From Science to Practice: Organizational Psychology Bulletin

Enriching the workplace by scientifically integrating psychology and organizational life

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From the Editor:

Welcome to the first Issue of *From Science to Practice: Organizational Psychology Bulletin (OPB). OPB* invites students, practitioners, and emerging scholars of Organizational Psychology to share with colleagues and the public applied articles on current topics in the field. Core contributors to this bulletin are students enrolled in the Master of Science in Organizational Psychology at Vanguard University of Southern California. Our bi-annual bulletin publishes selected papers representing the work of students as they immerse themselves into the field, analyze current empirical literature, and make connections between the science of Organizational Psychology and practical applications. The bulletin also welcomes papers from practitioners in the field, and students and emerging scholars from other institutions. Please see our Call for Proposals on page 5 for more details.

Our inaugural issue reflects the mission and core principles of our program. As outlined on our program website, http://www.vanguard.edu/ graduateorganizationalpsychology/,

The mission of the Organizational Psychology program is to prepare students for professional excellence, ethical leadership, and service to people and society through enhancing life in the workplace.

Practice of organizational psychology carries with it a tremendous responsibility. Our work impacts the lives of many individuals within organizations, and could make a difference between extremely fulfilling careers and traumatic work experiences, organizational thriving and organizational collapse, sustainable economic development and a cycle of bubbles and crashes. Understanding of this responsibility is the cause of our program commitment to these principles:

Commitment to ethics and responsible organizational practice. Values matter. Individual, organizational, and societal outcomes of our work matter. Commitment to values and to our ethical responsibility in organizational practice is not optional. This commitment is our first guiding principle.

Evidence-based organizational practice. This commitment stems from our ethical commitment, as well as from the empirical nature of our field. Ethical organizational intervention is also an evidence-based intervention, in which practical decisions are 1) based on thoroughly conducted research studies and 2) supported by solid understanding and appropriate interpretation of research.

Simultaneous commitment to organizational interests and employee interests. Sometimes it is assumed that in order to ensure organizational profit/benefit, employees must suffer. Or, that in treating employees well organizations risk their very existence. In our work we strive to demonstrate that it is possible to build thriving, strong, sustainable organizations which bring together thriving, productive, engaged individuals-modern, goal-oriented communities of innovation and commitment to the common vision.

The set of papers selected for our inaugural issue illustrates how the work of students in our program is guided by our principles and by our commitment to both organizational sustainability and individual well-being. Ashly Williams passionately discusses the impact of modern forms of racism, specifically microaggressions, on individuals and organizations, and proposes several practical steps toward reducing the incidence of microaggressions and building inclusive organizations. Kimberly Greene focuses

on another problem that impacts both individuals and organizations – incivility – and discusses several ways in which incivility could be lessened, to both organizational and individual benefit. Finally, Sawyer Pendleton takes on a topic that will likely resonate with many readers, but is not often discussed in organizational psychology literature – student debt as a source of stress for college graduates and potential threat to maximizing their productivity. Sawyer goes on to propose potential mechanisms through which organizations could address the issue of student debt and improve both organizational outcomes and employee well-being.

We believe this issue will contribute to the important work of translating research findings into organizational interventions, which will benefit both individuals and organizations. We encourage our readers to participate in this process and in this conversation–please see our Call for Proposals. We also would love to hear from you through your letters to the editor and e-mails.

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CALL FOR PAPERS:

From Science to Practice: Organizational Psychology Bulletin (OPB) welcomes articles which summarize recent empirical research findings relevant to the field of organizational psychology and suggest practical applications on the basis of research evidence. Articles must be written in simple, yet professional language, and be accessible and relevant to organizational practitioners and members of the general public interested in improving organizational life. In addition to 1000-2000 word (not including references) lead articles, we accept brief reports (300-500 words) on current topics in organizational psychology research and application, and 100-300 Letters to the Editor, which may include reflections on our articles or suggestions for further research and article topics. Please submit manuscripts in APA format.

Modern-Day racism in the workplace: Symbolic diversity or real change?

Ashly Williams

Coca-Cola made headlines when 16 current and former African American and Latino employees filed a racial discrimination suit against the corporate hegemon. The suit claimed that minorities at Coca-Cola are surrounded by a "cesspool of racial discrimination" (Greeenwald, 2012, p. 1). A number of accusations pertaining to a discriminatory work environment were made against the company including inequities in promotional advancement, punitive and retaliatory actions against minorities, and disproportionate dispersion of overtime hours (Greenwald, 2012). Several of the employees reported that racial slurs against minorities were recurrent and had gone unpunished (Marzulli, 2012). Possibly the most shocking part of this suit is that it was filed in 2012, and referred to events occurring during the same period in US history as the election of the first black President.

How much progress did our society make? Reports like these motivate the question of whether we have truly made the kind of racial progress towards equality often presumed. Have we truly experienced real racial change or has discrimination simply undergone a metamorphosis? Many people point towards the election of a black President, or the increased numbers of minorities represented within our organizations, but are these truly indications of progress? Or is this purely symbolic diversity that obscures a pervasive underlying problem and perpetuates denial about the inequalities that

continue to plague our organizations? There is overwhelming evidence that modern day racism persists, and although it doesn't always resemble the overt forms characterized by "old fashioned" racism, in many ways the covert forms of discrimination in organizations may be more harmful due to their insidious and pervasive nature. One recent study found that over a two week time period 78% of the Asian Americans participants experienced a microaggression (Ong et al., 2013).

Since the emergence of the movement towards political correctness, racism has taken on distinctly more subtle and aversive forms. People have begun to guard against the overt forms of racism frowned upon in a politically correct landscape (Deitch et al., 2003). Current research investigating discrimination within the workplace has revealed the disturbing fact that racial microaggressions are frequent, pervasive, and cause significant harm to both individuals and organizations. Microaggresions is a term that has been used to identify many forms of discrimination, but has most commonly been used to refer to the discrimination experienced by racial and ethnic minorities. Within this context Microaggressions can be defined as "commonplace verbal or behavioral indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicates hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 278).

What is a microaggression? Microaggression can further be organized according to subcategories that include *microassualts*, *microinsult*s, and *microinvalidations*. *Microassaults* are most similar to the overt forms of "old fashioned" racism (Sue et al., 2007). Examples of microassaults include explicit racial epithets associated with language more characteristic of the antebellum period (Ong, Burrow, Fuller-Rowel, Ja, & Sue, 2013). *Microinsults* are more covert styles of verbal and nonverbal communication that lack sensitivity towards issues faced by minorities. For example, when an African American employee is promoted within an organization, other employees often believe that the promotion was based upon Affirmative Action rather than intelligence or competency. Employees that then approach the newly promoted individual and question how the job was acquisitioned would be insulting the minority colleague by implying that the promotion was due to something other than intelligence or competency (Sue et al., 2007). Finally, *microinvaldiation* is a form of discrimination that invalidates or disavows the psychological and emotional experience of minorities. For example, it has become widely popular within the mainstream media to accuse minorities of invoking the "race card," this functions to invalidate the subjective psychological and emotional experiences described by minorities (Sue et al., 2007).

Symbolic Diversity or Real Change? Many times people point to the progress that society has made with respect to the more overt forms of racism as evidence that there is racial equality within our country. For example, people often argue that Affirmative Action programs have created equality within the workplace. While hiring disparities have certainly decreased, this does not mean that experiences of discrimination within the workplace have been eradicated. In fact, the more covert forms of discrimination that are prevalent today throughout our organizations are astonishingly frequent. Sometimes these incidences are overlooked due to the inherent covert nature of microaggressions which functions to perpetuate the problem because they are difficult to identify by the perpetrator (Offerman et al 2014). It would be a mistake to dismiss these occurrences as less harmful than overt forms of racism due to the "daily frequency and chronicity, microaggressions likely have a cumulative, inimical effect on health and well-being"(Ong et al., 2013, p. 197). The stealth nature and frequency of discrimination in the form of microaggressions within the workplace directly refutes the argument that Affirmative Action programs have gone far enough to create equality within organizations.

Recently Forbes magazine published an article describing the detrimental outcomes for organizations that ignore race by attempting to adopt a color blind perspective (Nobel , 2013).
The claim of colorblindness among people is often used as a way to express that they view all individuals as the same regardless of skin color. Statements of color blindness often fail to address the underlying attitudes that are far more responsible for covert forms of discrimination. A study on workplace discrimination revealed that people who ascribe to a colorblind worldview are less likely to perceive discrimination within the workplace. People that hold a color blind worldview are therefore likely to be unaware of discrimination in the workplace and even unaware of their own discriminatory behavior.

Fostering a belief that people are all the same and are all treated equally is a form of denial that minimizes the daily discrimination experienced by minorities. Since this worldview denies the very real experiences of minorities, color blindness is itself a microinvalidation (Offerman et al., 2014).

The media has focused extensively on the issue of minorities employing the "race card" within discussions of race relations. The claim that minorities are falsely attributing certain experiences to race is again a form of microinvalidation. The pejorative "race card" denies or invalidates the daily experiences of discrimination minorities face within the workplace (Sue et al., 2007). One study attempted to discover if people really are incorrectly assigning discrimination as the motive behind behavior within the workplace, as the race card supporters would claim. In order to do this the researchers used data previously collected for a completely different study that investigated mistreatment within the workplace. Using this data about mistreatment within the workplace, the researchers were able to examine if there were in fact real differences between the extent of mistreatment experienced by white employees versus black employees. They found that blacks experienced significantly more mistreatment within the workplace, even when the questions for data collection had nothing to do with race. This study demonstrates that blacks are truly being mistreated more often than whites within the workplace, and argues in opposition of the existence of a "race card" (Deitch et al., 2003).

Individuals and organizations are suffering as a result of the blind spot that is created by the prevalence of symbolic diversity, colorblindness, and misguided beliefs about the supposed "race card" which all result in the failure to address actual issues of modern racism. Microaggressions have been linked with negative physical and emotional consequences for minorities (Ong et al., 2013). These consequences affect the overall health of individuals as well as the absenteeism and turnover rates within organizations. Some of the individual-level outcomes include depression, lower self-esteem, and even PTSD (Ong et al., 2013). Also, discrimination within the workplace has been linked with poor job performance (Deitch et al,, 2003). These documented negative consequences strongly suggest the need for organizations to work on solutions for their employees and organizations alike.

Where are we, and where do we go from there?
There is a significant body of research on modern forms of racism and discrimination that suggest initiatives like Affirmative Action, and cultural sensitivity training are not going far enough to combat the problems of discrimination within our organizations (Deitch et al., 2003). Arguments that the symbolic representations of diversity provide evidence of the "race issues solved" ignore the ongoing covert forms of daily discrimination prevalent within the workplace. One suggestion would be to encourage organizations to extend the definition of discrimination to account for microaggresions that are pervasively eroding performance (Deitch et al., 2003). This new definition that addresses both microinvalidiations and microinsults could be incorporated into ongoing diversity training programs, which could functions to bring awareness to the problems which result from microaggessions subtle nature.

Another option is for organizations to begin cultivating cultures of inclusion in order to reduce microaggresions. Organizations attempting to foster more inclusion have begun establishing mentoring programs for all employees which functions to help minorities to begin integrating into organizations in a way that fosters growth along racial lines and inclusion for all employees (Constantine et al, 2008). Creating separate divisions within organizations that solely deal with issues of diversity and inclusion can provide enough staff to track the success of implemented changes following revised training courses. Where separate divisions are not possible, ensuring dedicated, empowered staffing within organizations to focus specifically on issues of diversity and inclusion can provide organizations with the ability to track and maintain momentum following training courses, and better ensure success. Tracking behavioral changes following training has demonstrated success with respect to training initiatives outcomes (Kravitz, 2008). Finally, cooperation between Human Resources departments, legal consultants and training managers can begin to change internal policies to incorporate definitions of microaggressions as a form of discrimination and function to reduce its occurrences (King et al., 2011).

The understanding that discrimination within industry persists despite training and policy efforts helps to explain the continued problems represented by reports like the 2012 Coca-Cola suit (Greenwald, 2012). Organizations need to begin considering more comprehensive approaches to mitigating these forms of discrimination within organizations which is likely to have positive consequences for individuals, organizations and our overall society.

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Anthony is rude to Charlotte…again. Why should you care?

Kimberly M. Greene

What would you do if you observed a rude interaction between two coworkers? Between a coworker and your supervisor? Would you think it was wrong? Would you intervene? Over the last fifteen years, several studies have shown the harmful impact that lack of civility has on individuals and the organization. Incivility negatively impacts organizational net earnings, turnover, customer relations, quality of work, and team morale (Porath & Pearson, 2013; Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 467). Individually, targets and observers experience reduced motivation, creativity, performance, helping behaviors, and organizational loyalty (Lim, Cortina, & Magley, 2008; Pearson & Porath, 2005). Ultimately, violations of workplace civility norms may lead to increasingly aggressive acts from the target and observer (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Porath & Erez, 2009).

Decreased Organizational Outcomes. Still, some might wonder whether it matters if coworkers or supervisors display a lack of regard for others. Perhaps a bit of tension is good for keeping people on their toes? Research provides strong evidence that civility in the workplace matters. Even a single instance of incivility is likely to impact organizational functioning and climate (Porath & Erez, 2009). A recent survey of HR professionals showed that 13% of a manager's time is spent restoring relationships and troubleshooting harmful outcomes of incivility (Porath & Pearson, 2013). Uncivil environments influence customer responses as well. Research has shown that 80% of people are less likely to conduct business with a company if they perceive an employee as rude to their colleagues (Porath &

Pearson, 2013, p.117). Notably, even when "occurrences are rare and followed by apologies, rationalizations, or efforts to make amends (Pearson & Porath, 2005, p.10)," incivility still has negative effects on the organization. Moreover, the tangible effects of incivility are seen in the corrosion of organizational culture, frayed workplace relationships, and diminished organizational outcomes (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Pearson & Porath, 2005, p.8).

Was That Incivility? With 98% of workers experiencing uncivil behavior and 50% of individuals being treated rudely at least once a week (Porath & Pearson, 2013), it is vital for employees, managers, and organizations to understand what qualifies as incivility. In 1999, Andersson and Pearson first introduced incivility as "acting with disregard for others in the workplace, in violation of workplace norms for respect" (Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p.455). Though workplace respect norms vary throughout countries, industries, and organizations, the value respect brings to an organization is fundamental. There is an understanding that decency and ethical practices allow for cooperation amongst a team. When workplace incivility violates those mutual respect norms, the organization and employees suffer (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Examples of workplace incivility include rude and discourteous behaviors, such as pounding one's fist, swearing, or personally debasing, interrupting, and insulting the ideas of another (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Chui & Dietz, 2014; Reich & Hershcovis, 2014, p.3).

How Incivility Hurts the Target. For males and females alike, an unpleasant work environment

negatively impacts the target of the uncivil acts. Schilpzand, De Pater, and Erez (2014) reviewed the literature on incivility and found that prior research supported that affective outcomes for targets of incivility include exhaustion, depression, lower levels of energy, lower affective trust, increased anger, fear, sadness, reduced optimism, and increased levels of stress. The literature review also showed that workplace incivility disturbs targets' personal lives, including decreased levels of well-being, marital satisfaction, and increased levels of work-family conflict (Schilpzand et al., 2014).

Furthermore, research has also revealed that violations of workplace civility norms lead to increasingly aggressive acts (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Anderson and Pearson (1995) described the spiral consequences of workplace incivility, noting that after an instance of incivility, the probable result would be a reciprocal counter-incivility from the target. In turn, increasingly strong responses may then escalate to more harmful aggression (Andersson & Pearson, 1999).

Negative Impact on Observers. It is important to note that targets are not the only individuals affected by incivility. Observers' emotions and

attitudes are also influenced by lack of civility between aggressors and targets (Reich & Hershcovis, 2014). A 2014 study by Reich and Hershcovis noted that observers treated instigators differently, based on their rude behavior. Observers were shown at times to punish an aggressor in work related ways, such as allocating them undesirable work. Aggressors also received less favorable evaluation of their work performance, when rated by observers (Reich & Hershcovis, 2014). Additionally, Anderson and Pearson's research found that

observers might replicate incivility behaviors with their own employees, colleagues, or customers (Andersson and Pearson, 1999, p. 468).

Steps to a Civil Workplace. So, what can an organization do to prevent or correct workplace incivility? Andersson and Pearson suggested the following classic strategies that managers may use to create a civil workplace.

1. Managers should reflect on their behavior, noting any ways in which they may be contributing to a discourteous work environment. Managers may ask employees for feedback regarding their leadership style. What do employees like or dislike? Adjust any behaviors negatively impacting the civility of the office.

2. Focus on hiring team members who give the impression they will positively regard others and act politely.

    a. Utilize multiple interview rounds when recruiting new team members. Include interviewers from varied departments and levels, noting feedback when making hiring decisions.

    b. Use internship programs to learn about candidates' interpersonal tendencies. Evaluate if they fit well with company norms.

    c. Conduct thorough reference checks on candidates, and request references for positions held prior to the most recent ones.

3. Provide opportunities for healthy stress release, including fitness centers, conflict mediators, and human resource hot lines (Andersson & Pearson, 1999).

Additional strategies have been suggested in recent research as well:

4. Set clear policies on civil workplace behavior, consistently addressing violations. Act quickly, holding all levels of employees to the same expectations (Reich & Hershcovis, 2014; Andersson & Pearson, 1999).

5. Conduct trainings on the importance of interventions against incivility. Include content on the unethical nature of deviant behavior and organizational policies to prevent retaliation against intervention (Chui & Dietz, 2014).

With the increased awareness of research findings concerning incivility, would you respond differently to the questions initially posed? What step will you take today to create a more civil workplace in your organization? It is the author's hope that more of us will make a conscious effort to implement key changes in the workplace, to prevent or remedy incivility. And, if necessary, intervene when witnessing a hurtful workplace interaction.

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Reducing stress and increasing employee loyalty: Helping college graduates manage student loan debt.

Sawyer Pendleton

Employee stress has negative impact on both individual and organizational outcomes (Aqeel, Khan & Riaz, 2014; Archuleta, Dale, & Spann, 2013; Nawab & Bhatti, 2011). Employee satisfaction, engagement and productivity often suffer because of stress, and one of the significant sources of stress for recent college graduates is financial worry due to student loans (Archuleta et al., 2013). Can organizations help employees, and perhaps improve organizational outcomes, by addressing this source of stress?

How Much of a Problem is Student Debt? It is estimated that 60% of graduates with bachelor's degrees accumulated an average student loan of $25,000 or more to fund their education. (The Project on student loan debt, 2011). Many college students take on the student loans with the impression that the college experience and gained knowledge will pay off in the end. Students assume a college education will help them receive a more prestigious occupation with higher pay, and many more opportunities. The problem is that this is the old way of the world; to get good grades, go to a good school, and get a good job, now it is much more competitive because many others have bachelor degrees as well.

The unfortunate reality is that many new college graduates currently are unemployed, or underemployed according to their status with a bachelor's degree. Underemployment rates, meaning college graduates working low-paying jobs that do not require a four-year degree were

reported to be at an unbelievable 34.6% (Jones & Schmitt, 2014). This presents many financial struggles for college graduates. Even worse, the first student loan payment may be due before a steady job is obtained. This can result in a loan postponement, which temporarily stops payments but allows for the interest on the loan to continue; ultimately creating more debt for the recipient of the loan. It seems now that what may have appeared as a great opportunity in the beginning is now one of the biggest regrets of many college graduates. The regret of the loan is accompanied by stress about finances.

Financial stress from student loans influences every aspect of the debtor's life; social, personal, work, etc. Some researchers stated that perceived financial well-being is related to one's overall psychological well-being (Archuleta et al., 2013). As college graduates enter the workforce, many expect that the academic degree they worked so hard for will give them an advantage in field that they desire. The statistics show that many college graduates, about 35%, get stuck working the entry level jobs that do not require a bachelor's degree (Janelle et al., 2014).

In order for college graduates to have any chance at meeting the debt obligations, they must take jobs out of necessity, not desire. This can create a great challenge for college graduates with student loans. Taking the entry-level positions, many college graduates only plan to stay short term, which may lead them to not feel a sense of commitment to an organization. If a college graduate is working in an entry level position that

pays minimum wage, they will not have the finances to balance student loan debt payments along with the other basic necessities of everyday life. This burden of debt obligations affects the overall well-being of people and causes stress. The stress over finances may cause college graduates to perceive that they are not being paid what they feel is deserved.

Believing that one is not fairly compensated can result in job dissatisfaction and a lower commitment level to an organization (Nawab & Bhatti, 2011). Researcher Thomas Patton stated, "for an employee to be satisfied he/she must perceive the compensation as; adequate, equitable, balanced, cost effective, secure, incentive providing, and acceptable to the employees" (as cited in Nawab & Bhatti, 2011 p. 27). This may make it difficult for an entry level position to fully satisfy college graduates, in part because of expectations that they placed on the value of the academic degree. Many college graduates expect a job that will fully cover their personal needs, as well as the student loan debt.

The perception of unfair compensation can result in a dedicated employee quitting, which then costs the organization time and money to replace the individual. When an employees are dissatisfied because they identify themselves as underpaid, work productivity may decrease, as opposed to those who feel fairly compensated (Nawab & Bhatti, 2011). In addition, if dissatisfied with a job, employees are more likely to leave if another opportunity produces itself. Both employee dissatisfaction and low commitment can cause dysfunction within organizations, due to the financial struggles that student loan debt places on college graduates.

What Can Organizations Do? Two suggestions below might help organizations increase retention and satisfaction of recent college graduates.

1. **"We pay as you stay".** Organizations can create "we pay as you stay" programs, through which employers or organizations can send a message to employees that they value loyalty. The longer a productive employee with student loan debts stays with an organization, the more tuition reimbursement that employee will receive.

Of course, employees must meet productivity expectations to be eligible for such programs.

2: **"We match you".** Many organizations have employees that are working in positions that have no relevance to the degrees of which the employees graduated. But somewhere in these organizations there are positions that are relevant to these employees' degrees. Organizations can create a "we match you" program. If a position becomes available that has many similarities to a current employee's degree, the organization would notify the employee of the available position. This does not mean that the employee will automatically get the position, but there will be an opportunity to further explore the fit with the position. This will provide additional opportunities for college graduates an opportunity to use the knowledge and skills that they had invested so much to acquire.

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