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## Fifty Years of Organizational Behavior from Multiple Perspectives

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## Fifty Years of Organizational Behavior from Multiple Perspectives

### Abstract

Many of the underlying themes in the field of organizational behavior reveal the strains between basic and applied research, qualitative and quantitative preferences, gradations of analysis, and the relative importance of research and practice.

### Keywords

organizational behavior, micro research, macro research, applied research

### Disciplines

Labor Relations | Organizational Behavior and Theory

### Comments

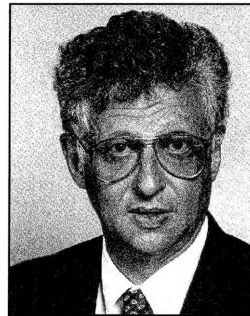
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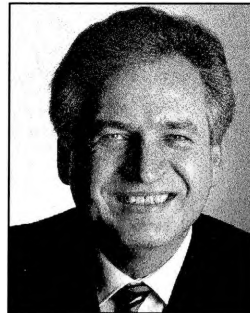
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*Many of the underlying themes in the field of organizational behavior reveal the strains between basic and applied research, qualitative and quantitative preferences, gradations of analysis, and the relative importance of research and practice.*



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Paul S. Goodman and David A. Whetten

## FIFTY YEARS OF ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR FROM MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

**F**OR THIS VOLUME WE WERE ASKED TO REVIEW THE development of the field of Organizational Behavior (OB). We defined OB broadly, to include both “micro” and “macro” areas of focus. Micro research tends to adopt a psychological or social psychological perspective and examines individual or group behaviors. Topics like motivation, commitment, leadership, and group dynamics typify this orientation. Macro research takes the organization as the unit of analysis and examines interactions with other organizations as well as responses to broad social, economic, and political environmental conditions. Exploring various predictors of organizational effectiveness has been a major staple in macro studies.

Our treatment of OB does not include two related fields: human resource management (historically referred to as personnel) and business strategy. We excluded these areas because another chapter in this book is focusing on the development of HRM and the strategy area is still in the process of evolving into a separate branch of organizational science.

Organizational behavior is an applied behavioral science discipline that examines the organization-environment and individual-organization interfaces in formal (typically work) organizations. Although its intellectual roots can be traced back to the writings of classical social science scholars like Max Weber, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud, to several turn-of-the-century management theorists like Henry Fayol and

Mary Parker Follet, to scholars in public administration, and to the work of Mayo and Roethlisberger, its unique identity as a scientific discipline emerged following World War II. As the American military-industrial complex experienced the wrenching transition from a war economy to a consumer economy, organizations began experiencing tensions between their technical requirements and the needs and preferences of their members. During the war social concerns in businesses were subordinated, but during the 1950s and '60s managers were increasingly challenged to balance the socio-technical dualism in their organizations.

This budding interest in applying the behavioral sciences to business organizations was given a strong institutional endorsement by the Carnegie report on business school education in 1959 (Gordon and Howell, 1959). Its authors strongly criticized business schools for ignoring the behavioral sciences in their curricula. The resulting rush to develop management/organizational behavior classes swept large numbers of new faculty trained in psychology (first) and sociology (later) into business schools. Bringing with them strong training in empirical research, these faculty set about testing existing social science theories in business settings.

OB is an applied social science discipline, and its evolution has been shaped by a variety of external forces. On the applied side, as managers responded to shifting social, political, and economic conditions their transient needs shaped the field's research agenda and curriculum

content. On the social science side, theoretical and methodological developments in sociology and psychology provided new and improved lenses for examining what we observed in organizations. Situated at the intersection of these two surging channels of activity and thought, the history of OB has been punctuated by high levels of creativity and conflict. The ever-present tensions between applied and theoretical research, teaching and research, and quantitative and qualitative methodologies have been both frustrating and stimulating.

Our objective in this chapter is to present some of the facts, perceptions, and emotions associated with the birth and maturation of organizational behavior. We will focus primarily on the past and the present—mixing in some views about the future for leavening. The bulk of the chapter will examine some of the major events and trends in our field from 1950 to 1990. We will also explore some of the internal and external forces that shaped our collective assessment of what we should study and how we should study it.

## Organization of the Chapter

Several reviews of OB have been published (Mitchell, 1979; O'Reilly, 1991). While they have used various approaches for identifying and presenting significant trends, content analysis of journal articles has been the most common one. Consistent with this established tradition, we will report the results of our content analysis of one issue per year of the *Journal of Applied Psychology* and *Administrative Science Quarterly* from 1950 to 1990. Our analysis design nicely complements other reviews—trading off sampling frequency with length of time. This approach permitted us to examine the broad outlines of long-term trends in our field, as reflected in shifts in the characteristics of authors and articles, the targets of research, the types of methodologies used, and the variables studied. We feel that this forty-year assessment will prove informative for a variety of readers: established scholars can compare their impressions with the data; younger scholars can better understand the history of the profession they are joining; practitioners can see what academic observers of organizations have deemed important.

To complement this empirical analysis we decided to revisit each of the preceding four decades from the perspective of a representative of the cohorts entering the field during each of those eras. Based on the supposition that graduate students and young scholars form especially vivid impressions of the goings-on in their field, we felt that interviews capturing their recollections and portrayals would provide a more textured account of the major trends and events showing up in our journal tallies, as well as shed light on the intellectual and situational forces underlying those trends.

Examining the evolution of our field through the experiences and impressions of these very observant and thoughtful colleagues has been an insight-provoking experience for us—one that we are excited to share with our readers. We feel that this information expands the historical documentation currently available in the literature. While several scholars have written very comprehensive and evocative overviews of our field (e.g., Scott, 1989; Perrow, 1986), the collage of personal recollections reported herein has the benefit of bringing multiple perspectives to the history-telling enterprise. A second distinguishing characteristic of these accounts is their heavy emphasis on reconstructing the behind-the-scenes pressures and opportunities experienced by those creating our history. It is one thing to understand that the scientific management era was followed by the human relations era and so forth; it is quite another to understand the social, political, economic, and scientific tectonic forces that helped shape the theoretical and methodological landscape we now take for granted.

We begin the analysis with a dialogue with our interviewees. Then we focus on the content analysis, concluding with some observations about future directions.

## Telling Our History through Retrospective Accounts

The OB program in the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University has been recognized as a leading center of scholarship during much of its fifty-year history. Its faculty and students have made major contributions to the development of the field as well as to

professional associations and other universities. The “Cornell connection” is the common denominator for several journal editors, chaired professors, distinguished teaching and research award recipients, professional association officers, influential consultants, and academic administrators. Because this school has a long and distinguished history in our field, we selected our four cohort representatives from the ranks of former or current members of the Cornell OB community.

Before we introduce our interviewees, we also must acknowledge the unique position of the ILR School as a producer of research and teaching about organizational behavior. Over the past forty years organizational research has clearly moved from academic departments to business schools. Institutional context makes a difference. The ILR School has a different mission and focus from most business schools. Therefore, as we work through the interviews generated by Cornell people, we will be exposed to a particular view of the OB world.

In making our selection we tried to achieve a balance between micro and macro research interests, roles while at Cornell (student versus faculty), preferred methodologies, and so forth. In the end we asked William F. Whyte, an up-and-coming faculty member at Cornell during the 1950s, to represent that decade. For a perspective on the 1960s we interviewed Walter Nord, who was a student at Cornell during this tumultuous period of change. Jan Beyer was connected with the ILR School during much of the '70s, including receiving her doctorate in 1973, so we felt she would have a particularly rich perspective on the developments in OB during that decade. To complete our panel we asked Steve Barley, a member of the ILR faculty, to share his views on developments during the most recent decade. The selection of interview accounts by decade is, of course, very arbitrary. The development and diffusion of ideas is not organized in terms of these specific time frames. As the reader moves through the interview accounts, the spillover of ideas across these time periods will be evident.

Prior to our interviews we sent the four panel members the table of contents from *JAP* and *ASQ* for their particular decade, as a way of refreshing their memories regarding the topics and authors typical of that era. We knew their task of reporting retrospectively about the field

would be selective in nature. We also sent them a list of questions that targeted various trends during their decade. These included: “What were the major events or trends in organizational science during this era?” “What were the major developments in the social sciences during this era that influenced the evolution of our field?” “What were the political, social, and economic trends during this era that influenced the development of our field?” “What was the relationship between research and practice during this era?” Our synthesis of their responses to these questions during our interviews (an hour or more each) is presented below, followed by an analysis of two recurring themes.

1. What were the major events or trends in organizational science during this era?

Bill Whyte identified two major themes or issues during the 1950s. First, there was heated debate over the relative merits of case studies versus large-scale, survey-type studies.

I believe that there were several very strong contributions from what would now be called qualitative sociology, that is, case studies of situations in industry. But that approach was in decline—superseded by a more “scientific” focus on testing hypotheses using survey data. I think we learned a great deal about what life was like in industry during that period from ethnographic studies like Melville Dalton’s *Men Who Manage: Fusions of Feeling and Theory in Administration* (1959). These rich characterizations of organizational life served as a “theoretical seedbed” sprouting many of the propositions that were formally tested by an emerging group of quantitative analysts.

Whyte reports that this debate took on broader significance than a contrast in research style because the case study scholars tended to focus on applied issues while the large-scale research scholars tended to focus on basic research. Whyte perceived the emergence of a two-tier status system around this cleavage (not only in the U.S. but also in other countries, like Norway) in which applied research was downgraded.

The second major issue during this decade focused on union-management relations. Some scholars were interested in improving these

relations (cooperation is good), while others felt that conflict was inevitable and probably healthy. Whyte's recollection is that the scholars who advocated conflict were identified as pro-union, while those who advocated cooperation were considered to be pro-management.

Whyte identified several books as hallmarks of this era—distinguished by their common focus on new forms of organization and new approaches to management. He believes that the most influential work was Eric Trist's book *Organizational Choice* (1963) on socio-technical systems. Much of today's work in our field can be traced back to the Tavistock research, according to Whyte. He also singled out Len Sayles's book, *Behavior of Industrial Work Groups* (1958), which introduced a fairly radical concept, that the nature of the work people perform affects their militancy, cohesiveness, satisfaction, etc. Chris Argyris's *Personality and Organizations* (1957) was important in Whyte's mind because it focused on another enduring theme, namely, the merits of involvement.

Walter Nord divided the decade of the 1960s into two "eras": The early emphasis was on micro research on individual/organizational relationships, as reflected in the work of scholars like Frederick Herzberg, Chris Argyris, and Abraham Maslow. The second half of the decade ushered in macro research on organization/environment relations, as exemplified by the work of James Thompson, and Paul Lawrence and Jay Lorsch.

As a graduate student at Cornell, Nord was struck by the emergence of OB as a teaching discipline. Courses on management and human relations were given OB titles, and business schools began hiring large numbers of OB scholars.

During this period he also observed a heavy influence of "organizational development" (OD) on the early history of this fledgling field. He believes that the goal of OD was to marry humanistic values and science. He also feels that OD's influence was moderated by its lack of attention to macro (organizational) issues. "A lot of the OD work dur-

ing this period tended to blend humanism and science together in ways that seemed more melted together than fitted together, mainly because it ignored the social embeddedness of individual behavior in organizations."

Jan Beyer chose the emergence of computers as tools in social science as the dominant development in the field, as she experienced it as a graduate student during the 1970s.

The widespread availability of computers and statistical software packages enabled scholars to collect data on questions that were previously un-addressable. (If you can't possibly find an answer, why ask the question?) This development not only led to a methodological romance with quantitative analysis, it also influenced the development of organizational theories. For example, during this era contingency thinking became the dominant perspective, partly because computer-based causal modeling permitted this type of analysis.

A parallel development to contingency theory was the proliferation of typologies. Schemes for categorizing leadership styles, organizational types, environmental conditions, and so forth became very popular during this era because people were trying to bring together several dimensions. Scholars like Richard Hall, Mike Aiken, and Jerry Hage were looking for patterns in the mountains of data made available by the new technological tools. The publication of Richard Hall's book *Organizational Structure and Process* (1972) was a watershed event, according to Beyer, because it brought together many of these typologies and contingency theories in a form suitable for classroom instruction.

According to Steve Barley, from his vantage point as a young professor at Cornell, the 1980s were characterized as an era of waxing and waning interest in various theoretical substrata in our field. He recalls that several topics came into prominence during this period, including organizational culture, interorganizational relations, network theory and analysis, population ecology, and technology. On the micro side, he saw a rekindled interest in group dynamics and teamwork.

Toward the end of the decade he reports that organizational culture seemed to lose much of its allure for organizational scholars.

I believe that this was due to several factors. First, culture was in some respects cast as the American corporation's response to the Japanese threat of economic global domination. Early in the '80s many authors argued that the difference between U.S. and Japanese firms was their culture. Consequently, culture became a code word in management and academic circles for how to compete globally. As we discovered that more than a transfusion of "Theory Z" culture was necessary to get the job done in the global marketplace, culture lost a lot of credibility. Second, the waning interest in organizational culture was partly due to its methodological intractability. If you measure culture with a survey it loses its distinction as an organizational construct—the results look too much like the rest of OB. On the other hand, if you measure it anthropologically then you have a hard time getting tenure.

In general, Barley looks back on the late '70s and '80s as the era when macro scholars shifted their attention to what was happening outside of organizations. They adopted more of a sociological interest in examining how organizations are molded by broader social, economic, and political forces. During this transition, contingency theory lost its position as the dominant theoretical perspective and was replaced by network analysis and population ecology.

2. What were the major developments in the social sciences during this era that influenced the evolution of our field?

Bill Whyte believes the single most important development in the social sciences was the emerging interest in economics and psychology in the effect of money on behavior. This carried over into our field and spawned work on incentive systems. In contrast, Whyte recalls very little connection with sociology during this period, which he believes stemmed from "a snobbish division between basic and applied research, where applied work was downgraded."

Nord believes that the strong emphasis on group process in psychology energized and legitimated much of the OD movement's research and focus. "For example, sensitivity training was 'sold' to managers on the basis that their effectiveness was directly related to the quality of

their group process skills. Furthermore, group activities and discussions were the training medium used in 'T-groups' to teach these skills." Nord also observed that the strong orientation of behaviorism in psychology significantly influenced research on motivation in our field. B. F. Skinner's work on behavior modification loomed large in the background of emerging discussions about incentives, goal setting, etc.

Jan Beyer identified three major trends in the social sciences during the 1970s that influenced research in our field. First, the strong emphasis on quantitative methods in sociology was imported into OB via a number of influential young scholars, including Howard Aldrich and Marshall Meyer.

The work in sociology on path analysis had a significant impact on our field. Path diagrams started popping up all over the place, particularly in the macro research. Network analysis was also highly influential. While path analysis allowed us to "see" our data differently, network analysis enabled us to "see" organizations in entirely different ways. Not only did it become clear that organizations are built out of networks, but we also began to appreciate the importance of where an organization fits into a larger network of relations. These are conceptual "ahas" that were enabled by new analytic tools.

Second, the content of OB research was influenced by the heavy emphasis on power in political science, sociology, and social psychology. This perspective defined relationships as exchanges and transactions, and anticipated the emergence of bargaining and negotiations as a dominant paradigm in OB.

Third, during this era Beyer noted a great deal of emphasis in psychology on cognitive approaches. This work was imported into OB via Karl Weick's book *The Social Psychology of Organizing* (1969), which introduced the concept of enacting the environment.

During the 1980s Steve Barley observed the continued emphasis in sociology on quantitative analysis. Like Beyer, Barley believes that the improvements in network analysis occurring in sociology had a significant impact on OB research methods and content focus. Barley recalls that during the '70s we didn't have the technology to study net-



works (intra- or interorganizational) very well. Then the math behind network analysis improved significantly and network studies became very popular.

Unfortunately, the impact of these improvements in network methodology was limited by the absence of comparable theoretical developments. Early attempts to frame organizational-level analysis relied on resource dependence theory. That is, organizational transactions were examined as a system of resource exchanges. However, this conceptualization was better suited for examining intraorganizational relations. The failure to develop a suitable theory of interorganizational networks resulted in network analysis being basically atheoretical, and, hence, out of the mainstream of OB research during this time.

Barley believes that the dominant trends in social science during the 1980s were in basic conflict—suggesting a shift in paradigms.

On the one hand, there was a strong push towards formal modeling and quantitative sophistication, especially in sociology. This trend was reflected in several approaches to organizational analysis that became popular during this period, including population ecology and internal labor markets. These dynamics contrast sharply with the emergence of a reactionary movement, namely, the rising popularity of deconstructionist theory. This “revolt” against the “religion of quantitative science” gained its foothold in OB among scholars who had been interested in studying organizational culture during the 1970s (particularly those who had championed the qualitative analysis of culture).

When asked to comment on the merits of these competing perspectives, Barley couched his reply in the context of philosophical pragmatism. “We need to find a middle ground where people agree that there are phenomena out there but that they are socially constructed and interpreted.”

3. What were the political, social, and economic trends during this era that influenced the development of our field?

According to Bill Whyte, during the 1950s management thought and practice were dominated by hubris, based on the acclaim they received from all sectors of society for their contribution to victory in World War II.

Our country’s success during the war blinded many managers to new ideas, especially those coming from academe. Our industrial sector’s postwar domination of the world market also tended to intimidate academics. I recall observing workers in highly oppressive work environments which were justified, even by the academics studying them, because they were highly efficient and profitable. Because the technology was so superior to what was available in any other country, compromises on the “socio” side were deemed appropriate (even necessary) to prevent the erosion of our technological advantage. It is ironic that foreign companies, like Volvo, were some of the first to pick up on research in the U.S. on humanizing the workplace.

Walter Nord characterizes the 1960s as being dominated by the belief that social institutions were repressive.

To the extent that intellectuals in the U.S. have ever been radicals, those were the people who were doing OD at that time. The desire to humanize our organizations attracted many students to OD-type classes. They were looking for solutions to social problems that they believed were the effluent from poorly managed organizations. Many scholars my age were attracted to OB during this era because it provided a legitimate means for protesting inequity in organizations and for doing something about it. The prevalence of this orientation is evident in the extensive research on alienation during this decade.

Jan Beyer points to the emergence of “threat” during the 1970s, as our major social institutions found it increasingly difficult to sustain their expectations of growth and profitability. “For example, universities began experiencing difficulty placing all their Ph.D.s and had to start downsizing some programs. Having been sensitized to this trend in academe, a number of OB scholars began studying organizational ‘decline’ in businesses who were unprepared to shift from the economics of abundance (’70s) to the economics of scarcity (’80s).”

Beyer also points to the rise of the women's movement as a field-altering social trend during the 1970s. "OB scholars started to realize that our research focused only on males. Further, we began to realize that it was only on white males. These realizations spawned the whole diversity movement in OB which has influenced the content of our courses, our research priorities, and the demographics of the profession."

Steve Barley points to two dominant influences during the 1980s: the Reagan administration and the Japanese invasion.

The impact of the Reagan era can be observed in their conservative approach to antitrust laws, which opened up a new set of interorganizational relationships that were previously illegal. This newfound opportunity to engage in a broader range of interorganizational relations was coupled with the motivation to search for new business practices in the face of heightened global competition, especially from the Japanese. The impact of these trends on the evolution of our field can be seen in the emergence of "strategic management." As new forms of interorganizational relations became both economically advantageous and legally viable, business strategy became a dominant theme in organizations as well as in academe. Scholars retooled and refocused; old theories were adapted to new settings; new societies, journals, and graduate programs popped up overnight.

Barley also noted the impact of the shifting demographics in our society. However, he believes the effects of this trend have not been fully reflected in our teaching and research. He made two observations:

First, we are doing a better job of teaching diversity than we are of studying it. Second, I believe that we are currently only seeing the tip of the iceberg. That is, the ongoing changes in demographics (e.g., the breakup of the nuclear family) will continue to intensify pressure for organizational changes, which will in turn have a dramatic impact on what we study and teach into the next century. While organizations have already been forced to make some accommodations to the shifting characteristics of their labor pool, I foresee even greater changes in things like employee benefits, the nature of work, and the definition of good performance.

4. What was the relationship between research and practice during this era?

During the 1950s Bill Whyte recalls that it was very difficult for academics to make a contribution to business practice because managers felt that anyone who had not managed before couldn't tell them anything worthwhile. (He was asked more than once by line managers, "Have you ever made a payroll before?")

At first, Whyte thought that the lack of application of academic ideas was due to poor communication, but experience changed his mind. "I felt that if we could just communicate our ideas better, then they would be received with greater enthusiasm. But experimenting with the mode or method of presentation didn't seem to alter the outcome. Grudgingly, I came to the conclusion that managers simply didn't think that we had the answers they were looking for." However, Whyte recalled one notable exception to this trend. "One positive impact came in the area of training. Based on the work by Kurt Lewin and others, many managers recognized that if they wanted to change their workers' behaviors they couldn't simply give them a lecture and expect immediate compliance. Instead, they needed to get their people involved in some type of social process that resulted in changed attitudes."

According to Walt Nord, the 1960s were a period of pronounced tension between organizational development "change agents" and organizational behavior "scholars." As a result, collaboration between research and practice suffered.

The notion of making organizations more humane through an arduous process of human growth, that also improved the organization's success, was very appealing to the OD people. But, overall, OD was certainly not mainstream. While on the one hand they benefited from the legitimacy of being scientists, they were basically anti-science, in the sense that they saw the institution of science as part of a larger problem of social oppression. I recall a particularly controversial article by Warren Bennis in which he proposed the counterargument: the values of science are good for organizations.

Nord observed that the tension between research and practice during this era was reflected in Alvin Gouldner's argument that behavioral science provides managers with a rationale for believing that they can be powerful and good at the same time.

Much of our research legitimates "soft control" through organizational values, norms, and mores. It substitutes unobtrusive for obtrusive power, which is less likely to be abused because you are less aware of how much control you can exert. However, I hasten to point out that the motivation behind soft control is still to maintain the current distribution of power. I've always wanted a system where people exercise self-control, where they have conscious control over their outcomes, rather than being controlled by their own creations.

Beyer believes that changes in the fortunes of business during the 1970s sent managers scurrying for new ideas. She recalls that several scholars developed quite a following (e.g., Warren Bennis and Chris Argyris).

This was an era when organizations were starting to get banged up by the effects of oil embargoes, global competition, and shifting demographics, and they were casting about for help. I later edited a special issue of *ASQ* on the application of scientific knowledge, and what I observed is that findings from organizational science don't get adopted wholesale, in prepackaged chunks. Instead, our ideas, languages, and frameworks tended to seep into the popular literature as practitioners were looking for something new, or for legitimacy.

Beyer made an important point that the link between research and practice is bi-directional. In particular, she offered several examples where changes in practice precipitated changes in research (e.g., decline and quality). "The fact that many scholars during this period were saying that change was good also reflected the fact that organizations were being forced to change or die. And we need to keep in mind that the whole field of information systems grew out of the widespread use of computers in business during the '70s.

Steve Barley's response to this question extended the theme introduced by Beyer: "The influence of practice on academics has been greater than the reverse. For example, the study of culture was largely precipitated by practical concerns in the marketplace. Furthermore, how we conceptualized and measured culture was driven by practical considerations. In contrast, it is not at all clear that our research has substantially altered organizational practice in this area."

When asked what obstacles he saw to research impacting practice, Barley replied,

The major problem is that the world of theory and the world of practice don't often coincide. The elites in our discipline are theory-driven. They denigrate applied work because it is atheoretical. Similarly, those who are more applied disdain the work of theorists as impractical and irrelevant. The problem is that we don't have a systematic means for helping those engaged in practice become more analytical and those who have their head in the clouds of theory become more practical. This is a major disconnect in our field that prevents us from having a substantial impact on practice.

## Analyzing Journal Articles as Artifacts of Our History

To complement these in-depth, highly personal reflections on the history of our field, we elected to examine the evolution of intellectual thought in OB over a fifty-year period as reflected in the content of our academic journals. In particular, we wanted to see if there were any interesting trends in what was studied, who was studied, how studies were conducted, and who reported the studies. We limited our investigation to two journals—*Journal of Applied Psychology* and *Administrative Science Quarterly*. We selected these two journals because they are well regarded, span the fifty-year time frame, and reflect the micro (*JAP*) and macro (*ASQ*) orientations that have dominated the field. It is clear there are other possible journals reflecting research or practice perspectives, but to make our task manageable, we focused on these two.

For each year we randomly selected one issue. The issue was coded for twelve variables (the coding system is available from the authors).

**Table 1. Characteristics of Authors****Table 1a. Number of Authors**

Period	JAP		ASQ	
	No.	No. per article	No.	No. per article
1950s	243	1.6	25	1.2
1960s	269	1.7	83	1.5
1970s	274	2.0	135	1.6
1980s	429	2.4	109	1.7
1990s	149	2.7	38	1.8

**Table 1b. Number of Female Authors**

Period	JAP		ASQ	
	No.	No. per article	No.	No. per article
1950s	15	0.1	2	0.1
1960s	19	0.1	2	0.0
1970s	27	0.2	14	0.2
1980s	86	0.5	26	0.4
1990s	28	0.5	14	0.7

**Table 1c. Number of Non-university Authors**

Period	JAP		ASQ	
	No.	No. per article	No.	No. per article
1950s	65	0.4	3	0.1
1960s	82	0.5	2	0.0
1970s	60	0.4	8	0.1
1980s	49	0.3	32	0.5
1990s	23	0.4	3	0.1

**Table 1d. Number of Non-U.S. Authors**

Period	JAP		ASQ	
	No.	No. per article	No.	No. per article
1950s	4	0.0	4	0.2
1960s	14	0.1	13	0.2
1970s	18	0.1	28	0.3
1980s	49	0.3	14	0.2
1990s	18	0.3	7	0.3

The total number of articles coded for *JAP* is 546 (1950–1993) and 202 for *ASQ* (1956–1993).

Journals are dynamic entities. So over this fifty-year period, there are changes in the number of issues per year, size of issue, editors, and so on. We will reflect these changes as we look at the following tables.

The reader should note our motivation for this adventure in coding. We wanted to look at the field through what people published. Articles represent a major part of what we do. Our selection of the journals and the coding procedures was both purposeful and arbitrary. There are no statistical claims for how we sampled and coded from this population of research, but the procedures seem reasonable and comprehensive. We thought this was one interesting way to cap-

ture developments in our field. Also, this analysis complements our interviews. An interesting task for the reader is to examine trends identified by both forms of media techniques.

The findings are organized by the characteristics of the authors and papers we published, whom we study, how we do our work—the methods, and what we study.

### Characteristics of Authors

Table 1 (*above*) provides one way to characterize the authors. In all tables we present data by journals and decades. It appears (Table 1a) that the number of authors per paper is increasing over time, with more authors per article in *JAP*. This increase in authors probably

**Table 2. Characteristics of Articles****Table 2a. Number of Pages**

Period	JAP		ASQ	
	No.	No. per article	No.	No. per article
1950s	643	4.1	555	26.4
1960s	844	5.2	1,175	21.0
1970s	919	6.7	1,305	15.5
1980s*	1,494	8.3	1,302	20.3
1990s	509	9.1	540	25.7

**Table 2b. Number of References**

Period	JAP		ASQ	
	No.	No. per article	No.	No. per article
1950s	1,133	7.31	304	14.48
1960s	1,323	8.22	1,270	22.68
1970s	2,043	14.80	3,003	35.75
1980s	5,126	28.48	3,240	50.63
1990s	2,283	40.77	1,284	61.14

\*The page size in *JAP* increased in 1986 by approximately 50%. Not adjusted above.

reflects the increasing complexities in doing empirical research. It also may reflect increasing numbers of faculty in a given university group, greater norms for cooperative work, and greater demands over time for publications for promotion reviews.

Table 1b suggests there is an increase in female authors over this time period. This increase is consistent with the changes in the number of females entering the field, particularly since the mid-1970s. It nicely complements observations from our interviews.

We asked whether the authors came from a university or non-university setting (Table 1c). There do not appear to be any consistent trends about non-university authors over time. Most of the authors

are university based. The relatively greater proportion of non-university authors in *JAP* reflects the consulting, private corporations, and private practice constituencies of this journal and, in general, the industrial organizational psychology field.

While scientific activities are international in scope, there are relatively few non-U.S. authors publishing their papers in these journals (Table 1d). This is partly explained by the growth of high-quality journals in other parts of the world. On the other hand, one might expect to see more international collaboration. If organizations, particularly in the last three decades, are operating in a more global economy, why do we not see some trend toward more collaborative research across national boundaries? That is, granted the existence of high-quality journals in many countries, we still might expect to see some increase in collaborative research across boundaries, but we do not.

### Characteristics of the Papers

We looked at two other characteristics of the papers being produced—the number of pages in the article and the number of references. In *JAP*, the more micro journal, there is a steady increase in pages per article. In 1986 page size increased by 50 percent, so the unadjusted figures in Table 2a (*above, left*) are understated. The increase in pages in *JAP* reflects to some extent the growing complexity of the problems and of the empirical work from this perspective. While there is some variability in the number of pages in *ASQ*, the average article seems to be twenty-plus pages, there are no noticeable trends, and the articles are always longer than those in *JAP*. The latter finding probably reflects the larger theory sections found in *ASQ*.

The number of references increases over time for both journals. This trend may be one indicator of a growing body of research that researchers can draw from. That is, there is a greater history of publications in the field. In addition, the organization area has been defined as a low-consensus field (Pfeffer and Moore, 1980). That means there is no convergence on accepted theory and methods. Therefore, if the amount of research increases, we might expect greater citations of different research. There also may be a greater propensity to cite refer-

**Table 3. Type of Subjects Used (%)**

	JAP					ASQ				
	'50s	'60s	'70s	'80s	'90s*	'50s†	'60s	'70s	'80s	'90s*
1) Production workers	8	6	10	7	8	27	0	11	12	6
2) Clerical workers	6	3	3	5	2	0	10	7	3	6
3) Supervisors	6	5	1	1	2	7	1	0	3	0
4) Salespeople	2	3	0	3	0	0	0	4	3	0
5) Military	13	13	5	3	12	7	5	5	0	0
6) Professionals	8	17	12	17	6	20	37	22	21	19
7) Managers/CEOs	1	8	8	11	4	32	20	24	40	19
8) Students	39	27	37	36	35	0	5	4	5	12
9) General sample‡	17	18	24	17	31	7	22	23	13	38
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

\*Only four issues were analyzed for the 1990s. †ASQ began in 1956, so we have coded only a few issues for the 1950s. ‡Subjects drawn from the general population, not from a specific firm or job.

ences. This propensity could be stimulated by journal reviewers and citation indexes. The greater use of references by ASQ may be related to the broader set of disciplines tied to more macro organizational research, such as sociology, history, economics, political science, and so on. *JAP* draws primarily from psychology.

We acknowledge there are other explanations for the increases in the number of references. Also, the metric of number of references may mask the emergence of seminal articles. However, our orientation is to provide an overview of the field via coding articles versus doing an in-depth study on one dimension. We hope the data will stimulate you to think about the antecedents and consequences of this finding.

### Whom Do We Study?

Table 3 (above) provides a picture of the types of subjects studied. What kinds of people are the objects of our research? In *JAP* the selection of people in the military seems consistent with a long tradition

(Katzell and Austin, 1992) in industrial psychology of examining recruitment, selection, and training issues in this sector. The large number in the “students” category reflects the large number of experiments conducted with students as subjects that are published in this journal. “General sample” means the researcher selects subjects from the sample at large rather than focusing on a particular company or organization. *JAP* articles frequently draw on this general sample category. In ASQ, most of the subjects seem to be drawn from the production worker, professional, manager, or general sample categories. For both journals there is a substantial increase in the percentage of subjects in the general sample category over time.

Table 4 provides another way to look at this topic. Here, the object is the type of organization versus the type of subject. For *JAP*, we included “students” as a category because it is a large group, and we wanted to distinguish it from the “education” category, which deals with studies of people in educational institutions. The student cate-

**Table 4. Type of Organization Studied (%)**

	<i>JAP</i>					<i>ASQ</i>				
	'50s	'60s	'70s	'80s	'90s	'50s	'60s	'70s	'80s	'90s
1) Manufacturing	19	30	14	14	14	25	13	13	19	18
2) Service	8	5	9	9	14	6	13	22	15	40
3) Military	15	15	7	3	14	6	6	3	4	0
4) Education	21	13	8	11	8	6	28	7	19	0
5) Health care	4	2	1	6	3	25	4	13	15	12
6) Students	23	18	40	32	38	0	0	3	0	12
7) Government	2	5	6	4	2	19	13	17	6	0
8) Mixed sample	8	12	15	21	7	13	23	22	22	18
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

gory represents people in universities and colleges who participate in studies not related to the educational institutions, and is the dominant category over time for this journal. In *ASQ*, there is a lot of variability in many of the categories (e.g., manufacturing, education).

What can we learn from these two tables? First, there seems to be some selective sampling. Students represent a major source of subjects for authors submitting to *JAP*, and professionals and managers dominate for papers published in *ASQ*. Second, there does not seem to be a major sampling from hourly production workers, clerical workers, or salespeople as suggested in our interviews. There is, in Table 3, some emphasis on manufacturing organizations, but the sample may be more of professionals and managers than hourly workers. Third, there seems to be a movement in *ASQ* papers to the service sector, but this is not reflected in *JAP* papers.

The underlying questions that we will address later are: Should selection of research subjects and organizations reflect changes or trends in the external environment or in the economy? How selective is our sampling strategy? Some have argued there is a strong managerial bias in our research. Should it be more heterogeneous?

### How We Do Our Work

In Table 5, we examine how this research work is being done. Table 5 is about design focus. We used a broad set of categories to reflect the diversity in approaches. For *JAP*, the major designs are correlational and experimental. For *ASQ*, the frequency of correlational studies increases over time as the frequency of qualitative studies decreases. There is no real presence of experimental work in this journal. We introduced the category of "methods" because we wanted to segment studies designed to develop and test methods rather than to test substantive questions. As one might expect, methods-type studies appear with fairly consistent frequency in *JAP*. Research focused on theory development seems more common in *ASQ* than *JAP*.

Many of the differences in this table reflect differences in the micro and macro perspectives and some differences between the journals. For example, the use of experimental designs is part of the basic training of industrial and organizational psychologists. The focus on method studies in *JAP* versus *ASQ* reflects a long history of development of tests and appraisal issues that are part of the work of industrial psychologists.

**Table 5. Design Focus (%)**

	<i>JAP</i>					<i>ASQ</i>				
	'50s	'60s	'70s	'80s	'90s	'50s	'60s	'70s	'80s	'90s
1) Correlational	29	43	39	31	35	14	43	69	63	76
2) Experimental	32	36	42	35	36	5	0	2	2	5
3) Methods	30	16	10	24	16	5	2	1	0	0
4) Qualitative	1	1	1	0	2	47	30	9	15	5
5) Multiple foci	6	1	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
6) Review	0	1	1	1	0	0	7	4	3	0
7) Meta-analysis	0	0	4	6	7	0	2	1	3	0
8) Theory	2	2	1	1	2	29	16	14	14	14
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

The decrease of qualitative studies in *ASQ* and the increase in correlation studies probably reflects the greater perceived legitimation of quantitative studies. Most industrial or organizational psychologists would tend toward more quantitative studies, and if they did any qualitative studies, would not look to *JAP* for an outlet. The absence of theory-based studies in *JAP* does not mean that theory development is unimportant in micro organizational behavior, but rather that one would not tend to submit these papers to *JAP*. The reemergence of more qualitative studies as suggested by our interviews may be correct. We need to explore other journals in the field or wait for more observations to ascertain whether this reemergence of qualitative studies can be documented.

In conclusion, there are interesting differences in Table 5, but these are attributable mostly to the differences in the micro and macro perspectives and to the differences in the journals. The major trend exhibited in *ASQ* was the movement to more quantitative studies. The general trend in the field to more quantitative studies appears throughout our interviews. The tension between quantitative and qualitative studies also is captured in the interviews, but not in these descriptive tables.

We did some further analyses of how OB researchers did their work. We wanted to focus more on trends rather than picking up differences between the micro and macro perspectives or in the journals. For example, in the organizational field, there have been many calls for more longitudinal research. What did we find?

In terms of the longitudinal question, we recoded the data into longitudinal, cross-sectional, experimental, and nonempirical. In *JAP* there was no real increase in studies using some type of longitudinal design, but in *ASQ* there was an increase.

We also explored the level of analysis being used in studies. That is, are the independent or dependent variables primarily at individual, role, group, unit, organizational, population of organizations, or environmental levels? (Each article could have up to three codes for different levels of analysis. Multiple codes were likely for the independent but not for the dependent variables.)

For independent variables, the individual and organizational levels are the most frequent categories for both journals. In terms of trends, there is an increase in the frequency of organizational-level variables over the fifty-year time frame for *JAP*, and an increase in environmental



variables for ASQ researchers. For the dependent variables, the individual level is the dominant variable in *JAP*, while individual and organizational levels appear in equal frequency for ASQ papers.

There are two other observations from this analysis. First, we expected to see a greater number of group-level studies. While there is a lot of interest in groups (Goodman et al., 1987; Hackman, 1991), there did not seem to be an increase in the empirical studies. Second, there have been increasing arguments (Goodman et al., 1994) for multilevel studies. Our analysis indicates there is an increasing number of studies incorporating at least two levels of analysis in their independent variables across both journals.

In a review of the OB field, O'Reilly (1991) argues there is a shift from micro to more macro or organizational-level topics. In our examination of levels of analysis, there seems to be a consistent interest in both individual and organizational levels of analysis over the fifty-year period for both the micro and macro journals. Also, as reported above, there is more use of multiple levels of analysis. There is no evidence of a shift from micro to macro topics.

Our last table examines the topics people studied. One challenge was to set up an appropriate coding system. We looked at many review publications in the field (e.g., *Annual Review of Psychology*) to get some guidance on categories. Our initial scheme had thirty categories, including absenteeism, stress, role conflict, decision making, traffic research, technology structure, and so on. Given the large number of low-frequency events, we collapsed categories across some common dimensions. So instead of having separate categories for individual, group, and organizational performance, we elected to have one category—performance. Table 6 reflects the five most frequently selected topics. (Each article can be coded for up to three topic areas.)

We have already discussed the methods emphasis that appears in *JAP*. Performance and work attitudes seem to be persistent topics through the fifty-year time period. *JAP* also shows a clear focus on organizational processes (e.g., communication), as well as studies in the perceptual and ergonomics areas. In ASQ we see structure and leadership, power, and control as frequently coded areas, as well as work at-

**Table 6. Five Most Frequently Coded Topic Areas**

<i>JAP</i>	ASQ
Performance	Performance
Work attitudes	Work attitudes
Organizational processes	Structure
Perceptual/ergonomics	Leadership, power, control
Methods	Interorganizational/environment

titudes and performance. The interorganizational/environment category appears more in the 1970s through 1990s.

What might be more interesting is what is absent from this table, particularly over the 1980s and early 1990s. Many of the traditional topics such as withdrawal, stress, and motivation do not appear. Also, current issues in organizational life such as quality, impacts of information technology, customer-firm relationships, and so on do not appear.

## Exploring the Future

Any exploration into the future of OB is guided by some underlying assumptions of the field. These assumptions identify, to a great extent, the possible ways to navigate the future. These navigation paths are not likely to change in the short or mid term.

We view OB as a field of inquiry characterized by tremendous diversity. Diversity comes in the form of many disciplinary perspectives (e.g., psychology, sociology, economics, political science) aimed at understanding organizations. The diversity comes in the form of different theories and methods. There are no commonly accepted theories or methods. There is no likely convergence in this field now or in the future. As we look ahead, over the next decade, diversity in theory, methods, and pathways for research and teaching should continue to characterize OB.

The field of OB is also applied. Much of the research we do either explicitly or implicitly deals with how to improve the effectiveness of

individuals, groups, or organizations. Much of our teaching concerns presenting concepts and tools to improve how people behave or operate in organizations. The major exodus of organizational studies from disciplinary departments to business schools has only accentuated that focus.

One of the consequences of characterizing OB as an applied field is that external forces have determined and will determine many areas of inquiry. Some of the principal forces come from changes in economic, political, technological, and demographic arenas. These forces determine what we do and what pathways we follow. In many ways, the field is reactive to these forces. Changes in economic conditions or the emergence of new technology stimulate how we structure our work to understand organizational functions. On one hand, these changing forces provide new opportunities to understand organizations. On the other hand, these forces also account for fads and cyclical interest in certain areas (Katzell and Austin, 1992).

Another set of assumptions or constraints in our chart of the future is the existence of strong institutional forces. What organizations we study and how we study them are, in part, determined by funding sources and accessibility to organizations. For example, as the government and industry become more interested in learning about quality, more funds and accessibility to companies will be available, and thus, more research and teaching about this concept will result. Similarly, as federal and state budget crises become more frequent and companies continue to focus on cost reduction, funding and accessibility become more difficult.

What organizations we study and how are also determined by the journals. While there has been an increase in the number of journals in the field, the editorial positions will shape the direction of the field. The selection of research problems by young researchers will clearly reflect perceptions of what will be acceptable to the journals.

How we study organizations is also, in part, determined by the organizations that provide us a place to work. The forces shaping these organizations (e.g., universities and industrial research groups) shape our work.

We begin our explorations of the future, then, with some givens:

- a field with tremendous diversity and little consensus on theory, methods, or interest areas;
- strong external and institutional forces that shape much of what we do, and that create both opportunities and stabilities;
- a reactive versus a proactive orientation;
- an emphasis on the applied versus theory.

With these givens providing the initial outlines of our chart of the future of OB, we focused our attention on young researchers. What are some of the dilemmas or tensions confronting them as their careers in OB evolve over the next ten to twenty years? To what extent will the dilemmas and tensions identified earlier in this chapter confront OB researchers in the future? To what extent will they be different? Our goal is to highlight the dilemmas and provide some new elaborations of options. We choose not to define prescriptive paths.

The first set of dilemmas deals with who collaborates on research. Then we turn to how we do our research. The third set of dilemmas deals with broader research strategy issues.

### **Intra- versus Interdisciplinary Research**

From both our interviews and our analysis of the two journals, it appears that we do our work primarily with people in our own disciplines. Psychologists, sociologists, and organizational behavior researchers work on problems of interest to them. So what is the dilemma? Organizations are going through major changes. Many of the functional boundaries that existed within organizations ten and fifteen years ago are vanishing. New forms of external relationships in the forms of consortiums, joint ventures, and strategic alliances among organizations and their suppliers and customers are in place. Many of the organizational processes of designing and coordinating are changing. The dilemma is whether we can understand these changes from the lens of a single discipline or perspective. Another way to state this is: how can we

effectively think about the boundaryless organization when we operate out of a specific disciplinary perspective?

One option in regard to this dilemma may be to move toward cross-functional research teams. The most obvious candidates are people in marketing, production, information systems, and accounting. For example, there has been increasing interest in understanding more about interorganizational relationships (e.g., between customer and firm). In marketing, a group of psychologists (e.g., Anderson and Narus, 1990) has been trying to examine customer-firm relationships more from a marketing than an organizational perspective. This could be a point of collaboration.

Another option is to think more broadly, and consider collaborative work with disciplines versus functional areas. Weick (1992) indicates we should expand our horizons to history, ethics, philosophy, and other such disciplines. Historians, for example, could provide a whole new perspective in thinking about what time means in an organizational context (Hounshell, 1984). This disciplinary focus would complement the way economic theory has begun to influence this field.

This argument for considering interdisciplinary options is made, in part, because of the changing nature of organizational boundaries. However, it is also based on the belief that it will create different lenses to look at the field and, hopefully, some new concepts, paradigms, and methods.

### **U.S. versus International Focus**

From our interviews and our analysis of the journals, it seems our research focuses very much on U.S. issues. Our problems and data draw primarily from U.S. organizations. This is not surprising given the large research infrastructure for OB in the U.S. It is clear there are many networks and conferences providing continual professional interactions on an international basis. There also is a field of international management. But from our analyses of the two journals there does not seem to be much *organizational research* that is done with or deals with international partners. The dilemma comes to life because the organizations we study now operate in an international environ-

ment. They are interested in how our knowledge about selection, groups, or organizational decline generalizes to these settings. Our student body is becoming more international. They are interested in how our models of motivation, withdrawal, or organizational design bear on their lives when they return to their country of origin.

One option, which parallels our discussion of the interdisciplinary dilemma, is to create or join a research team with international partners. One type of team might focus on traditional problem areas in a U.S. context, but the existence of international partners may provide some new insights into the research process. Or the research team may take an existing problem and methodology that have been examined in the U.S., and apply them to different international settings.

The basic challenge facing the OB researcher is resolving the relative insularity of our field with the growing forces of globalization. The call is not for doing cross-cultural research. Rather, it is to broaden our concept of organizational contexts by viewing our models and findings with the lens of international research partners or in the actual setting of international work. (See work by Brett and her associates [1996] for an example of this approach.)

### **Individual versus Collective Platforms for Research**

Traditionally, research has been an individual activity. The researcher selects a problem, creates a methodology, analyzes data, and reports findings. In our review of journals, we see growing numbers of authors per paper. While this finding indicates that groups of people are working together, we would still label this "individual work." That is, the work is being done by individuals with some division of labor. After the work is done, the group typically dissolves, and there tends not to be any institutional structure surrounding these groups.

A scan of our field and other sciences shows new forms of collective structures to do research. In OB there has been a growth in research centers. These institutions reflect new ways to fund work and provide access to organizations. There have been consortiums of individuals in different universities conducting research on focused issues. There is a new partnership between industry and the National

Science Foundation on quality that will alter the traditional form of decentralized, individual-based research. In computer science, we see electronic communities focused on the development of certain computer architecture. In other sciences, electronic communities of distributed researchers are organized around centralized databases.

The dilemma is that the emergence of these platforms represents a choice for the organizational researcher. Participation in these collective ventures provides resources and access, motivating people to join. But participation also brings costs of coordination and pressures for group versus individual products.

We think these collective structures will be a persistent dimension of our research environment in the future. The young researcher clearly has the option not to join. By joining on a limited basis one could explore the benefits and costs of this type of research relationship. Another option is to think about actively creating these collective platforms for research. Let us illustrate the importance of this third option in the light of research on groups. While there have been important developments in research on groups in organizations, there have been few studies that have looked at large samples of groups in different contexts and groups over time. These are important issues for advancing group research and practice. One strategy that relies on a collective platform is to create a community of group researchers who can build some common databases with different longitudinal perspectives. This community can be a mechanism for intellectual exchange, access, sharing of data, and acquisition of funds.

We now move to dilemmas surrounding how we do our work.

### **Micro versus Macro**

A major theme in our interviews was the initial dominance of micro-level work in the '50s and '60s and the emergence of macro studies in the '80s and '90s. In the past five years, there has been interest both in terms of writing and of professional institutions in meso-level research. Meso research focuses on integration across levels to better understand organizational processes. In our analysis of the two jour-

nals, there seemed to be some acknowledgment of the importance of multilevel research.

The dilemma confronting the researcher is the choice among levels. The dilemma is heightened by the fact that there are strong forces and counterforces that affect the choice of levels. The increasing complexity of organizational forms and processes calls for a multilevel perspective. The growing inability in our empirical research to explain in significant ways many organizational functions suggests the need to move toward a multilevel perspective. On the other hand, there are counterforces to this position. Much of our doctoral training legitimates micro or macro perspectives. Our methodological training work focuses on particular levels. Also, the lack of theoretical and methodological developments in integrating multiple levels hinders movement in this area.

We think there are two interesting options in the near term. First, we can explore multiple independent variables in a variety of ways. One way is to conduct a primary individual-level study in different organizational contexts. The basic theory and design of the study remain intact. The multilevel question is how context will change the results. A more adventuresome (and riskier) approach is to build the theory and methods around different levels of analysis as they bear on understanding organizational processes. Our view is that there is a recognition and legitimation for these types of studies. This recognition was not as clear ten years ago.

Another option, which has not been well explored, is understanding multiple levels from a dependent variable point of view. Most of our research, whether on individuals, groups, or organizations, makes assumptions about other levels of analysis. If we design ways to improve group performance, we assume it affects organizational performance. If we introduce training to increase individual performance, it is assumed to increase organizational performance. If we downsize an organization to increase organizational performance, we assume it will impact on individual performance. The interesting challenge is that we know little about the linkages between different levels of analysis. As we think of the future of OB, one option is to begin ex-

ploring adjacent levels of analysis. That means if we study groups in organizations, we should begin tracing the linkages between changes in groups and organizational performance. We use the word “trace” with the following intention. Let’s begin to collect some qualitative and quantitative data about linkages right now. This will inform us about new theories and methods. In time, one could design a study to systematically trace multiple linkages over time. (See Harris, 1994, for some developments on this issue.)

### **Quantitative/Qualitative**

A major theme in our interviews was a reaction to the movement toward more quantitative research. With the advent of more sophisticated computers and analytic techniques, there have been movements toward greater levels of quantification from both the micro and macro perspectives. There is no reason to believe this tendency will diminish. At the same time, there is leadership in qualitative studies about organizations. There are places one can be trained in primarily qualitative approaches to organizational studies, and many places provide training in qualitative methods. While there are journals that select primarily quantitative studies, there are others accepting qualitative work.

So where is the dilemma? The tension or dilemma is not about whether one should do quantitative or qualitative work or what is the appropriate emphasis on qualitative versus quantitative studies. We see the dilemma more as how to integrate quantitative and qualitative work. The dilemma rests in the time, methodological skills, and intellectual ability to formulate integrated qualitative and quantitative approaches to organizational studies.

We can illustrate this dilemma by pointing to some problems and opportunities. We do quantitative studies on a variety of organizational issues but never explain the organizational context. A theory, methods, and results are presented, but there is little intellectual work on the nature of the context and how it might help us to better inter-

pret the findings. Some of our work focuses on important organization units such as groups. The studies are well done in terms of theory, methods, and results, but there is often very little description of what groups do. It is not enough to know whether heterogeneity affects group performance. If we were more careful about describing what the groups do, we would have more insights on how groups perform. These two examples call for better qualitative descriptions of the organizational context and of the unit under investigation. Our assumption is that better qualitative descriptions and better linkage between descriptions and findings will improve the quality of our work.

Another level of integration is building one’s research on quantitative and qualitative methodologies. This is not simply another suggestion for multiple methods to demonstrate convergent and discriminant validity. Rather, it is a call for finding points where there is some unique leverage in combining quantitative and qualitative techniques.

The following example might clarify this point of finding leverage in linking qualitative methods to existing quantitative studies. There is an emerging interest among OB researchers in studying customer-firm relationships (Schneider and Bowen, 1985). Most of the studies use survey instruments to study attitudes and beliefs of employees and their customers. In most cases, the researchers select or build survey instruments that exhibit the appropriate psychometric characteristics, and they have presented some interesting findings. However, one question is, what do these survey instruments measure? What do customers mean when they report they are “satisfied” with service? When customers from the same organization or from different organizations report they are “satisfied,” are the meanings the same? Did they arrive at their judgments the same way? Our point is not to critique survey instruments. Rather, it is to argue that organizational research in this area is relatively new, and we might enhance our understanding of customer-firm relationships by adding qualitative measures and data to the research process. Interviews about how customers evaluate the firm or observations of firm-customer transactions should supplement the quantitative analysis. (See Schneider et al., 1992, for an example of this approach.)

### Traditional versus Nontraditional Subjects

Both our review of published journal articles and our interviews highlighted the significance of our choices regarding whom we study. The distinction between traditional versus nontraditional subjects reflects different choices in different contexts. For example, in *JAP*, it involved students participating in lab studies, whereas in *ASQ* it involved managerial/professional versus non-managerial/professional subjects.

The significance of these choices was evident in our interviews. Jan Beyer, Bill Whyte, and Steve Barley all expressed concerns about the effect that whom we study has on what we learn. Beyer and Whyte both noted a preoccupation with examining organizational issues and problems from the perspective of managers. Because personal interests and role responsibilities vary considerably across levels and units in any organization, approaching the study of organizations from a single perspective severely restricts our “range of understanding” in two ways: attention bias (restriction in the range of activities or issues that are selected for investigation) and interpretation bias (restriction in the range of explanations used in the investigation).

Barley expressed a related concern: “We know almost nothing about the changing nature of work. Our models of organizations are geared to our understanding of factory work and workers. In this era that is about as irrelevant as rooting our theories in the experiences of farmers.” For Barley, then, the salient choice is not between studying students versus nonstudents, or between studying managers versus nonmanagers, but between studying traditional versus contemporary work(ers).

Although our journal publication data indicate that researchers have been studying more than managers and factory workers, our interviewees’ point is that we are studying employees (and other nonmanagement groups) from the perspective of managers, and that we are bringing to our study of nonfactory workers an implicit model of factory work. For example, even when we collect data from multiple constituents, or stakeholders, we typically limit the focus of our questions to topics that managers have identified as important. Furthermore, our framing of the topic generally reflects the interests of managers (e.g., the “management” of diversity). In this context, the purpose of collect-

ing data from nonmanagers is to validate managerial perceptions (to what extent do the perceptions of other groups agree with the “accepted” perceptions of managers?) and/or to inform managerial action (what do other stakeholders think managers should do?).

These observations highlight the interdependence among our implicit theories, our sampling criteria, our assumed point of reference, and our research conclusions. Explicitly recognizing the interdependence of these elements of the research process opens up new possibilities for combining them. In particular, challenging our traditional views about whom we should study suggests a number of promising new lines of investigation.

There is a growing awareness in our field that much of our extant knowledge reflects the perspectives and experiences of a relatively small proportion of today’s highly diverse population, namely, white, middle-aged, successful males. Just as there has been a concerted effort in the international management arena to test the validity of our taken-for-granted knowledge by examining it in the context of non-American populations, there is an analogous need to explore these limitations within an increasingly diverse single-culture population. While it has been fairly common practice to examine an organizational outcome (e.g., effectiveness) from the perspective of multiple internal and external constituencies, our research, by and large, treats each constituency (e.g., employees, managers, stockholders, regulators, customers) as a homogeneous group of individuals. Seldom is this within-group homogeneity assumption explicitly challenged in multiple- or even single-constituency studies.

In earlier eras it may have been defensible to assume that individual differences within organizational positions were inconsequential (because there was so little variance in relevant personal demographics). Today, it is no longer permissible to assume that the only relevant sampling parameters are organizationally defined groupings (e.g., levels  $\times$  units). With the rapid increase in the diversity of individuals occupying nearly all organizational positions, we no longer can assume that individual differences in our samples are random error. Our organizational research designs need to more fully reflect our awareness

that not only do different types of individuals have different perspectives on common issues (e.g., equity), they also don't share issues in common. Some of the most contentious discussions in organizations today reflect different age, class, gender, race, and occupational interests (e.g., "family-friendly" benefits, retirement program funding deficits). This suggests that, while avoiding the tendency to stereotype, we need to develop a more systematic profile of the priorities and concerns of different types of workers, as well as the same type of workers doing different types of work.

Challenging the Weberian dictum that organizational members should be viewed as "position holders" rather than as "whole individuals" (who happen to spend some of their time doing a job in an organization) sensitizes us to the importance of understanding the interplay among organizational members' multiple roles. This orientation is beginning to show up in the "work-family" research which examines how organizational members' nonwork role demands (e.g., taking care of an infirm parent) influence their work role performance, as well as how members' nonwork role performance (e.g., experiences gained as a civic club leader, a youth group teacher, or a trade association representative) carries over to their work role performance.

Unfortunately, much of this research contains an underlying "employer-centric" bias: although it recognizes that members occupy both work and nonwork roles, the "cross-role effects" of interest are those that are relevant to the employer. Contemporary research in this area is relatively silent regarding the "inside-out" effects (what economists might refer to as the "human capital externalities" of managerial actions). For example, one is hard pressed to find current work on the effects of the type of work members perform, the criteria used to evaluate their work, the quality of their work relationships, or the characteristics of the predominant organizational culture on the values members teach their children, members' inclination to serve as community volunteers, or members' expectations of the educational, religious, and political organizations to which they also belong.

In his interview, Walter Nord introduced a related concern about the dominant insider's view reflected in our organizational research. He pointed out that we rarely frame our studies from the perspective of true outsiders, such as taxpayers, neighbors, community leaders, regulators, stockholders, or customers. He also echoed the need to examine the inside/outside role interdependence of members—observing that we tend to forget that "producers are also consumers." Commenting on this dualism, he made the following provocative observation.

We need to go beyond examining the way people make a living and focus on the nature of their living. That is, we should focus on consumption as well as on production as fulcrums for aligning the interests of individuals and organizations. In E. P. Thompson's book *The Making of the English Working Class*, he points out that these people would not fight about their wages, but if you raised the price of a loaf of bread you'd incite a riot. We have abrogated responsibility for the study of individuals-as-consumers to our economics and marketing colleagues. We need to add an OB voice to that conversation.

Barley and Beyer believe that our choices about whom we study have also removed us from conversations about entrepreneurs and small businesses. In their interviews, they argued persuasively that workers are increasingly less likely to be doing production work and to be working in large, highly integrated organizations. Despite these trends, micro organizational behavior researchers have largely ignored entrepreneurs, and their macro colleagues have similarly overlooked small businesses. Barley and Beyer's contention is that by breaking our traditional conventions about whom we should study, organizational scholars can begin examining previously ignored (and rather large) segments of the managerial and organizational populations.

## Conclusion

As we come to the conclusion of our review of fifty years of organizational behavior work, we hope readers will reflect on and review the rich and diverse perspectives provided by Whyte, Nord, Beyer, and

Barley. Similarly, we would like the reader to think about the content analysis of *JAP* and *ASQ*. Our goal was to provide a picture of who does the research, whom we study, and how we do our work.

The tables can be approached in at least two ways. First, how do the trends in the table match what I do or my view of the field over these fifty years? Second, why do these trends occur and what are the implications for our work and the field in general? We tried to provide a way to think about these questions, but our primary motivation was to stimulate the reader to address the questions.

Throughout this chapter, there have been underlying themes in the organizational behavior field. Many of these themes deal with tensions between basic and applied research, between qualitative and quantitative perspectives, among various levels of analysis, between the importance of research and that of practice, and so on. These themes appear in the past and present, and will probably continue in the future.

Our approach to the future was to define issues and choices. We think there are rich and exciting opportunities. There are new paths to follow that should revitalize the field and stimulate new intellectual growth. ■

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