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Greetings, *TIP* readers, and welcome to the newest edition of the **Spotlight** column. April has finally arrived, and you know what that means: Arbor Day is just around the corner. It's time to plant a tree! Or at least don't cut one down. Do you find yourself searching for something worthwhile to do during your tree-chopping hiatus this Arbor Day? If so, this column is for you! This issue provides an informative synopsis of I-O psychology in Israel that promises to keep you engaged for a spell. Read on for a detailed account of how our Israeli colleagues go about advancing, developing, networking, and collaborating with like-minded others.

Networking in Israel: Schmoozing in the Holy Land

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Israel, otherwise known as “the Holy Land” (holy for Jews, Christians, and Muslims), is a small country in the Middle East. It has 7,373,000 inhabitants and is about the size of the state of New Jersey (22,000 sq km). Israel is a beautiful country where history, religion, and modern times intertwine into a very colorful mosaic. But because Israel is also a country lacking most basic natural resources, its leaders have long promoted the notion that people are our only source of competitive advantage. Consequently, I-O psychologists are widely recognized in Israel as playing a central role in enhancing our country's fundamental resource and bringing it to its full potential. Quality graduate education, excellent research, strong academic–industry relations, and a good deal of old-fashioned “schmoozing” (Yiddish for friendly chatting as a basis for building or strengthening social relations) have contributed to the success of I-O psychology in Israel.



¹ As always, your comments and suggestions regarding this column are most welcome. Please feel free to e-mail me: lfthompson@ncsu.edu.

I-O psychology is taught at the master's or doctorate level in five of Israel's six public universities with about 60 graduates each year. In the University of Haifa and at the Technion there are distinct I-O psychology programs, whereas at the Hebrew University, Bar-Ilan University, and Ben-Gurion University the program is a combination of social and I-O psychology. The number of full-time I-O psychology faculty members in each university varies from three to seven. Most of these programs combine theoretical studies with practical experience.

As the distance between the northern-most and southern-most universities is only about 200km (125 miles), networking is more like schmoozing among next-door neighbors. Practitioners and academics can easily meet with one another to collaborate on research or consulting efforts as driving times rarely exceed 2 hours. Tight proximity to one another has generated tight social networks, with these dense networks enhancing graduate education (e.g., joint courses), promoting research collaboration, and facilitating academic-practitioner cooperation. Tight proximity also facilitates the cross-fertilization of ideas with each I-O program typically inviting colleagues from other I-O programs to present their research several times per year. Aside from offering us the opportunity to compare the quality of the food in each university's respective faculty club, these visits allow us to keep up to date on each others' research, share our new research ideas, and get early feedback from faculty and students on our work.

Given Israel's tiny size, when an Israeli academic I-O psychologist talks about networking he/she is usually referring to relations with colleagues from Europe or the U.S. Many faculty members go to both the SIOP conference and the Academy of Management conference on a yearly basis and compliment these with different I-O psychology conferences in Europe. Thus, we spend a lot of our time traveling out of Israel to maintain relationships and to keep up with the development of the field. We also encourage our students to present their work at international conferences and often find creative ways to help fund these trips.

When a quality student finishes his/her doctorate and is interested in a post-doc, he/she is almost always recommended to go abroad for this purpose. Having such a small and tight community in Israel, most academics in our field believe that such an experience is necessary in order for the budding academic to build his/her own network and to be exposed to new and different methods and approaches.

In Israel, we have a strong belief that it is not the numbers that count but the quality. Thus, although the I-O community here is small, we have managed to produce some leading figures in the field. These individuals have served or are currently serving in key positions in our community, either on the boards of our various academic institutions or as editors and associate editors of such top tier journals as the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Academy*

of Management Journal, and the *Journal of Organizational Behavior*.

Graduates from a certified I-O psychology program in Israel are eligible for listing in the National Registry of Psychologists, which is a list of all certified psychologists in Israel. This list belongs to the Israel Ministry of Health; once enlisted, the individual is considered licensed. There are currently 8,703 psychologists on this list. However, because many I-O psychology graduates end up in jobs that do not require a license number (unlike clinical or developmental psychologists), relatively few I-O psychologists actually register. I-O psychologists may also enroll as members of the Israeli Psychological Association (IPA; www.psychology.org.il) whose espoused mission is to maintain and enhance the status of the profession in Israel. The IPA has defined the criteria for professional residency in the different branches of psychology and credentials the various residency programs. The IPA has six sections corresponding to different areas of psychological specialty. There are 120 members registered in the I-O section; however, there are likely many more practicing I-O psychologists in Israel. The I-O section hosts a number of workshops each year with the upcoming workshop entitled "Occupational Diagnosis in an Era of Change—Innovations in the Selection Process in the Israeli Defense Force."

Other organizations in which practicing I-O psychologists play an active role are the Israeli Association for Organizational Development (IAOD) and the Israeli Association for Management, Development and Research of the Human Resources. IAOD's goal is to enhance the area of organizational consultancy and development. IAOD has 292 registered consultants and has an annual conference. The upcoming conference is titled "Aiming High: The Organizational Consultant and the Places Organizations Get Made." The Israeli Association for Management, Development and Research of the Human Resources is an association focused on enhancing the discipline of human resources in Israel and turning this discipline into a key factor that influences business processes in organizations. It aims to assist in the professional development of all those practicing the discipline of human resources and to create a supportive community for its members. The annual conference in 2008 was dedicated to the role of the human resources manager in organizations. I-O psychologists involved in these associations typically find these conferences a great opportunity to network and catch up on new field-based technologies and insights. In addition, members of our community often play a key role in these conferences, offering keynote addresses, leading workshops, and participating in paper and/or poster sessions.

The I-O psychology graduates opting to pursue their careers outside of academia find employment in a variety of organizations, both private and public. As Israel is known for its high-tech industry, many graduates are recruited by such high-tech companies to serve as internal consultants or senior HR executives. In addition, as can be seen from the title of the upcoming

conference of the IPA, the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) is also a major employer of I-O psychologists. Military service is compulsory in Israel with a large portion of the population remaining in the reserves. A citizen army, the IDF is the largest organization in Israel, with a unique set of organizational needs. Recognizing these needs, the IDF established “the behavioral sciences unit” consisting of a few dozen I-O psychologists and sociologists serving either as career soldiers or as reserve duty specialists. This unit is responsible for developing the IDF’s systems of selection and deployment at all levels, running motivation studies, developing and conducting leadership training and development programs, and offering organizational consultancy services. Indeed, a good number of those serving in this unit are deployed as in-house organizational consultants at bases across the country. With many of Israel’s leading I-O psychologists doing their annual reserve duty in this unit, it is not surprising that this unit is heavily research oriented. Studies conducted by or in conjunction with this unit validate innovative new instruments for selection and deployment, and examine new approaches to enhance performance assessment and management, group and team processes, training efficacy, and learning. Indeed, a significant portion of this research has been published in some of the leading I-O journals, offering new insights into peer appraisal, team learning, and individual self-efficacy.

In sum, although Israel’s I-O psychologists are few in number, the contributions that we have made to the field, to high-tech industry in Israel and abroad, as well as to the security and growth of our State are quite significant. Although many of these contributions are the result of simple hard work, there is no doubt that a strong culture of “schmoozing” has played a significant role.

Concluding Editorial

So there you have it—an excellent and informative overview of I-O psychology in Israel, which just happens to be the only country that entered the 21st century with a net gain in the number of trees (Lavi, 2003). As you can see, trees are not the only thing flourishing in this region, where our profession itself continues to thrive. Thanks to our Israeli colleagues’ keen appreciation for networking, collaboration, and scientific advancement, this area of the world has contributed significantly to our collective knowledge base, thereby facilitating important I-O developments across the globe.

היפרגוילביב

Lavi, D. (2003, September 16). Manji’s surprise. *National Post* (Canada), A17.