

FIFTH EDITION

ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

AN EXPERIENTIAL
APPROACH



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An Experiential Approach



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David A. Kolb, Irwin M. Rubin, and Joyce Osland

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Foreword

This book—or better, the body of experiences it proposes—seeks to communicate some knowledge of general psychological principles, and some skill in applying that knowledge to social and organizational situations. Science tries to illuminate concrete reality by disclosing the general laws and principles that make the reality what it is. The generalization gives meaning to the concrete instance, but the instance carries the generalization into the real world—makes it usable. Experiencing social situations and then analyzing that experience brings generalization and concrete reality into effective union.

In teaching undergraduate and graduate management courses, I have frequently encountered students who hold a magical belief in a real world, somehow entirely different from any world they had hitherto experienced, and different, too, from the world of their textbooks. In teaching experienced executives, I have as frequently encountered men who balked at the proposal to apply general psychological principles to the concrete experiences of their everyday world. If there are skeptics of either variety in a group that undertakes one of these exercises, they can conduct their own tests of the relevance of theory to experience and vice versa. That is what the exercises are about.

But are the exercises themselves “real”? Can you really simulate social or organizational phenomena in a laboratory? The answer hangs on what we know of people—of their readiness to take roles, or, more accurately, their *inability not* to take roles when they find themselves in appropriate social situations, but this in itself is a psychological generalization: Man is a role taker. Like any generalization, it should be tested empirically; and the exercises do just that. Each participant can be his own witness to the reality—or lack of it—of what has gone on.

But the purpose of the exercises is not just to increase understanding of principles, or understanding of concrete situations in terms of principles. They can be useful also as a means of developing skills for group situations: skills of observing, skills of self-insight, skills of understanding the behaviors and motives of others, skills of adapting behavior to the requirements of a task and the needs of groups and persons.

There is no magic to it. Learning here, like all learning, derives from time and attention directed to relevant material. The exercises provide the material. The time, attention, and active participation must be supplied by those who take part in them.

Herbert A. Simon

Preface

This fifth edition of *Organizational Behavior: An Experiential Approach* is the latest improvement on an experiment that began over 20 years ago. The first edition of this book was developed at MIT in the late 1960s and was the first application of the principles of experience-based learning to teaching in the field of organizational psychology. Since then the field has changed, the practice of experience-based learning has grown in acceptance and sophistication, and we, the authors, have changed.

The field of organizational behavior has grown rapidly in this time period and is today a complex tapestry of historical trends, contemporary trends, and new emerging trends. In the Introduction that follows we will describe these trends in more detail. However, one of these developments—the expanding multi-disciplinary base of the field—should be mentioned here, since it has led us to change the title of the book from *Organizational Psychology* to *Organizational Behavior* in this fifth edition. This change reflects the increasing contribution from sociology, organization theory and management fields to the study of organizational behavior, giving the field and this new edition both a “macro” and “micro” perspective on human behavior in organizations.

Since the publication of our first edition, a number of other experience-based texts have been published in organizational behavior and other management specialties, and experiential-learning approaches have become widely accepted in higher education, particularly in programs for adult learners. The value of educational approaches that link the concepts and techniques of academia with learners’ personal experiences in the real world is no longer questioned. In this latest edition we have attempted to reflect the state of the art in the practice of experiential learning and to bring these approaches to bear on the latest thinking and research in the field of organizational behavior.

The biggest personal change for us in the preparation of our fifth edition has been the addition of Joyce Osland to our co-author team. Joyce is professor of organizational behavior at INCAE in Costa Rica. She brings to our efforts the special perspectives of global issues, cross-cultural management, and the management of diversity. Her innovations can be seen throughout this new textbook. The chapter opening vignettes, the action tips for managers, the concept summaries, and the chapter-specific personal application assignments are just a few of the improvements she has introduced.

This book is intended for students and managers who wish to explore the personal relevance and conceptual bases of the phenomena of organizational behavior. It is designed with a focus on exercises, self-analysis techniques, and role plays to make the insights of behavioral science meaningful and relevant to practicing managers and students. Each chapter is designed as an educational intervention that facilitates each stage of the experience-based learning process. Exercises and simulations are designed to produce experiences that create the phenomena of organizational behavior. Observation schemes and methods are introduced to facilitate understanding of these experiences. Theories and models are added to aid in forming generalizations. And finally, the intervention is structured in a way that encourages learners to experiment with what they have learned in new experiences related to their personal life.

A companion readings book, *Organizational Behavior: Practical Readings for Managers*, Fifth Edition, is also published by Prentice Hall. Many footnotes in this

volume make reference to articles which have been reprinted there. That these articles appear in our readings book may be abbreviated as *Readings* at the end of the footnote entry.

A preface is a place to publicly thank the many people who have helped us. Our feelings of pride in our product are tempered by the great indebtedness we feel to many others whose ideas and insights preceded ours. It is a tribute to the spirit of collaboration that pervades our field that the origin of many of the exercises recorded here is unknown. We have tried throughout the manuscript to trace the origins of those exercises we know about and in the process we may, in many areas, fall short of the original insight. For that we can only apologize. The major unnamed contributors are our students. In a very real sense, this book could never have been completed without their active participation in our explorations.

We wish to thank James McIntyre, our co-author in the first four editions of this book, for his generous and creative contributions. While much has changed and will continue to change through successive editions of the book, Jim's presence will always be there.

The many instructors who, as users of previous editions of our text, have shared their experiences, resources, insights and criticisms have been invaluable guides in the revision process. Our colleague, Donald McCormick, was particularly helpful in his detailed feedback and suggestions for improvement.

Clifford Bolster, Richard Boyatzis, William Pasmore, and Mary Ann Sharp gave generously of their time and effort to allow the videotaping of their class sessions to demonstrate their approaches to teaching via the experiential learning method. Mary Ann Sharp has also made a major contribution by authoring an Instructor's Manual containing tips for the conduct of specific class sessions and additional teaching resources. The chapter "Managing Diversity" was jointly developed by a Case Western Reserve University project team consisting of David Akinussi, Lynda Benroth, Rafael Estevez, Elizabeth Fisher, Mary Ann Hazen, David Kolb, Dennis O'Connor, and Michelle Spain.

Alison Reeves, our Prentice Hall Editor, has been patient, persistent, and supportive throughout the revision process. Several innovations in this edition, such as the video supplements, were her idea. She is a true editor in the classic tradition. We owe a special debt of gratitude to Retta Holdorf who managed the production of the final manuscripts and brought this project together.

David A. Kolb
Irwin M. Rubin
Joyce S. Osland

Introduction to the Workbook

I hear and I forget
I see and I remember
I do and I understand

CONFUCIUS

As teachers responsible for helping people learn about the field of organizational behavior, we have grappled with a number of basic educational dilemmas. Some of these dilemmas revolve around the issue of *how* to teach about this most important and intensely personal subject. The key concepts in organizational behavior (indeed, in social science in general) are rather abstract. It is difficult through the traditional lecture method to bring these ideas meaningfully to life. Other problems concern issues of what to teach, since the field of organizational behavior is large and continues to grow. Relevant concepts and theories come from a variety of disciplines, and no single course could begin to scratch the surface. Another dilemma is one of control. Who should be in control of the learning process? Who should decide what material is important to learn? Who should decide the pace at which learning should occur? Indeed, who should decide what constitutes learning? Our resolution of these and related dilemmas is contained within this book. The learning materials in this book are an application of the theory of experiential learning to the teaching and learning of organizational behavior. In this method, primary emphasis is placed upon learning from your own experience. Each of the 20 chapters in the workbook begins with an introduction that raises key questions and provides a framework for your experiences in the unit. The core of each unit is an action-oriented behavioral simulation. The purpose of these exercises is to allow you to generate your own data about each of the key concepts to be studied. A format is provided to facilitate your ability to observe and share the personal reactions you have experienced, while the summaries at the end of each unit help to integrate the unit experiences and stimulate further questions and issues to be explored. If there is an overriding objective of the book, it is that you learn how to learn from all your experiences.

LEARNING ABOUT ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

It has been over 20 years since we first began developing and testing the feasibility of experiential learning methods for teaching organizational behavior. Our initial attempts to substitute exercises, games, and role plays for more traditional educational approaches were met in many quarters by polite skepticism and resistance. Today experiential learning approaches are an integral part of management school curricula and management training programs everywhere. During these years, the subject matter of organizational behavior has undergone much change as well. Some of this change has been subtle and quiet, involving the consolidation and implementation of trends that began years ago. Other changes have been more dramatic. New vital perspectives have come alive, reorganizing and redirecting research, theory, and teaching in the field. Still other trends loom on the horizon, as yet underdeveloped, pointing the way toward the future shape of the field.

As we began to work on this fifth edition, we felt that it was time to take stock of these changes so that we might faithfully, in new selection of topics and experiential exercises, portray the field of organizational behavior as it is today—a complex of vital themes enduring from the past, alive in the present, and emerging in the

future. Such a stocktaking is difficult to achieve objectively. Organizational behavior is a vast field with indefinite boundaries overlapping sister disciplines of social psychology, sociology, and anthropology, and management fields such as operations research, business policy, and industrial relations. One could convincingly argue that any patterns one sees in such diversity and complexity lie more in the eye of the beholder than in objective reality. At the very least, where one stands in defining organizational behavior is greatly influenced by where one sits, by one's particular experience and orientation to the field. Recognizing that any organization of the field is constructed from a combination of objective reality and subjective preference, we nonetheless felt that there is value in making explicit our view of the field, since it was on the basis of that view that choices of topics and exercises were made. By understanding our view, you, as learners, may be better able to articulate your own agreements and disagreements, thereby helping to sort the actual state of the field from our individual viewpoints.

In Table I-1 are summarized the changes we have seen in the field in the last 50 years in six general areas: the way organizational behavior is defined, the way management education is conducted, the field's perspective on the nature of persons, its view as to how human resources are to be managed, its perspective on organizations, and the nature of the change/improvement process. In each of these areas there are three kinds of trends: *historical foundations of trends*, previous historical development that is now widely influential in shaping the field; *contemporary trends*, current research and development that is capturing the excitement and imagination of scholars and practitioners; and *emerging trends*, new issues and concerns that seem destined to shape the future of organizational behavior in research and practice.

Definition of the Field

Paul Lawrence¹ traces the origin of the field of organizational behavior back to the early 1940s. He cites as the first key contribution to the field the group climate experiments of Kurt Lewin and his associates in 1943. Early scholars in the field came from industrial and social psychology and later from sociology. Organizational behavior departments were housed administratively in business schools, but in general they maintained their separate identity from the profession of management. Today we see major changes in the orientation as organizational behavior departments have become more integrated units within professional business schools. Most new faculty today have Ph.D.s in management as opposed to basic disciplines, and interdisciplinary research around the managerial task has burgeoned. Concepts are now more often defined in managerial terms (e.g., work team development) as opposed to behavioral science terms (group dynamics).

Active developments in organizational behavior today involve the expansion of the field from an industrial-business focus to a wider application of behavioral science knowledge in other professional fields—health care management, law, public administration, education, and international development. Perhaps because of this expansion into more complex social and political institutions, an emerging trend is toward a focus on sociological and political concepts that increase our understanding of management in complex organizational environments. In recent years the issue of environmental determinism has been raised, an even more “macro” approach to organizations. The population ecologists study the rise and fall of organizations within an entire industry and maintain that it is the environment, rather than actions by humans, that influences organizations. There is an active intellectual debate in the field between those who see strategic leadership and choice as the determinant of organizational success and those who subscribe to the environmental determinist position.

¹Paul Lawrence, “Historical Development of Organizational Behavior,” in Jay Lorsch (Ed.), *Handbook of Organizational Behavior* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1987).

Perspective on Organizations

Early work in organizational behavior took a somewhat limited view of organizations, being primarily concerned with job satisfaction and human fulfillment in work. The recent past has included much research aimed at organizational productivity as well. But until recently the primary focus on the study of organizations has been on internal functioning. Some of the most vital research activity in the field stems from what is known as the open systems view of organizations. This view states that since organizations, to survive, must adapt to their environment, organizational functioning cannot be understood without examining organization-environment relationships. This led to the contingency theory of organizations, which states that there is no one best way to organize and manage; it depends on the environmental demands and corresponding tasks for the organization.

The open systems view of organizations leads to an important emerging trend in the study of organizations. In most research to date, the organization is the focal point of study, conceived as the dominant stable structure around which the environment revolves. Yet in many cases the organization is but a part of a more pervasive and dominant industry, institutional, or professional career structure. Utilities, for example, cannot be understood without understanding the impact of their relationship with governmental regulatory institutions, and medical organizations such as hospitals are dominated by the medical profession as a whole and particularly by the socialization and training of M.D.s. Improvements in the effectiveness of these organizations can be achieved only by consideration of the system of relationships among the organization and the institutions and professions that shape it.

Interorganizational networks are replacing the traditional view of the organization as the primary entity. Quasi-firms, such as construction jobs, which consist of subcontracted work teams, are becoming more common. The influence of the global economy is felt everywhere. Current research portrays organizations as symbolic systems in which members interpret their shared social reality. In this approach, reality is what is agreed upon, rather than an objective fact. The importance of organizational culture and shared values has also become an important trend.

Perspective on Persons

In their perspective on persons and human personality, organizational psychologists have added an emphasis on power and influence processes to an earlier concern with the more "tender" aspects of socioemotional behavior (e.g., communication, intimacy, and human growth). These concerns with the social-motivational aspects of human behavior are currently being expanded by many researchers to consider cognitive processes—learning, problem solving, decision making, and planning—thus contributing to a more holistic view of human behavior. A most promising future perspective on human functioning is emerging from the work of adult development psychologists in personality development, ego development, moral development, and cognitive development. Researchers in these fields are providing frameworks for human functioning in organizations that emphasize developmental-appreciative processes as opposed to the deficiency-adjustment perspective that has dominated much work on human behavior in organizations in the past.

Human Resource Management

The changes in perspectives on the person, which we have just discussed, have been mirrored in changes in philosophy about how human beings are to be managed. From our current historical vantage point, early approaches to management in organizational psychology seem defensive and vaguely paternalistic. People were involved in work decisions and attention was paid to "human relations" to keep workers happy and to avoid resistance to change initiated by management. Recently participative management has come to be viewed more as a positive tool for improving organizational functioning. People are involved in decision making not only to make them feel more satisfied, but also because the improved information and problem-solving capability resulting from a participative process is more productive and effective.

Current research takes a more systematic approach to human resource man-

agement, shifting the perspective from management of people and the social-motivational techniques of management style, organizational climate, management by objectives (MBO), and so on, to a management of work perspective. This perspective considers the whole person as he or she adapts to the work environment. Work is seen as a sociotechnical system, considering the content of jobs as well as the management process. Managing work involves designing technological systems, organizational arrangements, and jobs themselves to obtain effective organizational adaptation to the environment *and* maximum utilization of human resources and talents.

An important emerging trend in human resource management involves the addition of a career development perspective to the organization development perspective we have outlined. A host of trends are occurring in the labor market, including an older population, a more balanced male-female work force, a more culturally and racially diverse work force, and increasing career mobility and change among workers through their work lives.

There is an emergent trend that encourages greater responsibility on the part of workers to develop their own careers. As a result of downsizing leaner structures and the clog of baby boomers, some companies are making it clear to employees that they can no longer guarantee a lifelong career within the company. While many companies still manage the careers of those in the "fast track," career responsibility belongs primarily to workers themselves.

Change Processes

Concern with change and organization improvement has been central to organizational behavior from its inception. Kurt Lewin's action research methodology has been a dominant approach to integrating knowledge generation and practical application following his dictum: "If you want to understand something, try to change it." In the last decade the specialized field of organization development (OD) has emerged from the Lewinian tradition as a powerful practical approach for using behavioral science knowledge to improve organizational effectiveness and human fulfillment in work. A major contribution of OD has been an understanding of the process of introducing change. Process consultation, an approach that helps the organization to solve its own problems by improving the problem-solving, communication, and relationship processes in the organization, has emerged as an alternative to expert consultation, the approach where outside consultants generate problem solutions and present them for consideration by the organization. Currently the technologies for introducing and managing change are expanding and becoming more sophisticated and problem-specific as OD programs are being initiated in organizations of all types. As change becomes a way of life in most organizations, there is a shift of focus from change as something created and managed by external consultants to a concern with the manager as change agent, managing the change process as part of his or her job function. As a result there is less concern today with training OD professionals and greater concern with improving managers' OD skills.

With greater change and complexity in organizational systems, the dialectic in Lewin's action research model seems to be shifting from an emphasis on action to an emphasis on research. Policy development and strategy planning techniques are being developed to assist organizations in their adaptation to increasingly complex and turbulent environments. These approaches seem to be reversing Lewin's dictum—"If you want to change something, try to understand it."

Management Education

From the beginning, the field of organizational behavior has been concerned with educational innovations, particularly those aimed at communicating abstract academic knowledge in a way that is helpful and meaningful to pragmatically oriented professional managers and management students. The two dominant innovative traditions in this respect have been the development of the case method, particularly at the Harvard Business School, and the experiential learning approaches that have grown from Kurt Lewin's early work on group dynamics and the sensitivity training movement that followed. Both these traditions have developed educational technol-

ogies that are sophisticated in their application of theory to practice. Today, most management schools offer a mix of educational approaches—the traditional lecture, the case discussion, and experiential exercises, sometimes combining them in new and innovative ways, such as in computer-based business simulations. With these new educational technologies, management educators have begun to raise their aspirations from increasing student awareness and understanding to improving skills in interpersonal relations, decision making, managing change, and other key managerial functions. These new aspirations create new challenges for the design of management education and training programs, where the criteria for success are based on performance rather than cognitive comprehension. Yet the future poses an even greater challenge. The rapid growth of knowledge and increasing rate of social and technological change are making specific skill training more and more vulnerable to obsolescence. The answer seems to lie not in learning new skills, but in learning how to learn and adapt throughout one's career. An emerging concern in management education and research is, therefore, how individuals and organizations learn; developing the basic processes and adaptive competencies that facilitate effective individual and organizational adaptation to a changing world.

THE PLAN OF THIS BOOK

In choosing topics and exercises for this book, we have attempted to represent all the major current trends in organizational behavior: those that are mature and established, those that are the focus of current research excitement, and new ideas that suggest the future shape of the field. The book is organized into five parts progressing generally from a focus on the individual to a focus on larger units of organizational analysis: the group, the organization, and the organization-environment interface. Part I examines the individual in the organization. Chapters 1 and 5 consider the individual's relationship with the organization over time through the concepts of the psychological contract and organizational socialization and career development. Chapter 2 reviews the principal theories of management. Chapters 3 and 4 focus, respectively, on the learning/problem-solving and motivational determinants of human behavior in organizations—on how individual motivation and skill in problem-solving influence organizational performance. Part II examines the creation of effective work relationships. It begins with an examination of interpersonal communication in Chapter 6 and progresses to the study of perception in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 focuses on group dynamics, while Chapter 9 deals with problem management. Managing multigroup work and intergroup conflict are addressed in Chapter 10. Managing diversity, both in the United States and abroad, are examined in Chapter 11. The chapters in Part III examine critical leadership functions in the managerial role—creating and maintaining organizational culture (Chapter 12), decision making (Chapter 13), power and influence (Chapter 14), supervision and employee development (Chapter 15), and performance appraisal (Chapter 16). Part IV is concerned with managing effective organizations. It portrays the organization as a sociotechnical system that exists as an open system in a wider, changing environment. Chapter 17 examines the organization-environment relationship via the concept of open systems analysis; Chapter 18 examines issues of organization structure, communication, and design; Chapter 19 is concerned with the sociotechnical design of work and its impact on worker motivation, and Chapter 20 describes processes of planned change and organization development.

YOUR ROLE AS A LEARNER

You will find as you work with this book that a new role is being asked of you as a learner. Whereas in many of your prior learning experiences you were in the role

of a passive recipient, you will now find the opportunity to become an active creator of your own learning. This is an opportunity for you to develop new and different relationships with faculty members responsible for this course. As you may already have sensed, the experiential learning approach provides numerous opportunities for shared leadership in the learning process.

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