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PERSPECTIVES ON SCIENCE AND PRACTICE



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INTRODUCTION

From the Editor

The goal of focal articles in *Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice* is to present new ideas or different takes on existing ideas and stimulate a conversation in the form of comment articles that extend the arguments in the focal article or that present new ideas stimulated by those articles. The two focal articles in this issue stimulated a wide range of reactions and a good deal of constructive input.

The Current Issue

In our first article, LeBreton, Scherer, and James offer a new perspective on an issue that has been debated before in industrial–organizational (I–O) journals: The implications of the apparently low level of reliability of widely used measures of job performance for research and practice. They raise concerns about the appropriateness of relying on such measures and about the meaning and the potential inaccuracy of psychometric corrections for this limited reliability. Ten comment articles reply to issues ranging from whether or not the most widely used estimates of reliability are correct and whether or not corrections of this sort are valuable and meaningful to alternate ways of estimating and interpreting the reliability of measures of job performance. As I note below, some of the interchanges were sharper than is usual for this journal, and this deserves some explanation.

In our second article, Tziner, Fein, and Birati argue that current approaches for estimating the impact and utility of interventions in organizations could be substantially improved by incorporating measures of well-being, and they illustrate several such applications of expanded utility models. Five comment articles ask how and whether we can as a field encourage managers to make better use of utility estimates and consider whether the authors of the focal article have gone far enough in their consideration of criteria that should be incorporated into evaluations of organizational interventions.

It would not be possible to publish this journal without the hard work of talented reviewers. I appreciate the help and input of Lisa Saari, Nancy Tippins, and Rob Silzer.

Some Closing Thoughts

This is the final issue for Volume 7 of *Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice*, and I thought it was appropriate to share two observations about the journal. First, this journal would not be a success if readers did not send us a steady stream of comment articles. I am very pleased to tell you that we received 145 comment article submissions in reaction to the eight focal articles we published this year. We average about 18 comment article submissions for each focal article we publish, and I continue to be impressed with the number of articles we receive that make constructive and unique contributions, extending or responding in a substantive way to the arguments made by the authors of the focal articles.

Second, several readers have commented on focal articles that they saw as taking strong stands or pushing an argument harder than they were accustomed to seeing in other journals. Some of them have seen this as off-putting.

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Some of the credit and much of the blame for the tone of focal articles should be attributed to me. A note to a recent author captures my philosophy about the role of focal articles in this journal. I said "I usually ask authors to take as strong a position as the data, theory, etc. will reasonably support (I think of this as 'swinging for the fences'), and to make a reasoned but strong argument for a particular point of view. As I think you know, *IOP* publishes two focal articles per issue, which are posted on the SIOP website for comment, and the last thing we want is an article that leads to a handful of comments that are essentially 'Gee, that was wonderful, and I agree with everything you said.' An article that has a strong point of view is one that will get people thinking." I believe that the strong and steady flow of high-quality comment articles we have received is a concrete indication that the focal articles we published this year accomplished this goal.

The current issue includes some particularly lively exchanges between authors on the topic of statistical corrections. LeBreton, Scherer, and James note "Agreed; would a reliability of .26 be acceptable? No; well then would .36 be allowed? Still no; let's jump to .46. Now are we okay?" Some colleagues, whose opinions I respect, found the tone of comments like this troublesome. Viswesvaran, Ones, Schmidt, Le, and Oh note "The focal article is unfortunately more emotional than rational in tone and conceptually and statistically confused." Some colleagues, whose opinions I also respect, found the tone of comments like this equally troublesome. I disagree.

I have a great deal of confidence in the discernment and judgment of the readership of this journal, and I believe that they are every bit as good at sorting the wheat from the chaff as I am. I have gone out of my way to encourage spirited discussion, and sometimes authors put a bit more topspin on their comments than they might have otherwise done, I think little harm is done in the long run. On the contrary, strong claims, regardless of whether they are made in a feature article or a comment, encourage critical thinking. In the end, I think a strong set of presentations advance our understanding more than a more subtle and polite set. I subscribe to the old show business axiom that there is no such thing as bad publicity, and by extension, there is no such thing as bad arguments, even if they are sometimes sharply stated.

The LeBreton, Scherer and James article, and the comment articles it stimulated illustrate a tendency I have observed in many other contexts—that is, that methodological articles stimulate particularly strong disagreements, sometimes over quite minor points. Perhaps methodology and theology are not so different after all. Given this, it is worth noting the surprising amount of common ground, even among authors who seem at first glance to violently disagree:

1. There is broad agreement that corrections can be useful but that the appropriate use of these corrections depends very much on the inference people hope to make.
2. There is no real doubt that .52 is the average value for interrater correlations, but there are many questions about what this means.
3. There is no real doubt that performance ratings are not the sorts of performance measures we wish we had, but there is real doubt about what to do about this fact.
4. It is widely understood that job performance is multidimensional, but the implications of this multidimensionality for evaluating the measurement of job performance is still to be worked out.
5. Validity studies and validity coefficients serve many purposes, and arguments over which one of these is correct or should have primacy are likely to be a fool's errand.

Like the practitioners of theology, methodologists too often claim certainty about unverifiable propositions, but on the whole, I was impressed by the number of authors who were willing to acknowledge

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the complexity of the issues discussed in this set of articles. I hope that when you read these articles, you will see beyond the sometimes strident tones and develop an appreciation for the sophisticated thinking that characterized so many of the points made in the focal article and the commentaries.

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