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I-O Psychology Gives Back To Society!

William P. Jimenez

Mahima Saxena

University of Nebraska at Omaha, msaxena@unomaha.edu

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POSTED BY: WILLIAM P. JIMENEZ, MS AND MAHIMA SAXENA, PHD APRIL 23, 2018

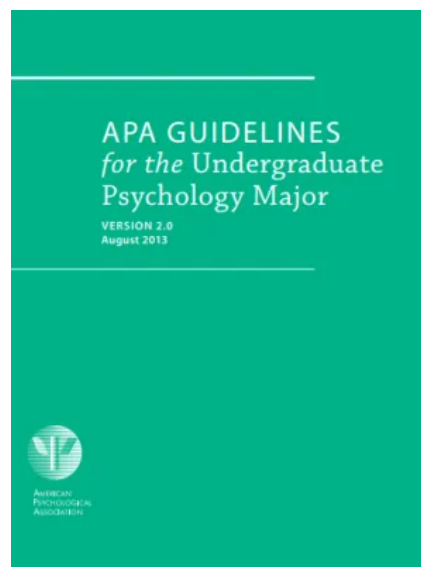
Industrial-organizational (I-O) psychology—what a mouthful! The field originally focused on **the prediction and improvement of job performance in industrial and military settings**, but after World War II **interests**

in broader organizational phenomena (e.g., leadership, groups, motivation, satisfaction) came into frame. Before **APA Division 14** incorporated as the **Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP)** in 1982, it was called Division 14, Industrial and Business Psychology from 1945 to 1962. In 1962, “Business” was dropped from the name, and in 1973 “Organizational” was added to the name.

Considering the field’s historical focus and Division 14’s former names, it isn’t surprising that traditionally I-O psychology has catered primarily to employer-centric interests. However, the eventual addition of “organizational” to Division 14’s name not only reflected a growing curiosity about broader organizational phenomena, but also acknowledged the emergence of a **more humanistic I-O psychology**. These leanings were **influenced by the 20th-century human relations movement**, which drew heavily from the work of humanistic psychologists, like **Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow**, who were not I-O psychologists. For several decades, I-O psychology has shown its capacity for advancing humanistic ideals and helping improve society at large.

I-O Psychology’s Impact on the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

I-O psychologists, such as **Robert Guion, Raymond A. Katzell, C. Paul Sparks, and Mary L. Tenopyr**, have advised the **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)**, which was established by the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The laws that the EEOC enforces prohibit employment discrimination based on “race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), national origin, age (40 or older), disability, or genetic information” in all work situations including “hiring, firing, promotions, harassment, training, wages, and benefits,” and **I-O psychologists frequently serve as expert witnesses in EEO litigation.**



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The efforts of the original I-O psychologists who advised the EEOC eventually culminated in the publication of the 1978 ***Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures***. The *Uniform Guidelines* still serve as a reference in workplace discrimination cases. Among the major provisions of the *Uniform Guidelines* are definitions of “adverse impact” and “disparate treatment” and requirements for the validation of tests and assessments used in personnel decisions. For example, the “four-fifths rule” specifies that if a group of applicants that differs from the majority of hires with regard to race, sex, or ethnic group is hired at a rate that is less than 80% of the rate of the majority of hires there is evidence of adverse impact in the selection system in question.

21st Century Prosocial I-O Work

I-O psychology can be applied to much more than just businesses. For example, the authors of this post have contributed to projects that involved helping individuals in settings that you wouldn’t traditionally expect to find I-O psychologists. During the fall 2017 semester, Wil and his colleagues at **Old Dominion University identified the post-deployment needs of combat-wounded warriors** to support the development of a training program intended to help these veterans readjust to and thrive in civilian life. Mahima, **a faculty member at the Illinois Institute of Technology** and an executive board member of the **Global Organization of Humanitarian Work Psychology (GOHWP)** is actively conducting research on the work experiences of informal workers in South Asia, many of whom live below the poverty line. Her initial work in this domain was supported by a grant from SIOP. Such initiatives are examples of **prosocial I-O work**, which involves the application of I-O psychology research, methods, and practice for the benefit of society at large. Also, GOHWP is the largest professional organization dedicated to prosocial I-O work.

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In line with more prosocial, humanistic, and humanitarian interests, I-O psychologists have recently highlighted the **relevance of poverty** in relation to the work experiences of laborers, work in the **informal economy**, marginalization and stigmatization of certain groups, and countries underrepresented in the literature for more holistic and inclusive I-O psychology research and practice. Growing interest in these areas is reflected in the **designation of SIOP as a NGO consultant to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 2012**. Specifically, SIOP is harnessing the expertise of its members to help ECOSOC attain the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, which revolve around eradicating poverty globally.

To learn more about I-O psychology, **visit the official website of APA Division 14, the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology**.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



William P. Jimenez, MS

Wil is a third-year doctoral student in Old Dominion University's industrial-organizational psychology program. His research interests include emotions and relationships in the workplace, employee monitoring, and prosocial I-O psychology. Prior to attending Old Dominion, he earned his B.A. at the George Washington University, where he

studied psychology and organizational sciences. Wil is originally from the Chicagoland area, and he plays several instruments including guitar, bass, and ukulele. He enjoys science, music, gaming, salmon, and curry—in no particular order.



Mahima Saxena, PhD

Mahima Saxena is an assistant professor in the Industrial-Organizational Psychology Program at Illinois Institute of Technology. She earned her doctorate from Purdue University and her research interests are in occupational health psychology (job-burnout, self-regulation, workplace incivility experiences), women in STEM, and humanitarian work psychology. Mahima is a member of the Executive Board of the Global Organization of Humanitarian Work Psychology.

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