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# What's in a Name?

## Job categorisation, relationship building, and work motivation in aid organisations

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## Abstract

Aid organisations operating in lower-income regions around the world are often staffed by local and international employees working together toward the common goal of poverty reduction. These employees tend to come from diverse cultural, social, and economic backgrounds, and may be positioned at work by themselves and their colleagues into categories which reflect salient characteristics of these backgrounds. Such positioning may create barriers between workers, and thus adversely affect aid projects, including attempts to build capacity. The aims of this research are threefold: 1) to explore the way local and international aid workers are categorised by themselves and others within the context of aid organisations in lower-income settings; 2) to identify links between job categories and indicators of work motivation; and 3) to test if a job categorisation-work motivation linkage is mediated by workplace *relationships*. To this end two studies were conceptualised and undertaken, the first qualitatively exploring job categorisation and work relationships from the perspectives of aid workers themselves, and the second quantitatively testing the hypothesised linkages.

Study I undertook a thematic analysis of interviews with a cross-section of 17 local and international aid workers in Cambodia. Content analyses indicated that local and international workers are positioned by themselves and each other within a hierarchy of job categories: ‘expatriate’, ‘consultant’, ‘volunteer’ and ‘local’. These categories are in turn underpinned by power and status, and reflective of relative pay and benefits. Using the interview data as a basis, the Aid Relationships Quality Scale (ARQS) was developed and checked for reliability and validity. The ARQS factor analysed into three reliable factors: 1) ‘relationships with expatriates’, 2) ‘relationships with locals’, and 3) ‘learning from expatriates and locals’.

In Study II a total of  $N = 1290$  workers from 202 aid organisations in six different countries were administered the ARQS (factors 1-3 above) alongside seven additional indicators of work motivation: 4) pay comparison, 5) self-assessed ability, 6) pay justice, 7) de-motivation due to pay, 8) turnover cognitions, 9) thinking about international mobility, and 10) job satisfaction/work engagement. In line with MacLachlan & Carr’s (2005) Model of Double De-motivation, in comparison with their ‘expatriate’ counterparts, ‘local’ workers compared their pay and benefits significantly more ( $p \leq .001$ ), experienced significantly more feelings of pay injustice ( $p \leq .001$ ) and de-motivation ( $p \leq .001$ ), and thought more about turning over ( $p \leq .001$ ).

A key finding of Study II is the central role played by relationships in work motivation. Multilevel regression modelling found that ‘relationships with expatriates’ partially mediated the links between job categorisation and 1) pay justice, 2) de-motivation, and 3) turnover. Further, ‘relationships with locals’ partially mediated a link between job categorisation and pay comparison. A combination of both ‘relationships with expatriates’ and ‘relationships with locals’ fully mediated the links between job categorisation and 1) job satisfaction/work engagement, and 2) learning. A revision and extension of the Model of Double De-motivation is proposed based on these findings.

Ultimately the results of this thesis provide the first systematic evidence for the vital role of relationships between both local and expatriate workers in tempering the negative impact of inequity between workers, and ultimately perhaps in the success of aid initiatives, including capacity development. A crucial moderating role was found for organisations, suggesting a key role for organisational policies, culture and climate which encourage relationships and challenge existing social hierarchies. Finally and critically, this research listens to the voice of the local worker, and in doing so provides critical insights into the environment in which aid is delivered, and ultimately facilitates *alignment* with the needs of lower-income nations themselves.

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# Publications & Presentations

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## Edited Works

- Carr, S.C., McWha, I., MacLachlan, M., & Furnham, A. (Eds.). (2010). *International Journal of Psychology: Special Section on Psychology and Poverty Reduction*.
- MacLachlan, M., Carr, S.C., & McWha, I. (Eds.). (2008). *Interdisciplinary research for development: A workbook on content and process challenges*. New Delhi: Global Development Network Books.

## Book Chapters

- McWha I., Carr, S. C., & MacLachlan, M. (2008). The interdisciplinary research workshop process. In M. MacLachlan, S. C. Carr & I. McWha (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary research for development: A workbook on content and process challenges* (pp. 119-39). New Delhi: Global Development Network (GDN).
- MacLachlan, M., Carr, S. C., & McWha, I. (2008). Why interdisciplinary research for development? In M. MacLachlan, S. C. Carr & I. McWha (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary research for development: A workbook on content and process challenges* (pp. 14-24). New Delhi: Global Development Network (GDN).
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## Journal Articles

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- Carr, S.C., McWha, I., MacLachlan, M., & Furnham, A. (2010). International-Local remuneration differences across six countries: Do they undermine poverty reduction work? *International Journal of Psychology: Special Section on Psychology and Poverty Reduction*, 45(5), 321-340.
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## **Workshops**

- MacLachlan, M., Carr, S.C., & McWha, I. (2008, January). *Interdisciplinary Research for Development*. A workshop presented at the Global Development Network Annual Conference, Brisbane, Australia [by invitation].
- Papola, T.S., Pais, J., Carr, S.C., & McWha, I. (2009, June). Project ADDUP in India. A funded workshop with project stakeholders and participants held at the Institute for Studies in Industrial Development (ISID), New Delhi, India.
- Peniop, J., Carr, S.C., and McWha, I. (2009, May). Project ADDUP in the Solomon Islands. A funded workshop with project stakeholders and participants held at the University of the South Pacific (USP), Honiara, Solomon Islands.

## **Oral Presentations - International**

- **International Congress of Applied Psychology (ICAP) Melbourne, Australia, July 2010**
  - Symposium Chair [by invitation]: *Organisational psychology confronts world poverty* (with Michael Frese, Stuart Carr, Elias Mpofu, Douglas Maynard, Walter Reichman)
  - Symposium Chair [by invitation]: *Employee health and organisational health: A reciprocal relationship* (with Walter Reichman, Esther R. Greenglass, Kirsten Way, Garry Hall and Erica Frydenberg)
  - Invited Panel: *Official Launch – A global special issue on psychology and poverty reduction: Accelerating input from the entire field of applied psychology* (with Ajit Dalal, Elias Mpofu, Winnifred Louis, David Fryer, Cathy McCormack, Graham Davidson, Leo Marai, Chris Burt, Charles Waldegrave, and Stuart Carr)
- **Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP) Annual Conference, Atlanta, Georgia, USA, 9 April 2010**
  - Symposium [peer reviewed]: *Understanding Humanitarian Work Psychology through case studies and student opportunities* (with Sarah Glavey, Karen Cheng, Jeff Godbout, & Lori Foster Thompson)
- **Institute of Social Psychology, London School of Economics, 18 May 2009**
  - Seminar [by invitation]: *Organisational psychology and poverty reduction: Do aid worker salaries undermine international development work?*
- **14<sup>th</sup> European Congress or Work and Organizational Psychology (EAWOP) Annual Conference, Santiago de Compostella, Spain, 15 May 2009**
  - Poster presentation [peer reviewed]: *Job categorisation, relationship building and work engagement in aid organisations.*

## **Oral Presentations – New Zealand**

- McWha, I., Carr, S.C., MacLachlan, M., & Furnham, A. (2010). *International – local remuneration differences across six countries: Do they undermine poverty reduction work?* Paper presented at the New Zealand Psychological Society Annual Conference, Rotorua, 20 July 2010 [winner: Best Student Conference Paper Award].
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