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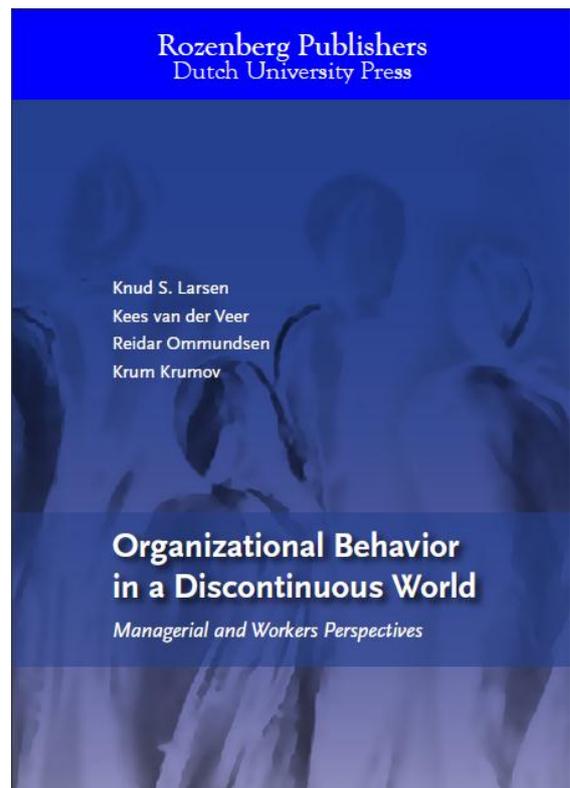
## Organizational Behavior in a Discontinuous World

Managerial and Workers Perspectives

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Organizational Behavior in a Discontinuous World, by Knud S. Larsen, Kees van der Veer, Reidar Ommundsen & Krum Krumov, is a detailed analysis of both individual and group behavior at the workplace. The book is based on the premise that “Research must be reevaluated in the context of a world where change is rapid, global in nature and discontinuous” (back cover). In documenting the role of OB across years through history and the present, the book reports that we live and work in a fluid world and such a context calls for a deep, change-related understanding of Organizational Behavior issues.

There is no doubt that Organizational Behavior in a Discontinuous World is an interesting book that significantly contributes to the literature because it is aligned with current priorities and trends. First, it offers a balanced international perspective, providing examples from both Europe and the United States, and an opportunity for meaningful reflection on the cultural constraints and cross-national differences that Organizational Behavior research has to consider. The authors acknowledge throughout the book that human behavior varies from culture to culture, as in the case of risk-taking behavior, which may be stronger in American society than in

African countries, and self-criticism, which may be more prevalent in East-Asian societies. In addition, industrial relations and working conditions may vary from country to country. For example, the eight-hour work schedule is not accepted in many parts of the world and “western European countries like Netherlands, Germany, and United Kingdom have a much stronger tradition than the U.S. in developing and using the power of labor unions for the benefit of workers” (p. 171). Nevertheless, the authors argue that many Organizational Behavior theories have been developed primarily in the United States and to a lesser extent in Western Europe and call for Organizational Behavior research that is more international in scope and less US-based. In doing so, they carefully contextualize the research findings they present and they offer cross-national studies on various Organizational Behavior constructs. Interestingly, the book also covers studies from Scandinavian countries, contrasting them with studies from the US. The last chapter titled ‘Organizational Behavior from a Cross-Cultural Perspective’ truly confirms the authors’ commitment to maintaining this cross-cultural perspective and encourages the sort of reflection that is most needed.

Second, *Organizational Behavior in a Discontinuous World* is part of an increasing focus on the importance of the dark side of Organizational Behavior, since the authors are concerned that “when workers are manipulated human relations become just another tool for extracting more work and effort, without providing proper compensation or participation in return” (p. 209). For example, they note that participative decision-making may be “a form of exploitation that results in increased work intensity and stress” (p. 40), as employees may be manipulated to take blame and responsibility. Further, they raise issues of gender and state that “offering flextime to women may have an unintended consequence by upholding the traditional idea that only women have to balance work and family” (p. 84). In addition, Chapter 6 offers a very interesting counter-intuitive discussion about charisma and manipulation that challenges the stereotypes about ego-based charismatic leaders and discusses the benefits of blending humility with individual competence. The above examples reflect what “a cynic might say” (p. 19) and prove the authors’ commitment on approaching OB with a critical eye.

A third way that Larsen, Van Der Veer, Ommundsen and Krumboltz’s book contributes to the literature is by treating almost all Organizational Behavior theories and their methodology with skepticism. For example, the authors criticize Maslow’s theory in terms of empirical validation, Herzberg’s theory on the grounds of methodology, or Hofstede’s work in terms of methodological problems, among others. Further, the authors offer a good overview of motivational theories, and approach them with

skepticism suggesting that they are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary. Of particular note, the authors wonder what is the causal pathway between various Organizational Behavior variables, such as social norms and individual achievement motivation or productivity and happiness. They further report the measurements of key Organizational Behavior variables and their pros and cons, proving once again their commitment to approaching Organizational Behavior with a critical eye.

A fourth contribution of this book is its relevance to recent discussions of the market economy during recessions and the financial crisis, as reflected in the book's title. The authors must be commended on the way they handle this discussion by offering a modern view of Organizational Behavior, discussing current priorities and trends, supporting their personal view with several useful examples and highlighting change via recent action research. Rightly so, Chapter 4 takes a detailed look at worker well being and discusses important issues pertaining to workplace health and safety, such as accidents, noise, toxic substances, and violence in the workplace. However, the important issues of family and work-life balance deserved to be better highlighted, since there are evident challenges for leaders in the era of telecommuting, when work boundaries shift further away, and there is little control over the physical work environment. Nevertheless, the modern Organizational Behavior approach that this book adopts is a significant catalyst for the kind of reflection so deeply needed in the world today; it is a good start to creatively re-examine Organizational Behavior through the much needed lens of the financial crisis and the current socio-economic context.

In terms of writing style, the book is very well-written and several interesting questions capture the reader's attention throughout the book. For example, the authors wonder "Is the successful manager the same person as the effective manager?" (p. 21), "Are most people satisfied with their work?" (p. 31), and "...is it possible to train people in transformational leadership" (p. 155). To answer such questions, they offer an interesting discussion of research evidence. Thankfully, the authors support their arguments with additional meta-analyses, such as meta-analyses on flexible work schedules, satisfaction, justice, trust, leadership, turnover, groups, motivation etc., which further spur the interest of the reader.

Overall, *Organizational Behavior in a Discontinuous World* by Knud S. Larsen, Kees van der Veer, Reidar Ommundsen & Krum Krumov is an intriguing and informative read, which exhaustively covers the most important issues in Organizational Behavior. The authors systematically examine past and current research, marking the landscape with economic uncertainty and change in unique and inspiring ways.