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The Future (and Past) of Work Psychology and Organizational Behaviour: A Personal View**

This paper offers a personal and perhaps "side-ways" view on the past and future of two closely related semi-disciplines: work psychology and organisational behaviour. The paper first addresses the terminological confusion in the area and discusses 10 terms often used inter-changably. It then considers whether work psychology has been, or can ever be, neutral or disinterested in the way it is researched and applied. Some time is spent on the issue of definitions at the heart of which is the idea that behaviour at work is shaped by behaviour out of the work place and vice versa. In this sense all behaviour is work behaviour. The central part of the paper offers six criticisms of past and present work psychology (Ethnocentric and parochial, a-theoretical, a-historical, neglecting salient issues, offering more simplification than clarification, and a tendency to relativism or absolutism). It also offers seven criticisms of organizational behaviour (political correctness, anecdotes not data, no powerful theories, derivative methodology, confused identity, marketing issues and the problems it attacks). Despite these critiques the paper ends on an "upbeat note" pointing to three examples where progress has been, and is being made.

Key words: **Work Psychology, Organizational Behaviour, Critique, Future**

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1. Introduction

Most of us are born and die in organizations. We are educated and work in - organizations. We spend a great deal of our in leisure time playing and praying in organizations. We are shaped, nurtured, controlled, rewarded and punished by organizations all our lives. We are social animals who live in groups most of which might be called organizations. Most of our behaviour is, of necessity, organizational behaviour. Yet, I/O or organizational psychology remains often a very small part of an undergraduate degree course in psychology, as does Organisational Behaviour in an MBA course. Nevertheless research into behaviour at work has been going on for over 100 years and there are now many texts and courses that cover this area. This paper attempts a critical and possibly idiosyncratic review of the state-of-the-art in this field.

For most of the last century anthropologists, economists, political scientists, psychologists and sociologists have studied, from their own perspective, how organizations influence the individuals in them and vice versa. This paper will consider two closely related sub-disciplines: the one (work psychology), a branch of psychology and organizational behaviour, a branch of sociology. It is a personal critical overview of 10 – 20 text books in the area as well as how and why the topic is taught mainly in the English-speaking world. Readers may find the tone skeptical, but hopefully not jaundiced; but certainly idiosyncratic. It is not a grand or majesterial review of the state-of-the art but an attempt on the part of a practitioner/scientist or academic consultant to step back and view work in the area.

Because behaviour at work is studied by many disciplines and goes under many different – and for the outsider many confusing – titles these will first be addressed. Then some political issues will be briefly discussed. Next the area of work psychology will be considered because I am first and foremost a psychologist and take, of necessity, that perspective. The next section looks briefly at what is an organization and attempts some clarification. The sixth section offers perhaps a pessimistic and critical review of the limitations of both work psychology and organizational behaviour. This is where the authors personal view and approach are most noticeable. The penultimate section looks at how the world of work is changing and the challenges that brings to those studying it. Despite the negativity of the sixth section the overall conclusion is upbeat suggesting that recent development mean a bright future for work psychology and organizational behaviour.

2. Terminological differences

A newcomer to the study of management soon becomes confused by the myriad of English terms that have been used synonymously: applied, industrial, occupational, organizational, vocational and work-psychology all used interchangeably; as well as related terms such as organizational behaviour, I/O psychology, ergonomics, and so on. Even in individual European countries new terms have emerged: an example is the emergence of the word "personal psychologie" in Germany.

There are according to Furnham (2002) essentially three reasons why so many related terms exist. The first is *historical*: changes in both the focus of the research and the valence or value attached to various words. Hence, "industrial psychology" is a term seldom used these days, although it was popular for the first half of this century.

Indeed, psychologists may now be more interested in non-manufacturing service industries than in large-scale heavy production industry. The world of cyberspace, the "virtual office" and cognitive ergonomics appears to interest work psychology specialists now more than manufacturing industries and production plants.

The second reason is *lingocentrism*. Different countries tended to choose and use different topics. The British (and many of her former colonies and dominions) use the term "occupational psychology", the Europeans "work-psychology" and the Americans the clumsy "I/O psychology". It is very easy for English speakers to ignore or overlook the interesting and important literature from Europe especially that published in French and German. Indeed Shimmin and Van Strien (1998) do an excellent and fair job in tracing the history of work psychology across all the major European nations as well as the United States.

The third reason is largely *narcissism*. Much research offers eponymous fame or at least the possibility that a word or phrase attached to a test, a technique, a topic or a sub-discipline might offer the author lasting fame. Although this has been less true in this area, it may be one possible explanation for the proliferation of terms.

Thus we have at least 10 different titles:

- *Applied psychology*
  This is contrasted with pure psychology and it encompasses all psychology looking at the direct application of theory or methods from psychological research.
- *Business psychology*
  A term occasionally used by consultants and management scientists to denote problems in everyday management. The term is gaining wider approval and may be used synonymously with organizational psychology. Critics might argue business psychology all too often takes the management, and not the workers', perspective.
- *Industrial psychology*
  Perhaps the first term used in this area, it reflected the early interests of applied psychologists, many of whom were interested in environmental and physical factors at work (human factors), ergonomics and human groups. Ergonomics is now a thriving and expanding discipline.
- M*anagement Psychology*
  A term occasionally used in the 1970's but not popular no doubt because it appears to reflect the interest of one side of the organization, namely management not labour.
- *I/O Psychology*
  An almost exclusively American term to include the older concerns of industrial psychology, and the more recent concerns of organizational psychologists. To a large extent it remains interchangeable with organizational psychology.
- *Occupational Psychology*
  Very much a British term referring to the whole area of organizational and industrial research. To some extent the term is misleading and has given way to the more common term of organizational psychology.

- *Organizational behaviour*
  A term used to cover a multidisciplinary area with theories and methodologies borrowed from management science, psychology and sociology. In Britain and Europe, sociologists are probably in the majority in this area, whereas in the U.S.A. it is psychologists.
- *Organizational Psychology*
  Probably the most widely used term embracing the whole concept of work-psychology (see below) and most facets of behaviour at work. This is probably the term that will "win through" the etymological battle. However, non-psychologists naturally resent the "psychology epithet" and hence prefer the term behaviour.
- *Vocational Psychology*
  A term used to denote a quite specific area of research – mainly concerned with vocational choice, the "fit" between individual characteristics and job requirements, and the differences between people in different vocations.
- *Work psychology*
  A relatively recent term, used mainly by European psychologists to encompass business, industrial, occupational, organizational and vocational psychology. Its simplicity is appealing, but once again it may be resisted by non-psychological researchers.

For the rest of this paper I shall use the term work psychology to refer to psychological research into individual and group based behaviour at work.

Anyone reading a textbook on work psychology is struck by how many theories are borrowed and adapted from social psychology (i.e. attribution theory) or economics (equity theory) or more recently cognitive psychology and ergonomics. There are however a few home grown theories like Herzberg's two factor theory of job satisfaction. But it seems work psychology has been happy to borrow and adopt theories to fit its needs. It is only important to distinguish between what is, and what is not an organization if behaviour differs in these two circumstances. Presumably, organizations differ enormously along several dimensions: large/small, public/private, expanding/contracting, manufacturing/service, old/new. In order to understand how they influence behaviour, climate and cultural variables need to be understood.

3. Politics and Work Psychology

How disinterested, a-political and objective are work-psychologists? There are those who believe that whether they are prepared to admit it or not applied psychologists, and work psychologists in particular, work within a particularly political framework. This is particularly true for those for whom consultancy money is crucial for their livelihood. It is possible that they may be compromised in terms of the questions they ask and the advice they give. Some argue that politics, epistemology and practice are all closely intertwined and cannot be separated. Naturally this has implications for work psychology.

Holloway (1991) offered a sociological critique of current work or work psychology. She asks three questions:

- If work-psychology is scientific in terms of theory-building and research, what does scientific mean in the context of application? Is it as disinterested and value free as it often suggests?
- To what end, and on whose behalf, do psychologists study organizations and their employees and what effects do they have? Are psychologists interested in happier or more efficient workers and are they compatible? Do they represent the interests primarily of employee or management?
- What do the different activities of work-psychology have in common – selection, skills training, scientific measurement? Is their focus on the individual to the exclusion of social and organizational factors?

Holloway (ibid.: 187) argues that:

> "Work-psychology's legitimacy hinges on its claim to be scientific and therefore neutral. The historical evidence demonstrates, however, that this very claim was part of a wider set of power relations which meant that work-psychology has predominantly been produced from a vantage point of management's concern with the regulation of individual - employees. The extent to which this functions on behalf of employees is a question that can be answered only by looking at specific practices in specific locations. None the less, work-psychology's utility to management hinges on its claim to be in the interests of both efficiency and welfare simultaneously."

Certainly, sociologists and others have argued that work psychology is far from value free and serves specific interest groups. Hence, the dropping of the concept of management psychology. There is a powerful political dimension to organizational behaviour that cannot be denied. The whole history of the twentieth century is scarred by the extreme politics of left vs right, communism vs capitalism, management vs labour. It started with the Russian revolution and (in some sense only) ended with the destruction of the Berlin wall.

Hopefully, the future of work will see less conflict and more co-operation between management and labour, and a genuine interest in the understanding of the complex mechanisms and processes of what determines behaviour in the work place.

4. What is Work Psychology?

There does appear to be agreement: that work psychology is essentially multidisciplinary; that it has various different facets/specialities; that it is comparatively new as a sub-discipline; and that it is both pure and applied. If the major areas of research in a discipline can be ascertained from the chapter headings of introductory textbooks, there does *not* appear to be a great deal of consensus as to the major topics in work psychology or indeed I/O psychology. For instance, Saal and Knight (1988) have a chapter on labour unions, whereas this topic is completely ignored by Baron and Greenberg (1990). Yet although the latter dedicates chapters to both stress and individual differences, the former effectively ignore this topic. Yet there are core themes in work psychology that straddle all approaches like work motivation, job selection and productivity.

There are a number of discernable types of text books that reflect how the discipline may be taught. Often the subtitle of the book says everything. Thus Spector (2003) has the subtitle "Research and Practice" and has chapters on job analysis and

performance and appraisal. Doyle (2003) on the other hand subtitles her book "An introduction with attitude" and in the introduction lists 8 areas such as training, assessment and selection, and human-machine interaction that she says does, will *not*, cover. Further she provides an explanation for each. McKenna (2000) has the subtitle of "A student's handbook" and is very light on practical issues, devoting less than 20% to what he calls management and organizational issues.

To this extent it may be possible to distinguish between "psychological work psychology" and "sociological work psychology". That is, some researchers and textbook writers have been trained in sociological disciplines such as sociology or economics, that focus on group phenomena, such as societal/structural factors, whereas others come out of the individualistic tradition of psychology and ergonomics. *Sociological work psychology* is more closely linked to "management science" and tends to prefer generating theories or models to explain, describe or understand behaviour at work. Indeed their titles often do not contain either the term psychology or organizational behaviour preferring the simple word management. Authors are likely to be in business schools.

Psychological work psychology looks very much like applied social psychology and tends to attempt field experiments to test quite specific hypotheses. Authors are often applied social and cognitive psychologists and work in a psychology department. Essentially, the former has as its unit the organization or a working group, and the latter has the individual as its unit of analysis. Given that work psychology is frequently a post-, rather than an under-graduate area of study, what probably determines whether someone is a sociological or psychological work psychology researcher is the core discipline within which they have been trained. It is also probably true that business schools who offer an MBA usually teach organizational behaviour while psychology departments in business consultancies prefer the approach of work psychology.

At the centre of the debate remains the question of the most appropriate unit of analysis in work psychology: the individual, the group or the organization. Most textbook writers in fact structure their work in terms of this threefold classification. That is, work psychology is considered to be the study of the *individual at work*, *working groups*, and the structure and behavioural *processes in organizations*. But there remains a tension at the heart of work psychology, as to what the central questions or boundaries are. But most organizational problems do not fall neatly into the boundaries erected by zealous academics. For many these demarcation disputes are petty irrelevant and ultimately damaging to the applied science aspects of work psychology. Managers want solutions to problems and are less interested in whether these are found by psychologists, sociologists or economists.

Sociologists and economists seem more theory and model driven than psychologists and economists who seem most data driven. In this sense the former are "top down" and the latter "bottom up". To the psychologists economic modelling looks strange given the sophistication of the statistics but the often poor quality (and quantity) of the data. Similarly sociologists theorising looks desperately in need of some empirical support. Equally, work psychology research often looks as if it pays little or no attention to the social, economic and political framework within which the organisation operates. Despite these long held differences there does seem more and more

evidence of co-operation and collaboration between people schooled in specific disciplines. More importantly there is now evidence of the growth of new cross-disciplinary departments, journals, and books that suggest questions and solutions are problem oriented.

It is for the above reason that there will be, inevitably, strong disagreement on the future of work psychology and organizational behaviour. If researchers cannot agree about the past or the main focus of a discipline it is unsurprising that they will not agree on the central questions and the ideal future agenda for it. However, precisely because work psychology is a young, forward looking discipline it tends not to look back and 'squabbles' remain relatively rare. What unites writers and researchers in this area is that the big questions remain the same: how to motivate people at work; how to design better work environments; how to reward productivity; how to select individuals for a better fit and how to manage change at all levels?

5. What is an organization?

Organizations are human creations. They are entities in which interacting and mostly interdependent individuals work with a structure to achieve a common goal. They come in many forms and their goals are manifold and may not always be shared implicitly or explicitly by all members of the organization.

Most organizations have a formal *structure* that may be drawn on a chart. This specifies roles, titles, levels, ranks and reporting structure. The formal structure usually dictates the nature of specialization, centralization, standardization, formalization, and so on. The structure of an organization (tall/flat, centralized/decentralized) is a function of history, technology and the environment. As the latter changes, particularly the market environment, so organizations have to change their structure.

But organizations cannot be described adequately on a chart. They are complex *systems* that have inputs and outputs of many sorts, and ways of transforming the former into the latter. There are many different systems in the organization operating at the same time, including the technology or production system and the social system. The systems' way of looking at organizations stresses the interrelatedness and interactive nature of organizations, although it may be wrong to suggest that these systems have a life of their own independent of the people in the system.

It is possible to look at organizations from many points of view – to stress the technology, the social system or culture, the external competitive environment, the formal versus informal structure of the organization, its accepted practices, and the employees and their characteristics. All are equally valid, although each, on its own, gives an incomplete picture of the organization.

To be able to answer the question, "What is work/organizational psychology?", one must have a concept of an organization. Work psychology is behaviour that occurs within the physical and/or psychological boundaries or contexts of organizations.

Consider the average person; for eight hours of the day he/she remains at work within a specified building and organization, in a culture that prescribes and proscribes all sorts of behaviour: verbal, non-verbal, spatial, and so on. After work this executive may go to a health club – also an organization with its own norms and rules. Thereaf-

ter, he/she may go home to a family, home for a meal and finally sleep. Is the home "an organization"? Does it have the features of an organization and if so what are they? Although it is true that all are in some sense organizations, work psychology is nearly always specifically concerned with the *work* organization. How people dress, talk and even sit and move can be shaped by the work situation. They feel obliged to follow explicit and implicit rules. Yet within organisations they may be equally variable. That is, in the presence of the chairman they behave somewhat differently than when in the privacy of their own office.

Cherrington (1989) has argued that an organization is an open social system (a set of interrelated elements that contains resources from the environment to which it - "exports" some useful output product) that consists of the patterned activities of a group of people (relatively stable and predictable events that continue to occur with regularity) that tend to be goal directed. This definition seems to imply that a family unit (of whatever type) is indeed an organization.

Not all behaviour takes place within the "confines" of an organization, although it may remain shaped by an organization, or indeed, many organizations. The way people dress or talk outside the work organization might be shaped by the organization itself. All sorts of factors shape, influence or determine behaviour, not only one's membership or experience of organizations. Indeed, one could argue, for instance, that personality and ability factors determine both which organizations people choose to join and also how they behave in them. That is, there is evidence of reciprocal causation. Through vocational choice we select organizations to work in that subsequently reward us for what we prefer to do. This may render organizational forces as consequences and not causes. Unless it can be demonstrated that organizational forces (culture, climate, implicit norms, explicit rules) are significant factors in determining behaviours within (working) organizations, it remains pointless to use the term and one might as well simply talk of behaviour (in organizations). On the other hand, if organizational behaviour is different from non-organizational behaviour, it merits keeping the term.

Perhaps organizational behaviour is most unique when the organization is very strong and where it does not originate in the indigenous culture. Thus a Nigerian working at home but for a big American multi-national maybe required to dress, speak and manage in ways pre- and pro-scribed by senior Americans working there or more likely as the headquarters dictates. He or she may therefore be two people whereas the person working for a local company feels less distinction between work and life-style. This pressure is often felt by females in masculine organizations. Asked to complete a questionnaire many ask "shall I respond as I am at work or at home?" Thus whilst for some there is little or no boundary between at work and out of work behaviour for others the difference can be a clear as speaking two different languages.

The question therefore remains: "What time is *not* spent under the behavioural - influences of an organization?". Is all behaviour organizational behaviour? Is organizational behaviour different from "non-organizational" behaviour? And if so, what is the definition of the latter. And yet behaviour at work can and does shape behaviour out-of-work. There is now considerable interest in what is called work-life balance which seems (erroneously) to imply that life is the opposite of work. Certainly it

maybe possible to talk about behaviour *at* work and behaviour *shaped* by work. Otherwise all behaviour would be 'work behaviour'.

Essentially, work psychology refers to behaviour at work, which is shaped, constructed and reinforced by the implicit and explicit needs of the organization. Organisational behaviour may be defined thus: *It is the attempt to describe, explain and understand how the beliefs/attitudes, values/emotional responses and behaviour of people in their workplace is shaped by the actual, imagined, implied or implicit rules, roles, and presence of others.*

Schein (1990) had noted various organizational facets that prescribe how problems are solved: a common language and conceptual categories; consensus on group boundaries and criteria for inclusion and exclusion; criteria for the allocation of power and status; criteria for intimacy and friendship; and criteria for the allocations of rewards and punishments. In this sense one may expect behaviour to differ very - substantially between organizations. On the other hand, non-organizational behaviour is presumably less constrained and prescribed, and more determined by individual preferences and needs. It is no doubt for this reason that selectors ask candidates about their leisure pursuits, which are freely chosen and often unconstrained by organizational pressures, and hence supposedly, more accurately reflect the "true nature" of the individual. To answer this question one must know about the nature of the organization.

Organizations influence individual behaviour, but individuals also influence the behaviour of organizations. Work psychology theorists stress the importance of the socializing forces of an organization on the individual, preferring to focus on how - organizational culture, climate, norms or structures shape individual behaviour. The individual level of analysis is exchanged for that of the organization. Yet individuals not only *choose* organizations (in line with their traits, values, preferences), but they also *change* them to make them more habitable and comfortable to live in. Some organisms adapt to the environment they are given; others choose the preferred environment. People choose, but can change, their working environment to fit their needs and aspirations.

Organizations can only influence the behaviour of individuals within them if they are very powerful in the sense that various institutional rewards and punishments are in place to maintain a particular behaviour pattern. That is, either because of loyalty to organization values, roles and norms of behaviour, or because organizations demand strong conformity (such as armies, mental hospitals or religious institutions), individuals are strongly pressured into a homogeneous, "corporate culture", behavioural repertoire. Organizations can equally reward individuality, eccentricity and polymorphous perversity so that, in a paradoxical way, they can also strongly shape the behaviour of individuals in them by stressing individuality.

6. The limitations of past approaches

A review of old work psychology textbooks can make for pretty depressing reading (Bellows, 1954). An optimist, known for pointing out that the glass is half full, and the critical academic reader may point to the growth and popularity of work psychology and the fat glossy books available on this topic. A pessimist who observes the glass is half empty, points to the thinness of the contents in contrast to the fatness of the

binding. At least six criticisms could be made of older approaches that one may see in books published in the 1960s and 1970s. Any students of this topic should consider these carefully and see what evidence he/she can marshal against such attacks in current texts.

A) Critiques of Work Psychology

Furnham (2000) offered six critiques of the past which inevitably have implications for the future:

1. *Largely ethnocentric and parochial:* Textbooks in work psychology tend to focus on, quote and review studies, theories and case histories from the perspective of Western industrial countries. They grossly under represent, downplay or neglect the contribution of scholars from other predominantly developing countries. They remain resolutely monoglot, ignoring all writing that is not in English. Hence, the subject is viewed and represented from a narrow perspective. National cultures do influence behaviour at work and it is important that they are taken into consideration.

   Too many textbooks are too provincial, but it is to the credit of American and European workers that their ideas and concepts are imported so uncritically, even if they find they do not "fit" well. It may not be that Euro-Americans are enthusiastic *exporters* so much as that others are eager *importers* of Euro-American know-how and procedure. What is more likely, however, is that there are few competitors in the market with more buyers than producers. In fact, the topic of international business management is now booming, which attempts quite specifically to examine, compare and contrast national differences in management practices and theories. The role of national and local culture has and will no doubt feature more in work psychology research. This has already began to happen with the influential theory of Hofstede (2001).

   The issues around globalisation have not been ignored by researchers. This is clearly more than simple issues of dealing with demographic diversity at work. Economic and political factors change societies and organizations within them. The knowledge worker with a flexible portfolio and few expectations for a career in one organization is very different from "organizational man" of the 1960s and 1970s. Work psychologists are beginning to realize that all their work is context specific and therefore need to try to understand the social forces that shape organizations and the people in them.
2. *A-theoretical contributions:* Of all the branches of psychology, work psychology has perhaps been least concerned with theory development. There are no grand theories in this area. Some topics of concern in work-psychology, such as job motivation or satisfaction, do boast various different theoretical perspectives, but may have been borrowed or adapted from other branches of psychology and economics. There is nothing wrong with this, of course, but it does reflect little interest in theory development. There are some unique theories in the area such as Herzberg's celebrated two factor theory, but they are few and far between. Because of both the pragmatism and the applied focus of their work, work psychology - researchers have downplayed the origin, intricacies, inconsistencies and implica-

tion of theories. It remains important to examine the theoretical underpinning and origins of concepts. As Lewin famously remarked there is nothing as practical as good theory. Indeed there is evidence in all the top journals of serious theoretical development in the area.

There tend to be grand theories in politics, economics and sociology but relatively few in psychology. New "isms" like Thatcherism and Communitarianism have little psychological input. Psychological theories, unlike psychoanalysis, are very narrow range and more like models than grand theories about issues like motivation at work.

3. *An a-historical understanding:* Work-psychology, like psychology as a whole, has a short history but a long past, yet for most of the last century researchers and theoreticians have been active and the number of journals and books produced voluminous. A discipline with no memory keeps rediscovering itself. Fads, fashions and folderol seem particularly prevalent in work psychology, perhaps precisely because researchers have no historical insight; no knowledge of where they have been. Any cursory glance at textbooks in the area shows how little attention is devoted to history. It is dangerous to look forward without looking back. Alas this trend seems likely to continue.

   Indeed it seems that some text book writers feel constrained not to refer to papers, books or ideas more than ten years old showing how up-to-date they are. Hence old ideas and concepts get renamed and repackaged and nobody is much the wiser. As has been noted before those who know no history are frequently condemned to repeat it.

4. *Neglect the effect of pre-, post- and outside-work activities:* In order to understand the behaviour of people at work, one must have a knowledge of what they did before work each day and what they do while not working. Inevitably, the eight hours spent working each day are strongly influenced by the eight waking hours spent not working. There is a considerable, but largely neglected, literature on the interface between work and leisure that needs to be considered at length. Work, while important, is not everything. Hence the interest in work-life balance, which may be more an issue for females rather than males. Behaviour in organizations may not be very different from behaviour outside organizations. This issue has been covered earlier.

5. *Simplification rather than clarification:* The fact that young people have been brought up on comic books and that cartoons may present truisms in a way, even memorably, does not necessarily justify their inclusion in textbooks. Yet text books with Dilbert cartoons remain very popular with adult audiences. Perhaps humour is a good vehicle for saying less acceptable things. Too often, theories and data are presented in a simplified rather than clarified manner. The difference is important: the former cuts corners, ignores complexity, renders bland and facile. The latter hopes to present the ideas and data such that important distinctions are made; non sequiturs, contradictory inconsistencies and fallacious logic is exposed. Scientists seek for parsimonious theories and explanations. Some managers prefer simple theories. There still remains tension between management gurus and

prophets who prefer simple magic ballet approaches and scientists who appreciate multivariate causal complexity.

Book reviewers have frequently distinguished between America and British books. They claim that British books are more cautious and critical of research and theories stressing whether they are wrong or problematic. American text books are more descriptive preferring to describe more than evaluate research and theories. Further the expansion of higher education to admit more students means that, in instances, it could be argued that books, like courses, have been "dumbed down". Indeed a series of otherwise good books are indeed called "X for Dummies". This phenomena is however general and certainly not restricted to books on work psychology.

6. *A tendency to benevolent eclecticism (relativism) or partisan zealotry (absolutism):* Where different theories or approaches exist, as in personality theories, two opposed but equally wrong approaches are taken. Benevolent eclectics present uncritically all the approaches, ideas and theories as if they were equally valid; partisan zealots will accept only one approach as valid and veridical. Both neglect an appropriate review of the evidence upon which the theory is based. Only theories that have been tested or descriptive systems and understanding or categorization merit inclusion in a textbook, unless they are considered to be of historical interest only. For the field to progress, ideas need to be tested and those found wanting dropped. After all, chemistry books have no detailed sections on alchemy.

   This problem is most obvious when looking at theories of work motivation of which there are well into double figures. Most textbooks adopt a benevolent eclectic stance by solemnly listing them as if they were all of equal merit. Whilst there have been attempts to integrate them still they seem uncritical putting as many facets of each theory into the integrated model.

But the past is another country: they did things differently there. Work psychology is today very sensitive to cultural issues, interested in theory building, aware of its past and the effect it has on the future, and eager to see organizational behaviour within the context of social behaviour. Part of the positive developments in work psychology have occurred because of market forces. Trained psychologists are working as management consultants and their ideas, insights and practices have proved to be valuable and successful in a wide variety of organizations. Hence large firms with consulting arms as well as small management consultants recruit trained and chartered/registered work psychologists because clients like them. Demand has been met with supply. Hence the growth in universities across Europe of past graduate degrees in work psychology and organizational behaviour.

Indeed it is quite possible to think of various research areas that suffer none of the above faults. One has been the area of vocational preference and P-O Fit. Furnham (2001) reviewed this literature based heavily on Holland's (1985) theory which has proved to be applied across time, cultures and jobs. The concept of fit between person and job is a very old one both in management and psychology and thanks to Holland's imaginative ideas bas been translated into a robust theory and measurement tool.

Another area that seems to have done well given the above criticism is the work on job attitudes specifically alienation, commitment, engagement and satisfaction. There has been theory development testing as well as the concern with corporate and national culture influences on satisfaction. Ideas of the psychological contract as well as measures of work-life balance means that research in this area is dynamic, practical and useful.

B) Critiques of Organizational Behaviour

Furnham (2001) also made various specific accusations that can be made against the business school discipline of *organizational behaviour* as currently taught. Whilst many of the accusations could be said to be unfair they are made from the perspective of a work psychologist who has tried to teach organizational behaviour in two business schools.

1. *Political Correctness:* This involves anything from a doctrinaire denial of biological influences on human behaviour to laments about the fashionably oppressed workers or consumers. Organizational behaviour writers and teachers seems particularly eager to jump on any politically correct bandwagon, like diversity, espousing the accepted view or following lay enthusiasms like emotional intelligence. Fashion and managerial acceptance, not veridicality, seem the important criteria for researching and writing about a topic, which is not how science should or does proceed. Often fairly "thin" ideas like management-by-walking-about are picked up and dropped by fickle consultants and researchers more eager to please managers and fit in with the zeitgeist than "do science".
2. *Anecdotes, not data:* There is too much emphasis on stories, case studies, parables and anecdotes not enough emphasis on the data to substantiate theories and concepts. Case studies make interesting reading and they are extremely useful for teaching. But science develops from hunch to hypothesis to theory to law. We move from observation and induction to verification and falsification. Organizational behaviour researchers need to develop and test theories more. They need to understand the power of statistical modeling rather than mere case study accumulation.

   A good example can be seen in Goleman's (1995) phenomenally successful book on Emotional Intelligence. Whilst the author has a PhD in Psychology he is a science journalist and has the craft of the story teller. Various often quite unrelated studies are quoted, the book tells stories about the topic. The academics have been late in catching up trying to "unpack" the concept and understand where it fits in the established "periodic table" of individual differences. However lack of theoretical clarity as well as good measures prevented neither lecturers nor consultants enthusiastically propagating the very simplistic and often muddled ideas of the book.
3. *No powerful theories:* a theory is a network of falsifiable causal generalizations. But organizational behaviour has a messy stew of ideology, buzz words and doctrinaire statements. What theory regularly leads to is the prediction of empirical relationships and generalizes across topics/phenomena. Theories in psychology and

economics – dissonance theory, equity theory, social exchange theory – are warmly embraced but never bettered by organizational behaviour theories.

4. *Derivative methodology:* Most psychologists collect their own data to test hypotheses. They choose the most appropriate methods to do so. Many economists analyze others' large data sets with sophisticated econometric models. Organizational behaviour researchers often do neither. The focus should be on what we know rather than how we found out about it. Methodology is a tool, but an important one for doing research. Organizational behaviour research is difficult – there are lots of related and confounding factors, but organizational behaviour really needs to explore them sensitively and thoroughly though advanced empirical methodologies.
5. *Identity:* Organizational behaviour does not know what it is and what it isn't. Its incoherence means it never rejects ideas, many of which are pretentious and shallow. Marxists, feminists, psycho-biologists, ethno-methodologists, all can find a cosy nest in a course or book on organizational behaviour. Everybody is welcome, all ideas are equally important and all approaches are equally good. There are no rules, no limits and no quality control as long as one is politically correct (see above). All this exacerbates the identity problem of what the topic and mission of their enterprise is at its core.
6. *Marketing:* OB teachers, however, certainly know about marketing their ideas. They know the power of the press, the virtue of spin and they use it to the full to further their cause. Organizational behaviour courses are well attended and organizational behaviour departments are often highly rated within business schools (at least by the students) because of the business that they attract. Marketing is important because often the ideas are ephemeral and vaporous – there is a constant need for marketing because there are constantly new products on the market.
7. *Attempting tractable rather than important problems:* Researchers know the difference between tractable, and those intractable, but perennial, problems of business that are pretty unsolvable. So they go for those pretty important ones where they can make a difference. And this is a fairly good strategy. To make a small but significant difference is surely the right thing to do.

However it would be entirely wrong to be gloomy, despondent or depressed about the future. Indeed the opposite is true. Increasingly work psychology and organizational behaviour researchers is becoming a theoretically coherent, methodologically sophisticated, applied field of psychology. Journals are thriving, new post-graduate courses are being introduced everywhere and more time is being allotted to behavioural science on MBA courses.

Just like all applied psychologists – clinical, educational, ergonomic – work psychologists have a foot in both the world of science and in that of the application of science. In the ideal world these two experiences are complementary and enriching. The scientist is trained to formulate and test hypotheses; to challenge assertions and to develop strong theoretical foundation to their area. The practitioner uses the scientific knowledge to understand issues and solve organizational problems. The science-

practitioner model is fundamental to the growth of professional psychology. Practitioners have innovative scientific ideas and the marketplace impacts on science. Thus the work psychologist needs training in science and its application.

7. The Future of Work

The nature of work is changing fast. This, of course, has important implications for researchers. Overall work psychologists have been good at spotting trends and moving applied research into trying to understand new problems. Frese (2000) has listed nine discernable trends: Dissolution of the unit of work in time and space (where and when you work); a faster rate of innovation; the increased complexity of work; greater global competition; the development of both larger and smaller work units; changes in the concept of a job and a career; more work in teams; reduced person supervision at work and increased cultural diversity in the workplace. Each of these topics has become a lively area of research from teleworking to job performance among older workers.

Patterson (2001) identified five slightly different future trends that, she argues, have very important consequences for work and organizational psychology. The transformation of the organizational context with things like an increase in the *service sector* in most Western countries as well as an increasing *skills gap*. Employer demands vs employer choice; that is from a buyers to a sellers market, and the 'war for talent'. The concept of employer of choice is now very important as is the psychological contract which is an implicit agreement between employer and employee. The psychological impact of the changing nature of work with more emphasis on employee well-being, work-life balance, and customer service skills. Theoretical and methodological advances in such things as meta-analysis and structural equation modelling to analyse the complexity of the data. Developments in the profession with greater professionalism and opportunities to study and practice organizational psychology.

As work changes so will inevitably the discipline that studies it. Knowledge workers in virtual organisations and in a service economy are very different from production workers in factories. How, where, why and with whom people work is changing dramatically in the first world. Work psychology has, therefore, got to be very adaptive to catch up with trends.

8. Conclusion

Overall, despite the above criticisms, the future for work psychology and organizational behaviour looks good. There are more teachers and ex-students working in the area. There are more consultants trained in the discipline and more clients from managers to labour unions interested in their services.

Neither work psychology nor organizational psychology behaviour is imprisoned or restricted by its historical, theoretical and methodological past. For all sorts of reasons these two slightly different approaches to the similar topics are growing closer together and beginning successfully to understand the causes and consequences of the work-place of the twenty-first century.

Text book writers are eager in every new edition to point out new sections that deal with new topics like diversity in the work-force; the role of emotional intelligence, at work; working from home.

There are three signs that bode well. First, there is evidence of *theoretical development*. For instance the taxomic work of Hofstede has given a great fillip to the important and difficult work of the role of corporate and national culture. Second, there is evidence of *better research* manifest in the quality and quantity of international journals in both areas. The statistical modelling of complex variables to investigate causal pathways is now fairly common. Third, there appears to be a *breakdown in disciplinary demarcation* disputes such that ideas and methods are easily and happily translated from one area to another.

One way to justify optimism in this area if to examine text books and journals over a decade and attempt to trace areas and topics where there has been significant conceptual advance. Allied to this it is possible to examine how methodological and technical advances have helped developed a more academically and vibrant understanding of the issues.

Three examples will be considered. The first relates to the better understanding of how individual differences, primarily personality traits and disorders, as well as intelligence has been used very successfully to explain wide individual differences seen at work. This work has been driven by powerful meta-analyses which have shown consistent results. The jury is back: individual differences (specifically neuroticism and conscientiousness) can account for 20% to 30% of the variance in good measures of job productivity, motivation and satisfaction. A stream of edited books in the field attest to the specific and important development (Borman, Ilgen & Klimoski, 2003; Roberts & Hogan, 2001; Schneider & Smith, 2004).

A second example is the development of useful coherent hybrid areas of research where two sub disciplines have found more in common than previously thought and have developed an excellent collaborative relationship. For example occupational health psychology and cognitive ergonomics; behavioural economics and others. Work behaviour seems simply too complex and multi-determined to be adequately covered by the disciplines.

Third and allied to the above is the availability of, and now willingness to use, powerful multivariate tools like structural equation modelling to better understand causal paths in organisational behaviour. The softer social sciences have embraced the modelling possibilities used by economists and statisticians and produced some important, testable and powerfully explanatory models on the basis of this type of analysis.

It seems clear now to many researchers that being wedded to disciplinary boundaries and specific techniques is insufficient for progress. Disciplinary rivalry and hostility where economist fought sociologists and psychologists have proved unhelpful for all. There now appears a generation of well trained researchers who seem unimpaired by ideological rivalries eager to understand complex systems and willing to take on any way of helping them do so.

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