Toward a Boundaryless Psychology*

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Abstract
This series of papers argue for the integrating of psychology as a core discipline. They show the benefit to the science and practice of psychology, of psychologists being aware of and building upon theory and research outside their subspecialty. Specifically, the three respective papers examine potential advances in I/O psychology through knowledge of clinical, social, and neuroscience psychology.

A primary goal of my presidency of the Canadian Psychological Association (1999-2000) was to create a boundaryless psychology. This goal was based in part on my observation that fields outside of psychology such as the biological and neurosciences often learn about discoveries by scientists who meet at the annual meeting of the Canadian Brain, Behavior and Cognitive Sciences before their colleagues who meet annually at CPA’s convention; it was based in part on the knowledge that people in industrial-organizational (I/O) psychology are seldom aware of advances in social and personality psychology despite the overlap in the three subject matter domains; and it was based in part on the observation that the clinical psychology literature is seldom cited by I/O psychologists despite the fact that these are the two groups in psychology who explicitly embrace the scientist-practitioner model. In summary, it was based on the belief that the continued growth of a multitude of subspecialties will lead to independent psychologies unwilling, incapable, or both, of communicating with one another. As Benjamin (2001) noted, this fragmentation can lead to the disappearance of psychology altogether as its subspecialties become absorbed into such fields as neuroscience, cognitive science, education, health care, and management.

An initial step that was taken to attain this goal of boundarylessness was my nomination, and the Board’s approval of Bandura as CPA’s Honorary President (1999-2000). Bandura was born in Alberta, attained his undergraduate degree at the University of British Columbia, and received his PhD under the supervision of Kenneth Spence at the University of Iowa. Bandura was asked to serve as the Honorary President because his research demonstrates the value of minimizing, if not eliminating, the boundaries or walls that currently exist within psychology. His social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986, 1997) has influenced the science and practice of clinical, educational, developmental, industrial-organizational, and social psychology.

In his honorary presidential address, Bandura (2001) focused on the growing unease regarding the integrity of psychology as a core discipline, and the belief by some that, similar to zoology, psychology is in danger of obsolescence through divestiture to multidisciplinary programs structured around a common interest. In contrast to the proclamations of the demise of psychology, Bandura documented cogently that psychology is the one discipline that uniquely encompasses the complex interplay among intrapersonal, biological, interpersonal, and sociostructural determinants of human functioning:

It is ironic that an integrative core discipline, that deals with the whole person acting in, and on environments, should consider fractionating, farming out subpersonal parts to other disciplines. The field of psychology should be articulating a broad vision of human beings not a reductive fragmentary one. (Bandura, 2001, p. 13)

Elsewhere, Bandura (2001, p. 13) noted that “our psychological discipline is being split and dispersed by intradisciplinary squabbles and power struggles, rather than by conceptual importance.” Hence a second step that the CPA Board took at the 2000 annual meeting was to seek approval from the membership to ask the Canadian Chairs of Departments of Psychology, (Education), Canadian Cognitive Brain and Cognitive Sciences (Science) and the Canadian Provincial Associations of Psychology (practice) to accept seats on the Board. The first two associations have accepted this offer; the latter may do so at a later date.

Personal communication with Bandura suggests
that the sharing of knowledge among the different camps in psychology was not a problem prior to the 1940s. For example, Hull, Spence, and their students, Tolman, and his students, and Guthrie, and his students met annually at the American Psychological Association to challenge one another's findings. The present series of papers argues the value for adapting the practice of that era of psychology to the present millennium.

Because of the power of modeling in influencing behaviour, I organized a symposium for the 2001 annual meeting of the Canadian Psychological Association for I/O psychologists to share ideas on the benefits of reading the literature outside I/O psychology for enriching both science and practice. The intent was to stimulate other disciplines in psychology to do likewise so that psychology can maximize its contribution to Canada, so that we as psychologists can “advance psychology for all.” The following papers are the result of that symposium.

Just as benchmarking is used in industry to minimize re-inventing the wheel, G. Latham and Heslin argue the benefits of I/O psychologists adapting extant theory and research findings in clinical psychology and systematically testing them in organizational settings. Specific attention is given to theories and methods in cognitive behavioural psychology with regard to self-regulation. In the training literature, I/O psychologists have focused almost exclusively on the trainee while ignoring the trainer as well as the trainer-trainee relationship. The authors conclude their paper with a discussion of research and theory in clinical psychology on the therapist and the therapist-client relationship that may be applicable to organizational psychology.

The second paper by Seijts and B. Latham focuses on ways that findings in social psychology have already advanced knowledge and understanding of organizational behaviour. They point out ways that the two fields have studied similar phenomena from different vantage points, and the benefit of having done so in terms of external validity. The authors then suggest additional avenues of research for I/O psychologists based on current findings in social psychology.

The final paper by Lord, Hanges, and Godfrey 1 is arguably the most audacious. They attempt to explain a theory of employee motivation, namely, valence instrumentality expectancy theory, in terms of neuroscience.

These papers are discussed by Peter Suedfeld from the perspective of a social psychologist, Janel Gauthier from the perspective of a clinical psychologist, and Jack Duffy from the perspective of an industrial-organizational psychologist. Suedfeld is a scientist, Gauthier is a scientist-practitioner, and Duffy is a practitioner scientist.

Résumé
La présente série d’articles traite de la nécessité d’intégrer la psychologie en tant que discipline fondamentale. Leurs auteurs décrivent les avantages que tirerait la psychologie en tant que science et pratique si elle comptait sur des psychologues qui seraient à la fois au courant de la théorie et de la recherche élaborées à l’extérieur de leur sous-spécialité et qui s’appuieraient sur celles-ci. Plus particulièrement, chacun des trois articles de cette série étudie les progrès potentiels dont pourrait jouir la psychologie I/O si elle tirait avantage des connaissances provenant de la psychologie clinique, sociale et de la neuroscience.

References


1 The paper by Lord et al. was accepted as part of this special section. However, it was inadvertently published in a previous issue: Lord, R.G., Hanges, P.J. & Godfrey, E. G. (2003). Integrating neural networks into decision-making and motivational theory: Rethinking VIE theory. Canadian Psychology, 44 (1), 21-38.

Erratum
The paper by Lord, Hanges and Godfrey, referred to in some of the commentaries (this issue), was accepted as part of the Special Section on psychology without boundaries. However, it was inadvertently published in a previous issue. The full reference is: