



Taking time seriously: Changing practices and perspectives in Work/Organizational Psychology



José Navarro^{a,*}, Robert A. Roe^b, María I. Artiles^a

^a University of Barcelona, Spain

^b Maastricht University, Netherland

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 9 January 2015

Accepted 17 July 2015

Available online 26 September 2015

Keywords:

Time

Work/Organizational Psychology

Organizational theory

Organizational research

Complexity science

ABSTRACT

Although dedicated to the study of processes in people and organizations, W&O Psychology has shown little sensitivity to the fact that processes happen in time and evolve over time. This paper describes how the field has become more aware of time, after an initial neglect of time, and is now engaged in developing theories and empirically investigating when things happen and how they change. We discuss proposals from Molenaar, Van de Ven, Roe, and colleagues to make our conceptual apparatus better suited to the study of temporal dynamics and to make research methods more sensitive to temporal issues, changing their focus on individual differences to within-person variations. We finish with a discussion of how taking time seriously may lead W&O Psychology to explore new frontiers and to enter new paths in the future which can lead to a better recognition of complexities in organizational behavior.

© 2015 Colegio Oficial de Psicólogos de Madrid. Published by Elsevier España, S.L.U. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Tomarse en serio el tiempo: cambios en la praxis y en las perspectivas de la Psicología del Trabajo y de las Organizaciones

RESUMEN

Aunque se ocupa del estudio de los procesos en las personas y en las organizaciones, la Psicología del Trabajo y de las Organizaciones ha mostrado escasa sensibilidad hacia el hecho de que los procesos suceden en el tiempo y evolucionan a lo largo del mismo. Este trabajo describe cómo se ha tomado conciencia del tiempo en este campo después de un periodo inicial de ignorarlo, con una gran implicación actual en el desarrollo de teorías e investigación empírica sobre cuándo ocurren las cosas y cómo cambian. Se comentan las propuestas de Molenaar, Van de Ven, Roe y colaboradores dirigidas a adecuar mejor nuestro aparato conceptual al estudio de la dinámica temporal y a conseguir que los métodos de investigación sean más sensibles a los aspectos temporales, cambiando su enfoque desde las diferencias individuales a las variaciones intra-persona. Se concluye comentando que considerar en serio el tiempo puede hacer que la Psicología del Trabajo y de las Organizaciones explore nuevas fronteras y abra nuevas rutas en el futuro que conduzcan a un mejor reconocimiento de las complejidades del comportamiento organizativo.

© 2015 Colegio Oficial de Psicólogos de Madrid. Publicado por Elsevier España, S.L.U. Este es un artículo Open Access bajo la licencia CC BY-NC-ND (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Palabras clave:

Tiempo

Psicología del Trabajo y de las Organizaciones

Teoría organizativa

Investigación organizacional

Ciencia de la complejidad

The Importance of Time in Work & Organizational Psychology

Time is an issue enjoying growing interest in the behavioral and social sciences (e.g., Levine, 2003; McGrath & Tschan, 2004; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999) as well as in the specific literatures of management and Work and Organizational (W&O) Psychology (e.g., Albert, 2013; Ancona, Goodman, Lawrence, & Tushman,

* Corresponding author: Departamento de Psicología Social. Paseo Valle de Hebrón, nº 171. 08035 Barcelona, Spain.
E-mail address: j.navarro@ub.edu (J. Navarro).

2001; George & Jones, 2000; Mitchell & James, 2001; Roe, 2008; Sonnentag, 2012). Whether conceived subjectively, as a psychological property of people's consciousness, or objectively, as a physical attribute of events and episodes, it is of obvious importance for W&O Psychology, because "the substance of organizational behaviour – its constructs – exists in and through time" (George & Jones, 2000, p. 666). Neither the behavior of human beings nor the activities of organizations can be defined without reference to time, and temporal aspects are critical for understanding them. Moreover, the experience of time among working people reflects in numerous ways what Roe (2014a) has called the 'temporal footprint of work'. This notion refers to the way in which work-related activities are mapped on the time-line, i.e., the start and end of working periods, the alternation and succession of tasks, interruptions and breaks, among others. Finally, there are also numerous constructs that directly refer to time, such as time pressure, polychronicity, deadlines, time perspective, and so forth (Sonnentag, 2012). Therefore, W&O Psychology is a field in which temporal issues matter.

W&O Psychology can be described as the study of cognitive, energetic, motor, and social processes of people at work. However, there is no single, universally accepted definition of process. For instance, a process has been defined as "a series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve a particular end" (Oxford English Dictionary), but also as a continuous flow: "Process is fundamental: the river is not an object, but an ever-changing flow; the sun is not a thing, but a flaming fire" (Heraclitus, cited by Rescher, 1996, p. 10). The psychological literature is rather ambiguous in its use of the term process. For example, the work motivation literature contains several so-called "process theories", which are supposed to depict the processes by which people get motivated (e.g., Latham & Pinder, 2005). Well-known examples include the valence-expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) or the goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990), both suggesting that work motivation is produced in a sequence of cognitive and energetic processes. On the other hand, there are many studies in the area of group and team research postulating on-going processes that shape the outputs achieved by people working together (e.g., cohesion, shared cognition, climate, etc.). According to Roe, Gockel, and Meyer (2012, p. 632), a process is a "changing state of a subject defined with reference to a certain period of time".

The idea that W&O Psychology is devoted to the study of processes stands in stark contrast with the observation that very often researchers treat presumed processes in a static, atemporal manner, and measure them in a "snapshot-like" fashion (George & Jones, 2000). Several authors have expressed worries about this inconsistency and the problem-method misfit implied in it, and have pointed at its detrimental consequences for the validity of the accumulated knowledge (e.g., Ancona et al., 2001; George & Jones, 2000; Mitchell & James, 2001; Roe, 2008; Roe et al., 2012). In their view, any serious study of cognitive, behavioral, or social process should concern variables as states rather than quasi-traits.

Thus, while W&O Psychology is a field in which temporal issues are of central importance, there are reasons for concern about the ways in which time is being treated in (at least part of) the theoretical approaches and of the empirical research studies in this field. To better understand the present situation, this paper pursues the following objectives: first, to review how time has been considered in the more recent W&O Psychology literature; second, to describe recent proposals to consider time more seriously; and third, to explore possible future trends in theory-building and research practices. By doing so, we hope to contribute to a growing awareness among W&O psychologists regarding the importance of time and to offer views that can guide future work, which, in our opinion, needs to be more sensitive to temporal issues.

How Has Time in W&O Psychology Been Considered?

A 'Variable' View of Time

The most popular approach to time in the W&O Psychology literature has been that of time as a defining element of a construct. Using the PsycInfo database, within the Industrial and Organizational Psychology field (code 3600), and doing a simple search with "time" as a keyword, we found 277 peer-reviewed journal papers during the period 2000–2014 (information retrieved on October 1st 2014). A cursory look at the abstracts reveals that many researchers have been interested in time as an element of a construct. Authors have investigated, for instance, constructs referring to subjective time, such as time pressure, time strain, time demands, time urgency, or time orientation and their relationships with other constructs. For example, Syrek, Apostel, and Antoni (2013) studied the influence of time pressure on exhaustion and work-life balance. Castro (2011) studied the interaction between time demands and gender role, and how this interaction has important implications for career advancement. Or Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) were interested in time perspective as a personality-related construct that helps to understand how people build their time experience.

Other studies have used constructs and variables related to objective time, such as timing, time lag, time delay, and time management (e.g., Claessens, Roe, & Rutte, 2009; Guenter, Van Emmerik, & Scheurs, 2014; Waller, 2000). Objective time is also present in studies using variables related to working hours, which are for instance used to define shifts or to distinguish between part-time and full-time workers. For example, Wittmer and Martin (2011) studied role involvement, work attitudes, and turnover intentions in a sample of part-time workers. Here, time appears as a construct with a socio-demographic meaning, useful to characterize a population.

Finally, there are studies that use time as an instrumental construct, which refers to elapsed time (captured by 'time 1', 'time 2', etc.). Here, time serves as a factor in a before-after experimental design or a longitudinal design that covers multiple measurement time moments (e.g., Beal & Ghandour, 2011; Vancouver, Thompson, Tischner, & Putka, 2002). A pure time variable – measured within individuals – is also used in studies with multi-level or panel designs (Dierdorff & Ellington, 2012), as well as in historic studies describing long-term trends (e.g., Hofmann, Jacobs, & Baratta, 1993).

The recent literature clearly shows the awareness among researchers of the relevance of time and time-related constructs for understanding human behavior in organizations. Organizational behavior is full of temporal influences and the previous list shows only some of the most significant explored in W&O Psychology research.

Time As a Neglected Topic

From another angle it appears that time has not received the attention it deserves. Several authors have pointed at the neglect of time in theory-building, measurement, and data analyses (e.g., Albert, 2013; Ancona et al., 2001; George & Jones, 2000; Mitchell & James, 2001). Compared to earlier decades – up to 1960 – there has even been a declining interest in temporal issues and processes (e.g., works of Lewin, Bales, Bion, etc.; see Roe, 2014a). Roe explains this fact from the standpoint of the 'differential revolution' that happened in the nineteen-sixties, when the original focus on time was displaced by the study of individual differences. Moreover, we can think about several other reasons why time has become a neglected issue. First, at a theoretical level there appears to be an explicit or implicit denial of the role of time, either because theories reject time, embrace the notion of stability, or ignore the possible

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/895310>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/895310>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)