

## **Industrial-Organisational Psychology in New Zealand:**

### **Who are we and where are we going?**

**Helena D Cooper-Thomas, University of Auckland**

**Sarah Wright, University of Canterbury**

#### RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Address for Correspondence: Helena D Cooper-Thomas,  
Department of Psychology,  
University of Auckland,  
Private Bag 92019, Auckland, New Zealand  
Tel +64 9 373 7599 x82833/ Fax +64 9 373 7043  
Email [h.cooper-thomas@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:h.cooper-thomas@auckland.ac.nz)

**Abstract**

In spite of a long history, Industrial and Organisational (I/O) psychology appears to be relatively unknown beyond those who teach or practice it. Research in Aotearoa/ New Zealand and elsewhere shows this situation is not new. We review previous research pertinent to the status of I/O psychology at a global and local level. We then present the findings of our research on the current status of I/O psychology in New Zealand. We surveyed 46 I/O psychologists to find out what types of activities I/O psychologists in NZ are engaged in, what they think the issues are with regard to training, clients, and the education and future development of the profession. We group the issues into four themes: Current role, education and training, strategic perspectives, and the future. We conclude with suggestions to address the key problems that our I/O psychologist respondents identified.

## Introduction

Industrial and Organisational (I/O) psychology is about improving the effectiveness, efficiency, and well-being of people at work. I/O psychology knowledge, theory and interventions may be at an individual, group, or organisational level. Their impact is at these levels and also at a societal level, through the overall impact of improved well-being and enhanced productivity (Cronshaw, 1988; Jamieson & Paterson, 1993). Cronshaw goes as far as to state that I/O psychology can offer improved national competitiveness in international markets. Cronshaw also makes a strong case for the human rights issues that I/O psychology can help with. He focuses on the situation in Canada, where legislation has provided both a need for I/O psychology to provide fair and neutral practices, and has put pressure on I/O psychologists to meet rigorous professional standards. These issues are relevant in NZ. As a relatively small and geographically isolated nation, NZ can only grow its economy by being globally competitive. With a large and increasingly diverse immigrant population, NZ can only get the best from candidates and employees by ensuring they are assessed and treated fairly. This suggests that I/O psychology should be a valued profession, with high demand for its services. Yet research consistently shows that it is not well recognised.

Hines (1972) found this in research with personnel managers in the US, Australia, and NZ, although recognition was lowest in NZ. Recent data from the US confirms this as an ongoing issue: Gasser, Whitsett, Mosley, Sullivan, Rogers, and Tan (1998) found that only 13% of the general public had heard of an I/O psychologist, although the term Industrial Psychologist was better known (35%). Ryan (2003) has discussed the identity quest of I/O psychology in the USA. As President of the Society of Industrial–Organizational Psychology, which markets itself as the premier organization for I/O psychology (Nershi, 2005), it is notable that Ryan identifies issues that seem relevant for I/O psychologists in New Zealand too. She identifies six challenges and concerns: Visibility of the field; differentiation from other like disciplines; being perceived less positively as competitors in the marketplace; fit within the broader field of psychology; whether our name conveys who we are; and future I/O psychologists. Ryan notes that these ongoing challenges are not unique to I/O psychology, referring to a range of other professions that have struggled to define their competence, identity and uniqueness both within and outside psychology. Further, even within I/O psychology, issues of differentiation and marketing are not new (Viteles, 1941; Watson, 1954; both cited in Ryan, 2003).

I/O Psychology in NZ dates back to the 1920s and 1930s (Jamieson & Paterson, 1993). Yet in spite of this long history, managerial employees have a limited view of I/O psychology's potential contribution to their workplace (Hansson & O'Driscoll, 1993). Hansson and O'Driscoll's results highlighted the following issues: a lack of understanding of the breadth of areas that I/O psychology can impact; that empirical research was poorly aligned with the actual needs of organisations; and that I/O psychology was poor at marketing itself to organisations. As we have shown above, this situation is not unique to New Zealand. To date, no surveys of NZ I/O psychologists own views of their profession have been published. Our aim was to redress this in order to gauge the issues facing the profession, with a view to starting a discussion as to how the discipline might develop now and in the future. To increase the likelihood of including the full range of views about I/O Psychology in NZ (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), we tried to gain input from the widest possible spectrum of I/O psychologists, including academics, consultants, and those in HR roles; and those in different employment situations: self-employed, and both public and private sector employees and external and internal consultants.

## **Method**

### Research Design

A survey was constructed to assess respondents' (1) current satisfaction with their role, (2) perception of IO psychology in NZ, (3) the value of IO psychology to business practice, (4) current issues facing IO psychology including psychologist registration, (5) the quality of IO psychology education, and (6) professional development issues. The survey questions were based on research from the United States (e.g. Gasser, Whitsett, Mosley, Sullivan, Rogers & Tan, 1998), Britain (e.g. Patterson, 2001), and Canada (e.g. Cronshaw, 1988). The questions were successively revised through consultation with three experienced I/O psychologists (two practitioners and one academic). In total, the survey consisted of 41 open-ended questions.

### Participant Details

Participants were recruited by two means. First, a request for participants was posted to ionet, an email list-server for topics relating to I/O Psychology, with no restrictions on membership. In addition, we contacted 6 practitioners and 2 academics directly to elicit their views. This

targeted participation was conducted to ensure that key individuals in I/O Psychology were represented.

51 individuals agreed to participate in the research, and questionnaires were posted to them. 46 completed questionnaires were returned. Of these respondents, 18 were male, 19 were female, and 9 did not indicate this. Respondents were approximately evenly split between working for private consulting firms ( $n = 22$ ) and working in the public service sector ( $n = 21$ ). Of the public sector respondents, these were split across roles in the military ( $n = 9$ ), the university sector ( $n = 6$ ), and other unspecified public services ( $n = 6$ ). Of the three other respondents, two operated as independent private practitioners, and one worked for private industry. 36 (78%) respondents had completed a Masters Degree or a PhD in Psychology. 18 (39%) respondents were members of the New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPS) and 29 (63%) were Registered Psychologists.

It is difficult to know what proportion of New Zealand I/O psychologists this represents. As can be seen in these figures, many I/O psychologists are not members of the NZPS. There are 91 self-identified I/O psychologists in the NZPS, which may be an underestimate as not all psychologists indicate an area of specialisation. An alternative measure is the subscribed membership of ionet, an I/O psychology email list-server. Membership was 284 as of August 2005 (Frey, 2005) although this figure includes I/O psychologists, and also students and others interested in I/O psychology. The true number of I/O psychologists is likely to be somewhere between these two figures.

#### Data collection and analysis

The survey procedure and sample size do not allow us to be certain about the representativeness of this sample of New Zealand I/O psychologists. However, the sample size is sufficient that most important themes in I/O Psychology will have been surfaced.

An initial review of the data showed that responses were prevalent in certain sections and for certain questions. Further, there was significant overlap in responses to related questions. Therefore, our analysis focuses on those areas which I/O psychologists responded to most. At this stage, we reduced the responses into six themes of qualifications, current role, state of the profession, value of I/O psychology, current issues, and tertiary education. We subsequently reduced these to four overarching themes (current role, education and training, strategic perspectives, and the future), and we report our findings using this structure.

Survey responses were transcribed into Excel to allow for thematic coding. These responses were then read multiple times to ensure familiarity with the data prior to analysis (King, 1994). Three tactics were then used to generate meaningful codes for the data: noting patterns, clustering, and conceptual coherence (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Excerpts from two respondent surveys are provided below to illustrate the data and coding. These are from the section on factors negatively affecting public perceptions of I/O Psychology as a profession.

*“Psyc society [NZPS] is entirely made up of clinical psycs who have little to no awareness of what we do. As the body that is supposed to represent us to the public and govt, this is concerning.” A1*

*“Lack of strong endorsement by the profession, or organisational bodies of the importance of psychology to work..... It needs a body to stand up and say ‘have you checked the credentials of that person conducting your psych tests?’” A2*

Comparison of these two responses shows overlap around a theme of I/O psychologists needing to be appropriately represented to the public and to government by a professional body, which is a role that they perceive is not currently filled. This is represented in Table 4 (lack of a distinct body representing I/O Psychology). Respondent A2 also highlights the lack of understanding of what I/O Psychology is about, and the assumption that all psychology is about mental health issues (see Table 4: Psychology associated with mental illness only).

## Findings

### Current role

I/O psychologists in this research have diverse major responsibilities. These are shown in Table 1 below. We have divided these responsibilities into three categories to provide a clearer picture, which are assessment and selection, development, and strategic/ external relations/ management. These responses show that the NZ I/O psychologists in this survey are working in the core areas of the discipline. The overall picture from respondents is that more of them have responsibilities for individual level assessment and development rather than broader organisation-level interventions. That is, industrial psychology appears to predominate over organisational psychology. We note our particular concern that no respondents mentioned responsibilities relating to diversity. This is in spite of the potential for I/O psychologists to provide a range of research and interventions in this area (Cronshaw, 1988). Moreover, this is

surprising given evidence from New Zealand of ongoing discrimination against ethnic minority job applicants (Wilson et al., 2005) and the under-utilisation of immigrants' talents (Mace & Carr, 2005). Work design and leadership were also not mentioned, these also being core areas of I/O psychology.

Table 1

Assessment & Selection	Development	Strategic / External Relations/ Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• job descriptions/ analysis</li> <li>• selection</li> <li>• interviewing</li> <li>• psychometrics</li> <li>• psychological assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• performance management</li> <li>• personal development/ coaching/ career development</li> <li>• training/ development</li> <li>• debriefing/ feedback</li> <li>• stress management/ counselling</li> <li>• team building</li> <li>• OD / change management</li> <li>• conflict resolution/ facilitation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• client liaison/ support</li> <li>• business development/ proposals/ marketing</li> <li>• strategic HR/ HR policy development</li> <li>• employment relations</li> <li>• surveys/ questionnaires</li> <li>• research/ evaluation</li> <li>• management (staff, budget)</li> <li>• report writing<sup>ii</sup></li> </ul>

Respondents' views on the best and worst aspects of their current role are shown in Table 2. This information may be useful both for current I/O psychologists to compare their own perceptions with others in the profession, as well as providing career information for those considering I/O psychology careers. These two sets of responses each grouped into three themes. Looking first at the best aspects of being an I/O Psychologist, a first theme of the current role was evident. Respondents mentioned variety and meeting different people. A number of respondents also enjoyed the innovative and technical aspects of their role, illustrating the scientist-practitioner model in action.

*"Variety of work... meet different people"*

*"Ability to resolve difficulties, technical expertise"*

*"Design of assessment tools"*

A second theme was the positive aspects of working with clients, which is clearly a core part of practising as an I/O Psychologist.

*“Client interaction, using research to make a difference inside organisations”*

Last, a third more eclectic theme was around working conditions, with respondents mentioning supervision, teamwork, and remuneration among other positive aspects.

*“Working with team of psychologists/OD consultants”*

*“Managing competent team of psyocs”*

Work pressure was the main theme of negative aspects of being an I/O Psychologist, including the long hours, financial pressures, and stress in general.

*“Not having enough time to do everything”*

*“Timeframes and client demands; everyone thinks they are more important than everyone else”*

*“Work on weekends; posted on short notice; large workload”*

A second theme was around negative aspects of client interaction, contrasting with those respondents who enjoyed client interaction. Negative aspects related to business development including confusion about the role of I/O psychologists, and persuading others of the benefits of I/O psychology. We come back to these themes in discussing the future of I/O Psychology (see below “strategic perspectives”).

*“Business development: engaging orgs to put the money, time and effort into making their work better for people”*

*“Lack of understanding of I/O psyc”*

*“Clients wanting to take shortcuts, so not being able to deliver the most effective solution”*

The third theme on the negative side was working conditions, including issues that are likely to transpire in many workplaces, namely politics, administration, and limited freedom to do non-fee paying work.

*“Admin & paperwork; fighting the same battles over and over again”*

Table 2. The best and worst aspects of I/O psychologists’ current role

BEST ASPECTS	WORST ASPECTS
<p><b><u>The Role</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variety</li> <li>• Interest/ challenge/ constant learning</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Work Pressure</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long hours</li> <li>• Time pressure</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autonomy</li> <li>• Cultural diversity/ meeting different people</li> <li>• Technical expertise / ability to innovate</li> <li>• Research</li> <li>• Positive impact on people/ society</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Client Issues</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winning work/ building business</li> <li>• Client interaction/ partnerships</li> <li>• Having an impact on the client e.g., education</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Working Conditions</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel</li> <li>• Being a professional</li> <li>• Teamwork</li> <li>• Supervising/ leading others</li> <li>• Remuneration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial pressure</li> <li>• Stress</li> <li>• Work not valued</li> <li>• Projects that fail/ go wrong</li> <li>• Juggling competing demands</li> <li>• Lack of predictability</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Business Development</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing self in market</li> <li>• Confusion about the role of I/O psychologists</li> <li>• Persuading others of I/O Psychology benefits</li> <li>• Having to turn work down</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Working Conditions</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational politics</li> <li>• Administration/ paperwork</li> <li>• Limited freedom to pursue non-billable work</li> </ul>
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In overview, I/O psychologists in our sample enjoyed the variety of their work, including aspects both of being a scientist (e.g., designing assessment tools) and practitioner (e.g., educating clients). However, some elements of the practitioner role caused frustration (e.g., selling work to clients) yet, more common than this was mention of the pressures of work (e.g., limited time). The overall impression is of I/O psychology providing a demanding yet fulfilling career.

### Education and Training

Most respondents felt that their I/O Psychology qualification was sufficient to prepare them for their role and profession. This may be partly due to the high proportion of respondents (78%) holding a postgraduate qualification. However, it might also be due to self-serving bias (Campbell & Sedikides, 1999). Many of these noted that there was a good balance between applied and theoretical aspects of their training. For those who felt their qualification was not sufficient, most indicated that it was too theoretical, with several noting the need for more emphasis on the realities of business.

Most responded that, given the chance to turn back the clock, they would still train to be an I/O Psychologist. Reasons are shown in Table 3, and included the opportunity to make a positive contribution, and the challenge and enjoyment of everyday work.

*“Enjoy work and see real benefit to people's work lives, as well as benefiting practices and decisions of org.”*

*“Enjoyment, fascinated by people's experiences at work”*

*“Fertile ground for contributing to society, because work plays such a huge role in the wellbeing of people, families, communities, yet the majority of orgs don't think about IO psych.”*

Table 3. Reasons to train as an I/O Psychologist

<p>Worthwhile/ fulfilling/ meaningful/ useful/ makes a difference/ is positive</p> <p>Opens doors/ possibilities for future roles/ fantastic training</p> <p>Enjoyable/ fascinating</p> <p>Enjoy working as a psychologist in a commercial environment</p> <p>Growing field</p>
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The survey also asked about the current level of education of I/O psychologists. Most felt that it was adequate, although three provisos were noted by some respondents. First, that a final stage of on-the-job training and experience, with appropriate supervision, was necessary before becoming competent. Second, a handful of respondents noted that the level of education attained depended on the institution, although no-one provided any further specific information. Third, several respondents noted that education was only satisfactory for those who went through to postgraduate level.

Taken overall, the responses in this section suggest that, while I/O education in New Zealand is generally viewed as satisfactory, there are some concerns around lack of practical and business-related learning for students. There was also concern that some programmes might be of lesser quality. These issues suggest that I/O psychology teaching would be improved if business issues and practical components were integrated into the curriculum. Other quality control issues should be considered, such as requiring I/O psychologists to pursue postgraduate courses as a pre-requisite of using the title “psychologist”, and a system of ensuring the value and standards of such courses. Yet it was notable that I/O psychologists responding were overwhelmingly positive about their education and training, with almost all indicating that they would make the same career choice again.

### Strategic Perspectives

The survey contained a number of questions pertaining to issues of value, credibility and recognition of I/O psychology. Respondents highlighted more problems in representing I/O psychology to the public than positive factors (see Table 4). Looking first at those aspects which help to provide a positive impression of I/O psychology, these clustered into two themes. The first theme was around the value of I/O psychology skills, providing scientific solutions to commercial problems. The second theme was of I/O psychology being part of the general trend of focusing more on the people side of business. Human Resources trends such as emotional intelligence were also seen as increasing the visibility of I/O psychology.

*“Qualifications seen as a premium work qualification”*

*“Focus on the people side of business”*

*“Specialist skill set; developing field”*

Respondents noted a greater number of problems affecting I/O psychology's public image, which grouped into three themes: lack of clarity as to what I/O psychology can offer; lack of representation to the public; and lack of exclusivity (see Table 4). For the first theme, the foremost problem was of clear communication of I/O psychology to the public, which was viewed as being due to the lack of branding or clear marketing combined with the broad scope of I/O psychology.

*“Lack of clarity about what makes I/O useful, when and to whom”*

*“Misconceptions about psychologists in general and psyc tests. Lack of strategy to do the things that matter most to the leading practitioners”*

*“Lack of branding of I/O psyc”*

*“Title of IO psychologist is not used, less recognised”*

*“Not a profession our parents can explain to their friends....title complicated, not understandable”*

Further, I/O psychologists were criticised for failing to prove their worth. Suggestions included providing specific examples as evidence of making a positive difference to people and organisations, and gaining greater exposure through contributing to public debates on relevant

policy issues. Other comments included the lack of collective action between, and cohesion among, I/O psychologists in representing themselves as a profession.

*“Lack of contribution to policy and public debate on critical issues”*

*“Not enough cohesion within discipline”*

For the second theme of lack of representation, respondents noted the problem of all psychologists being viewed as providing the same service, this being helping with mental health issues, i.e. clinical psychology. Further, some respondents thought the NZPS did a poor job of representing I/O psychology due to the majority of members being clinical psychologists. Respondents also noted that I/O psychology is not clearly differentiated from HR, with this causing further confusion for the public.

*“Public perception that all psychs are clinical psychs”*

*“The general public lump psychologists together”*

*“Psyc society is entirely made up of clinical psychs who have little to no awareness of what we do. As the body that is supposed to represent us to the public and govt, this is concerning”*

*“IO not viewed as distinctly different from clinical or differentiated from HR”*

Third, respondents noted the lack of exclusivity and protection of I/O psychology expertise. Specifically, that I/O psychologists working in the public domain are competing against consultants from various fields including HR, recruitment, management, and strategy, as well as some clinical psychologists who have migrated across to I/O psychology areas. Further, there is limited protection under the HPCA Act (2003) for the public from unqualified people or poor practices. We note that this issue of public protection, if seen as needing a professional body to fill this role, links back to the second theme of unique professional representation.

*“Currently don't exclude people who are unqualified”*

*“Unqualified people using psychometric tools incorrectly or just using 'bad' tools can give the profession a bad name”*

*“Lack of strong endorsement by the profession, or organisational bodies of the importance of psychology to work.... It needs a body to stand up and say ‘have you checked the credentials of that person conducting your psych tests?’”*

“Suppliers of products who push people through 3-5 day programmes and accredit them to practice in our area vs. the years of study that we have done.”

Table 4. Factors helping and hindering I/O Psychology’s public image

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
<p><b>Skill-rich profession</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I/O Psychology qualifications/ skill set well-regarded</li> <li>• Provides rigorous scientific solutions to problems</li> </ul> <p><b>Growing field</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefiting from growth in Human Resources field generally</li> <li>• Increasing recognition</li> </ul>	<p><b>Lack of clarity of what I/O psychology can offer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complicated title and broad scope making I/O psychology difficult to communicate as a profession</li> <li>• Lack of collective action by I/O psychologists</li> <li>• Lack of statistical abilities among I/O psychologists limiting our ability to prove the benefits of our work</li> </ul> <p><b>Lack of representation to the public</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of promotion of I/O Psychology as a profession with a distinct skill set</li> <li>• Lack of differentiation from HR and from Clinical Psychology</li> <li>• Lack of a distinct body representing I/O psychology / Insufficient representation of I/O psychology by NZPS</li> <li>• Psychology associated with mental illness only</li> </ul> <p><b>Lack of Exclusivity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No legislation or other factors limiting skills and tools to I/O Psychology</li> <li>• Unqualified people using psychometrics poorly, or using poor psychometrics, giving I/O Psychology a bad name</li> </ul>

Respondents were also asked about the value of I/O psychology to businesses in New Zealand. There were five themes relating to positive values: providing an objective approach to business issues; providing economic benefits; improving wellbeing; improving talent recruitment and use; and offering innovative tools and techniques (see Table 5). We note that economic and wellbeing benefits have been identified as intended outcomes of I/O

psychology more broadly (Cronshaw, 1988; Jamieson & Paterson, 1993). Looking at these in more detail, the first theme relates to the data-based, scientific and objective approach that I/O psychologists can provide. Comments included:

*“Gather data to more accurately predict high and low potential performers.”*

*“Providing a scientific background to decision making and processes.”*

A second theme was around the economic benefits of using I/O Psychology, including improved profits, and a good return on investment.

*“By fully understanding the dynamics that underpin productivity we are the best equipped to improve it.”*

*“Helps NZ businesses ... keep up with overseas markets and trends”*

Improvements to individual attitudes, and overall individual and organisational well-being, comprised a third theme.

*“Providing specialised knowledge to help increase org effectiveness & wellbeing”*

A number of respondents specifically mentioned the value of I/O psychology for recruitment, assessment, and development; all traditional areas of I/O expertise (Collins & Stevens, 2002; Cook, 2004).

*“Research and development of selection methods”*

*“Better assessment and development systems”*

A fifth theme related to I/O psychologists being able to develop specialised tools to suit client needs, and help solve people-related business problems.

*“Provides professional development of survey tools”*

*“Providing latest knowledge/techniques to the management of organisation”*

*“Deals with emerging issues, e.g. talent shortages”*

However, a sixth theme concerns that lack of specific value provided by I/O Psychology which was a present but minority view.

*“Individuals provide value - contribute just as much if they had a different background”*

Table 5. *The value of I/O Psychology to business*

<p><b>Provides a data-based, objective approach to business issues</b></p> <p>Scientific approach to business processes and decisions</p> <p>Provides a theoretical backing for business initiatives</p> <p>Offers business-focused interventions</p> <p>Offers professionally developed and valid tools and techniques</p> <p>Provides evidence-based results</p> <p><b>Provides economic benefits</b></p> <p>Improves profits</p> <p>Improves productivity/ performance</p> <p>Reduces risk/ increases safety</p> <p>Provides cost-effective solutions</p> <p><b>Improves wellbeing</b></p> <p>Improves attitudes/ motivation and decreases attrition</p> <p>Increases organisational effectiveness and wellbeing</p> <p><b>Improves talent recruitment and assessment</b></p> <p>Assists organisations in getting good people</p> <p>Enables organisations to get the best out of their people</p> <p><b>Offers tools and techniques to address emerging issues</b></p> <p>Providing latest knowledge &amp; techniques</p> <p>Ability to deal with emerging issues e.g., talent shortages</p>
<p><b>Has no additional value</b></p> <p>Has no value to business</p> <p>It is the individuals who provide value, regardless of their background</p>

### The Future

A series of questions asked respondents about the pertinent issues facing I/O psychology in New Zealand. Three themes emerged, which indicate changes that I/O psychologists should

consider to move the profession forward. The main theme that emerged was around the need for I/O psychology to establish a professional identity and then market this.

*“Challenges raised by changes in registration and defining what I/O psych is”*

*“Growth of profession must be managed”*

*“Branding, and recognition of brand”*

*“Educating businesses about the value of IO psyc”*

*“Increasing the bar in the profession”*

A small number of respondents noted the need to adapt I/O psychology knowledge to NZ, including issues of biculturalism, multiculturalism, and also the practical constraints of working with smaller organisations in an economy that is prone to relatively quick changes.

*“Cultural appropriateness of theory, research and applications”*

*“IO mostly from US but different working population here, e.g. small businesses”*

*“Small and often temperamental economics of NZ”*

Similarly, a small number of respondents also noted potential problems for I/O psychologists and the use of psychometric tests. While some thought that being viewed as purveyors of tests was limiting, others were more concerned in differentiating psychometric expertise from test administration.

*“Being pigeon holed into testers”*

*“Issues about testing/relevance of measures being sold on the open market”*

*“Raising public awareness of the difference between someone who is trained as a psyc and someone who has completed a 3-day course.”*

Last, we asked respondents about the steps that could be taken to increase the use of I/O psychology. The majority view was that I/O psychology needs to be marketed in a user-friendly and highly visible manner. Suggestions to achieve this included having a voice in public forums, marketing successful applied projects that showed clear benefits from I/O psychology, and publishing in mainstream management and public media.

*“Market profession more”*

*“Media coverage of successful projects”*

*“Make research findings more applicable and disseminate findings in a more user friendly way”*

*“More publicity about where psychs have added value to a business”*

*“Disseminate theories and research more widely, engage in public forums, be more proactive in challenging current assumptions, practices and beliefs”.*

Two other themes were identified, which were the need to emphasise I/O psychology’s distinct offering, and for all I/O psychologists, both academics and practitioners, to work together more closely.

*“Increase use of IO psych as a job title”*

*“Emphasise value of qualifications and registration”*

*“Market it as a distinct profession which can add value beyond HR practices”*

*“Work together to plan and implement processes”*

*“Academics and practitioners work together to enhance the profession “*

*“Get together more often to do useful stuff”*

*“Academics can make research less abstract and more applied, practitioners can share their knowledge in a more academic way”*

## **Discussion**

There are three main issues that we would like to highlight in closing: I/O psychology as a challenging but rewarding career; the need to market the profession better; and the need to manage the profession as it grows. First, I/O psychologists enjoy what they do. Most I/O psychologists are practitioners who enjoy the variety and challenge of their work with clients. However, applying psychology to work in helpful and profitable ways requires considerable time and energy, in persuading clients to commit to projects, and then making those projects work for the client, and providing a profit and future work for the practitioner. We need to bear this in mind when discussing the second theme, of how to promote the profession. This came through clearly from a large number of respondents, particularly around issues of visibility and marketing. Suggestions of how to work collectively to improve the branding and marketing of

I/O psychology must be made with due consideration of the constraints of time, workload and billable hours that are primary concerns of practitioners. It is likely that any strategic initiatives will have greater buy-in and success if the aims and intended benefits are defined up-front, and there are clear limits on the time and workload entailed. In this respect, there may be valuable lessons to be learned from the development of I/O psychology in other countries. NZ is like Australia, Canada, the US and UK, in that I/O psychologists are represented by a subdivision of the main psychological society or association. However, I/O psychologists may have other affiliations, especially with management and human resources organisations. In the UK, the Association of Business Psychologists has recently formed to provide a distinct community of I/O psychology practitioners. We see this as an unfortunate development, potentially reducing the interplay of science and practice, and diluting efforts to communicate I/O psychology more broadly. Instead, we propose that NZ I/O psychologists need to determine what kind of body they want, and under what auspices. All I/O psychologists should then actively participate in shaping, supporting and promoting this body so that it provides the appropriate level and type of representation to the public and government that our survey respondents indicated was needed.

NZ I/O psychologists responding to the survey clearly indicated a desire for I/O psychology to be better represented to the public and clients. As with previous US research (Gasser et al., 1998), and as suggested by some respondents in this study, consistently using a single name for ourselves would be a start. Gasser et al. also suggest that I/O psychologists should put themselves forward to talk to future managers, through talks to business students at high schools, colleges and universities, and chamber of commerce meetings. While many marketing activities may happen on an ad hoc basis, a co-ordinated effort might achieve greater results.

A third theme is how I/O psychology should be managed as the profession grows and matures, including issues of working collectively and ensuring a coherent approach between practitioners and academics to provide pragmatic and scientific solutions (Anderson, Herriot, & Hodgkinson, 2001). Notably, while most I/O psychologists are practitioners, the first few years of training for future I/O psychologists is with academics. It seems sensible to suggest that universities should have practitioner elements in their curriculum, but this will require input from both academics and current practitioners. Other opportunities for collaboration include co-operative continuing professional development activities, joint research/ consultancy projects, academics taking practitioner sabbaticals and vice versa, and the co-supervision of students for

registration. We also note the changing population of NZ, with increasing numbers of people with Pacific nations and Asian heritage, and the small size of most organisations in NZ. These issues bring challenges to I/O psychologist practitioners and researchers alike (Bryson & Hosken, 2005; Taylor & O'Driscoll, 1998).

### **Conclusion**

While it is perhaps comforting to know that the problems of I/O psychology are not new, not unique to I/O psychology, and not limited to New Zealand (Ryan, 2003), this should not engender apathy. Surely it is time to do something to address our various concerns. Ryan (2003) concludes that all I/O psychologists have an individual responsibility to make conscious choices in how we represent ourselves and our profession, and in this way we can all contribute to the future of I/O psychology. Yet respondents in this research suggested explicitly or implicitly that collective action is also needed. Hansson and O'Driscoll (1993) concluded that "enhancement of the profession's image could be achieved by increased communication with consumers of our services and more effective marketing of the expertise and areas of competence of industrial/ organizational psychologists" (p. 18). Over a decade later, this still holds true. With a century of I/O psychology in NZ rapidly approaching, we believe it is time to act collectively to increase the recognition and use of I/O psychology.

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<sup>i</sup> We have kept written notes verbatim for the most part, providing the underlying meaning is clear. Author comments and word completions are indicated with [square brackets].

<sup>ii</sup> We note that report writing may refer to the results of assessment and development interventions (e.g., psychometrics, stress counseling), or be related to other management issues. This was not specified by respondents so we have left it in the generic third category.