THE PSYCHOLOGY OF BEHAVIOUR IN ORGANIZATIONS

Also by Elizabeth Chell

PARTICIPATION AND ORGANIZATION:
A Social Psychological Approach

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL PERSONALITY:
Concepts, Cares and Categories
(with *J. M. Haworth and S. A. Brearley*)

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF BEHAVIOUR IN ORGANIZATIONS

Second Edition

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Preface to the Second Edition

The rationale of the original text still stands. Despite the movement in higher education to mass education, mass audiences and the implications for teaching methodology, I believe, perhaps even more fervently, in the need for a 'middle way' which avoids the superficial treatment of the subject. This book is intended to provide such a 'middle way'. It avoids the textbook approach – breadth of coverage but wanting in depth – and is selective, treating particular topics in a detailed manner. It is recognized that students on management courses cannot be expected to read all the original texts and papers upon which particular theoretical developments are based. Indeed, it is questionable whether it is appropriate that they should do so. After all, the managerial contexts in which past research has been carried out have changed and, while there are some seminal works which should be read, we must consider the longer-term applicability of some theories and the accompanying research findings. The study of leadership is a very good case in point. As a history of ideas in management and organizational behaviour/psychology, it makes a fascinating study. But few theories in leadership have stood the test of time. Even some of the most well known, for example Fiedler's contingency theory, have been subjected to heavy criticism.

The danger of not reading past theoretical contributions to the subject is, I can hear someone saying, the tendency to 'reinvent the wheel'. This is another reason why books like *The Psychology of Behaviour in Organizations* (and there are many examples covering complementary aspects of organizational behaviour) are important. They give students a sense of the richness of the subject – both its systematic and imaginative treatment.

This book should appeal to a wide and diverse audience. It is, of course, primarily directed at students of organizational behaviour but will be of interest to students of applied social psychology and of organizational psychology. It will also be of interest to postgraduate students pursuing an MBA degree and, not inappropriately, post-experience students taking short courses in various aspects of executive management. In this and other ways it is hoped that the book will reach a wider audience of practising managers, for it is only through interaction and dialogue with the practitioner that a subject such as this can produce ideas which are relevant and which lend themselves to the development of better management practice.

PLAN OF THE BOOK

The book covers subjects which represent three levels of analysis of behaviour in organizations. As organizations are staffed with people, it is at this level of analysis that the book begins.

Chapter 1 examines the nature of personality and shows how important it is to think of personality not as something which is wholly determined from within but which is affected by the context within which the person operates. The theoretical basis of this account – interactionism – is outlined and examples of applications at the place of work – for example, psychological climate and stress – are described. The approach to understanding personality is reconsidered through an examination of Hampson's social construction theory. Another theoretical approach is that of attribution theory. This process considers the way individuals attribute causes to events; it is important when we consider what might count as evidence for a particular attribution. The implications of these analyses for understanding behaviour in organizations are clearly spelt out.

Chapter 2 tackles the issues of personality development. The issue is one of whether personality changes throughout the life course, or whether perceived differences are merely superficial responses to new situations which leave the basic personality unchanged. Different approaches to dealing with this matter are outlined and their implications for management discussed. Additional material considers how transitional events impact upon the individual, his/her psychological well-being and coping strategies.

Chapter 3 presents the real challenge to management in terms of their understanding what motivates, and how to motivate, subordinates. The coverage of this chapter incorporates need, reinforcement, equity and expectancy theories. A discussion of management style as a motivator is also included.

Organizational life is rarely about individuals acting independently; often tasks are too complex for one person to tackle and accomplish single-handedly. Efforts need to be coordinated and goals integrated. Thus the second level of the discussion directs attention to the role and function of groups and teams within organizations.

Chapter 4 outlines the nature and function of groups, and in particular examines the effect of normative structure and conformity on decision-making behaviour.

Chapter 5 suggests that of fundamental importance to the organization are its management teams, work groups and specialist groups. The question pursued is how to make such groups operate effectively – indeed, how might one build an effective team in the first place? Several approaches to answering these questions are covered in detail.

Chapter 6 concerns leadership theory. In 1986, when I wrote the first edition of *The Psychology of Behaviour in Organizations*, leadership research appeared to be in the doldrums. Since that time there has been much rethinking of the role that personality plays in explaining leadership behaviour. This has been demonstrated in the revived interest in the charismatic personality, and in ‘transactional and transformational’ models of leadership. The chapter concludes with a conceptual model of the skill of leadership.

The third area of discussion focuses upon the organization as such.

Chapter 7 examines what organizations are and the effect of organizational structure on behaviour. The Weberian model of the bureaucratic organization is described in some detail with a critique based on Clegg’s analysis. There is a discussion of power and commitment in organizations, and, in addition, socio-technical and contingency models of organizations are described. A critical examination of the role of the organizational psychologist as interventionist is also included.

Organizational environments continue to be characterized as turbulent, imposing a need for responsiveness, flexibility and, in short, change. Chapter 8 therefore looks at pressure for change. In particular the question of the continued relevance of organizational development is examined. The techniques and approach of organizational development are outlined and a plan for the evaluation of change programmes put forward.

Chapter 9 discusses the issue of controlling and managing organizations. It covers scientific management and Taylorism, worker participation in management, quality control circles and total quality management. The issue is the extent to which employees have a say in how they are managed, and the psychological and structural factors which affect the balance between worker and managerial control.

Finally, I would like to add that I am delighted that this book has gone into a second edition. I hope that the book will continue to be of use to students and teachers of organizational behaviour in the years to come.

Acknowledgements

Producing the revisions has been quite a protracted process and I should acknowledge most sincerely my debt of gratitude to Belinda Holdsworth and her predecessor Frances Arnold at the publishers for the encouragement they have given me and for the patience they have displayed. Carrying out these revisions has coincided with the process of leaving one institution and taking up a quite challenging post in another. This has made life extremely interesting and it has made the preparation of the manuscript even more protracted!

It is 'normal' in a personal statement of acknowledgement such as this to thank one's family and friends for their support. In my own case I have to say that since the first edition of this book, my family has dwindled and I have lost some five members of it, those particularly close to me being my father and my grandmother. This has meant that I have been called upon to be supportive and to draw upon my own inner reserves. While this has, on occasions, been a strain, I have throughout enjoyed the support of a few dear friends – friends whom I have come to appreciate more and more.

E. C.

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