

INDUSTRIAL-ORGANIZATIONAL (I-O) PSYCHOLOGY

A Four-Lesson Unit Plan for High School Psychology Teachers

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CONTENTS AND PROCEDURAL TIMELINE

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This unit aligns with the following content standards and learning targets of the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula* (APA, 2022):

Industrial-Organizational (I-O) Psychology: A Four-Lesson Unit Plan for High School Psychology Teachers

PILLAR	STANDARD AREA	CONTENT STANDARDS AND LEARNING TARGETS	SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS AND ACTIVITIES
Scientific Inquiry & Research Methods	Scientific Inquiry & Research Methods	Content Standard 1: The nature of psychological science 1.4 Identify careers individuals can pursue in psychological science.	Lesson One Content Outline Activity 1.1: What is Your Dream Job?
Social & Personality	Social	Content Standard 2: Social influence 2.1 Explain how the presence of other people can affect behavior. 2.2 Describe how intergroup dynamics influence behavior.	Lesson Three Content Outline Activity 3.1: How Do You Behave in a Group? Lesson Four Content Outline Activity 4.1: What Does Leadership Look Like? Critical Thinking Exercise 4.1: Leadership in Pop Culture. Activity 4.2: Assessing Your School's Culture Critical Thinking Exercise 4.2: Changing Your School's Culture
Social & Personality	Motivation & Emotion	Content Standard 1: Influences of motivation 1.1 Explain biological, cognitive, and social factors that influence motivation.	Lesson One Content Outline Activity 1.1: What is Your Dream Job?
Social & Personality	Motivation & Emotion	Content Standard 2: Domains of motivated behavior in humans 2.2 Identify motivational factors that influence achievement and affiliation.	Lesson One Content Outline Activity 1.1: What is Your Dream Job? Critical Thinking Exercise 3.1: Which Team Would you Choose?
Mental & Physical Health	Health	Content Standard 1: Stress and coping 1.1 Define stress as a psychophysiological response to the environment. 1.3 Explain physiological and psychological consequences of stress for health and wellness. 1.4 Explain physiological, cognitive, and behavioral strategies to deal with stress.	Lesson Two Content Outline Activity 2.1: Stress at School
Mental & Physical Health	Health	Content Standard 2: Psychological science promotes mental and physical health and wellness 2.2 Identify evidence-based strategies that promote health and wellness.	Lesson Two Content Outline Activity 2.1: Stress at School

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Introduction and Document Use

Industrial-Organizational (I-O) Psychology is the scientific study of people at their jobs. This field is not about being a therapist at work. Instead, the field has two main goals: 1) to help people perform better at their jobs, and 2) to help people enjoy their jobs more. I-O psychologists work to achieve these goals in many ways, such as focusing on the “business” side of things. On the other hand, another way I-O psychologists do their job is by focusing on the “people” side of things. This part of the field looks at topics such as motivation, leadership, and stress.

This lesson plan is designed to teach a broad range of concepts related to industrial-organizational (I-O) psychology (i.e., work psychology).

How to use this document:

We recognize that many using this lesson plan may have limited training on I-O psychology. Therefore, we suggest a specific strategy for using this document:

- Rather than teachers needing to cover all four lessons, we recommend the teacher choosing one or more they believe the students will be most interested in (depending on time constraints).
- We have also included extra sections after called “Instructor Background.” These sections give more information on a topic than is included in a lesson plan outline. Teachers may find this background section interesting to help prepare them to teach the topic, or they may skip it if they wish.

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Proposed number of days/hours for lesson:

Number of total teaching hours: 4 hours

- Each lesson is projected to take approximately 1 hour (though could also be done in a 50-minute class period)

LESSON 1

Job Motivation

GENERAL OVERVIEW

A person has to be motivated to be good at their job, and they will probably not enjoy their experience at work if they are not motivated. However, what does it mean to be motivated? Motivation is at times hard to put into words though many know it when they see it.

DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

- **Job Motivation:** the form, direction, and intensity one initiates work-related behaviors toward
- **Job Characteristics Theory:** this theory highlights that how a job is designed impacts how motivated a worker is in that job
- **Skill Variety:** the different activities, tasks and abilities required by a job
- **Task Identity:** how much a job requires an employee to complete a task from start to finish
- **Task Significance:** how much job responsibilities have a broader positive impact on others
- **Autonomy:** how much an employee has control and decision-making over their job
- **Feedback:** how much information an employee receives about their performance
- **Goal-Setting Theory:** setting SMART goals can motivate employees

CONTENT OUTLINE

Job Motivation

- Different people have different levels of motivation at work.
- Different theories of motivation try to explain what motivates people at work.

Job Characteristics Theory

- There are five aspects of a job organizational leaders can adjust to make the job more motivating.
- **Skill Variety:** how much a job requires the employee to use a variety of different skills
 - » *Example:* Instead of just working the cash register, let employees rotate between the cash register, waiting tables, and cooking as well.
- **Task Identity:** having each employee complete the beginning, middle, and end of a task
 - » *Example:* Instead of cooking only one part of a meal in a restaurant and combining it with what others are cooking, have one person cook an entire meal.
- **Task Significance:** connecting what an employee is doing to why it is important
 - » *Example:* Share customer feedback with the employees so they can see how their job helped make other people happy.
- **Autonomy:** giving employees some level of control in how they do their work
 - » *Example:* Let employees choose what section of the restaurant they would like to work in, or the best way to stock the supplies.
- **Feedback:** telling employees what they are doing well and what they can improve on
 - » *Example:* Talk to employees regularly about what they are doing well and should continue doing as well as what they can change to improve.

Optional Video Resource (6 minutes) - [Theories of Motivation: Job Characteristics Model](#)

Goal-Setting Theory

- SMART goals are more motivating than “do your best” goals.
- **S**pecific: a goal should be specific in what the employee needs to accomplish rather than general in order to be motivating.
- **M**easurable: a goal should have a clear and objective way of determining if/when it reaches completion in order to be motivating.
- **A**ttainable: a goal should be difficult so that it really pushes employees but not impossible to achieve in order to be motivating.
- **R**elevant: a goal should clearly relate to the employee’s job as well as the organization’s priorities in order to be motivating.
- **T**ime-Bound: a goal should have clear deadlines that delineate when it is due in order to be motivating.

[*Activity 1.1: What is Your Dream Job?*](#) can be completed at this point.

INSTRUCTOR BACKGROUND: Job Motivation

Motivation is a topic that is studied more broadly than just by I-O psychologists, and much of the research on general motivation also applies to the workplace (for instance, there is a lot of research applying Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to one's job). Additionally, there are a number of theories and approaches to job motivation the field of I-O Psychology specifically uses; below we highlight two.

Job Characteristics Theory: The general idea behind job characteristics theory is that the way organizations design a job can be motivating or demotivating for employees (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). At times, we can think of motivation as just something inherent to a person and therefore unchangeable – and there is a component of this. However, there are things organizations can do to help promote motivation. Specifically, job characteristics theory suggests five factors that organizations can modify when designing someone's work.

Skill Variety: Some jobs are routine and only require a limited number of activities that an employee repeats. Research suggests that this is typically less motivating. Instead, organizations should design a job to require a variety of different skills to keep the employee engaged.

Task Identity: At times, an employee may be required to perform just one part of a task and another employee (or employees) complete the rest. A better way to motivate an employee is to let them complete an entire task so they see how all the pieces fit together.

Task Significance: Everyone wants to feel like their job is meaningful and helps others. Organizations should design jobs in such a way as to make this clear. At times, the impact may be less obvious, but leaders can help explain the connection to employees to motivate them.

Autonomy: Employees are more motivated when they have control over their work. Of course, this is not always possible or easy because some tasks must follow a procedure. However, giving employees some level of control will lead to larger gains in motivation.

Feedback: Employees are also more motivated when they know how they are doing and if they are performing well or not. Some tasks can inherently give feedback (i.e., creating a product and seeing that it works) but leaders can give feedback too.

Job characteristics theory originally included other aspects to the model (such as psychological states that mediate the process). However, research has not supported this, so the more important idea is to keep in mind that motivation need not only be an internal individual difference specific to employees. Instead, there are things organizations can do to help promote this among their workforce.

Goal-Setting Theory: Goal-setting theory (Locke et al., 1981) is another theory that organizations and leaders can use to motivate employees (though this is something employees can participate in as well). Simply put, goal-setting theory suggests that when employees have a well-developed goal, they are more motivated and perform better than if they are given no goal or just a general goal to “do your best.” Research also suggests that employees are even more motivated when they can help create the goal (instead of just a boss telling an employee what to do). However, what does a “well-developed” goal mean? Research says there are five factors that make a SMART goal (i.e., a motivating goal; see list on previous page).

Research Spotlight: *One study looked at this in the context of fitness apps (Liu & Willoughby, 2018). How can goal-setting theory help make these apps as effective as possible? In this study, 50 young adults all used a fitness app to track their diet and exercise for two weeks. The experimenter randomly assigned half of the users to receive a goal-setting text message reminder and the other half received a reminder email without any goal setting in it. Those that received the goal-setting reminder logged more physical activities, liked the app more, and felt better about themselves compared to those who did not receive the goal-setting reminders.*

A challenge with goal-setting theory is that it is not always easy (or possible) to condense modern job tasks into SMART goals. For instance, think about a high school teacher. One SMART goal could be “create a lesson plan for Thursday's class” and the principles explained above could easily apply. Another SMART goal could be “grade all the students' tests by Friday.”

On the other hand, what about a goal of “help ensure students are knowledgeable about the topic and can apply what they learned.” This is clearly an important goal, but it is not very specific – and measurement can of course be a challenge. The trick to goal-setting theory is to get creative on how to make the SMART-est goals possible for the specific job.

LESSON 2

Stress at Work

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Work can be a stressful place at times. Organizations can minimize the amount of job stress someone experiences, and individuals have many resources they themselves can use to reduce their stress – but sometimes, feeling stressed out at work is inevitable.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

- **Job Stressors:** things at work that cause stress for an employee
- **Role Ambiguity:** feeling uncertain about what you are supposed to do for your job
- **Information Overload:** feeling overwhelmed by being exposed to too much information
- **Work-Life Balance:** aspects of one's home life and work life interacting with each other
- **Interpersonal Challenges:** social tension between people at work
- **Evaluation Apprehension:** anxiety over the thought of being evaluated at work
- **Job Strains:** the negative effects of stress at work
- **OPTIONAL**
 - » **Primary stress intervention** – stopping stress at work before it happens
 - » **Secondary stress intervention** – stopping stress at work while it is happening
 - » **Tertiary stress intervention** – helping employees recover from stress after it happens

CONTENT OUTLINE

Job Stressors

- **Role Ambiguity:** confusion over what to do on your job or how to it
- **Information Overload:** too much information at one time
- **Work-Life Balance:** stress from work and life outside of work affecting each other
- **Interpersonal Challenges:** fights or disagreement among employees
- **Evaluation Apprehension:** thinking and worrying about receiving feedback

Job Strains

- **Physiological:** job strains that are physical or biological in nature
 - » *Example:* job stress can lead to becoming physically ill, such as a headache or upset stomach. Long-term stress can lead to bigger problems such as heart disease.
- **Psychological:** job strains that are mental in nature
 - » *Example:* job stress can lead to employees being in a bad mood and feeling down. Long-term stress can lead to bigger problems such as anxiety, panic attacks, or depression.
- **Behavioral:** job strains that are an action an employee does in response to the stressor
 - » *Example:* job stress can result in employees skipping work, coming in late, putting in less effort at work, or even quitting their job.

Optional Video Resource (10 minutes) - [What Causes Burnout at Work?](#)

Stress Interventions (Optional)

- **Primary Stress Intervention:** proactively changing some aspect of the workplace to try to stop stress from happening before it even starts
 - » *Employee Example:* if an employee knows deadlines make them stressed, they can start each month by writing out a detailed schedule to make sure they do not miss deadlines – and therefore do not become stressed.
 - » *Organization Example:* if certain shifts are stressful because they are busy and customers demand quicker service, the boss can change the schedule so more employees are working – and therefore they do not become stressed because they can handle the work.
- **Secondary Stress Intervention:** while someone is currently experiencing stress, changing some aspect of the situation to alleviate the stress as it happens
 - » *Employee Example:* if angry customers cause stress for an employee, they can stop what they are doing and take deep breaths to try to calm down.
 - » *Organization Example:* organizations can put up signs around the workplace reminding people to get up, walk around, and stretch whenever they are feeling stressed.
- **Tertiary Stress Intervention:** after a person experiences stress, do something to try to alleviate the strains a person feels and heal from the stress
 - » *Employee Example:* after a long and stressful day at work, employees can give themselves a treat by doing something they enjoy (such as eating ice cream).
 - » *Organization Example:* organizations can offer services for stressed employees to have a trained counselor to talk to (such as an Employee Assistance Program).

Optional Resources - [SIOP's Top 10 Work Trends](#) (Trends may relate to job stress and employee well-being)

[Activity 2.1: Stress at School](#) can be completed at this point.

INSTRUCTOR BACKGROUND: Stress at Work

Most people spend more time working than any other activity they do – that is a lot of time to feel stressed out. Stress at work can also affect a person's home life (and vice versa) so it is an important topic to think about and address in the workplace..

Job Stressors (from Truxillo et al., 2016): A job stressor is something that causes stress for a person at work. Many things can be a stressor at a person's job. Below, we highlight a small sample – but keep in mind there are more than are listed here!

Role Ambiguity: If a person is unclear about what they are supposed to do on their job or how to do their job, it can be stressful.

Information Overload: Too much information can be stressful for a person, so overwhelming employees with information can backfire on leaders.

Work-Life Balance: Stress from work can affect one's life outside of work (and vice versa), and sometimes work or life can take over so a person does not have time for the other.

Interpersonal Challenges: When people fight with or just get in a disagreement with their coworkers or even their boss, it can be stressful and make the workplace unpleasant.

Evaluation Apprehension: Sometimes, getting negative feedback can be stressful, and sometimes it can be just stressful thinking about it and worrying about the feedback you will receive.

Focus on Diversity: *One particular interpersonal challenge that can be very stressful is discrimination based on someone's race, gender, or other part of identity. Prejudice unfortunately happens in the workplace and it can cause many problems for organizations and individuals. One study looked at bullying in the workplace (Attell et al., 2017). The study found that bullying at work caused stress, but having support from your coworkers helped. However, the study also found that women and African Americans received less support by their coworkers - so they therefore experienced more stress.*

Keep in mind that something that might be stressful for one person but not stressful (or even motivating) for another person. Sometimes, stressors are broken up into two types. A *hindrance stressor* is a negative stressor that is difficult to deal with, such as the examples above. On the other hand, a *challenge stressor* is something that actually pushes you to try harder and motivates you. For instance, having a tight deadline to finish a project might motivate you to work hard and get it done. If you have a demanding boss who has high standards that might motivate you to work hard in order to get good feedback.

Research Spotlight: *One study looked at how job stressors affected employees over time (Ángulo & Osca, 2012). This study examined 130 employees in a car manufacturing plant. The experimenters measured the participants' job stressors and then one year later contacted them again to measure how they were doing. What they found was that participants who felt some form of role ambiguity or information overload were much less satisfied with their jobs one year later. However, they found that people who used time management skills were not as affected by role ambiguity!*

Job Strains (from Truxillo et al., 2016): As discussed, there are many job stressors. The effect job stressors have is called *job strain*. There are many kinds of negative job strains and they can have a big impact on people's work lives.

Job strains can be a real problem for employees and organizations. Many people think they should just be tough and push through it – but this is dangerous! It is an organization's responsibility to take care of its employees; if it does not, the employees will leave and go somewhere that will!

Stress Interventions: Job strains can be a real problem for employees. Luckily, there are things employees and organizations can do to address this issue. In the section above, we focus on three types of interventions that can help alleviate stress. As you will see, the difference between the three depends on when you use them.

Please note: "stress interventions" is less traditionally included in I-O discussions about stress, but students often find it interesting to think about how they can reduce stress. For this reason, we include it here but mark it as "optional."

LESSON 3

Working with Others in Teams

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Most work in organizations today is done in groups or teams. However, assigning tasks that require working together can be challenging at times. Research shows there are many factors that go into what makes a successful team at work.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

- **Demographic Diversity:** how much each member of the team differs in background
- **Cognitive Diversity:** how much each member of the team differs in thoughts
- **Team Mental Model:** all the team members agreeing on how to work together
- **Group Conflict:** interpersonal disagreements among team members
- **Team Performance:** how well the team accomplishes its goal
- **Team Viability:** how much the team wants to work together after the task is done

CONTENT OUTLINE

Critical Thinking Exercise 3.1: Which Team Would You Choose? can start this lesson.

Team Inputs

- Characteristics members bring to the start of a team project.
- **Demographic Diversity:** differences across people often (but NOT always) visible
 - » Examples: race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability
- **Cognitive Diversity:** differences across people in how they think or what they believe
 - » Examples: values, beliefs, skills, abilities, knowledge

Team Processes

- Interactions team members go through to complete their task
- **Team Mental Model:** each member of the team sharing an understanding of how to work
- **Group Conflict:** disagreements and tension among team members

Optional Video Resource (8 minutes) - [Fostering Psychological Safety: Creating a Safe Workplace](#)

Team Outputs

- The outcomes of a team; what happens after they are done
- **Team Performance:** whether or not a team accomplishes the task it was set out to do
- **Team Viability:** whether or not a team wants to continue working together

Optional Video Resource (3 minutes) - [The Best Teams have this Secret Weapon](#)

Activity 3.1: How Do You Behave in a Group? can be completed at this point.

INSTRUCTOR BACKGROUND: Working with Others in Teams

Groups and Teams: A team is an arrangement of people who come together to do one or more common goals; they are interdependent and function in an organizational context. There are many types of ways that teams can do work. For example, in a company they may utilize *project teams*, which are teams created for a particular problem. Once the team solves that problem, they may disband, or they may focus on yet another problem within the organization. *Production or service teams* are another example of types of teams; these teams focus on producing a tangible output or providing a service to customers. *Virtual teams* are teams whose members are not located in the same place. These teams may have team members who may be in different states or even countries.

If you think about the many aspects of your world and think about the services you either receive or the things you interact with, you will start to notice the prevalence of teams. For example, a team may serve you food when you eat in a restaurant, a team of healthcare providers may be treating you for an injury, a team has built the car you might drive, and there is a team working together any time you fly.

Teamwork: For teams to be effective, they must successfully perform both task work and teamwork. *Task work* involves the specific tasks to achieve the team goal. Task work represents work-related tasks and even expertise related activities (e.g., serving food, doing a surgical procedure, building a car, or flying a plane). *Teamwork*, on the other hand, is the shared behaviors, attitudes, and cognitions that are necessary for teams to accomplish these tasks. It can be helpful to think about the experience of working with a team in terms of inputs, processes, and outputs.

Team Inputs: Even before you start working in a team, there are factors that affect how well the team works. One of the biggest inputs that matters for teams is group composition: the make-up of who is on a team. In today's society, diversity is an important topic that influences many aspects of our lives, and teams are no different. In the study of teams in the workplace, we talk about two "types" of diversity: demographic and cognitive.

Keep in mind that although on paper, demographic and cognitive diversity sound like two different things, the line between them is often blurry. For instance, two different cultures (something we often associate with *demographic diversity*) may value different things (something we often associate with *cognitive diversity*). In addition, something like sexual orientation (something we often associate with demographic diversity) may not be visible to others. Therefore, the distinction between these two types of diversity is a general guideline and not an exact rule.

Research Spotlight: *Does diversity help or hurt teams? One study says the answer is complicated (Harrison et al., 2002). The study looked at 144 different student teams working on projects for their classes. They found that demographic diversity could cause tension and difficulties in teams at first because working with people that are different from you can feel uncomfortable. However, over time, this difficulty goes away and instead teams benefit from having people from different backgrounds. Cognitive diversity can be helpful for coming up with ideas and new perspectives (because people have different skills, abilities, and values). However, the study found that because teams with cognitive diversity have people that think differently, sometimes that could make it difficult to communicate and coordinate with each other. Like many things in life, there are advantages and challenges - but if set up correctly, diversity can be a strong asset to a team!*

Team Processes: Once the team has been set up, it starts working together on its task. What processes do teams go through to do their work? I-O psychologists study many team processes in order to understand what makes teams work. Here, we will focus on two.

Team Mental Model: each member of the team having a shared understanding of how to work. *Why does it matter?* If team members are not on the same page, they will not be able to work together well to accomplish their goal. A team mental model has two dimensions: task and social. From a task perspective, everyone has to agree on the best way to accomplish the work. From a social perspective, everyone has to agree to the same norms (often unspoken) about how best to treat each other interpersonally.

Group Conflict: disagreements and tension among team members. *Why does it matter?* If team members are in conflict with each other, they may not be able to work together well to accomplish their goal. Conflict has two dimensions: *task* and *social*. Team members may be in conflict about how to accomplish the task, and/or team members may have interpersonal conflict. Although some may wish to avoid conflict, it is not always bad. Sometimes, conflict can be good; it can help come to new and better solutions. For instance, if two people are disagreeing about how to approach a task, they can work together to figure out a way to incorporate both their ideas and thus have an even stronger outcome. Related to team conflict, is the concept of *psychological safety* - the degree to which group members feel they can speak up and ask questions without being embarrassed and/or reprimanded. Psychological safety is associated with information sharing, seeking information, engagement, and performance.

There are a lot of moving parts when it comes to a team - it is not just doing the task! However, these extra aspects can help elevate teams and potentially result in them performing better than any one person could.

Team Outputs: How do you determine if a team was “successful” or not? What is the mark of a “good” team? As we will see, it is a bit more complicated than how you would determine if an individual performed well. Here, we will focus on two team outputs.

Team Performance: whether or not a team accomplishes the task it was set out to do. *Why does it matter?* A team is put together in order to accomplish a task, and so in many ways, this is the first thing we look for in order to determine if a team was successful or not.

Team Viability: whether or not a team wants to continue working together. *Why does it matter?* For most teams, accomplishing the task is not great by itself if the members had a negative experience and do not want to keep working together. Most teams need to stay together, so team performance without team viability is a short-term win but a long-term problem.

A common theme in this teams section is that there are task and social components to everything we do. Judging the effectiveness of a team is no different; we have to make sure we are paying attention to both in order to be a success as a team!

LESSON 4

Organizational Dynamics

GENERAL OVERVIEW

In addition to researching individual workplace factors (e.g., motivation) and group dynamics (e.g., teamwork), I-O psychology also examines organization-wide factors. Leadership and organizational culture can both have large-scale influences on the entire workplace.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

- **Leadership:** the process of influencing a group to achieve a common goal
- **Trait Theory:** there are specific characteristics that all leaders have
- **Skills Approach:** leaders have skills and abilities that one can develop
- **Behavioral Approach:** leaders exhibit unique behaviors
- **Situational Approach:** leaders must adapt their approach to their followers
- **Contingency Theory:** leaders adapt their approach to their situation
- **Organizational Culture:** the set of shared values which determines how a group perceives, thinks about, and reacts to its environment
- **Artifacts:** the physical manifestation of an organization's culture
- **Espoused Values:** the explicitly stated values and norms of an organization
- **Basic Assumptions:** taken for granted organizational values which serve as unspoken rules and guide organizational behavior

CONTENT OUTLINE

[*Activity 4.1: What Does Leadership Look Like?*](#) can be completed to open the lesson.

Leadership

- **Trait Theory:** there are specific characteristics that all leaders have
 - » *Examples:* intelligence, extroversion
- **Skills Approach:** leaders have skills and abilities that one can develop
 - » *Examples:* technical skills, problem-solving skills
- **Behavioral Approach:** leaders exhibit unique behaviors
 - » *Examples:* oriented, relationship-orientated, passive, transformational
- **Situational Approach:** leaders adapt their approach to their followers
 - » *Note:* Unlike the theories that came before it, this approach to leadership focuses on both the leader and the followers

Optional Video Resource (5 minutes) - [*Ten Leadership Theories in Five Minutes*](#)

[*Critical Thinking Exercise 4.1: Leadership in Pop Culture*](#) can be completed at this point.

Organizational Culture

- Shared concepts among employees that influence individual and organizational behavior.
- **Artifacts:** tangible manifestations of the culture; the most visible aspects of a culture
 - » *Examples:* a school's mascot or uniform
- **Espoused values:** explicitly stated values and norms of an organization
 - » *Examples:* a school's motto or the pledge of allegiance
- **Basic assumptions:** the least visible and often hardest to articulate and change. These unconscious beliefs (often taken for granted) are ultimately the source of organizational values and action.

Optional Video Resource (3 minutes) - [The Container Store's Employee Focused Culture](#)

Optional Video Resource (7 minutes) - [Edgar Schein's 3 Levels of Organizational Culture](#)

[Activity 4.2: Assessing your School's Culture](#) and [Critical Thinking Exercise 4.2: Changing your Schools Culture](#) can be completed to end the lesson.

INSTRUCTOR BACKGROUND: Organizational Dynamics

Leadership: *Leadership* and management are among the most studied topics in I-O psychology. Although used interchangeably, there are differences between both. Leadership primarily deals with influencing, direction-setting, and establishing a vision. In contrast, *management* focuses on executing, administering, and directing organizational activities (Leadership and Management, 2018).

Historical Approaches to Leadership (Northouse, 2016): The concept of what makes someone a leader has significantly changed since it was first conceptualized. Below is a breakdown of leadership theories throughout the decades (roughly in chronological order).

Great Man Theory: This early approach to leadership argued that leaders were born not made. As inferred, this was discussed during a time when only men were considered leaders.

Trait Theory: Successor of the “Great Man” theory, trait theory identified specific characteristics (e.g., intelligence, extroversion) that could be used to differentiate leaders from followers. Continuing in the great man tradition, though, gendered research suggests masculine traits are considered better for leadership than feminine ones.

Skills Approach: In contrast to trait theory, the skills approach focuses on skills and abilities (e.g., technical, problem-solving) which one can develop.

Behavioral Approach: This approach to leadership focuses on the unique behaviors that leaders exhibit (e.g., task-oriented, relationship-orientated, passive, transformational).

Situational Approach: Unlike the theories that came before it, this approach to leadership focuses on both the leader and the followers. Specifically, the situational approach argues that leaders must adapt their approach to the situation at hand and to their followers’ knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Contingency Approach: Born out of the situational approach, this theory tries to match leaders to appropriate situations. Contingency theory argues that a leader’s effectiveness depends on how a leader’s leadership style fits a situation.

Formal/Informal Leadership Roles: Leaders don’t always have to be in a position of power or authority. There are generally two types of leaders within organizations: formal and informal leaders. Formal leaders are individuals officially placed in a leadership role and are usually distinguished by their title (e.g., CEO, school principal). Informal leaders are individuals who have not been officially placed in a leadership role, but are seen as leaders by their peers and colleagues (e.g., someone others trust and respect).

Organizational Culture: Often referred to as an organization’s DNA, organizational culture influences multiple aspects of an organization such as structure, group processes, and employee attitudes and behaviors (Kinicki & Fugate, 2016). It is no wonder why having a “good” culture is critical for organizational success and performance.

Characteristics of organizational culture: Shared concept (i.e., shared among everyone in the organization), learned over time, influences behavior (i.e., impacts everyone in the organization positively or negatively), and impacts outcomes at multiple levels: individual, group/team, and organizational.

Three levels of organizational culture: According to Schien (1985), organizational culture can be viewed in three levels (artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions) each varying in their outward visibility and resistance to change.

Observed artifacts: tangible manifestations of the culture, such as a school’s mascot or uniform. Artifacts are the most visible aspects of a culture.

Espoused values: explicitly stated values and norms of an organization. For example, a school’s motto or the pledge of allegiance.

Basic underlying assumptions: least visible and often hardest to articulate and change. These unconscious beliefs (often taken for granted) are ultimately the source of organizational values and action.

Functions of organizational culture: Fosters an organizational identity and facilitates collective commitment (e.g., we're in this together), promotes stability (i.e., helps things function), and shapes behaviors by assisting individuals make sense of their work environment (i.e., why do we do this work).

Leaders as architects of organizational culture: A leader's values and behaviors are two key elements which drive organizational culture. According to Schein (1985), there are various ways by which leaders shape organizational culture.

What they focus on (e.g., does the leader focus on making money versus caring for their employees)

How they react when times are tough or something bad happens (e.g., quick to blame others versus bring everyone together to solve the problem)

How they allocate resources and rewards (e.g., do they provide employees the bare minimum or do they go above and beyond)

Do they engage in role modeling and coaching of organizational members (e.g., helping others grow professionally)

How they recruit, select, and promote organizational members (e.g., always looking to hire externally versus promoting from within)

ACTIVITY 1.1

What is Your Dream Job?

CONCEPT

This activity will help students think about different aspects of job motivation, what can be done to motivate people, and what they want out of a job.

MATERIALS

Sheet of paper and pen/pencil.

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity takes 20-30 minutes to complete.

- Have students form small groups (3-5 students per group).
- Individually, have students write up a design of their “dream job.” If they don’t know what exactly that job is, that’s fine. The important point is they should think about what will make them satisfied with this job and committed to staying.
 - » After they have written a general description of this job, students should specifically use Job Characteristics Theory to think about what would motivate them at the job. Come up with what they could do to be motivated in the job (for instance, how they could design the job or what goals they could set). Tell them to imagine they are in control and can set up the job however they want.
- Next, have the students discuss their dream jobs with their group. Compare their jobs; what are the similarities and differences? Next, compare their ideas about what would motivate them. What were the similarities and differences there?
 - » Ask the students to rank all the motivational ideas the group came up with. Of all the ideas suggested by everyone in the group, what do people think would be most motivating and what would be least motivating?
- After this, the entire class can discuss. What common themes emerged across multiple groups? Ask them if anything surprised them – did anything come out as ranked less or more motivating that they didn’t expect? Did everyone agree on what’s the most and least motivating? Did some of the students think about motivating factors others didn’t think about?
- Finally, students can go back into their groups. Tell them to imagine they are the boss at an organization and they want to motivate their employees.
 - » After everything the class just discussed about how to motivate employees using Job Characteristics Theory, ask the teams to set three goals a boss could ask of their employees.
 - » Remind the students to use the SMART framework when setting goals.
 - » After teams come up with goals, the teacher can go over some of the best goals with the class to ensure all students understand good examples of a SMART goal.

Optional Video Resources:

- [Five Minute Career Preview: I-O Psychology](#)
- [I-O Career Paths Tool \(One minute\)](#)

ACTIVITY 2.1

Stress at School

CONCEPT

This activity will help students think about different sources of stress a person might experience as well as what can be done with it.

MATERIALS

Sheet of paper and pen/pencil.

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity takes 30-45 minutes to complete.

- Have students form small groups (3-5 students per group).
- Individually, have students write a list of school stressors they experience. Encourage them to be as specific as possible instead of writing general ideas (being specific will help them in the next steps).
- Next, have the students discuss their sources of stress with their group. Compare what they came up with; what are the similarities and differences? Ask them if anything surprised them; did anyone come up with something others disagreed with?
- Finally, ask them to develop three interventions that could be implemented in their school: a primary stress intervention, a secondary intervention, and a tertiary intervention. Encourage them to be as realistic as possible so that they could potentially use some of the ideas in their own lives.

CRITICAL THINKING EXERCISE 3.1

Which Team Would You Choose?

CONCEPT

This exercise will enable students think about team dynamics.

INSTRUCTIONS

Present the following scenario and have students reflect on which team they'd prefer to be on. Imagine you have been invited to join one of two groups.

- **Team A:** composed of people who are all exceptionally smart and successful.
 - » When you watch this group working, you see professionals who wait until a topic arises in which they are an expert, and then they speak at length, explaining what the group ought to do.
 - » When someone makes a side comment, the speaker stops, reminds everyone of the agenda and pushes the meeting back on track.
 - » There is no idle chit chat or long debates. The meeting ends as scheduled and disbands so everyone can get back to their desks.
- **Team B:** evenly divided between successful executives and middle managers with few professional accomplishments.
 - » Teammates jump in and out of discussions.
 - » People interject and complete one another's thoughts.
 - » When a team member abruptly changes the topic, the rest of the group follows him off the agenda.
 - » At the end of the meeting, the meeting doesn't actually end: Everyone sits around to gossip and talk about their lives.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Which team would you choose? Why?
- What team characteristics stood out to you?
- Why do you think this team would be more successful than the other team?
- What about the other team did you not like?

Source:

Duhigg, C. (2016, February 25). What Google learned from Its quest to build the perfect team. *The New York Times Magazine*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/28/magazine/what-google-learned-from-its-quest-to-build-the-perfect-team.html>

ACTIVITY 3.1

How Do You Behave in a Group?

CONCEPT

To understand one's role within groups/teams.

INSTRUCTIONS

Think of a typical group situation in which you often find yourself (e.g., a club, study group, small work group), and answer the following items as accurately as possible.

When in a group, how often do you:

	NEVER	SELDOM	FAIRLY OFTEN	FREQUENTLY
1. Keep the group focused on the task at hand?	1	2	3	4
2. Help the group clarify the issues?	1	2	3	4
3. Pull various ideas together?	1	2	3	4
4. Push the group to make a decision or complete a task?	1	2	3	4
5. Support and encourage other groups members?	1	2	3	4
6. Try to reduce interpersonal conflicts?	1	2	3	4
7. Help the group reach a compromise?	1	2	3	4
8. Assist in maintaining group harmony?	1	2	3	4
9. Seek personal recognition from other group members?	1	2	3	4
10. Try to dominate group activities?	1	2	3	4
11. Avoid unpleasant or undesirable group activities?	1	2	3	4
12. Express your impatience or hostility with the group?	1	2	3	4

Access for free at <https://openstax.org/books/organizational-behavior/pages/1-introduction>

This questionnaire asks you to describe your own behavior within a group setting. To score the instrument, add up your scores as follows for the three categories of behavior.

Task-oriented behavior These roles focus on task-related activities aimed at achieving group performance goals.	(add up items 1-4)
Relations-oriented behavior These roles emphasize the further development of the group, including building group cohesiveness and consensus, preserving group harmony, looking after group member welfare, and so forth.	(add up items 5-8)
Self-oriented behavior These roles emphasize the specific needs and goals of individual members, often at the expense of the group.	(add up items 9-12)

Examine the resulting pattern in your answers. As usual, there are no correct or incorrect answers. Instead, this is an opportunity to view how you describe your own role-related activities in a group.

- What did you learn about yourself?
- How does your role in a group differ from those of other individuals?

Source:

Black, J. S., & Bright, D. S. (2019). Group and intergroup relations. In *Organizational Behavior*. OpenStax. Retrieved from <https://openstax.org/books/organizational-behavior/pages/9-management-skills-application-exercises>

Access for free at <https://openstax.org/books/organizational-behavior/pages/1-introduction>

ACTIVITY 4.1

What Does Leadership Look Like?

CONCEPT

This activity will help students better understand the leadership process.

MATERIALS

Sheet of paper and pen/marker.

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity takes 15-20 minutes to complete.

- Have students form small groups (3-5 students per group) and draw what leadership looks like (5 minutes) to them.
- After groups have finished, have a representative from each group explain their illustration (5-10 minutes). For a more robust conversation, teachers are encouraged to point out anything that stands out from the drawings (e.g., gender, positioning of figures, distance between figures).
- Following the “share out”, provide the definition of leadership to the class (a *process* whereby an *individual* influences a *group* of individuals to achieve a common goal) along with the following key elements (Bradberry, 2015):
 - » Leadership stems from social influence, not authority or power
 - » Leadership requires others (no implication they need to be “direct reports”)
 - » No mention of personality traits, attributes, or even title (can be formal or informal)
 - » It includes a greater good, not influence with no intended outcome
- Post-definition discussion (*Optional*).
 - » Students can also be encouraged to reflect on:
 - the differences between their illustrations and the definition of leadership
 - situations in which they have served in a leadership role (e.g., at school, in their community)
 - » Societal leadership aspects to discuss or highlight (Zweigenhaft, 2020):
 - Most Fortune 500 CEOs are White men (85.8%) although they account for roughly 35% of the population
 - While women have been gaining traction, it’s mostly White women
 - Non-Whites, regardless of gender, comprise 7.4% of Fortune 500 CEOs

References:

Bradberry, T. (2015, Jul. 27). *What makes a leader?* [Post]. LinkedIn.

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/what-makes-leader-dr-travis-bradberry>

Zweigenhaft, R. (2020, Oct. 28). *Fortune 500 CEOs, 2000-2020: Still male, still white*. The Society Pages.

<https://thesocietypages.org/specials/fortune-500-ceos-2000-2020-still-male-still-white/html>

CRITICAL THINKING EXERCISE 4.1

Leadership in Pop Culture

CONCEPT

This exercise will enable students to identify and reflect on leadership in everyday life.

INSTRUCTIONS

Have students identify a character from their favorite movie or TV show. Students will then reflect on that character's leadership skills.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is this character an example of a formal or informal leader? Give specific examples.
2. What leadership behaviors does this character exhibit? Give specific examples.
3. Which leadership style does the character most embody? Give specific examples.
4. Overall, is this character an effective leader? Why or why not? Give specific examples.

ACTIVITY 4.2

Assessing Your School’s Culture

CONCEPT

This activity will allow students to apply concepts learned to their school environment.

MATERIALS

School Culture Assessment Worksheet

INSTRUCTIONS

Completion time for this activity varies depending on how much time the teacher wishes to allot. For a quick activity, a minimum of 10 minutes is recommended (5 minutes for assessment and 5 minutes for debrief). Additionally, students can be placed into groups if time is a factor.

- Have students assess their school by writing down aspects of the culture. Note, it may be difficult for students to articulate the school’s basic assumptions. Therefore, teachers may want to provide some examples.
- Once students complete the culture assessment worksheet, have them share their thoughts with the class. Teachers should write down common descriptors on the board for each organizational level (artifact, espoused values, and basic assumptions).

Artifacts (physical manifestation of an organization’s culture)	Espoused Values (explicitly stated values and norms)	Basic Assumptions (values that have become taken for granted over time)

CRITICAL THINKING EXERCISE 4.2

Changing your School's Culture

CONCEPT

Organizational consulting is one of several career paths I-O psychologists/practitioners can pursue. In the following exercise students will play the role of a consultant trying to make changes to your school's culture. This exercise will enable students to think more critically about organizational culture. Note, it's crucial that consultants collect data before making a diagnosis and/or making recommendations. As such, the completed school culture assessment will serve as the student consultant's data.

MATERIALS

Completed School Culture Assessment Worksheet from Activity 4.2

INSTRUCTIONS

- Exercise can be completed either in-class or as homework.
- Have individual students answer the following questions. If completed in-class, follow-up with a discussion/share out.

You have been hired by your school to assist in changing its culture. After reviewing the completed school culture assessment, please address the following questions:

1. What changes would you make to the school's culture and why?
2. How would you approach this change (keep the three aspects of culture in mind)?
3. Which of the three aspects of culture would be easiest to change? Which would be the most difficult? Why?
4. What recommendations would you provide school leaders to create the desired change and to make those changes last?

Resources

SIOP Educator Resources: www.teachiopsych.com

- This website contains material (such as a standalone I-O chapter, an I-O online mini-course, I-O content PowerPoints and supplemental materials, and brief summaries of core I-O content) that instructors can use to further incorporate I-O psychology into their classes.

SIOP Materials for Incorporating I-O into an Introductory Psychology Textbook: : <https://www.siop.org/Events-Education/Educators/Incorporating-I-O>

- Since very few introductory psychology textbooks cover I-O psychology, this website provides instructors who wish to incorporate this topic into their class with options for doing so.

SIOP Bridge Builders Student and Educator Resources: https://linktr.ee/SIOP_BB

- This curated list of I-O psychology educator and student resources includes a guest speaker directory, podcasts, videos, memes, research articles and more to further enhance the teaching of I-O.

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