



The Emerald  
Review of  
Industrial and  
Organizational  
Psychology

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**Robert L. Dipboye**

**THE EMERALD REVIEW OF INDUSTRIAL  
AND ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

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**ROBERT L. DIPBOYE**



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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## Preface

My intent in this book is to provide a comprehensive review of the research, theory, and applications comprising the field of Industrial and Organizational (I/O) Psychology. I do not desire to write another introductory textbook. There are already books that do an admirable job of presenting the essentials of I/O psychology. Neither do I wish to write a handbook containing detailed technical reviews. Several handbooks are in print that provide exhaustive, meticulous examinations of specialized topics in I/O. Rather, my goal is to generate a book that falls somewhere between an introductory text and a handbook. I set out to write an in-depth and comprehensive review of the field of I/O that is accessible to a broad audience.

I cover many of the same topics contained in human resource management (e.g., staffing) and organization behavior (OB) (e.g., teams), but I do so as a psychologist. I/O is a specialized field within the larger discipline of psychology. I/O (also called Work and Organizational Psychology in Europe or simply Organizational Psychology) is the scientific study of how individuals and groups behave in the performance of work activities and in the context of organizations. It is also the application of this research to improve the effectiveness and the well-being of people. I/O is part science, contributing to the general knowledge base of psychology, and part application, using that knowledge to solve real-world problems. The business of I/O psychology is NOT simply business. I/O psychology is concerned with a various types of work, including service, manufacturing, professional, intellectual, physical, paid, and unpaid. I/O psychology is concerned with a variety of organizations, including, but not limited to, business, governmental, military, religious, educational, union, and not-for-profit organizations. I/O psychology is concerned not only with how to increase the productivity and efficiency of workers in the performance of their tasks and the effectiveness of the organizations to which they belong, but also the health and well-being of individuals who perform work activities and of society in general.

Psychology is the focus of this text, but any review of I/O psychology must acknowledge the contributions of other disciplines. All of the social sciences have contributed to the research, theory, and applications associated with the topics reviewed here, including anthropology, sociology, political science, communications, and economics as well as the business school specialties of human resources management and OB. In addition, other specialties within psychology are concerned to some extent with the topic, most notably social psychology, personality, and psychometrics. Clearly, I/O psychology is not the sole discipline concerned with human behavior in organizations, and, consequently, I have attempted to provide an interdisciplinary coverage in my review.

In this book, I emphasize the scientific nature of the field. As in any science, there are controversies, conflicting results, and theoretical disputes. Those who seek insight into a field that is continuing to evolve and who appreciate the competition of ideas may find this book more appealing than those who seek simple answers to the questions of human

behavior in organizations. The book does cover practical applications, especially in that section covering personnel topics. However, an underlying theme is that good practice follows from solid science. Moreover, science is an endeavor that is never completely finished but is always searching for alternative explanations and better theories. Also, no one study can provide a definitive answer and truth lies in the aggregate findings of many studies. Consequently, in reviewing the science, I rely on quantitative meta-analyses to show the cumulative results of research on the topics covered in this book. Meta-analyses provide the reader with a realistic picture of the state of research findings and are useful in identifying directions for future research.

In attempting to generate a science of human behavior in organizations, it is necessary to evoke abstract and generalizable constructs that transcend specific times and places. However, I try to bring the discussion down to earth by showing the relevance of the research, theory, and applications to current events. Major changes are occurring in society that will fundamentally change careers and the way organizations manage human resources. Corporate restructuring, globalization of business, and diversity of the workforce are only a few of the continuing changes that are reshaping work life. Examples are provided throughout the book of how these changes are affecting organizations and the implications for the nature of work and the management of people at work.

In this book I attempt to provide an integrative review of the field. The reader is exposed to a full range of organizational topics (the O in I/O), such as leadership, power, role theory, groups in organizations, conflict, and communication, as well as the traditional personnel topics (the I of I/O) of job analysis, selection, performance appraisal, staffing, and training. The separate I and O topics are usually presented as distinct categories of subject matter. I have attempted to cross reference throughout the book and frequently refer to the implications of research on organizational topics for topics in human resource management and vice versa. In addition, the organizational topics are placed before the human resource management topics to emphasize that the latter always occur in the context of the organization.

Finally, I have chosen not to emphasize potential cross-cultural differences. At one time, scholars in North America and England dominated the work on human resource management and OB. The most impressive development over the last three decades is the conduct of research by those outside these regions. A perusal of the professional journals reveals an explosion of research in China, Japan, Germany, the Netherlands, and other countries. The research contributions of scholars around the world have identified national and cultural differences that potentially moderate some of the findings of our research and theory as well as practical applications. Where there is evidence of cultural moderators, I discuss them. Nonetheless, the dynamics of human behavior at work and in organizations appear remarkably consistent across cultures. Where appropriate there is a discussion of cross-cultural limitations, but I do not believe the findings justify a splitting up of the field along cultural and national lines. As more cross-cultural research is conducted, I may be proven wrong, but for now, I see no reason to believe that many of the important findings in I/O psychology cannot be generalized across cultures.

The first two chapters provide historical and scientific contexts for the remainder of the book. In outlining the history and development of I/O psychology, I discuss the individual contributors to this history and the historical events that provided the impetus for scientific applications of psychology to work and organizations. The chapter on the scientific method is perhaps the most important in the text. What we know about some of the topics will change as new findings emerge; but the method of scientific research remains constant.

The next chapters cover the organizational topics (the O in the I/O and OB), including work motivation, attitudes, groups, social structure, social processes, leadership, and stress. Much of this literature comes from the research of social scientists who view organizations as complex social systems. The book covers the organizational topics prior to the personnel topics to provide a context for personnel psychology (the I in I/O or human resource management). For instance, the discussion of work motivation and social processes will set the stage for later discussions of performance appraisal and feedback. Despite this structure, each chapter stands alone and does not require the student to read any previous chapters. The only possible exception is the examination of research methods. Those not acquainted with this topic should probably read chapter 2 prior to the chapters in the second and third sections.

The last chapters cover topics that are usually lumped under the title of personnel or industrial (the I in I/O) psychology and human resource management. Included in this section are work analysis, employee selection, training, and performance appraisal. In contrast to the more theoretical slant of organizational psychologists, personnel psychologists are more practically oriented and devote much of their research to developing techniques to improve the fit between employees and the organization. Providing a “good fit” is in part an *attraction problem* in that you want to entice the most qualified people to seek employment in your organization. It is a *selection problem* in that you want to be able to choose the best-qualified people from those who apply. It is a *placement problem* in that once hired, you want to put people where they belong. It is a *training problem* in that you want to instruct those who are hired in how to perform the work properly. It is a *criterion problem* in that measures of performance provide the basis for a variety of human resource management activities, including the rewarding, promoting, and developing of employees. Work analysis is the foundation for all these activities.

The epilogue provides an overview of some major conclusions in the previous chapters and summarizes my personal views of the science and applications that constitute I/O psychology. As is always the case with any scientific endeavor, there are no final answers. Everything is a work in progress. I do not measure the success of this book against the number of definitive answers to crucial questions such as how we motivate workers. Rather, the book is a success if it challenges, intrigues, and even provokes readers to seek their own answers. I hope that you share some of the excitement associated with this relatively new field of psychology and are inspired to search for your own answers to the many questions that remain.

In closing I should acknowledge the influence and inspiration of two colleagues. William (Bill) C. Howell wrote a short volume entitled *Essentials of I/O Psychology* that was first published in the 1970s, followed by two revised editions that I co-authored in the 1980s. In the 1990s, we authored a new textbook, *Understanding I/O Psychology: An Integrated Approach* with Carlla S. Smith. By the time I decided to write the present book, both had passed away. Although *The Emerald Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology* is a new book, Carlla and Bill had a major influence on how I approached several of the topics, especially the discussions of the history of the field and stress. To the extent that this text proves intellectually stimulating, entertaining, or in some other way beneficial, they should share in the recognition. To the extent that the text falls short, I assume total responsibility and they deserve none of the blame.