I-O psychologists are in high demand. As the modern workplace becomes more dynamic, organizations strive to hire and train employees capable of adapting to uncertain circumstances (Pulakos, Arad, Donovan, & Plamondon, 2000). In order to do this, organizations must first identify the knowledge, skills, abilities, and personality characteristics (KSAPs) necessary to perform such dynamic work. Understanding the complexity of modern work to identify these KSAPs requires a specialized skill set, a skill set that is familiar to I-O psychologists. As such, the demand for I-Os is expected to grow 53% by 2022 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Unfortunately, this need may go unmet. Staffing needs are met with a well-established talent pipeline (Meyers, 2012). Despite the growth in demand for I-O psychologists, only 11% and 5% of all master’s and doctoral applications, respectively, are to I-O psychology programs (Mulvey, Michalski, & Wicherski, 2010). Furthermore, these numbers appear to be relatively stable, indicating a lack of growth in the number of individuals qualified to meet the increasing demand for I-O psychologists.
Though a subgroup of I-O psychologists specialize in career counseling areas, many of us forget that the process of career development can begin at very early age. Experiences in elementary school can influence the development of vocational interests and one’s awareness of the range of careers that exist (Gibson, 2005; Magnuson & Starr, 2000). Throughout middle and high school (Dick & Rallis, 1991), students begin to develop their self-efficacy for prerequisite abilities and skills pertaining to various occupations (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001; Bores-Rangel, Church, Szendre, & Reeves 1990; Watt, Eccles, Durik 2006). Through various sources of influence including peers, parents, teachers, and representatives of various occupations (Beale & Williams, 2000; Harackiewicz, Rozek, Hulleman, & Hyde 2012; Nauta & Kokaly, 2001), they consider new career options and eliminate less desirable ones as they gain further information and begin to form their career identities (Harper, 2010). These processes, in turn, affect career development strategies in college and beyond, as they interact with emerging career aspirations and individual differences (Ackerman, Kanfer, & Beier, 2013; Major, Holland, & Oborn, 2012; Marrs, Barb, & Ruggiero, 2007).

In particular, theories about stages of career development have emphasized the importance of dispelling myths and stereotypes about occupational fields as early as middle school (Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000). Virtually all of us in I-O psychology have experience in dealing with public perceptions about psychology as being overly broad (nonapplied) or narrowly focused on clinical matters. Thus, some active efforts to reduce these misperceptions may help more students enter the I-O pipeline at all stages of development. Fortunately, introductory psychology textbooks have included greater coverage of I-O (Haselhuhn & Clopton, 2008) in recent years, and colleges have offered courses in I-O more consistently as electives (Stoloff et al., 2010). However, many psychology students in college continue to gain little to no exposure to our field, despite entering business-related careers later in life. Regardless of whether these individuals pursue a path in I-O psychology, they could spread awareness about the field to their colleagues in the business world and may one day hire or consult with I-O psychologists. In other words, students are an important leverage point to increase visibility.

Focused efforts to build an explicit pipeline improve our field’s ability to attract individuals with the highest potential, regardless of their background. Though rigorous research is still needed to evaluate their success, widespread programs have already been established to funnel underrepresented ethnic minorities and
genders into STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields in youth (Gibson 2005; Morganson, Jones, & Major, 2010; Subotnik, Tai, Rickoff, & Almared, 2010; Winkelby 2007; Winkleby et al., 2013). Similar efforts might be made to address the same dilemmas faced in psychology (Maton, Kohout, Wicherski, Leary, & Vinokurov, 2006), as part of the subset of science fields.

**SIOP’s Educational Outreach Program**

The Educational Outreach Program (THEO) is a listing of SIOP members who have agreed to travel locally (without reimbursement) and give introductory talks about I-O psychology to high school and college students, and other communities of interest. We are seeking additional volunteers to help spread the word (keep reading for information regarding how to sign up).

THEO is a renaming of an older program, formerly known as the Teacher’s Bureau. The Teacher’s Bureau was created in 2011 by SIOP’s Education and Training Committee. As mentioned in the initial announcement of the Teacher’s Bureau, an earlier version of this outreach program was called the Ambassador’s Program, which is now an unrelated SIOP program that matches first-time SIOP conference attendees with more experienced attendees. In our most recent survey of THEO members (see more information below), many expressed dissatisfaction with the Teacher’s Bureau name and suggested a new name that better encompassed I-O outreach activities around the educational pipeline. This new name was chosen based on a 2011 SIOP program devoted to discussing how best to increase awareness of I-O psychology among high schools and colleges, especially within the early general psychology curriculum. We hope that this new name will help external communities better understand and take advantage of the outreach offered by THEO members.

**Recent THEO Activities and Next Steps**

Over the past year, THEO committee members have been working together to determine how to increase awareness and utilization of THEO membership. We decided that the first step in this process was to survey our current membership regarding the extent to which they were giving presentations in the community and to solicit their advice in increasing these activities.

In January 2013, we sent an online survey to the 212 registered members of the THEO, and 87 members participated. Some of the key findings were:

- Respondents reported receiving a total of 146 requests from communities of interests over the past year (2012)
to present about I-O psychology and related careers. The majority of these requests were from college/university classes (47%) or college/university organizations (25%). Only a combined 5% of these requests were from high school classes and organizations. These requests were also rarely initiated through THEO (4 total; 2.7% of total requests).

- Respondents reported they had contacted others regarding presentations a total of 122 times. The majority of communities of interest were college/university classes (38%) and college/university organizations (24%). Only 16% of respondents contacted high school classes, and no respondents contacted high school organizations (23% contacted other communities).
- In total, respondents reported giving 162 presentations to various groups. The majority of actual presentations were also to college/university classes (50%) and college/university organizations (23%). Only 7% of these presentations were to high school classes (6%) and high school organizations (1%).
- Almost all respondents (95%) indicated that presentations took only a small or moderate amount of effort. The majority (75%) perceived these presentations to be usually or almost always effective.

THEO members also provided a number of helpful suggestions to reach out to high school and college students, as well as other communities of interest, so that they can take advantage of this great resource. These ideas include:

- “Using social media...postcards targeting younger students”
- “I think there is an association of high school teachers of psychology...perhaps a flyer to them would be useful”
- “Send (letter) to local high school principals and psych/business professors at 2 and 4 year schools”
- “Searchable database of SIOP members willing to present”
- “Contact state personnel offices, community Better Business Bureaus, and high school teacher organizations to advertise...(also) SHRM.”
- “Send materials to (us) and have us contact communities of interest”
- “Connect with career counselors in some way”
- “Direct mailing (to high school teachers)”
- “Email blasts to principals/teachers and/or brochures to promote the program.”
- “Extensive marketing through TOPSS, Psi Chi, Psi Beta, APA Division 2, NCSS”
- “Career fairs”
- “Partner with teacher organizations, principal organizations, guidance counselors”
• “Provide info on SIOP website… change name”
• “Target schools that do not have any I-O related courses”
• “Send emails to some central email list”
• “It would be great if there was a website that listed communities and schools where presentations are welcome”
• “AP Psych courses in HS would be one great way to convey information… working with community colleges”
• “Ask other introductory psychology professors to guest lecture about I-O. Many introductory psychology professors don’t teach it. That would reach the right audience at the right time (when they are deciding on their career).”

In the forthcoming months, the THEO subcommittee will be contacting communities of interest (e.g., high school psychology teachers, Psi Chi chapters), many of which were recommended by THEO members, to advertise THEO as a resource.

What Can You Do?

For starters, join THEO! Head to the THEO website [http://www.siop.org/instruct/theo.aspx](http://www.siop.org/instruct/theo.aspx) and click on “You can volunteer here.” You can also sign up through your SIOP membership account summary ([http://www.siop.org/mas/mas.aspx](http://www.siop.org/mas/mas.aspx)). You will be able to indicate your areas of interest, which show up when people search for THEO members to give talks.

You can also do the following. (Thank you to THEO members for these suggestions—and for encouraging us to write a TIP article!)

• Ask introductory psychology professors and high school psychology teachers to guest lecture about I-O.
• Attend career days at local elementary and middle schools.
• Post introductory I-O lectures, exercises, and handouts to SIOP’s teaching wiki to help facilitate efforts to create exciting presentations that represent the scope of I-O psychologists’ research and practice.
• Represent I-O psychology on career panels (especially for high school students and students within their first couple of years of college).
• Use social media to spread awareness about I-O psychology and encourage others to take advantage of THEO. For example, members could share relevant news articles about I-O on social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter along with a link to the THEO website and instructions for requesting a presentation.

After you engage in an outreach activity, please take the quick survey on our home-
page to help us (a) keep track of talks given and (b) learn how we can best support THEO members’ presentation efforts.

I-O psychology was recently labeled the fastest growing occupation in the U.S. (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Despite this growth, however, current enrollment rates suggest that the I-O talent pipeline may struggle to meet this steep demand. Addressing this potential shortfall requires creating a strong and sustainable talent pipeline, which is only possible through the collective outreach efforts of the SIOP community. This is truly an exciting time to be an I-O psychologist, and we greatly appreciate SIOP members’ efforts to further develop the I-O talent pipeline.

References


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