October 27 is quickly approaching, and you know what that means: Cranky Coworkers Day is just around the corner (Elmer, 2007). Do you find yourself searching for a way to escape the complaints of that cantankerous colleague down the hall? If so, this column is for you! The following pages provide everything you need to know to steer the next office conversation away from your crabby coworker’s grumblings and toward something infinitely more interesting: I-O psychology in South Africa. Read on for details.

Industrial and Organizational Psychology in South Africa

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South Africa is indeed a country of contrasts, from first world technology to third world poverty. It is this environment of extreme change that allowed for the miracle of the “new” South Africa in 1994 and provides the I-O psychologist with one of the most exciting environments in the world to work in. There are few places that provide a space so full of diversity and transformation to test our science of group differences and cross-cultural issues in the world of work, while at the same time seeking the practical implementation of employee-orientated activities with an emphasis on developing human resources, bolstering the economy, and improving South Africa’s global competitiveness (Muchinsky, Kriek, & Schreuder, 1998).

1 As always, your comments and suggestions regarding this column are most welcome. Please feel free to e-mail me: lfthompson@ncsu.edu.
Industrial psychology\(^2\) has a long and dynamic history in South Africa. The contribution of South African psychologists to the world of work can be traced back to World War II. During this time, R.W. Wilcock’s development of intelligence and special aptitude tests, P. R. Shawran’s early work on the selection of pilots for the armed forces, and I.D. MacCrone’s study of racial attitudes in South Africa were significant contributions (Raubenheimer, as cited in Muchinsky et al., 1998). Subsequent work conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in the late 1940s further advanced I-O psychology in South Africa. This work focused primarily on the development of psychometric instruments used in many different fields. Additional contributions were made in J. G. Taylor’s work on the behavioral basis of perception; H. F. E. Renning’s studies of the abilities, temperament, interests, and creativity of the Kalahari Bushmen; W. Hudson’s studies of the perceptual abilities of Blacks; J. Wolpe’s and A. Lazarus’s work in the field of behavior therapy; F. W. Blignaut’s study of alcohol addiction in white mice; and S. Biesheuvel’s research on the intelligence and abilities of different population groups in South Africa (Raubenheimer, as cited in Muchinsky et al., 1998).

Over the last 3 decades, industrial psychology in South Africa has grown at a remarkable rate. Almost all universities have industrial psychology departments in addition to their psychology departments. These departments were established in the 1960s and 1970s. The popularity of industrial psychology as a field of study has increased enormously over time. In 1972, only 3,147 students studied industrial psychology at South African universities, but by 1997 about 12,000 undergraduate students in I-O psychology were enrolled at the University of South Africa (Unisa) alone.

The establishment of the Professional Board of Psychology represents another notable development in the history of psychology. This occurred in 1974. Industrial psychologists are obliged to register with this board, through which they obtain statutory recognition.

Finally, discussions of the roots of I-O psychology in South Africa would not be complete without mention of the Journal of Industrial Psychology (published as Perspectives in Industrial Psychology from 1975 to 1985). This journal serves as an independent publication for scientific contributions to the field of industrial psychology. Today, this publication functions as an open access journal where articles can be downloaded for free (visit www.sajip.co.za). The Open Journal Publishing System is also directly linked to Google Scholar where all the published articles are linked to the Google search portal.

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\(^2\) In South Africa the name “industrial psychology” is still used to describe the total field of industrial and organisational psychology, although professionals and academics are debating whether the name is sufficient to the needs of the environment.
I-O Psychology as a Profession

In South Africa, an industrial psychologist is required to register with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA—www.hpcsa.co.za) in accordance with the Medical, Dental, and Supplementary Health Service Professions Act, No 56 of 1974. The main function of the board is to instill high standards of professional training and conduct among members of the profession. In order to become registered with the Professional Board, a master’s degree in psychology and a formal internship of 12 to 18 months is required. Registered psychologists are required to accrue a certain number of CPD (continuous professional development) credits per year to maintain their professional registration with the board. These credits can be obtained from various registered CPD Service Providers. In 2007, there were 8,779 individuals registered with the HPCSA in categories ranging from mental health assistant to psychologist. Of these, 1,123 were registered I-O psychologists (12% of these are Black). At this time, 274 interns were also registered (29% of these are Black).

Many industrial psychologists also register as personnel practitioners with the South African Board of Personnel Practice (SABPP). This is not a statutory body and is not regulated by legislation as in the case of the Professional Board.

I-O Psychology at Universities

The significant growth in I-O psychology as a field of study has led to nearly all South African universities having I-O psychology departments. I-O psychology is taught in departments at 14 South African universities. Some of these departments are part of psychology departments, but by far most of these are situated within the Faculties of Business and Commerce either as independent departments or as part of Human Resources Management departments. The commercial focus of most of these departments provides South African students with a unique opportunity to combine their science in psychology with the practice of business and commerce.

Professional I-O Psychology Associations

South Africa’s history of transformation has also influenced the way psychologists have organized themselves over the last few decades. Originally, there were two professional associations for psychologists in South Africa—the South African Psychological Association and the Psychological Institute of the Republic of South Africa. In 1982, the Psychological Association of South Africa (PASA) was established, which consisted of five institutes concerned with the following fields: academic and research, industrial, counseling, clinical, and educational psychology. As a result of the transformation process in South Africa, this body was replaced by the present Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA), founded in January 1994.
From 1994–2005 the Society for Industrial and Organisational Psychology of South Africa (SIOPSA) comprised a division of PsySSA. During October 2005, the Society’s members chose to become an independent organization with an arm’s length relationship with PsySSA. As described next, SIOPSA is now one of the prominent professional associations representing the interests of more than 650 psychologists working in industry.

The Society for Industrial and Organisational Psychology of South Africa (SIOPSA). Most industrial psychologists are represented by SIOPSA (www.siopsa.org.za). In general, SIOPSA aims to encourage the existence of a fair and humane work situation in South Africa, to which all have an equal opportunity of access and within which all can perform according to their abilities, develop to their full potential, and experience a high quality of work life.

The Society is a registered nonprofit organization with an elected central executive. The executive takes responsibility for the representation of members at a national level with statutory bodies like the Board of Psychology. The executive also works to ensure effective communication with members through the Society’s Web site, quarterly newsletter, and regular news items, organizes national events like the annual SIOPSA conference, and provides additional member services as well.

SIOPSA is an accredited CPD Service Provider of the Board of Psychology and arranges several national and regional events for members and other interested parties. In 2007, the Society issued more that 2,000 CPD certificates over 20 events. International cooperation is also important to SIOPSA, which has a Society Memoranda of Understanding with SIOP, EAWOP, and the Division of Occupational Psychology of the BPS.

The main event of the Society is the annual SIOPSA conference. The conference has been presented annually for at least the last 20 years. This peer-reviewed, 3-day conference is normally held in June and includes several pre-conference workshops and at least two international keynote speakers (which have, in the past, included a number of prominent SIOP members such as Frank Landy, George Thornton, Murray Barrick, Walter Borman, and Lois Tetrick). Also included are South African keynote speakers and around 40–50 papers from South African and African I-O psychologists. The conference follows a format similar to that of the annual SIOP conference.

Regionally, the Society has branches in four main South African cities: Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, and Pretoria. Each of these branches has its own executive committee and is represented on the central executive by a regional chairperson. Many regional events are well attended by as many as 70 I-O psychologists, interns, and students.

Consulting in Psychology Interest Group and People Assessment in Industry (PAI). In addition to the regional branches, the Society has two active special interest groups: the Consulting in Psychology Interest Group and PAI. The intent of the Consulting in Psychology Interest Group has been to drive the
cause of consulting in psychology as an area of practice in South Africa. Meanwhile, PAI (www.pai.org.za) was originally establishing to proactively engage various stakeholders interested in psychological assessment in South African industry. The purpose of PAI is to ensure testing exists in the South African context as a value added and ethical practice. PAI’s activities include promoting fair assessments in the workplace. The group has provided the government with input on the wording of psychometric assessments found in the Employment Equity Act and has set up a network of interested stakeholders around the country. PAI is actively engaged in educating everyone about the potential benefits of sound psychological assessment in the industrial context.

Since its inception, PAI has published a range of survey reports and best practice guides including:

- Guidelines for the Validation of Assessment Procedures (2006)
- *Code of Practice for Psychological and Other Similar Assessment in the Workplace* (2006)

During 2007, PAI invited Jim Outtz of SIOP to present a workshop on adverse impact as part of a Fairness Symposium in Pretoria. Kevin Murphy also presented a workshop on the assessment of honesty in the workplace, and Wayne Cascio and Rich Arvey presented on fairness in personnel decisions some years ago.

**The Assessment Centre Study Group (ACSG).** The ACSG (www.acsg.co.za) is a special interest group of practitioners in South Africa who present a conference on assessment centers each year. The study group operates independently, both professionally and financially, and consists of a committee of volunteers who are elected every second year. The ACSG aims to promote the professional use of the assessment center technique; facilitate the exchange of experience and skills with regard to this technique; provide a forum to exchange research, insights, and information related to the science, practice, and teaching of assessment centers; ensure that this technique is applied in an ethical and professional manner by its users; ensure that the application of the technique in Southern Africa keeps pace with overseas developments in this field; and identify and address related problem areas. Since it establishment in 1980, the ACSG has been instrumental in building relationships with international scholars and practitioners across the globe. A highlight on the I-O psychology calendar every year is the annual ACSG conference held in the beautiful cape wine lands during March. This conference is attended by around 150 delegates annually.

**The Future of I-O Psychology in South Africa**

As the world well knows, South Africa has undergone significant changes over the past 10 years, impacting our lives and the world of work in ways that were once difficult to imagine. Sharing and managing knowledge in the
information age have become key to success, resulting in significantly differ-
ent models of work, opportunities for innovation, and infinitely more career choices.

To help manage and drive what lies ahead, SIOPSA hosted a one-day Futuring Conference earlier this year to identify and establish a range of issues of shared importance. This conference resulted in a strategic framework for I-O psychology over the next 5 years. Delegates from various stakeholder groups including academic institutions, practitioners, large organizations, and independent practice attended and identified 11 professional action domains that would be critical for our future. These action domains are provided below.

![Figure 1: Key outcome from the Futuring Conference—Professional Action Domains.](image-url)

These action domains will form the basis of 11 working committees, which will function under the auspices of SIOPSA with the specific aim of defining a comprehensive strategy to ensure that I-O psychology in South Africa is ready for the future.

By maintaining balance between science and practice, and by making a conscious effort to render scientific knowledge more accessible to its users, we feel confident that industrial psychology will grow and prosper in the new socio-political order in South Africa.
Concluding Editorial

So there you have it—an interesting and informative account of the past, current, and future directions of our SIOPSA counterparts, who are clearly doing their part to rid the world of workplace crankiness by advancing the science and practice of I-O psychology. All signs indicate that our profession will continue to flourish in the South African corner of the globe, where our forward-thinking colleagues work to ensure that I-O psychology remains useful and relevant to diverse populations operating in an ever-changing environment.

References