Introduction
Industrial-Organizational psychology (I/O psychology) focuses on the application of psychological principles to the workplace. Research in I/O psychology has been applied to the fields of psychology, education, and business, providing practitioners and leaders with information to better improve organizational practices such as employee selection, while highlighting the best ways to ensure positive interpersonal dynamics within the office (e.g., leadership, motivation). I/O psychologists work specifically with the human components of an organization; in the role of scientist-practitioner; I/O psychologists conduct research and work directly with organizational management (Aamodt, 2010). I/O psychologists utilize a variety of other branches of psychology, including but not limited to social, cognitive, and behavioral psychology.

In 1945 the American Psychological Association (APA) established Division 14, which is now referred to as the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP). The stated mission of the SIOP is “to enhance human well-being and performance in organizational and work settings by promoting the science, practice, and teaching of industrial-organizational psychology,” which it does through online resources, annual conferences, webinars and other training programs (Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 2012). Although they operate as a division within the APA, the SIOP is an independent, self-governed organization that provides information for both individuals and organizations through a variety of mediums. Despite starting with only 130, SIOP membership now exceeds 6,000 and continues to be a valuable resource for professionals and students who are interested in information pertaining to everything from business strategy to talent management (Aamodt, 2010; Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 2012).

Definition and Conceptualization
I/O psychology takes a scientific approach towards issues including, “talent management, coaching, assessment, selection, training, organizational development, performance and work-life balance” (Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 2012). The growing field of I/O psychology involves both the industrial (e.g., hiring practices, training) and organizational (e.g., employee satisfaction, leadership) approaches toward workplace issues. Research findings are applied to the organizational setting with the goal of improving the well-being and performance of individuals, while ensuring organizational success.

Keywords
SIOP, industrial, organizational, workplace, employer, employee, business, leadership

Traditional Debates
In the late 1920s and early 30s, the now infamous Hawthorne Studies were conducted in a Chicago electric plant to determine the relationship between working conditions (e.g., wages and lighting) and employee performance. Despite their initial focus, the results of the study established a relationship between managerial attention and employee productivity (i.e., employee productivity increased as a result of being monitored; Aamodt, 2010; Freedheim & Weiner, 2003). As one of the pioneering studies in the field, Hawthorne’s results inspired research examining employer/employee relations and employee attitudes, which had not previously been a focus (Aamodt, 2010).
In the 1950s and 60s the field of I/O psychology became focused on issues diversity and fair practices (Freedheim & Weiner, 2003). During the civil rights movement in the 1960s, research in I/O psychology was shaped by the need for businesses to develop fair selection techniques and to implement sensitivity training to combat employee biases (Aamodt, 2010; Freedheim & Weiner, 2003). This refocusing towards workplace equality meant was in line with much of newly the established civil rights laws. To ensure the legality of what they espoused, I/O psychologists at the time were cautious in their promotion of a very limited variety of hiring practices (Aamodt, 2010).

The field shifted focus again after renowned behavioral psychologist B.F. Skinner published *Beyond Freedom & Dignity* in 1971. Skinner’s publication led to an increase in the use of behavior modification techniques within the field of business. The 1970s played host to an emergence of theories on the behavior of employees in the workplace (Aamodt, 2010). By the end of the decade, many organizations began to center on the best way to serve and evaluate the individual (Aamodt, 2010; Freedheim & Weiner, 2003).

The 1980s became known as the “Health Decade” due to research topics focusing on stress, health, well-being, and issues affecting the work environment (Freedheim & Weiner, 2003). During the 1980s and 90s, there was a heightened interest in the impact of the family life on the employee, as well as the effect of leisure activities available to the worker (Aamodt, 2010). The research marked a shift towards concerns for the worker in a way that promoted the well-being of the company as a whole. Interest in diversity reemerged the 1990s, given that employers were hiring from a global marketplace. Culture, ethnicity, race, gender and age became important variables to the I/O psychologist (Freedheim & Weiner, 2003).

**Critical Debates**

Many debates involving the workforce, both modern and in years past, can be mediated by the research conducted within I/O psychology. One such debate is over the role of women in leadership roles, and what effect they may have on a given company. Recent research has found that women are overrepresented in “glass-cliff” positions, namely those leadership roles within a company that may be facing crises. There is evidence to suggest that certain leadership traits such as understanding and tactfulness, that are frequently associated with women, tend to be significantly more desirable in times of crisis (Association for Psychological Science, 2012). When evaluating hypothetical positions, women tend to place much greater emphasis on the importance of social resources (e.g., employee support), than did men, who tended to put more value into financial resources (e.g., investment from management). These findings may signify that there are certain gender stereotypes about leadership that men and women alike have internalized. This debate revolves around the proposal of whether women might be more likely than men to accept leadership roles during a time of crisis, potentially jeopardizing their careers. Inherently weighty, research on this “glass-cliff” may prove to be particularly beneficial for companies experiencing crises, or in helping to develop the contingency plans revolving around allocation of resources and support (e.g., social or financial) if and when they were to face one (Association for Psychological Science, 2012).
Finally, and possibly most important is the contrast between the two sides of I/O psychology—the industrial perspective and the organizational perspective. While frequently paired together, industrial and organizational psychology emphasize different aspects of the organizational setting. When analyzing a given company, industrial psychologists seek best practices in terms of the functioning, i.e., how to make the company function more efficiently (King, 2008). The process involves a focus on figuring out what positions are needed and their intrinsic value; how to hire for the job, how to train that hire, and finally, how to determine the quality of work of each hire (King, 2008). The focus in industrial psychology is on issues such as determining the best ways to allocate a company’s personnel resources and ensuring a safe working environment.

Organizational psychology delves deeper into the relationships that exist within a company. Areas of research in organizational psychology tend to be focused on worker satisfaction, relationships with coworkers, and more generally on the person and how he or she interacts within the environment. While the economic results are the baseline by which the efficacy of a company is frequently measured, organizational psychologists would urge companies to focus on factors of what keeps employees satisfied (King, 2008). An employee’s devotion to their work, and their feelings about the importance of the work, might greatly impact company output. Theories on management styles and approaches have been well developed and serve as a tool by which managers can learn to best engage their employees.

The work done in I/O psychology has attempted to look at both of the aforementioned approaches to help businesses, big and small, succeed. Research has found that satisfied workers tend to work more productively, so understanding not only how to ensure employees work more efficiently (i.e., industrial) while feeling satisfied in the process (i.e., organizational) can make a world of difference (King, 2008).

**International Relevance**

Many businesses now operate globally and must take into consideration how to best implement culturally sensitive practices. Developing methods that will allow companies to select, train, and ultimately communicate with employees throughout the world will facilitate this global expansion (Silzer & Cober, 2010). For an organization to operate with optimal efficiency, issues over philosophical, religious, ethnic and other differences will need to be mediated for their expansion and maintenance of a worldwide presence. Aamodt (2010) underlines the importance of I/O psychology moving forward, as wealthier nations tend to export jobs that can be completed at a lower cost in developing countries. As jobs are moved abroad, like we frequently see in manufacturing sectors, there is a greater need for highly trained human resources managers that will be able to address the variety of issues that will arise (Aamodt, 2010).

**Practical Relevance**

The field of I/O psychology revolves around the applied practical relevance of psychology in the business world. Among all the aforementioned focuses of the field, each has played a role in the development of the modern workplace. I/O psychology has worked to identify workplace motivation, efficient hiring techniques, desirable leadership skills, and components of nearly every other facet of business. As referenced in the introduction, the field of I/O psychology serves as a multi-pronged approach in that most within the branch focus on both research and real-world application.
Of the many practicalities, two seem to have special relevance currently and moving forward: the aging workforce and the use of new technology in the workforce. As people live longer, the age of retirement changes and new challenges arise with managing that aging workforce (Rupp, 2012). Issues on curtailing job requirements to better suit aging employees, focusing on their changing motivators, and finally on their evolving needs are likely to be addressed. Next is the issue of the burgeoning use of technology in the workplace. As it becomes commonplace, technological advances pose an interesting dilemma and opportunity. I/O psychologists have been working to better understand the role technology can play throughout--from the process of hiring to workforce evolution. Researchers will need to make use of more practical electronic media to provide web-based testing, assessment, and training to employees (Silzer & Cober, 2010). As development continues, however, cultural differences and technological availability may pose an interesting hurdle and redirect future research.

**Future Directions**

As the professional world around continues to develop, so does the need for more comprehensive and expansive research in I/O psychology. Researchers have already identified some areas that should remain the focus for future work, including in the development of labor unions (Freedheim & Weiner, 2003). The role and importance of labor unions is an issue that has remained politically divisive, but research should not remain sidelined. The dynamics of an organization or company shift to accommodate for a unionized workforce, and I/O psychology has a role in quantifying and analyzing those dynamics to better ensure a more productive future. Silzer & Cober (2010) believe that I/O psychology will shift away from issues pertaining to the industrial side and begin to focus more on issues of organizational and leadership development. This research has and will most likely focus on issues such as job satisfaction, leadership methods, and overall workplace satisfaction. As with this transition, there persists the need to remain fluid and follow the needs of businesses and people alike. Following the “green movement,” I/O psychologists will need to conduct research and work on implementing more environmentally friendly practices in a way that benefits the company and society (Silzer & Cober, 2010).

Moving forward, the role for the SIOP will remain equally focused. Among other things, SIOP will likely address the widening gap between research and practice, ensuring that the findings of modern research lead to real world application that ultimately benefits the field and businesses alike. With this, and the unique research being conducted, SIOP will work with the field to help distinguish it from other professions (Silzer & Cober, 2011).

**References**


**Online resources**

SIOP Website

Video on Google's Workplace Happiness

APA Website on Workplace Issues