly valued knowing our historical roots and desired to provide a more complete historical account, I ignored the advice and continued my research. I immediately contacted Frank Landy, who was known for his historiography of I-O psychology during the early years of the discipline. I asked him if he came across women psychologists in his research. These women were not his focus so he was not sure, but encouraged me to continue the research. He then mentored me on how to study archival material. We visited the Northwestern University archives while researching Walter Dill Scott and the Scott Company. During this trip, I found Mary Holmes Stevens Hayes, who was the only consulting psychologist working for the Scott Company. I traced her to the National Archives because she had a very successful career of applying psychology to solve problems while working for the federal government.

I continued my search in which I actually felt like a detective, looking for clues that would provide connections between women and men psychologists. I reviewed letters written by famous psychologists of the time (e.g., Cattell, Munsterberg), examined newspapers and conference programs, analyzed company materials, and studied other primary and secondary material. The research was very gratifying when I made connections. I remember the feeling of success when I first saw a photo of Mary Holmes Stevens Hayes, a psychologist I researched for 5 years. I remember thinking “that’s what she looks like!” I also interviewed living psychologists (e.g., Pat Smith), who were retired and could recall the early years of the discipline.

I became fascinated with these women’s lives. I was enthralled with their capacities to earn doctorates, pursue professional careers, and in some cases, have children, all during
a time period where these efforts were not common for women. I was especially pleased that I discovered Marion Bills, Elsie Bregman, and Millicent Pond, all who worked in industry and made significant contributions to the field. I also spent a considerable amount of time in understanding the work of Lillian Gilbreth who conducted time and motion studies with her husband while also seeking employees’ perspectives. Lillian Gilbreth was one of the first full-time consulting psychologists; she carried on her husband’s consulting business after he died. She then proceeded to support her 12 children through college, and has been the only psychologist honored with a U.S. postage stamp. A book and movie Cheaper by the Dozen were made to recognize their prolific work.

After conducting this research, I realized that a text that pulled together various aspects of the discipline did not exist. I then embarked on a project, which results in an edited volume on historical perspectives of I-O psychology. This project took over 5 years, working with discipline experts and historians. To date, it’s the only text that captures individual contributors as well as specific topics, such as selection, training and development, consumer psychology, and so forth. I believe this work enhances our understanding of questions asked and problems solved. As noted by others “the past is the prologue of our future.”

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acquisition and personnel selection, while there was very little attention given to the organizational side of the field. This was not, however, the case in other parts of the world at the beginning of the 20th century. In Great Britain, for example, H. M. Vernon, who is acknowledged as one of that country’s first industrial psychologists, investigated such topics as industrial fatigue, accidents, the impact of long work hours, and worker efficiency. Fatigue of employees was also of interest to psychologists in Australia, most notably Bernard Muscion. Most of these topics are today considered part of the organizational side of the field, and in fact part of the recently emerging field of Occupational Health Psychology (see Chapter 7).

Table 1.1 provides a chronological summary of some of the major events that shaped the development of the field of organizational psychology in the 20th century.

Somewhat surprisingly, the beginnings of the organizational side of the field were heavily influenced by the work of several nonpsychologists. Perhaps the best known of these was Frederick Winslow Taylor, who developed the principles of scientific management (Taylor, 1911). Although for many the term scientific management typically conjures up images of time-and-motion study, as well as piece-rate compensation, it was actually much more than that. Scientific management was, to a large extent, a philosophy of management, and efficiency and piece-rate compensation were the most visible manifestations of that philosophy. When one looks past these more visible aspects of scientific management, three underlying principles emerge: (1) those that perform work tasks should be separate from those who design work tasks; (2) workers are rational beings, and they will work harder if provided with favorable economic incentives; and (3) problems in the workplace can and should be subjected to empirical study.

In considering the underlying principles of scientific management described earlier, the first principle is certainly contrary