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Top five conversation openers you're likely to overhear during coffee breaks at the SIOP 2007 conference in New York:

1. Did you get here in time to attend the presidential address?
2. Say, I really enjoyed that last article you published in *JAP*.
3. Is this your first SIOP?
4. So, what's your favorite strategy for obtaining a guaranteed globally optimal solution to the age-old problem involving least-squares unidimensional scaling of a symmetric dissimilarity matrix?
5. Hey, I wonder if I could score a free drink tonight if I changed my nametag to "**Eduardo Salas**."

Looking for something new to talk about at SIOP in New York? If so, this column is for you! The following pages provide everything you need to know to engage your colleagues in an interesting conversation about how I-O psychologists in Québec meet and network with like-minded others. As this issue's guest author Jacques Forest explains, some rather unique challenges and opportunities face our Canadian counterparts as they seek to bridge the language gap that separates segments of their country. Read on for details.

I-O Psychology in the French-Speaking Province of Québec: An Energetic North American Community²

Jacques Forest

**John Molson School of Business (Concordia University) and
Québec Society for Work and Organizational Psychology**

Most of you may have heard that part of the Canadian population (about 32 million) actually has French as their first-language and that most of these individuals live in the province³ of Québec (about 8 million). Usually referred to as French-Canadians or Québécois, we are recognized or known for all sorts of things such as the singer Céline Dion, maple syrup, our



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

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³ For your information, Canada is separated into three territories (Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut) and 10 provinces (from west to east: British-Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Québec, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland).

love of hockey and other winter sports, harsh winter weather (imagine yourself outside when it is -35°C, or -31°F, with wind chill!) and also for our famous French-Canadian “joie de vivre” (joy of living). Anybody who has been here can assure you that we sure are fun people! Québec people (including myself!) are usually very proud of their province and they will let you know how much!

Having two distinct communities (French- and English-speaking) within one country sometimes creates political ripples and most often necessitates adjustments. Some people refer to this situation as the “two solitudes” or as “Québec + ROC” (ROC stands for “Rest of Canada”). That is, we live in the same country but there are some obstacles in comprehending the “other-Canada.” Our situation is somewhat similar to Belgium where Dutch- and French-speaking inhabitants live in the same country but have differences that necessitate compromises. It is the same in Canada where we get along well by putting efforts towards comprehending our counterparts.

Far from being a problem, I find it interesting to live in a country where we can draw from each other’s expertise and experience as well as each other’s culture and language. Nonetheless, the drawback of this political situation is that it frequently means two associations or governing agencies for the same topic. This duplication is true with our professional I-O psychology associations.

I-O Psychology in Québec

In the French-speaking province of Québec, I-O psychology is represented by the Société Québécoise de Psychologie du Travail et des Organisations (SQPTO). In English, this could be translated as the Québec Society for Work and Organizational Psychology, and you can see the association’s Web site at www.sqpto.ca. Although it’s only in French at the moment, you can use the function “Translate Web page” available for free on the Google Web site to more easily navigate on the Web page.

The SQPTO currently counts more than 270 active members (who paid their dues) whereas the list of people interested by the discipline (i.e., former members that we can contact by e-mail) has approximately 800 names. No need to say that I-O psychology is pretty alive in our province!

Each year, in autumn, the SQPTO organizes an annual conference which is a good occasion to learn about new consulting techniques and recent research results, get new ideas and also professional contacts. In addition to this annual conference, the four regions of the SQPTO (Québec city region, Eastern Townships, Outaouais, and Montréal) organize, approximately every 3 weeks, very popular dinner conferences of the SQPTO. These activities (18 spread across the different regions of the province) allow consultants, psychologists, students, and professors to talk and hear about interesting issues in I-O psychology like emotional intelligence or positive psychology applied to work.

In addition to these training and knowledge-transfer activities, the SQPTO has published two books: *Concilier Performance Organisationnelle*

et Santé Psychologique au Travail [Reconciling Organizational Performance and Psychological Health at Work] (Foucher, Savoie, & Brunet, 2003) and *Domaines de Pratique et Compétences Professionnelles des Psychologues du Travail et des Organisations* [Fields of Practice and Professional Competences of I-O Psychologists] (Foucher & Leduc, 2001). The first book is a collection of scientific articles on the way in which it is possible, as the title states, to reconcile organizational performance and psychological health. The second book identifies the five fields of practice of I-O psychology in Québec: (a) testing and evaluation, (b) organizational development and diagnosis, (c) training and coaching, (d) career management and reassignment and (e) employee assistance programs and psychological health. The two books SQPTO has produced provide a nice example of how active and dynamic our organization is.

Regarding university training, of the 10 I-O psychology programs in Canada, 3 are in Québec. The three universities offering doctoral programs in I-O psychology are the Université de Sherbrooke, the Université du Québec à Montréal and the Université de Montréal. The Université de Montréal (where I studied) now has four professors and more than 30 students. Approximately half receive grants by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Québec Funds for Research on Society and Culture, or other Canadian and American grant organizations. At the Université du Québec à Montréal, the program numbers two full-time professors (plus some external collaborators) and approximately 20 students whereas the program at the Université de Sherbrooke numbers three full-time professors (plus some collaborators) and approximately 20 students.

The Position of Québec I-O Psychology Within Canada

The Canadian Society for Industrial-Organizational Psychology represents I-O psychology for all 10 provinces of Canada. You can see the CSIOP Web site at www.csiop.ca. As a good example of the “two solitudes” of Canada, it is interesting to note that both the SQPTO and CSIOP Web sites are unilingual. That is, SQPTO’s Web site is only in French, and CSIOP’s Web site is only in English. This obviously does not facilitate collaboration for the moment though both organizations are working on making their Web sites bilingual (see below).

Although the SQPTO (Québec) has no relation with CSIOP (Canada), they have the same mission: to defend and promote I-O psychology. However, as will become evident, there still exist great networking challenges ahead for I-O psychology in Canada. The fact is that the French-speaking and the English-speaking communities don’t mix that much and that many of the political debates we have in the country are over the different identities, culture, background, and visions of those two different communities that form Canada. (For a crash-course on the history of Canada, I would recommend a

search in the free online encyclopedia Wikipedia.) Sometimes, this results in misunderstandings or no dialogue at all between those two groups, or, as mentioned earlier, the so-called “two solitudes.” This separation between the two languages affects politics but also affects I-O psychology. One example of this involves the definition of the I-O psychology field. Although SQPTO has established this definition with an extensive survey of its members and by subsequently writing a book on the five fields of practice of I-O psychology (described earlier), CSIOP has posted on the CSIOP Web site its “Position paper on I-O psychology in Canada” (see <http://psychology.uwo.ca/csiop/paper.html>) along with another write-up titled “Defining the field of I-O psychology” (see <http://psychology.uwo.ca/csiop/defining.htm>). In fact, the CSIOP and SQPTO completed the exact same task (i.e., defining the field of I-O psychology) without ever taking advantage of each other’s work or collaborating together.

In terms of number of members in the English-speaking community, CSIOP has about 320 members, the majority of whom are English-speaking and outside of the province of Québec. Meanwhile, as said earlier, the SQPTO has about 270 members who all live in the province of Québec and the vast majority of whom are French-speaking. That is to say that there are about as many members in the I-O psychology association of Québec as there are in the I-O psychology association representing Canada. Of all the CSIOP members, only 42 are from Québec, so we can assume that there is not much of an overlap between Canada and Québec in I-O psychology. A difference worth noting that might explain this nonoverlap is that CSIOP is more academically oriented, but SQPTO is more applied (e.g., interventions and consultations).

Another plausible explanation for the limited involvement of SQPTO’s members in the English-speaking association and conference circuit is, you guessed it, language. Although a very large majority (I would say 85%) of our students and professors speak, write, and read English well, we are able to take advantage of both French-speaking and English-speaking conferences. The circuit of conferences in which we generally take part includes those of the International French-Speaking Association for Work and Organizational Psychology (AIPTLF), French-Speaking Association for Knowledge (ACFAS), the Québec Psychology Research Society (SQRP), and the SQPTO. In fact, because French-speaking people have numerous and dynamic congresses in which they can share scientific knowledge in their mother tongue, other conferences such as those hosted by the Administrative Sciences Association of Canada (ASAC), SIOP, and CSIOP are attended less frequently.

Bridging the Gap Between French-Speaking and English-Speaking I-O Psychology Associations in Canada

In the years to come, an important future direction for CSIOP and SQPTO involves bringing together the French-speaking and English-speaking I-O psychology communities. To this end, in December 2006, a meeting was held

in Montréal with the SQPTO president (Bruno Roy, I-O psychologist and consultant), CSIOP president (**Stéphane Brutus** from the John Molson School of Business in Montréal), CSIOP president-elect (**Steve Harvey** from Bishop's University, in Lennoxville, Québec), and myself in order to “walk the talk” on bridging the gap between the two associations. The short-term actions we agreed upon to bring the two associations closer were:

- Translating some components of both associations' Web sites in both official languages
- Including hyperlinks between the two associations' Web sites so that members of each association can have quick and easy access to information on I-O psychology in the “other-Canada”
- Trying to have at least one yearly meeting (be it in person or by phone) between the two associations' representatives
- Promoting any CSIOP opportunities (e.g., grants, prizes, etc.) in French-speaking Canada

These concrete actions are only the beginning of what could be a long and fruitful collaboration between Canada's two main I-O psychology associations. Together, the power of our numbers and the fact that we can make our voice heard in two languages can only be beneficial for our discipline in North America and abroad.

In closing, you can see that the I-O psychology in the French-speaking province of Québec is very vigorous and productive. Also, one of our great challenges is to develop and maintain a harmonious and dynamic relationship with our English-speaking counterpart while keeping our unique identity. But with recent concrete actions and the positive attitudes of the boards of directors of SQPTO and CSIOP, the future does look good for I-O psychology in Québec and Canada!

A last word: if you come in the nice province of Québec, be sure to e-mail me at jacqfor@jmsb.concordia.ca or jacques_forest@hotmail.com so that I can tell you how wonderful it is!

Concluding Editorial

So, there you have it, everything you need to know to turn SIOF coffee break banter into an intriguing discussion of how our colleagues in Québec organize, network, and meet. Clearly, a variety of unique opportunities and challenges face those wishing to pursue networking and professional development avenues in a country comprised of two distinct cultures and languages. As suggested in this article, all signs indicate that collaborations between the French- and English-speaking segments of Canada are on the rise, pointing to a future with many exciting possibilities for I-O psychologists in Québec and beyond.