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**Introduction to special section on
*Organizational Challenges in the Knowledge Society***

I am pleased to have been asked to serve in the role of guest editor for this special section of the journal. I was honored to have been awarded a Senior Fulbright Scholar Fellowship to teach and work in Bucharest, Romania for the academic year 2012-2013. My host university, Școala Națională de Studii Politice și Administrative, allowed me the enviable opportunity to have significant autonomy in my teaching and participation in other scholarly activities. As a result I learned certainly as much as I taught any of the graduate students in my classes. I am someone who has transformed my career several times, from clinical to consulting psychologist and from organizational consultant to academician. Always, people and their interactions with one another have been at the core of my interest.

When those of us in the field of organizational behavior identify ourselves as working in the “human side of business”, cynical receivers of that comment scoff at the existence of a “human side” to business. Surely the preponderance of emphasis on financial gain and the ‘bottom line’ suggests that often the financial accounting carries more weight than attention to the people who do the work in organizations. And yet, as the articles in this special section – and indeed the majority of articles in all journals devoted to organizational behavior – indicate, there is great need to attend to the people who communicate, learn, share knowledge and skill, emote, plan, and are or are not engaged in the business of the organization.

Any of the readers of this journal are well familiar with the history of human collectives – from agriculture/craft to industrialization to knowledge management. Readers are aware also of the transition in organizational emphasis from mechanistic, authoritative structures to more organic, participative structures. This evolution is certainly evident in the explosion of journal articles in the past decade on the topics of knowledge management, sustainability, transformational leadership and a host of other buzz words – all of which let us know we are talking about complex human interactions and complex systems of production. Despite our knowledge, schools of business “continue to treat the workplace and world as clockwork mechanisms too for the purpose of converting resources into shareholder value”. (Engdahl, 2005) And yet, as Engdahl impressively demonstrates, we do this 21st century a great disservice to ignore what we are learning and teaching.

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The field of Organizational Behavior (OB) has been built on human sciences of psychology, sociology, and anthropology. We know that people and their emotions, motivations, prejudices, skills, temperaments, experiences, attitudes, fears, etc. are the key components of our organizations. The articles in this special section each take a different approach to the topic of furthering our understanding of OB in a knowledge economy, but all address the core need to understand culture and behavioral principles of people. This common core of understanding organizations gets us back to attending to the people who work there.

Fellows, Goedde, & Schwichten (this issue) provide much in the way of overview material, summarizing a number of key contributions to the field. At times the language in the article is sufficiently esoteric and/or jargon-filled as to be a barrier to comprehension, but underlying information is worth the effort of slogging through. Fundamental to 21st century globalization is the contributing value of cultural intelligence and sensitivity.

Leovaridis & Cismaru (this issue) also provide an excellent review, with specific emphasis on the topics of organizational culture and climate. Their careful progression from historical overview to current results provides a strong foundation for continued empirical study, as they plan.

Wozniak's contribution (this issue) is the most focused of the three and yet still offers insights into the arena of corporate social responsibility (CSR), a concept unimagined by most a generation ago. As Wozniak's research demonstrates, understanding the contribution of CSR to the effective functioning of organizations is critical for continued growth and development.

Despite various claims that 'corporations are people' (James, Cosgrove & Hulsart, 2012; Totenberg, 2014), the preponderance of evidence suggests that approach is fallacious, especially as concerns OB. In the United States there has been significant the backlash to the *Citizens United* Supreme Court ruling-labeling corporations as 'people' for certain intents and purposes. (Totenberg, 2014) The vast research cited in only the articles in this issue demonstrates the necessary attention that must be paid to human characteristics of employees. However, we human beings have difficulty distinguishing between an organization as a legal/financial entity and the individual humans who are employees of that organization. To the extent we can learn to embrace the wholeness of people and what they bring into our organizations, to the extent we can internalize the strong interdependency of human characteristics with organizational processes and systems, to the extent we can continue to learn and to share our knowledge – only then can we develop effective, efficient, and human organizations.

References

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