

SPOTLIGHT ON I-O ORGANIZATIONS



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Greetings, *TIP* readers, and welcome to the autumn edition of the **Spotlight** column! Now that the month of October has arrived, you're probably spinning your wheels trying to decide whether to attend that upcoming Halloween party as a pirate, Elvis, or an I-O psychologist from New Zealand. Those of you choosing the latter will undoubtedly need to do a little homework to prepare for the role. Thanks to Mike O'Driscoll, Stu Carr, and Stewart Forsyth, the following pages provide all the information you need to pass yourself off as someone who is truly "in the know" about I-O psychology down under. Read on for an interesting and informative account of how our colleagues on the other side of the globe go about meeting, learning, networking, and sharing information with one another.



**I-O Psychology in Aotearoa,
 New Zealand: A World Away?²**

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Industrial-organizational psychology has had a fairly long history in this country, dating back to around the 1920s (Jamieson & Paterson, 1993). To a large extent the field developed initially within universities, although the focus of I-O psychologists' activities in this country has always been very applied. Inclusion of I-O psychology in university curricula originally started at the University of Canterbury (in the south island) and then Massey University (in the north island); now two other universities (University of Auckland

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and University of Waikato, both in the north island) also provide training programs in the field. There are about a dozen academics in psychology departments who would consider themselves to be I-O psychologists, and a small handful in management or HRM departments. Clearly the number of academics specializing in this field is very small. Although this poses challenges for the development of I-O psychology in Aotearoa New Zealand, at the same time it helps communication among us.

Typically, students wanting to find employment in I-O psychology graduate with either a master's degree or a postgraduate diploma; relatively few go on to complete PhDs, as these are not required for employment as practitioners in this country. Instead, they often enroll in a post-master's diploma program, completion of which enables them to apply for registration (licensure) as a psychologist. The content of undergraduate and postgraduate courses is fairly equivalent to that offered in U.S. and European programs. There are, however, some unique issues here that influence the nature of our teaching and research. For instance, in recent years there has been an increasing emphasis on the importance of recognizing the role and status of the indigenous Maori people (*tangata whenua*). Compared with most Europeans (known here as *pakeha*), Maori culture fundamentally embraces collectivistic values, and there is a strong emphasis on extended family and kin (the *whanau*), which exerts a very powerful influence on social customs and interactions between people, along with a strong sense of family responsibility.

In addition, Aotearoa New Zealand is becoming an increasingly multicultural society, with recent growth in the immigration of peoples from the South Pacific and Asia in particular. I-O psychology in this country has, regrettably, not paid as much attention as it should to bicultural and multicultural issues, and there have been calls for approaches that recognize both the similarities and the differences in cultural backgrounds and values, and how these can affect the functioning of work organizations. There has also been advocacy for the acknowledgement of multiple psychologies, rather than a (some would suggest biased) focus solely on European-based theories, methodologies, and practices. To some extent, cultural issues are reflected in practice areas; for example, personnel testing and selection, and teaching programs have made efforts to incorporate Maori perspectives in particular.

Most businesses here are relatively small in size and, with the exception of the armed services and some consulting firms, very few employ people with the title "I-O (or organizational) psychologist." Hence, graduates from I-O psychology programs compete with their colleagues from management schools for similar positions (typically in human resource management functions), and organizations often do not understand or make a distinction between graduates with a psychology background and those with management or HRM training. Having said that, an increasing proportion of students combine psychology and management in their degrees (e.g., majoring in business psychology), which enables them to get both the depth of training in

psychology as well as breadth of exposure to other related areas. University psychology faculty also collaborate with their colleagues in management schools, a recent example being the research on migration in and out of Aotearoa New Zealand by the “talent flow team” (Inkson et al., 2007).

Most graduates are interested in practitioner roles, either in the larger corporations (e.g., in the human resources section), in government agencies, in consulting firms (of which there is a growing number), in the armed services, and in not-for-profit organizations. A few graduates eventually establish themselves as private consultants. Nevertheless, the overall number of practitioners (although growing) is also relatively small, certainly compared with our near neighbor Australia. The New Zealand Psychological Society (our equivalent of APA) has around 1,000 members in total, of whom approximately 150–200 might identify themselves formally as I-O psychologists. Within the Society, we have a division of I-O psychology, membership of which is very open, and even professional psychologists who do not necessarily practice as I-O psychologists can belong to this division. Many I-O psychologists also join the Human Resource Institute of New Zealand (HRINZ), a separate body providing materials, conferences, and networking opportunities for human resource specialists.

The Division of I-O Psychology was established around 25 years ago. Although small, it has been quite active in promoting the profession and providing an opportunity for I-O psychologists (and students) to interact and network with each other. The annual conference of the New Zealand Psychological Society (see http://www.psychology.org.nz/news/Conference_calendar.html) is one of the major forums for this networking, and typically one whole stream of this 3-day conference is filled with papers on I-O topics. Although many of these presentations are “academic,” there are also opportunities for practitioners to discuss applications of I-O principles in applied settings. About 7 years ago, the I-O division established a virtual communication network called I-O Net, which is hosted by Massey University and promotes the exchange of information and viewpoints on a wide array of issues, including topics such as the utilization of assessment techniques for selection purposes, the value of various training programs and packages, research on personality factors and work behavior, career opportunities, information on conferences and publications, and similar topics. This virtual discussion group currently has about 600 subscribers (one does not need to be a formal member of the I-O division to subscribe to I-O Net). The majority of subscribers (around 60%) are practitioners, with approximately 30% being academics and the remaining 10% students. Although the volume of traffic is not consistent, some topics have generated lively debate and exchange of viewpoints.

Another unique networking activity that has been popular over the past few years is the formation of special interest groups in major centers. These are referred to here as I-O SIGs, and the ones in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch have been the most prominent. The first I-O SIG was established in 2000 in Auckland, after the suggestion was mooted in an I-O Net

discussion. The Auckland group is the most active and organizes 8 or 9 presentation sessions per year (with attendance ranging from 25 to 60 people, most of whom tend to be practitioners), involving both local and (sometimes) international presenters who cover a variety of relevant topics. Presenters are typically (though not always) other I-O psychologists. Topics presented have been wide ranging, including personality disorders at work, challenges to psychological assumptions about measurement, a critique of psychological testing in the workplace, and selection biases against some skilled immigrants. Not all presenters have been I-O psychologists, some notable exceptions being a family psychologist discussing work–life balance, a recruiter reflecting on the practicalities of career advancement, and an engineer describing a strategy to increase personnel retention in his business.

The I-O SIGS began primarily as an opportunity for I-O psychologists in a region to interact informally with each other and to share experiences. Their mission has evolved over time to focus more now on promoting the scientist–practitioner model. We share the SIOP goal of being “visible and trusted authorities on work-related psychology” (Hough, 2006, p. 20). Presenters at I-O SIG meetings are encouraged to emphasize evidence-based approaches. Among the lessons learned from these interactions are (a) the importance of establishing relationships with HR professionals and their networks—there is close collaboration with HRINZ; (b) the need to rotate the coordination of I-O SIG functions, to facilitate various initiatives and to think strategically when organizing events; and (c) in a world where there are multiple networking opportunities, it is vital to provide a range of events appealing to different interests, to diversify attendance and ensure that attendees have the opportunity to meet a variety of professionals in allied areas. Future intentions will focus on the provision of more skill-development sessions for I-O psychologists and continuing to add value to professional development. In a similar vein, the University of Canterbury has built a strong alumni network and summer studentships, which other universities may soon emulate.

Multi-institutional research collaboration has become increasingly important in this country, especially as the major research grant-awarding agencies are now favoring research projects that include researchers from more than one institution (and more than one discipline). About 18 months ago, a group of us from five different universities met in Auckland to discuss possibilities for the development of a collaborative research project. Since then we have met several times and have moved forward in the development of a project that will examine the factors (both situational and psychological) that contribute to the development and effectiveness of small businesses in Aotearoa New Zealand. This and similar developments offer exciting opportunities to conduct collaborative research that has a very local flavor.

In recent years there has also been considerable interaction with our Australian colleagues. One avenue for this interaction has been the biennial Australian Industrial and Organizational Psychology conference (see Myers [2005] for an overview). This event, which in 2007 was concurrently desig-

nated as the first Asia-Pacific Congress of Work Psychology, provides an important and increasingly utilized mechanism for the exchange of information and for collaboration between researchers and practitioners from our respective countries. Earlier this year, an online journal was established, the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Organisational Psychology*, and two of us (Mike and Stu) are on the editorial board of this new journal. We anticipate that this will further strengthen ties between Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, as well as promote research collaboration across the Tasman.

Further afield, a range of other collaborative I-O networks has been instituted to benefit our profession. These include agreements to exchange both students and faculty in I-O psychology, in teaching and research. Agreements exist with universities in Germany (the University of Lueneburg) and Ireland (University of Dublin, Trinity College). The former agreement to cooperate rests on the partners each having a bachelor of arts degree with a specialization in business psychology. The latter rests on a shared research and policy focus regarding the Millennium Development Goals (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>). Hence, existing and developing networks span both more and less traditional foci for I-O psychology.

Research links are not solely university to university. The New Zealand Psychological Society has recently set up an International Affairs Standing Committee, whose charge includes connecting with international professional societies in applied psychology and fostering mutual capability building for the profession as a whole (e.g., with regard to managing natural disasters). A more exclusively “I-O-focused” network is “Povio.” Povio was formed to enable practitioners in I-O psychology, working to apply I-O psychology to poverty reduction, to connect with and find support from (a) other practitioners working in the same (difficult and underresourced) situation, (b) academics, (d) practitioners, and (d) policy makers (Carr, 2007). Povio is hosted by a poverty research group, which is currently working with Ireland’s Center for Global Health and City University of New York to initiate a global taskforce on work psychology for development. Alongside those efforts, a largely New Zealand-founded global project called “SmartAid: Consultants Without Costs” is currently working with the SIOP Foundation and Rotary to facilitate pro-bono teams assisting with aid projects, constituted from underemployed I-O-skilled migrants, I-O consultants living in “developed” economies, and Rotarians. (Those interested in learning more about this initiative can contact **Dr. Stephen Atkins**, satkins@tekotago.ac.nz.)

Other projects further highlight the global and interdisciplinary network in which New Zealand I-Os participate. Project ADDUP (“Are Development Discrepancies Undermining Performance?”) is a noteworthy initiative that is jointly funded by the UK’s Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and Department for International Development (DFID). ADDUP explores the effects of aid salary discrepancies in the health, education, and business sectors of six countries: the landlocked economies of Malawi and Uganda, the

transition economies of India and China, and the island economies of the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. Bringing together an international team of psychologists, sociologists, management experts, educationalists, and economists from 10 different countries, and coordinated from within New Zealand, ADDUP focuses on the human dynamics of aid salary discrepancies and their significance for capacity building in low-income countries (<http://psychology.massey.ac.nz/research/res-groups.htm>).

Innovative connections like the above are reinforced through regional journals. One example is the *South Pacific Journal of Psychology* (SPJP, <http://spjp.massey.ac.nz/>). Despite its title, this journal was from its inception interdisciplinary. More recently, the SPJP has metamorphosed into the *Journal of Pacific Rim Psychology* (JPRP, <http://www.australianacademicpress.com.au/Publications/Journals/JPRC/jprp.htm>). Like its predecessor, JPRP retains a focus on I-O psychology. As well however, the new journal has a wider geographical ambit. That greater outreach is explicitly designed to enable us to connect further with our colleagues across both South and North America, including of course SIOPI!

In conclusion, as we say here in Aotearoa, New Zealand, haere mai (welcome) and please do come and visit our beautiful and spectacular country. If you are coming our way, be sure to let us know and we (and our colleagues) would be very happy to show you some of our world-renowned Kiwi hospitality!

Concluding Editorial

So there you have it—everything you need to expand your working knowledge of I-O psychology in New Zealand. As you can see, our colleagues on the other side of the globe have developed a number of creative and effective systems for learning, networking, and collaborating in person and virtually. Though relatively small in numbers, their impact continues to be great, both within and beyond their country and our discipline.

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