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COMMENTARY

Where no one has gone before

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"Things are only impossible until they're not."

—Captain Jean-Luc Picard

We thank Rudolph et al. (2021) for their important piece regarding a historic world event. The COVID-19 pandemic affects every facet of industrial-organizational (I-O) psychology, challenging us as we guide clients, students, and research through an uncertain future (Toaddy, 2020). Although Rudolph et al. described research and practice opportunities, they did not broach the superordinate direction of I-O psychology in light of many deeming we have lost our way (Ones et al., 2017). I-O psychology views itself as a *values-free* science (Lefkowitz, 2008, 2013), but no science is free of values (Riger, 2002). Minor improvements to efficiency, validity, and theory are deemed adequate accomplishments (Ones et al., 2017), and past criticisms (Gordon et al., 1978) have highlighted our narrow focus (Islam & Schmidt, 2019). Without a clear vision of what our discipline hopes to accomplish, our scope and effectiveness is limited.

The present paper proposes a lens through which I-O psychology can rechart its future course while respecting its position as the premier field of organizational science by driving meaningful change. Values frameworks are linked to effective strategic planning (Williams, 2002), and we advocate for a comprehensive values framework for I-O psychology given recent events. The United States is in a historical civil rights shift with the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement (Buchanan et al., 2020), and organizations have consequently adopted diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives (Duarte, 2020). This widespread DEI conversation was notably absent from Rudolph et al.'s (2021) piece, a surprise given COVID-19 and BLM protests are inexorably linked to the same pandemic: racism. DEI is a necessary component not just of social justice but also organizational justice. I-O psychology must address DEI without and within; the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP) has taken steps by creating a D&I officer and establishing an antiracism grant. We argue more needs to be done to address DEI within I-O psychology, beginning with a strong values framework. Our compass is centered around this essential element missing from Rudolph et al.'s article.

The big picture

The COVID-19 pandemic and BLM movement cast a renewed light on an undeniable fact: structural inequality is pervasive. Rudolph et al. (2021) hint at this in their discussions on work–family issues, precarious work, and blue-collar workers in human resources (HR) policies but never fully

name the elephant in the room. I-O psychology generally serves an archetypal worker, which fails to recognize or value individual or group differences in background and experiences. People do not enter the workforce on even footing, and extant organizational systems and processes do not provide equal or equitable opportunities for all people.

One root cause is a general failure to acknowledge that research in the social sciences is based on Western, educated, industrialized, rich, democratic (WEIRD) populations (Henrich et al., 2010). We are no exception; we found only one prominent piece relating WEIRD to I-O research. Gloss et al. (2017) argued that I-O psychology has a POSH bias (*professionals* with *official* jobs in a formal economy, who enjoy relative *safety* from discrimination, living in *high-income* countries), focusing on the wealthy and neglecting those in poverty. Similarly, we will target just one facet of our WEIRD bias, using empirical data to demonstrate how it hinders our scientific potential and utility.

Since March 2020, Culture Amp has been collecting data from organizations' surveys about their response to the pandemic, employee well-being during this time, and preparations to return to the workplace. Cross-organizational median favorability scores from 931 companies and over 350,000 employees indicate some stark gender differences. At a global level, women are more negative than men regarding commuting to work (-9%), looking forward to returning to the work-place (-9%), and being energized by that return (-8%).

But these numbers obscure very important regional differences where the gender disparities are even greater. North American women face additional issues of overcoming work challenges (-12%), productivity (-10%), leadership neglecting employee well-being (-11%), and transitioning back to the workplace (-13%). In Asia, women are having greater difficulties taking time off work (-24%), looking after dependents (-18%), and managing their work–life demands (-15%). In Europe, women are more negative about commuting (-27%). In the Middle East and Africa, women feel less equipped to manage their work–life demands (-25%). In Oceania, women's greatest concerns are about the commute (-16%) and using company facilities (-13%). Had this data been limited to just Western populations, the effects of the pandemic on women in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa who are having greater struggles with work–life demands would have been ignored, and this example touches on merely one of many dangers of focusing on only WEIRD populations.

The wrath of econ

I-O psychologists find themselves in a challenging time with the economic and social turmoil caused by COVID-19. We are often in HR and consulting roles. HR is often seen as a cost center, not a strategic partner, despite efforts to change that idea (Schiemanann & Ulrich, 2017). Organizations are fighting for survival, and I-O psychology needs to provide a contribution that is valuable enough to be worth funding despite scarce resources. We argue that I-O psychology needs to embrace a more active role in organizations and the broader community.

Islam and Schmidt (2019) argue that I-O psychologists need to be the testers and debunkers of current management practices, testing with our rigorous methods what works and communicat-ing that to the business community. I-O psychology often ignores management fads and trends, with this inaction in testing these practices allowing bad trends to fester and flourish, causing problems for organizations. Thus, to be strategic and influential, the field needs to be at the fore-front of what is meaningful and effective for organizations.

Although we agree with the basic ideas of Islam and Schmidt (2019), we argue for the need to expand beyond assessing traditional organizational practice. For-profit organizations should not be the only ones to benefit from I-O psychology; we should apply our work to nonprofits, com-munity groups, governmental groups, and others outside of the space of paid work. Some I-O psychologists have done this, and SIOP has initiatives related to such collaborations

(e.g., government groups, https://www.siop.org/About-SIOP/Advocacy/Government-Relations), but these are exceptions. I-O psychology should be tied to societal good versus that of the C-suite and their bottom line. With this broader view, I-O psychology could offer a clear vision for what work is and perspective on what work should be based on rigorous scientific methods and evidence. This would assert that I-O psychology is essential and central to society as a whole.

The search for meaning

I-O psychology is a broad field: people within formal organizations. Yet, our investigations over-represent salaried, managerial, and executive employees (Bergman & Jean, 2016). We demonstrate our values with our research on mTurk samples, knowledge workers, professionals, and students: those worth studying and serving belong to a particular social class. Although our field should be investigating all people in all organizations, the reality is some are more valued than others. We will explore the culture of I-O psychology as a discipline, using artifacts to unearth the unstated values and assumptions that underlie our field.

Cultural Tenant #1: The experiences of WEIRD people are paramount and generalizable

WEIRD samples have been central in social science research (Henrich et al., 2010). With 33% of I-O psychologists working in a university setting, 17% in the private sector, and 17% in consulting (SIOP, 2018), our practice is crafted by WEIRD perspectives, a direct contradiction to the unstated population of "all employees in all organizations" (Landers & Behrend, 2015). Our field elevates, magnifies, and prioritizes WEIRD people over others, and we erroneously assume those experiences apply to all people.

Cultural Tenant #2: Research is the highest purpose of I-O psychology

Professional status in I-O psychology is established primarily based on numbers of cited publications by groups or individuals (e.g., Aguinis et al., 2017). This spotlights academics, the dominant presence in peer-reviewed journals and textbooks. SIOP's current executive board is 75% academic, and 67% of its officers are academics. Yet only 33% of respondents to the 2018 SIOP membership survey work primarily in a university setting—including graduate students. When academics are prioritized in terms of both in status and leadership within SIOP, we elevate research as the primary path of influence and the principal goal of I-O psychology.

Cultural Tenant #3: Money matters

Landers and Behrend (2015) had restrictedly quoted, "all *employees* in all organizations." We focus on employing organizations, not other forms (e.g., volunteer, faith-based, etc.). Additionally, 11% of I-O psychologists in the 2018 SIOP membership survey work in the public sector and nonprofits are uncategorized. Although research in I-O psychology should encompass all organizations, in practice, we center around capitalism with our focus on employers, the private sector, and WEIRD samples. Our field values profit, and money drives who is worthy of our attention.

Cultural Tenant #4: Power

Traditional private sector businesses are hierarchical in structure. Even our decades of research on leadership demonstrate that we assume that hierarchical power structures exist within organizations. Everything in our field that fosters competition and exclusivity—including in our professional societies—draws on assumptions of the naturalness of power concentration.

Cultural Tenant #5: I-O psychology is color-blind

The issue of DEI was spoken around but not addressed in Rudolph et al.'s (2021) paper. Even in the language of *WEIRD*, we talk around the issue of race but not about it directly. In the 2018 SIOP membership survey, 73% are White. Our research samples are predominantly White. The focal article perpetuates the idea that I-O research can be colorblind; 69% of the 62 empirical references did not report race/ethnicity demographics, and the rest were either mostly White (16% [ranging from 77% to 89% White]), all Asian (10%), or all White (5%).

By not speaking about the centrality of race—specifically Whiteness—in our profession, our assumption is that I-O psychology is color-blind. At its heart, a re-envisioning of values and assumptions for I-O psychology requires that we center race explicitly and clearly. Focusing on the entire human identity is critical to our proposal. It is time for us to build a new profession grounded in antiracism, so we will no longer have DEI professionals; all I-O psychologists will be change agents for equity.

The voyage home

Although our propositions may be different from the traditional view of I-O psychology, they have deep historical roots. A prominent figure in I-O psychology, Hugo Münsterberg was dedicated to the development and protection of our field (Landy, 1992). We would advise all I-O psychologists to consider where we are going as a field, using Münsterberg as a role model for engaging with the discipline more deeply and taking an active hand in carving out that future. Münsterberg was not afraid to create new ideas (i.e., job placement centers, mental trait maps) to drive the field forward and offer a vision of the future accessible to those within and outside of I-O psychology (Moskowitz, 1977). This innovation is exemplified by the likes of Blacks in I/O (Blacks in I/O, 2020) and The Global Organization for Humanitarian Work Psychology (2020), who are attempting to create new spaces for I-O psychology. As Zickar and Gibby (2007) note, I-O psychology always responds to the demands of a given period.

The final frontier

DEI initiatives are a good case study of I-O psychology's values. The *managerialist bias* (Lefkowitz, 2009) in our values manifested again in SIOP's (2020) antiracism statement: "we understand that workplaces are better, healthier, more productive, and more profitable when they are welcoming and inclusive." This declaration casts I-O psychology's role in terms of organizational boons without clear explication of the implications for workers. DEI benefits organizations (Miller & del Carmen Triana, 2009; Roberson & Park, 2007), but ultimately, it is about the people. SIOP's framing ignores that people comprise organizations; they are the ultimate beneficiaries of I-O psychology's efforts (Lefkowitz, 2016). To this end, we must expand our reach to workers and the community at large. This is the true final frontier for I-O psychology.

The path ahead begins with an inclusive framework, shifting our values and actions to overthrow the extant tenants. Inviting Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), and other underrepresented peoples (the poor, unpaid laborers, LGBTQ, etc.) to a table built by the WEIRD, White establishment is not the way. We need to build a new table, together.

A multicultural organization (and profession) reflects the diverse social groups it serves; it is dedicated to eradicating social oppression internally, includes all members as full participants, especially in decision-making, and pursues external social responsibilities (Jackson & Holvino, 1988). In an inclusive profession, power is shared, and support comes from the most affected communities (Dismantling Racism Project, 2003). Movement toward true inclusion would require our field to not tally members of groups (protected and unprotected) at the existing table but be bold enough to cascade transformation to all of our systems and practices.

In an inclusive I-O psychology discipline, WEIRD people would not be paramount, as we would fully welcome the unique participation and experiences of all people. Systems would invite decision making by researchers, practitioners, students, clients, and all other stakeholders. We would embrace and transform organizations outside of for-profit work and paid work. Power sharing moves I-O psychology from hierarchical dominance-based systems to pluralist systems (Jackson & Holvino, 1988). Finally, an inclusive approach explicitly centers race and how racial identity and culture manifests and shapes each of our experiences. This approach calls us to do better by each other as whole human beings. By adopting a comprehensive inclusive framework, I-O psychology can not only react effectively to disruptions but also proactively define and lead a path forward for our field and organizations.

The undiscovered country

The year 2020 has been one of profound change, featuring COVID-19, systematic racism, and injustice. We have highlighted several of I-O psychology's inadequacies in the scope of these issues. Much of our work has been deemed nonessential, as our traditional years-long cycles of research are ill suited to the evidence-based practice organizations need to take decisive action now, not after the crisis is over. The resurgence of attention on systematic racism has highlighted how, for too long, we have walled off DEI as its own subdiscipline within I-O psychology versus evaluating all our science and practice with an inclusive and equitable lens: Does our research and practice exemplify these qualities? What do we need to do to get there?

It is time for I-O psychology to change and evolve. We can no longer be mired by the troubling trends listed by Ones et al. (2017): overemphasis on theory, the prioritization of publications over solving practical issues, and engaging in fad-driven practice, which has handcuffed innovation in I-O psychology, resulting in stagnation in the exploration of new concepts, a truly valuable and necessary venture in this changing world. I-O psychology has trapped itself in its own psychic prison. It's time to break free and boldly go where our field has not gone before.

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