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Industrial-Organizational Psychologists in Business Schools: Insights from a UK Perspective

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As I-O psychologists working in a business school, the issues discussed in the focal article struck a chord. To contextualize our response to Aguinis, Bradley and Broderson (2014), we initially offer some background information about our personal situation, before providing a UK perspective on I-O psychology in business schools. Having recently completed our doctorates in I-O psychology (or what is in the UK more commonly known as ‘occupational/organizational psychology’), we began working as early career academics at the University of Edinburgh Business School at the same time, coming into an interdisciplinary team of scholars, together forming the ‘Organization Studies’ group, whose research is aimed at providing insight into major challenges in human resources and public policy. Of the eleven group members, the majority ($N = 6$) are psychologists (mostly with I-O psychology focus); the remaining individuals are sociologists ($N = 2$), human resource management scholars, economists or anthropologists ($N = 1$ respectively). Looking at the composition of our group, this may be interpreted as lending support to Godard’s (2014) claim that employment relations and human resource management are being ‘psychologized’. Indeed, we believe that such a composition is likely to be typical for business schools offering undergraduate and postgraduate programs in human resource management, organizational behavior, behavioral economics, strategic management, leadership and even business and management more generally, since all of these subjects draw on a variety of disciplines, thus requiring input from different subject matter experts.

As our personal academic networks include, amongst others, I-O psychologists working in psychology departments, as well as those that have moved to business schools, we were eager to explore if the migratory trends discussed by Aguinis and colleagues (2014) could be observed in the UK also. It is our hope that by adding an additional perspective on the matter, I-O psychology worldwide will be in a better position to reflect on where it should and wants to go in the future. We propose to present a comprehensive overview of I-O

psychology in the UK by examining the following five complementary sources of data: affiliations of editors and editorial board members of the British Psychological Society's (BPS) *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology (JOOP)*, the inclusion and ranking of I-O psychology journals in the Association of Business Schools (ABS) 'Academic Journal Quality Guide' (Harvey, Kelly, Morris & Rowlinson, 2010), delegate attendance of a key UK I-O psychology conference, as well as the current state of UK I-O psychology Masters education (typically known as MSc in the UK context). In addition, our commentary includes comments from I-O psychology scholars in the UK based both in psychology departments and business schools regarding their perceptions of the possible migration. We believe that the combination of quantitative and qualitative data from the above named sources, in a similar way to the Aguinis et al. study (2014), provides a triangulated assessment of the extent to which UK I-O psychology scholars may be moving from psychology departments to business schools. Having presented the data gathered, our ensuing discussion centers around the following questions: Is I-O psychology as a profession in the UK shifting or expanding? Either way, does it matter? What are advantages and disadvantages of the migration of UK I-O psychologists to business schools? For example, what may be the implications for I-O psychologists' professional identity? Based on our findings, we consider what conclusions can be drawn for I-O psychology education, publication outlets, practice and for individuals themselves.

JOOP Editorial Affiliations

Looking first at a key UK I-O psychology publication, we examined editors' and editorial board members' affiliations for JOOP, which can be regarded as the UK equivalent to *Journal of Applied Psychology (JAP)* and *Personnel Psychology (PPsych)*. We did this by recording the name of each editor and editorial board member (between eight and nine per term), and identifying his or her affiliation at the time of their term, over the course of the last 10 years (unfortunately, we were unable to find publicly available information going back further than this). Of the three editors representing JOOP between 2003 and 2014, none was affiliated with a psychology department; rather, the first was based at a business school, the second in a department of industrial engineering and the current editor is affiliated with a college of commerce. The majority (63%) of the 25 editorial board members across the three terms worked in business or management schools, most of the remaining individuals being affiliated with psychology departments, although in some cases with related schools and departments (e.g., department of human resource studies). Thus, comparing these figures with

those provided by Aguinis and colleagues (2014), it is clear that the trend for I-O psychology journals' editorial teams to be dominated by members with a business school affiliation is apparent not only in the US, but also in the UK. As an aside, being two female early career academics, we found it of note that despite some of JOOP's editorial board members being female, this percentage (28%) was relatively low, which, together with all editors being male, leads us to suggest that I-O psychology may like to examine this perceived gender imbalance more closely in the future.

I-O Psychology Journals in ABS Journal Quality Guide

The ABS list, as it is often referred to, "provides a guide to the range, subject matter and relative quality of journals in which business and management academics might publish the results of their research" (Harvey et al., 2010, p. 1). It is intended to be a comprehensive journal quality guide primarily for the UK business and management research community, although the authors note that it is used in many other countries, also. Having undergone an expert assessment based on peer review, citation information and editorial judgments, journals relevant to business and management scholars are divided into four main categories of quality, where "modest standard" and "acceptable standard" journals are accorded one star (1*; 24.8% of journals) and two stars (2*; 35.8%) respectively, whilst "highly regarded" and "top journals" can be recognized through their respective 3* (27.9%) and 4* (8.7%) rankings (Harvey et al., 2010, p. 5).

You may wonder why the ABS list would be important in our assessment of the UK situation of I-O psychology. The reason for its inclusion here is that I-O psychology scholars working in UK business schools, like any other scholars affiliated with such institutions, are under pressure to publish in 3* and 4* journals as defined by the ABS list. As such, the ABS list could be regarded as a proxy for how the landscape is changing in the UK regarding the possible migration of I-O psychology scholars to business schools. Indeed, we note that the ABS list, which, as aforementioned, is targeted at business and management academics, seems to be becoming more open and accepting of I-O psychology journals. This is evident when comparing the number of psychology journals included and judged to be of 3* and 4* quality in the ABS list in 2010 to previous versions of the list. Whilst in 2007 63% of psychology journal were deemed to be of 3* and 4* quality, this rises to 71% in 2010. It is further noteworthy that more journals with a clear I-O psychology focus have been included in the current version of the ABS list compared to previous versions. With the latest version

of the ABS list due to be published in late 2014, we are curious to see what changes it may bring for I-O psychology and related journals. Based on the pattern observed, as well as in relation to possible general migratory activities of I-O psychology to business schools, we predict that I-O psychology journals will be accorded even more weight in the next ABS list.

UK I-O Psychology Conferences

Next, we examined delegate numbers and affiliations for the annually held Division of Occupational Psychology (DOP) conference, which can be regarded as the UK equivalent to the Society for Industrial & Organizational Psychology's (SIOP) annual conference. Between 2000 and 2014, the period which we were able to obtain figures for, overall delegate numbers for the DOP conference ranged from a low of 284 in 2011 to a high of 468 in 2006; there does not seem to be an upwards trend in delegate numbers as observed by Aguinis et al. (2014) for the SIOP conference. Rather, it seems that the absolute number of delegates has stayed more or less stable over the 14-year period that we looked at, bar a drop in the years 2009/2010/2011, which we speculate may be ascribed to organizations being more frugal in their training and development spending following the UK recession (Figure 1; panel a). In an attempt to determine to what extent Aguinis and colleagues' (2014) prediction that the SIOP conference will increasingly attract I-O psychology practitioners (rather than scholars) in the future, given current trends in the US, we compared the percentages of 'scholar delegates' (which could be easily identified from their affiliations) to 'practitioner delegates'; we note hereby that our 'practitioner' category encompasses a mix of consultants, I-O psychologists working independently and those employed by organizations (e.g., within a human resources department). As can be seen in Figure 1 (panel b), the relative percentage of practitioners attending the DOP conference has decreased from 70.02% in 2000 to 62.75% in 2014. Whilst some may argue that this suggests the prediction put forward by Aguinis et al. (2014), does not hold true in the UK context of I-O psychology conferences, we believe that a drop of just over 7% is not sufficiently substantial to support such an argument. Further, even though it appears that the relative number of 'scholar delegates' attending the DOP conference (compared to 'practitioner delegates') rose starkly in the years 2009/2010/2011 and dropped somewhat in later years, it seems absolute numbers of 'scholar delegates' have remained more or less stable over the 14-year period. This, following our earlier speculative reasoning, may indicate that 'practitioner delegates' in particular were forced to reduce conference spending after the UK recession (followed by a rise in practitioners attending the

conference now that the economy is in a process of recovery), whilst this is likely to have been less of an issue for ‘scholar delegates’.

I-O Psychology MSc Education in the UK

Currently, 23 MSc programs in I-O psychology are offered in the UK, of which 20 are concerned specifically with I-O psychology, which is reflected in the respective program titles and their content; the remaining three programs cover content that is very similar to I-O psychology (e.g., work and/or business psychology, organizational behavior). Most of these UK MSc I-O psychology programs are accredited by the BPS, this being seen as a “mark of quality that prospective students and employers understand and value” (BPS, 2013, p. 10). I-O psychology education has a long-standing tradition in the UK, the first MSc program having been established in 1979/1980, with many more being introduced in the 1990s. The most recent program dates from 2013/2014. With a range of approximately 20 to 100 students, an average of 45 students is enrolled in UK I-O psychology MSc programs. Whilst these statistics may paint a healthy picture of I-O psychology education at postgraduate level, we note that at least five programs have failed in the last decade, the main reason being a decline in applications. Of the 23 MSc programs in the UK, 13 (57%) are taught in psychology departments, eight (35%) in business or management schools, one (4%) in a school of medicine and another one (4%) in an institute of health and society. Thus, despite most programs being affiliated with psychology departments, it is clear that a considerable number has also moved to business/management schools, this providing further evidence of I-O psychology migrating away from psychology departments.

Discussion

In our commentary so far, we have drawn on our own empirical research of the situation in the UK context in order to compare the findings presented by Aguinis et al. (2014) to a UK perspective. We have ascertained that, as in the US context, I-O psychology is certainly more present in UK business schools now than ever before, however, we cannot be sure whether this represents a ‘shift’ for I-O psychology or whether it indicates an ‘expansion’ of I-O psychology. To delve a bit deeper, we also conducted a small scale replication of the focal article’s second study to establish whether perceptions from UK based I-O psychologists on migratory trends mirrored, or differed, from those presented in the focal article. Although not offering any conclusive evidence regarding the ‘shift’ or ‘expansion’ debate, the responses we received did acknowledge that I-O psychology is becoming more

accepted and more evident in business schools, as is showcased in the following quote: “Psychology is a fairly wide-ranging topic (e.g., developmental, occupational, clinical, forensic, sports etc.) so it makes sense for occupational psychology to be situated in a business-thinking department.” (I-O psychologist based in a business school).

Push and pull factors

Drawing on the qualitative data obtained from key respondents in Study 2, Aguinis et al. (2014) identified a series of ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors associated with the perceived shift in I-O psychology. Their data offers an insight into whether a shift is, or would be, perceived as positive or negative. We will now examine whether a shift of I-O psychology to business schools signifies a need for concern, or not, in the UK context. On the whole, the individuals that we spoke to were in agreement that a shift toward business schools was not necessarily negative, with both camps supporting the view that clear benefits of a shift could be identified, as is evident in the following quotes: “I don't think it is a bad thing for occupational psychology to be affiliated with business schools. In fact, in relation to the practice of occupational psychology, I think it might be in our benefit to be related to a school that takes a much more applied/practical approach.” (I-O psychologist – psychology department); “We have found it useful to use our links via the business school to offer MSc students placements with large multi-national organisations for their dissertation work.” (I-O psychologist – business school)

However, although advantages were identified of I-O psychology shifting, or expanding into business schools, a strong message emerged from our qualitative data highlighting the relative strengths or advantages of being based in psychology departments, and the importance of ensuring that, whatever happens, sight is not lost of these aspects in order to maintain the integrity of the discipline whilst enjoying the benefits of engaging with a more applied business context. The following quotes illustrate this well: “It is important to ensure that areas such as research design, methods and analysis (i.e., the 'science' side) are not lost in the move to business schools.” (I-O psychologist – business school); “I do, however, think it is important to maintain the strong psychological principles and theory underpinning occupational psychology, particularly in research. From personal experience, very theoretical research is not received very well by more business related journals and I would fear that we risk losing this type of research and knowledge if occupational psychology is integrated into business schools entirely....” (I-O psychologist – psychology department)

Implications for I-O psychology

We have considered quantitative and qualitative evidence regarding whether a shift or expansion is evident, and whether this would present benefits or challenges to the field of I-O psychology. We will now turn our attention to what we, as the authors, believe the implications might be of such a shift, for education, publication outlets, practice, and for individuals respectively.

Aguinis et al. (2014) state that Masters level I-O programs are still the domain of psychology departments. However, they go on to identify a possible move for PhD level research to business schools. In the UK context, this may provide some challenges to graduates as a PhD obtained in a business school may not fully meet the criteria for individuals wishing to become chartered psychologists or to be eligible to work as psychologists in practice. For example, students conducting their research in the University of Edinburgh Business School, are awarded a PhD in management, irrespective of whether their topic is what would be perceived as an I-O psychology theme. Thus, depending on how such a PhD is perceived by the professional body of psychology in the UK (i.e., the BPS), it may affect future career choices and options.

In terms of Aguinis et al.'s article (2014), they focus on conference attendance as a clear mechanism by which a shift from psychology departments to business schools could be seen. They argue that, if a shift is occurring, then I-O psychologists may be more inclined to pitch their conference papers to key management conferences (primarily the Academy of Management (AOM) conference, or the British Academy of Management (BAM) conference in the UK), rather than to more traditional I-O conferences. At first sight, this may not seem an issue; however, we agree with Aguinis et al. (2014) that if this has the effect of separating practitioners from academics then this can be negative in terms of our learning and practice. In our experience of the UK context, for business school employees, acceptance of a paper at the AOM conference would be highly regarded and financial incentives would be offered for such an achievement. To date, to the best of our knowledge, no purely I-O psychology conferences are acknowledged or revered in this way. However, we feel that the abovementioned rankings of journals in the ABS lists are a positive sign that psychology journals generally and I-O psychology journals specifically are becoming more recognized in business and management. Thus, we tentatively anticipate a positive knock-on effect in terms of the conferences which I-O psychology scholars based in business schools are encouraged

or incentivized to attend. This may also serve to offset the potential issue of segregation of I-O psychology practitioners and I-O psychology academics at conferences (specifically the SIOP annual conference), which Aguinis et al. (2014) anticipate. Despite this more positive outlook in terms of conference attendance, we would like to offer our views on the points raised by Aguinis et al. (2014) regarding inclusion of practitioner articles in journal publications. Their data identified a drop in the number of such articles in the top I-O psychology journals in the US (JAP and PPSych). Referring back to our UK comparator (JOOP), there is a clear dominance of academic articles over practitioner articles. Having said this, it is pertinent to refer to Arnold (2004, p. 2), who used his editorial space to actively encourage greater input from practitioners, and to make a plea to practitioners to submit articles, either independently or jointly with academic authors. The lack of practitioner voice in key journal publications, coupled with the potential segregation of practitioners and academics in terms of conference affiliations and attendance again highlights a negative impact of a shift for I-O psychology to business schools by increasing the differentiation in focus. In the same editorial, Arnold also recommended that JOOP be considered to feature not only in ranking lists for psychology journals but also for “human resource management, organization studies and ergonomics” (Arnold, 2004, p. 6), explicitly acknowledging and encouraging a greater allegiance with psychology, business and management.

So, if we were to assume that the shift is occurring, why would individuals move from psychology departments to business schools? We will consider here some of the push/pull factors identified by Aguinis et al. (2014) and then propose some of our own. With regard to ‘push’ factors towards business schools, the issue of resources resonates in the UK too. However, the salary differentials acknowledged in the US do not seem to reflect here, as academic salaries are more standardized across universities as a whole in the UK, so this may not be such a clear push factor. Yet, in keeping with Aguinis et al.’s (2014) observations, anecdotal evidence tells us that other financial resources, such as monies for research (assistance), conference attendance or publishing are often more readily available in UK business schools compared to UK psychology departments, which could represent a possible pull factor.

In terms of a career path, it may be the case at present that the psychology route is more clearly delineated, given that the professional bodies recognize academic achievements in these departments as eligible for, and worthy of, recognition (e.g., by enabling chartership). However, business schools can enable greater links with practice, which could

facilitate a – possibly very lucrative – consultancy route. On the other hand, as regulations in the UK are tightening regarding professional qualifications (e.g., in relation to the Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC)), the business school route may lag behind, at least at present, in terms of ensuring a career path in I-O psychology in practice. Yet, as Aguinis et al. (2014) suggest, if PhDs are the way business schools engage with I-O psychology then this may facilitate a continuing career in academia; nevertheless, in keeping with our findings, this would be in relation to teaching in human resource management or organizational behavior, rather than explicitly in I-O psychology.

Two key factors we felt that could intercept the clear push factors from psychology departments to business schools related to culture and to identity. In psychology departments, common values and beliefs may be shared by psychologists, irrespective of their specialization (for example social, developmental, I-O), which gives a sense of a common culture (see Schein (2004) for more detail on models of culture). This may be in stark contrast to the experience of I-O psychologists working within a business school whereby, as mentioned earlier, rather than teaching in specific I-O psychology areas and using that title or brand, I-O psychology topics are often incorporated, however comfortably, into teaching in human resource management or organizational behavior. There may not be the same clear culture or sense of community that one may find in a psychology department. Furthermore, as alluded to in the focal article, this has implications for one's sense of identity. Indeed, social identity theory suggests that we do not just identify with a group but that we tend to evaluate our group, and membership of this group, positively (Hogg, 2006). Is our identity as psychologists becoming diluted, fuzzy or lost as a consequence of being amongst scholars from such an array of other areas of expertise, such as accounting and finance, international business and strategy which, as psychologists, we had not identified with traditionally? Whilst this is not to say that individuals from differing subject areas do not complement each other, this does raise a query of how we as I-O psychologists identify ourselves and with what. The lack of I-O psychology journals in ABS lists until recently, and the predominance of management conferences as those for preferred attendance to date, has only served to exacerbate this feeling of fit and identity. As business schools themselves shift in terms of the extent to which they recognize, and value, I-O psychology in its own right, rather than as a component of human resource management or organizational behavior, the potential negatives of a shift, in relation to I-O psychologists' identity, may be overcome.

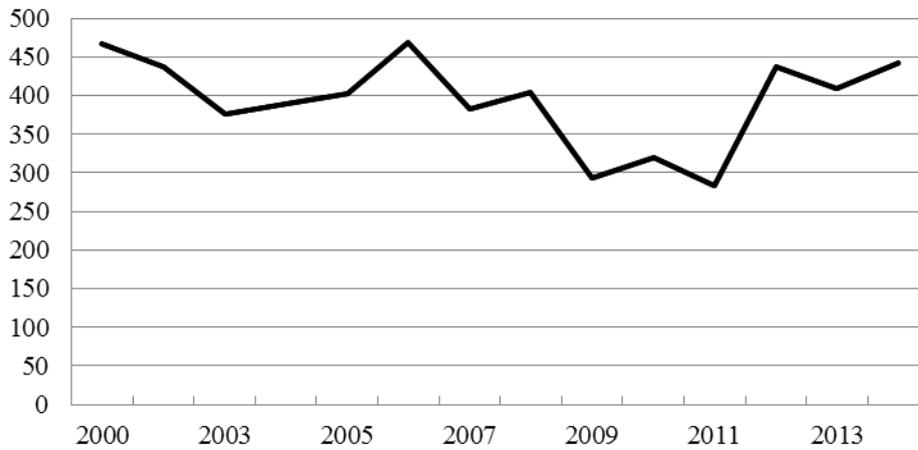
Clearly this is a transitional time for I-O psychology in both the UK and the US. If it is the case that I-O psychology is continuing to expand in the UK, we would argue that whether it shifts or not will become less relevant over time as business schools come to recognize and incorporate the change. However, in order to offset potential negative effects of such transitions, such as those described above, it is important that professional bodies (such as the BPS) also start to recognize the shift and to consider amending their policies and regulations in light of this.

In conclusion, as early career academics, working in a business school, with a background in I-O psychology, the 'brain drain versus eye opener' debate is a pertinent one. From our perspective, however, rather than an either/or situation, we see the expansion of I-O psychology into business schools as an opportunity for greater (interdisciplinary) collaboration, diversification of academic faculty and, consequently, teaching being informed by a variety of perspectives. Thus, as also identified through the qualitative comments, we can appreciate the positives of both domains (e.g., a strong identity for I-O psychologists based in psychology departments on the one hand and greater access to resources and increased visibility associated with a business school affiliation on the other hand), and can foresee utilizing these to enhance our research by engaging with scholars within and across disciplines.

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a: Number of Attendees at Annual DOP Conference (2000-2014)



b: Percentage of 'Practitioner Delegates' to 'Scholar Delegates' at Annual DOP Conference (2000-2014)

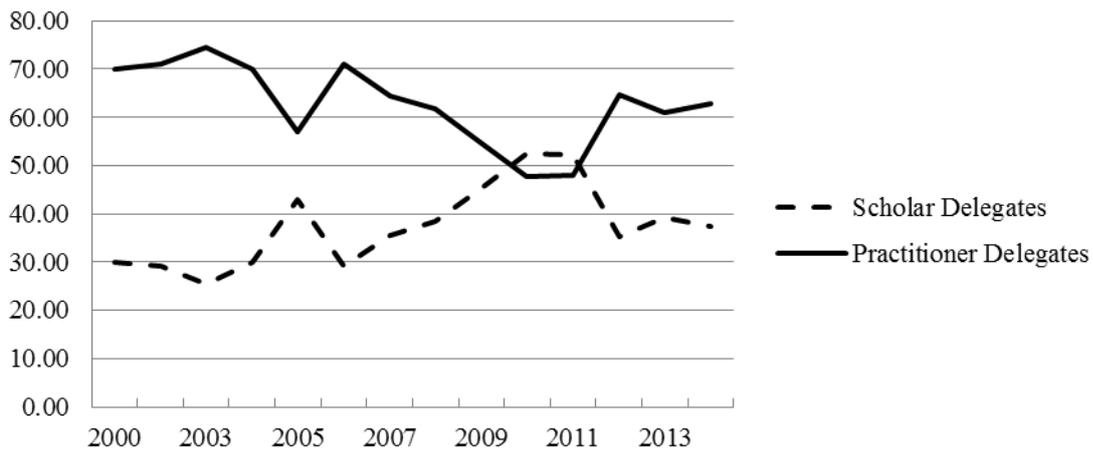


Figure 1. Panel a: Number of attendees at DOP annual conference for the years 2000 to 2014; panel b: Percentage of ‘practitioner delegates’ to ‘scholar delegates’ at DOP annual conference for the years 2000 to 2014.