International Inspiration:

The 2017 Presidential International Initiative at Convention

“The participation of the presidents from 28 national associations at the APA Convention reflects our 125th Anniversary vision: A psychology that encompasses all of us.”

Amanda Clinton, Ph.D,
Senior Director, Office of International Affairs

“Inspiration” as defined in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary means “the action or power of moving the intellect or emotions” (www.m-w.org). “Inspirational” is certainly an appropriate adjective for describing the APA President’s International Initiative hosted by Dr. Antonio E. Puente, 2017 APA President, at the 125th APA Annual Convention in Washington, D.C., last month. The President’s International Initiative brought together leaders in psychology from across the globe to participate in special activities throughout APA’s anniversary celebration at convention.

Dr. Puente developed his initiatives as APA President-Elect at the end of 2016. In addition to his presidential goal of including psychologists in the physician’s definition, Dr. Puente wished to both open APA to the world and to bring the world to APA during his tenure as President in 2017. This idea evolved into the 2017 International Presidential Initiative as part of the 125th Convention. The first step making the idea reality was to extend an invitation to the presidents from every national association across the globe for which the Office of International Affairs (OIA) could identify a contact person and/or email address (see the Directory of National Associations of Psychology at http://www.apa.org/international/networks/organizations/national-orgs.aspx). Twenty-eight psychologist leaders from all corners of the world confirmed their participation at APA’s 125th Convention. These included: Spain, the Philippines, Lithuania, Belgium, Germany, Nepal, Guatemala, Iceland, the Czech Republic, Jamaica, Uganda, Lebanon, Norway, England, Portugal, Italy, New Zealand, Kuwait, Haiti, Canada, China, Cuba, Sri Lanka, Dominica, Namibia, Guyana, Belgium, and France.

The intellectual power and emotional impact – or inspiration – of psychologists joining together from around the world in the interest of the science and practice of the profession could be observed in several ways. Formal presentations, shared panels and casual conversations that highlighted similarities in the field at a global level and unique needs depending on context served as one source of inspiration. In fact, many of the critical issues the APA is facing are important to national associations in other countries, notably international mobility and professional competencies as well as encompassing diversity and social justice.
In terms of competencies, the issue of an internationally recognized credential is actively being studied by many nations. On the European continent, one may observe significant progress in the development of a shared credential called EuroPsy. Examination of efforts like EuroPsy suggests that mobility programs that emphasize competencies can advance the academic and practical training requirements of psychologists to higher levels than previously established. Other countries – such as Uganda, Haiti, Germany, and Kuwait, among others – continue to emphasize the development of standards and establishment of regulation in psychology as they strive to strengthen their national organizations and advance the profession. Globally, themes such as adequate mental health care access and addressing stigma were conveyed in discussions of social justice and inclusivity. On all topics, leaders in psychology from across the globe expressed a desire to work together at an organizational level, to share resources, to advance communication and to develop shared initiatives.

“Culture matters! Humanity matters!”
-Dr. Stewart Cooper

In terms of bringing APA to the world and the world to APA, leaders of national psychological organizations expressed a desire to make collaboration between nations meaningful. This included possibilities such as examining shared membership options as well as ideas like programs and partnerships in science, education, policy, and practice. Discussions resulted in suggestions for developing international experiences for graduate students and early career psychologists as well as for established psychologists. Ideas ranged from professional visits and exchanges between countries with which APA has MOU agreements to inviting US-based professionals to join in unique programs – like boot camps and technology challenges in mental health – that have been highly successful for associations outside of the United States.

The highlight of the 2017 APA President’s International Initiative was Dr. Puente’s “President’s Panel” which featured all the 28 presidents in attendance at Convention. The conversation focused on successes within respective countries and regions, as well as a vision for the future. APA membership demonstrated keen interest in the discussion, filling the space for 300 people to standing room only.

The international success of IPsyNet was demonstrated in a panel attended by several leaders, including those from Norway and the Philippines. Discussions of international human rights issues highlighted work addressing poverty and social justice work from New Zealand to the United States and at the level of the APA United Nations Representatives Panel, as well. Other special international activities included involving students as mentors for guests from countries outside of the United States, the celebration of the 20th Anniversary of APA’s International Division (DS2, https://div52.org/), and a reception for international guests personally hosted by Dr. Puente.

Members of the APA Board of Directors who engaged directly with presidents of national psychological associations reflected on the way their experience served to inspire. Dr. Stewart Cooper, APA Board Member-at-Large shared, “Few professions in the world have changed more than in international psychology. Only a few years ago, the majority of psychologists across the globe were trained in the USA. Today, psychology has truly become global with psychologists and psychologists training in numerous countries in the world. Members of an international psychology community, all have much to share with and learn from each other. Connecting with the leaders among our international colleagues and professional organizations provides a rich source of understanding of our commonalities of purpose and challenge as well as our respective differences. Culture matters! Humanity matters!”

Dr. Helen Coons added, “It was a pleasure to meet several presidents from psychological associations from around the world during the 2017 APA Convention in Washington, DC. As an American psychologist and member of the APA Board of Directors, our conversations deepened my understanding of issues of international significance affecting the health and well-being of individuals and families from other nations. I also learned about their pressing science, practice, and policy agendas.”

The positive reception by Convention attendees of Dr. Puente’s President’s International Initiative symbolizes the future of psychology as global discipline with broad implications. Let’s take the energy, synergy and inspiration for international psychology forward and grow as individuals, as professionals, and as an association. The time to expand our worldview to encompass all of humanity is now.
Presidential Welcome dinner at Cuba Libre the night before Convention opened.

Student Ambassador Monica Oganes, SIP President Sandra Luna, and Student Ambassador’s Rachel Kantor and Jazzmn Rios together at the OIA Photo Booth.

Dr. Conny Antoni, President of the German Psychological Association and Dr. Antonio Puente, President of APA signed an MOU committing to working across organizational lines to promote Psychology together across the globe.
APA President’s International Initiative:
Perspectives from a Relationship formed between Namibia and the United States of America.

Joab Mudzanapabwe, PhD, and Stephen DiDonato, MS, LPC

This narrative will introduce the President’s International Initiative at the 125th APA Convention in Washington, D.C., which brought upon the development of a collaborative relationship between the President of the Psychological Association of Namibia (PAN), Dr. Joab Mudzanapabwe, and an international psychology doctoral candidate from the Chicago School of Professional Psychology, Stephen DiDonato. We will cover the activities experienced by Dr. Mudzanapabwe as part of the President’s International Initiative, followed by what the Initiative meant to them broadly as professionals in psychology and also discussing their experience as they learned from one another and the power of making personal connections at meetings and in our field. The narrative will conclude with recommendations on how to nurture relationships built through the Initiative to enhance international psychology research and programs. From this narrative, we hope that readers are motivated to continue or formulate international relationships to further the growth of the global science of psychology.

“I am pleased to welcome you to APA’s 125th Anniversary Convention in Washington, DC. Thank you for being a part my 2017 President’s International Initiative. By bringing together leaders of psychological associations from across the globe, I hope to begin a lively and enduring international dialogue on psychological practice, policy, science and education. As APA 2017 President, my aim is to recognize the impact of psychology on a global scale. We can accomplish this by joining together to develop relationships that support advancement of the field through partnerships and collaborations, starting by acknowledging our respective challenges and accomplishments as leaders. Ultimately, I look forward to working toward greater understanding of the future of psychology for psychologists through our shared time in Washington and thank you for your participation.”

Presidents of international psychological associations were represented from Namibia, New Zealand, Philippines, Germany, Canada, Haiti, Spain, Iceland, Cuba, Britain, Italy, Lithuania, Guatemala, China, Kuwait, the Czech Republic, Norway, Uganda, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Dominica, Jamaica, Guyana, Portugal, Cuba, Belgium, Nepal, and France. Not only did the Initiative afford international presidents to begin in-person collaborations to further the field of psychology, but it also provided opportunities for students to attend the Convention as “ambassadors” to an international president. The President’s International Initiative was under the leadership of Amanda Clinton, PhD, Senior Director of the Office of International Affairs. It must be noted that in addition to Dr. Puente’s vision, it was Dr. Clinton’s leadership and passion that ensured the success of the Initiative, specifically the development of relationships between international presidents and relationships between leaders and students / early career psychologists. A key support of the Initiative was Division 52, International Psychology, under the leadership of Craig Shealy, PhD.

As not all Convention attendees were able to attend all sessions, we wanted to provide an overview of the activities of the President’s International Initiative. Each session was geared toward APA learning from the international presidents and for collaborative relationships to be formed. Each paragraph represents a separate day of the Convention.

After a long haul from Namibia to Washington, D.C., with a five-hour time difference, Dr. Mudzanapabwe attended the reception for the international presidents, hosted at Cuba Libre restaurant by Dr. Puente and APA. This provided the international presidents with an opportunity to network and relax with APA executives.

At the beginning of the first official day of the Convention, a brown bag event took place where the international presidents met with student ambassadors. Discussion took place focusing on the challenges of psychology in each country. Although not a “scheduled event” we visited the APA international affairs booth where Dr. Mudzanapabwe left the Namibian flag, “marking the presence of Namibia within the psychological landscape of the USA, an incredible feeling that was second to none.” The Committee for International Relations in Psychology (CIRP) hosted an informal function where international visitors had the ability to interact with other international visitors. During the Opening Ceremony the international presidents were given VIP seats as international delegates.

Division 52 hosted a breakfast reception to discuss issues within and across nations so leaders could begin to strategize about how international collaborations might enhance the future of psychology.
There are individuals that have transcended the landscape of psychological science, and although not specific part of the President’s International Initiative, being able to attend Dr. Seligman’s symposium was a highlight of International Initiative, being able to attend although not specific part of the President’s landscape of psychological science, and There are individuals that have transcended (and other nations) and how partnerships seemingly there were more universal problems than country specific problems. While problems have universality, the barriers that limit each nation’s capacity to address these issues seemed to be different. This Initiative showed that not only was this a “President’s Initiative,” but APA members were keen on inquiring about the state of psychology in Namibia (and other nations) and how partnerships could be formed to address concerns domestically within Namibia (and other nations) and globally.

One aspect of the Convention that was of great importance to Dr. Mudzanapabwe was the racial, and by inference cultural, diversity of APA members in attendance. Of note, is that APA president Dr. Puente is Cuban American, the Chief Executive Officer (Dr. Evans) is African American, the incoming president is an African American female, and another candidate who was campaigning for presidency was also African American female. APA is racially and culturally diverse, showing the inclusivity of APA. As psychologists we are reminded about the dangers of exclusivity and extremism under the guise of identity. We witnessed potential harm coming out of these extremes manifesting as infrahumanization and ontologization, such as the Rwanda genocide, the Holocaust, the South African apartheid system. The growth of international psychology as advocated by the APA through its structures like the Office of International Affairs and the multicultural composition of the APA membership is testimony that the APA intends not only to preach about international collaborations, but is practicing this ethos. In addition, programs like the International Psychology doctoral degree program at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, shows that APA is supportive of higher education programs that are developing students for careers in international psychology.

Informal discussions with various APA members showed that the systemic and organizational problems faced by PAN are fairly different from those faced by APA. For example, PAN still faces problems of running their affairs because the association and business is usually conducted at the executive committee members’ private offices. There is limited psychological expertise and research has not been a priority. There are significant opportunities for conducting research in Namibia especially in the areas of Conversion disorders (mass hysteria), drug and alcohol abuse, partner killings (passion killings), trauma due to road accidents and violence, and cultural idioms of the manifestation of psychopathologies. There are also limited places where psychology students can conduct their internships. Psychological services are still viewed as elitist hence a luxury than a necessity. Most rural areas are still deprived of psychological services because most psychologist are urban based due to financial incentives.

Having a student ambassador eased Dr. Mudzanapabwe’s anxieties about being in Washington D.C. for the first time. This structured connection increased clarity about the state of psychology in the USA as well as general questions. Outside of “professional” aspects of the Initiative, having a student ambassador enabled the opportunity to tour important monuments throughout Washington D.C. The student ambassadorial system that was employed by the APA for international presidents allowed the presidents to fuse in easily with the Convention proceedings.

Although the primary purpose of the President’s International Initiative was to “…join together [international presidents] to develop relationships…” there were indirect benefits that the student ambassadors received. Specifically, as a student in the end stages of an international psychology doctoral program, a sense of empowerment came from intimately engaging with international leaders in psychology. There could never be a classroom exercise or an international field experience that joined leaders from over 20 countries together in formal and informal discussions about the state of psychology in their respective countries and how everyone within and outside of APA can enhance the science of psychology through ongoing international collaborations.
Recommendations:

1. The Psychological Association of Namibia (PAN) is still in a state of flux and it needs capacity building through well-established associations, such as the APA.

2. Developing relationships between APA and PAN for APA members to visit Namibia to provide trainings on specific topics to the PAN members for continuous professional development and capacity building.

3. The degree of International Psychology is not known in Namibia and possibly in Southern Africa. This qualification has significant ecological validity. Dr. Mudzanapabwe recommends that psychologists from other countries provide insights into the practice of psychology outside the USA to the students of International Psychology through contact sessions (teachings). In a similar vein, an exchange program should be developed so students from the USA can undertake educational tours to Namibia and vice versa.

4. Namibia has got a lot of potential research areas emanating from the problems stated earlier. APA researchers should collaborate with Namibian psychologists to conduct research in Namibia.

5. PAN and the APA should establish a memorandum of understand in order to benefit from the diversities and similarities of the two countries.

In conclusion, the President’s International Initiative was very informative and promoted the globalization of psychological practices through international collaborations. Most importantly, this Initiative should serve as the beginning of an exciting professional journey in the field of psychology where psychology shall grow seamlessly by appreciating the sameness and uniqueness of humanity. This Initiative must not cease with the conclusion of the APA Convention.

About the Authors:

Dr. Joab Mudzanapabwe in a clinical psychologist based in Windhoek. He is in full time private practice. He does part-time teaching at the University of Namibia when needed. He is the current President of the Psychological Association of Namibia.

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Stephen DiDonato is a doctoral candidate in international psychology at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology. Stephen will be defending his dissertation, Comparing Medical Students Adherence to Child Sexual Abuse Myths in South Africa and the USA, in October of 2017. Stephen is also an Assistant Professor of Community & Trauma Counseling at Jefferson University (Philadelphia University + Thomas Jefferson University) in Philadelphia, PA, USA. Email address: didonatos@philau.edu

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At present, the International Psychology PhD Program has two main concentrations: Organizations & Systems and Trauma Service. Through didactic and experiential coursework online and abroad, graduates become competent at navigating international work settings, roles, and activities. They engage in advocacy, consulting, research, and education/training in the public and private sectors, for profit and non-profit organizations, and at policymaking and grassroots levels. They work collaboratively with experts from other fields to address unmet needs and injustice and to advance well-being around the world.

At the invitation of the American Psychological Association, students from the International Psychology PhD program at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology (TCSPP) were invited to join APA in hosting international visitors from around the world. The graduate students were sponsored by TCSPP. The conversations and connections created made a lasting impression! Here are some reflections from the students on the experience:

“The opportunity to attend the APA Annual Convention was an honor. In addition to the opportunity to represent my university, I had the opportunity to meet other international psychology professionals and participate in dialogues that could significantly impact the field globally. Attending the various sessions helped me realize the value of my program and training. I was happy to see the need for international psychologists highlighted, and the variety of opportunities available to early career psychologists who want to work globally. We need to work together from different perspectives in psychology to address worldwide limitations in resources. International psychologists can bridge the gap and create collaborative relationships across borders to understand and address global humanitarian issues. This experience of connecting at APA could be beneficial to future students and recent graduates who are exploring their options and eager to find their niche.

Thank you so much to APA and TCSPP for allowing me to be a part of this experience. I came back from the convention feeling excited and rejuvenated - I’m certainly planning to present my research at the next APA Convention!” - Terry-Ann Adjmul, International Psychology Doctoral Candidate, TCSPP

An APA International Psychology Ambassador

The International Psychology Program at The Chicago School Professional Psychology - Breeda McGrath, PhD
“The APA President’s Initiative was so empowering for those of us from the International Psychology PhD program at TCSPP. We have been studying international psychology (IP) for a number of years, with incredible international field experiences learning from in-country experts, and our faculty, but the APA initiative gave us a voice at the table with leaders from around the world. Without the academic background in IP, we would not have been able to contribute at this depth, but because of our coursework and experiential learning, we were able to engage fully with these global psychology leaders. It was a wonderful experience that has certainly set the stage for our early career endeavors. I would suggest continuing this effort in the future especially for advanced students and recent grads, who are ready to launch their professional careers and expand their international networks. It was amazing to sit in a room with more than 20 presidents and CEOs of psychology associations globally and hear them discuss the state of psychology from their perspectives, to hear the similarities in issues and different barriers they face in mitigating those issues. This was a priceless learning experience that created connections we will continue.” -Steve DiDonato, International Psychology Doctoral Candidate, TCSPP

“It had the tremendous privilege of hosting Dr. Neriga Grigutyte, the international president from Lithuania. It was a pleasure to assist Dr. Grigutyte at the convention and to gain so much knowledge and insight into psychological science strengths and limitations in Lithuania. Dr. Grigutyte and I connected throughout the APA Convention about the different workshops and events, and we have since become not only professionally acquainted but also personal friends. Serving as an IP ambassador for TCSPP was priceless and was transformative. I am proud to be a part of something that connects theory and practice in such an objec-

tive way!” - Lora Erickson, International Psychology Doctoral Candidate, TCSPP

“I had a great experience connecting with the psychological association leaders across the world. The need and role of international psychology could not have been more apparent. While the well-being of persons is a global issue, it is best addressed by combining efforts. I enjoyed observing global leaders share specific issues in their country, and the brainstorming sessions we had to determine how we can address these challenges.

As I listened to guests from Namibia, Guatemala, Haiti, Germany, Lithuania, and the Netherlands, I heard their passion for helping and improving the lives of their people. It stoked the fires of my own heart to help in any way that I can - not just here in the U.S., but everywhere that people are being oppressed, marginalized, forgotten, or made to suffer needlessly. Being in the midst of our international guests made me want to do more and talk less!

I acknowledge the privilege of being invited to host and it is an honor that I will cherish for a long time. I truly believe that there is no race more important than the human race. If we could bypass the rhetoric, embrace our differences, and forget about whose theory is best, we could really work on treating, supporting, and providing assistance to one another as well as to those in need. Thank you again TCSPP for being such a linchpin in making these things happen for me.” -Karen Brown, International Psychology Doctoral Candidate, TCSPP

“I had the tremendous privilege of hosting Dr. Neriga Grigutyte, the international president from Lithuania. It was a pleasure to assist Dr. Grigutyte at the convention and to gain so much knowledge and insight into psychological science strengths and limitations in Lithuania. Dr. Grigutyte and I connected throughout the APA Convention about the different workshops and events, and we have since become not only professionally acquainted but also personal friends. Serving as an IP ambassador for TCSPP was priceless and was transformative. I am proud to be a part of something that connects theory and practice in such an objec-

tive way!” - Lora Erickson, International Psychology Doctoral Candidate, TCSPP

“It was a wonderful to hear from my international guest, Dr. Quentin Abraham, what is happening in New Zealand and their work with the Australian Psychological Association (I conducted my research in Australia). Dr. Abraham is a fluent Maori speaker, and it was refreshing to hear him use it in a place where diversity was being celebrated.

The opportunity to meet with so many international guests was amazing, and I was able to continue the connection with many of them. In discussing the challenges that are being faced across the globe, I realized that although we have different belief systems, traditions, and cultural norms, at the heart of it all we share the same humanity.

This was a wonderful networking opportunity for us as psychology graduate students. I made invaluable contacts with global entities, such as the United Nations, and individual researchers and teachers who were happy to share their knowledge. In particular, I appreciated meeting other professionals with similar interests, which opened the door for future collaborations and opportunities. Overall, it was a very enlightening experience… thank you!” -Amber Rexilius, International Psychology Doctoral Candidate, TCSPP
President’s Corner

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President’s Corner
Across the United Nations system, and around the world, leaders have recognized how crucial our youth are to the future of humanity, and to our planet. As a consequence, the perspectives of youth have been foundational to the development, and now the implementation of the U.N.'s 2030 Global Agenda on Sustainable Development. Whether formally at the U.N. or in diverse places around the world, youth have been organizing a movement aimed at expressing their voices regarding the critical issues of our time. Increasingly, world leaders understand that to achieve the world we want without impediments to the achievement of human rights for all, the energy, ideas and dedication of future generations will be critical. In concert with these aspirations, the American Psychological Association's (APA) United Nations NGO Team in conjunction with the APA’s Office of International Affairs (OIA) have instituted an internship program dedicated to developing the knowledge and skills of psychology students on human rights issues. Graduate students from a range of disciplines within psychology have spent a year learning about human rights and acquiring research and advocacy skills within the context of the U.N. Their work culminates in several ways including presentations at the U.N., and at psychology conferences. In this way, the voices of our youth in psychology have been heard at the U.N., in their universities and in our psychological community.

Since its inception in 2008, the APA U.N. internship has successfully contributed to the training of future psychologists. In general, interns, alongside members of the APA’s UN NGO team, offer their valuable voices through their participation in projects that contribute to psychologically informed global policies in areas such as ageing, children and families, climate change, disability access and accommodation, education from early childhood throughout the lifespan, gender equality, habitat, environment and human settlements, health and mental health, including treatment and preven-
found that victims of ACEs also reported elevated risky health behaviors, including insomnia, depression, suicide attempts, etc. One study in Manila found that suicide attempts were found to be 24 times more likely as the number of adverse childhood experiences reached 4 or more (Ramiro, et. al., 2010).

Another study looking at the effects of ACEs in Saudi Arabia reported that among affected children anxiety was the most common psychological diagnosis (17%), followed by depression (9%), and suicidal thoughts (8%). Again, being exposed to 4 or more ACEs increased the risk of having chronic diseases by 2-11-fold, and increased risky health behaviors by 8-21-fold (Almuneef, et. al., 2014). In Nigeria researchers found that victims of ACEs also reported elevated substance use disorders in adulthood among those who experienced family violence, neglect, or abuse as children. Parental psychopathology significantly increased the risk for children developing mood disorders and higher incidence of violence in the family. In general, parental criminality, parental mental illness and substance misuse were more likely to have significant mental health consequences for children in their later adult years (Oladeji, et. al., 2010). As recently as 2016, a study in France reported ACEs, including severe abuse and neglect, were frequent in youth suffering from bipolar disorder type I (BD-I) (58%), and from catatonia (57%). Similarly, it was found that in the United Kingdom households affected by a combination of mental illness and sexual abuse had the highest association with markers of subsequent adult mental well-being. (Hughes, et. al., 2016).

Prevention and early intervention of child maltreatment are clearly recommended. Planning and developing programs to prevent child maltreatment may serve to alleviate the burden of chronic diseases and mental disorders in adulthood. Such efforts may reduce the prevalence of health-risk behaviors and morbidity in later life. UNICEF has promoted several programs to prevent child maltreatment and support the healthy development of resilience in children across countries and cultures. In addition, assessment of ACEs in a quick, effective and culturally sensitive manner can be conducted with the new ACE International Questionnaire created and implemented by the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO, 2017). This instrument may assist in the planning and development of programs that can help alleviate the burden of long-term mental health disorders and chronic diseases in victims of child maltreatment.

Binh-An Nguyen, doctoral candidate in Clinical Psychology at Rutgers University, New Jersey, presented on the indoctrination of violent extremism in children. She elucidated the relevance of psychology in the understanding of the multitude of interconnected factors that significantly influence child recruitment to armed violence. These factors often include the political and economic instability of conflict-ridden areas, the low socioeconomic status of children’s families, the abject conditions of living locations, and the benefits often promised to children by militia forces (i.e., money, wives, status). After becoming indoctrinated, children continue to be negatively affected psychologically, as their development is skewed by the different tasks and roles they are trained for in war. It is easy to see how a host of normative developmental experiences will be disrupted by persisting trauma leading to problems socially, educationally and occupationally when they attempt to reintegrate into society.

International humanitarian law prohibits the recruitment of children below the age of 18 in armed conflicts. Although the International Criminal Court finds breaking such laws to constitute a war crime, statistics addressing the use of child soldiers continue to be alarming. It was estimated in December 2012 that 40% of armed forces had illegally recruited approximately 300,000 children. https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/children-not-soldiers.

The U.N. has supported various efforts to address this crisis. The seminal work of Graça Machel, the former Minister of Education for Mozambique reported to the General Assembly in 1993 the disproportionate impact of war on children, and identified them as the primary victims of armed conflict. Machel’s report led to General Assembly Resolution 51/77, which created a mandate for the Secretary General to appoint a Special Representative who would be responsible for preparing annual reports on the recruitment of children to armed violence. The resolution also outlined that the Special Representative would present an annual report to the U.N. General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. Additionally, the “Children, Not Soldiers” campaign seeking to end the use of children by armed governmental forces was launched by the collaboration between the Special Representative of the Secretary General and UNICEF.

Ivette Merced, M.A in Clinical Psychology at Teacher’s College, Columbia University, New York emphasized recognizing the traumatic experiences of migratory and post-migratory refugees. Today the world is witness to a global refugee crisis of proportions not seen since World War II. While most of the international media attention is on the refugees arriving in Europe, from countries such as Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, there is another protection crisis unfolding in Central America (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2015). The Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA), which encompasses Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, is one of the most dangerous places in the world and has been called the “deadliest zone in the world outside of war zones” (Serna, 2016). Women and children...
are fleeing from the NTCA because of violence perpetrated by transnational criminal gang groups, brutal domestic violence, extortion, and political unrest.

According to the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crimes, “the violence that women are fleeing from in the NTCA stems from increasing territorial control by organized criminal armed groups. . . . Murder rates in the region are among the highest in the world; Honduras ranks first, El Salvador fifth, and Guatemala sixth.” In rates of female homicides globally, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras rank first, third, and seventh, respectively (U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014; CIA World Factbook, 2016).

There must also be informed knowledge that besides the pre-migratory traumas, there are additional traumas experienced enroute to the US during migration, and subsequently post traumatic experiences once refugees arrive. During migration, many women are beaten, raped and often killed, and children are sold into slavery. If and when they finally arrive in the United States, these refugees continue to face trauma in detention centers. In particular, women report abuses and mistreatment regardless of their duration of stay. This accumulation of negative experiences makes it even more difficult for refugees to acculturate and/or adapt to a new country, and add to a long list of psychosocial stressors that they have to negotiate. This entire trauma has long lasting psychological consequences that can lead to PTSD, depression, and anxiety.

The United Nations General Assembly has conferred upon the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) the responsibility to provide international and direct assistance to refugees from the NTCA. The protection of women and children remains a high priority. Intervention, both direct and indirect, advocacy, and expanded field presence serves to achieve the goals established by the UNHCR. As such the UNHCR calls on all governments, stakeholders and civil society to provide women and children with desperately needed protection. The psychological community can be instrumental informing both public opinion and policy concerning the need for developing and refining treatment modalities to overcome the effects of trauma upon refugees from the NTCA. The implementation of effective mental health models and modalities, which are designed to treat these specific populations should include the training of culturally competent providers in mental health.

A relevant statement in this context was issued by the Psychology Coalition at the U.N. (PCUN) advocating for how psychology can be effectively used to build key institutions and preserve peace through enhancing group cohesion, ensuring mental health and well-being and promoting social justice. The statement also strongly recommends integrating proven psychological principles into U.N. programs, such as cooperative problem-solving, dialogue, crisis management, peace building and participatory strategies with the understanding that these concepts can help foster a greater sense of cohesion among individuals and groups within societies.

The reality of global migration and the refugee crisis are challenging issues on the international stage and are important components of the U.N. global agenda. Estimates are that an unprecedented 65.3 million people around the world have been forced from home. According to the latest UNHCR report (2015), of the 21.5 million refugees around the world today, only 107,100 (0.5 percent) have been resettled. Research indicates that these forced migrants and refugees are suffering from serious mental health problems such as depression, anxiety disorders and PTSD (Murray, Davidson & Schweitzer, 2010). They report that children and adolescents make up over 50% of the refugees and are at risk for forced child labor, sexual exploitation, violence and recruitment for armed forces. Many children have also been unable to survive the flight to safety (Allwood, et al., 2002; Kinzie et. al., 1989; Saigh, 1989; Fazel, et. al., 2005; Ellis et. al., 2007). Cultural distance and integration play crucial roles in the process of migration resettlement and adaptation.

The migration process and its impact on families are issues germane to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) number 3 (good health and well-being), 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality), and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions). The U.N. and its NGO committees have been addressing the crisis of refugee children and their families and are diligently seeking solutions. In September 2016, the U.N. General Assembly hosted a high-level summit for refugees and migrants at the Heads of State and Government level to bring countries together for a better international blueprint. As a result, this summit produced an outcome document known as the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (2016) to be signed by heads of state. Since the Summit, the NGO Committee on Migration has formed 4 new subcommittees focused on climate-induced displacement, a campaign against xenophobia, and protection for refugee children. The American Psychological Association (APA) is also taking actions to address the refugee crisis. Initiatives include the 9th U.N. Psychology Day event on the global migration crisis and the APA presidential task force report (2012) which addresses the cultural and social barriers to mental health treatment for refugees. Cross-cultural psychology provides an understanding of the present refugee crisis and proposes intervention models that can pair up with the U.N. efforts to respond to this global issue.

Cross-cultural psychology recognizes that trauma-related symptoms may affect adjustment to a new culture. For example, Kataoka, et. al., (2002) found that 40% of young refugees to the U.S. had psychiatric disorders, mainly PTSD, depression and other anxiety related difficulties. While affected populations may benefit from mental health services, future clinicians must be able to recognize and treat these vulnerable communities in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner. The training of specialists working with trauma must emphasize capacity building to increase trained mental health specialists within different communities, as well as partner with community providers/agencies so that cultural expertise is integral in the services being provided. This philosophy represents a strength-based rather than a deficit-based intervention model. In this way families can be helped by building on their own culturally sanctioned healing traditions which may serve to reduce PTSD risk factors associated with resettlement stress.

The significance of social interventions and psychological research in support of SDG 16 was addressed by Bharanthy Premanchandra, M.A. in General Psychology New York University, New York. SDG16 is a call to action promoting peace, justice, and inclusive societies and is intended to act as a catalyst for profound social transformation. Understanding the psychological processes of inter and intra group dynamics, may well play a significant role in determining the success in reaching the targets associated with SDG16. (U.N., 2017).

Psychosocial strategies and techniques applied by the U.N. pertaining to SDG 16 focus on fighting corruption, building safe and inclusive cities, and building open and responsive governments.
A relevant statement in this context was issued by the Psychology Coalition at the U.N. (PCUN) advocating for how psychology can be effectively used to build key institutions and preserve peace through enhancing group cohesion, ensuring mental health and well-being and promoting social justice. The statement also strongly recommends integrating proven psychological principles into U.N. programs, such as cooperative problem-solving, dialogue, crisis management, peace building and participatory strategies with the understanding that these concepts can help foster a greater sense of cohesion among individuals and groups within societies.

Psychological research has contributed significantly to the field of conflict resolution by deepening our understanding of the nature of conflict, the significance of collective memories, and the importance of respect for moral and sacred values as a prerequisite for developing trust between conflicting parties. An illustration of how psychological principles can be effective in conflict resolution can be found in the work of Filho and Retig’s (2016) thematic analysis of the life’s work of Dr. José Ramos-Horta, a 1996 Nobel Peace Laureate, former President of East Timor, and current envoy of Guinea-Bissau to the U.N. Dr. Ramos-Horta was awarded the peace prize “for his work towards a just and peaceful solution to the conflict in East Timor.” He was interviewed regarding peace-building strategies he has used to manage conflicts during his tenure in Timor and since then around the world as a social activist, diplomat, and politician. Filho and Retig conducted a thematic analysis of the interview and of his peace prize acceptance speech. Their qualitative analysis revealed two higher order themes: psycho-social skills and social networking. Specifically, Dr. Ramos-Horta was found to use active listening, mindful breaks, and awareness of media trends to create personal and strategic networking contacts which were critical elements of managing conflict and were central to his diplomatic efficacy.

In more recent times, behavioral insights which draw heavily on psychological science have been gaining traction in policy formulation and in the implementation of strategies. In January 2016, the UN Secretary-General appointed Behavioral Insight specialists to work with the United Nations Development Program’s (UNDP) Innovation Facility on many projects such as improving the uptake of an e-waste recycling solution in China, crowd funding efforts for green energy in Ecuador, ‘Phones Against Corruption’ in Papua, New Guinea, and other similar projects. The main insights from behavioral science that were used to maximize the impact of these interventions were:

- Network nudges: people are influenced by the behavior of friends and members of their extended social network;
- Prompts: people are likely to take action when prompted at the right moment;
- Commitment contracts: people are more likely to execute actions when they have committed to achieving a goal, for example by signing a document that states their intentions;
- Descriptive norms: people observe other people’s behavior as guidelines for what’s acceptable and desirable.

One of the most successful programs that incorporated behavioral insights was the Phones Against Corruption initiative in Papua, New Guinea. At the time, Papua, New Guinea, was faced with significant mismanagement and corrupt practices involving public funds. The focus to improve the quality and quantity of corruption reports centered on developing tools to increase the willingness of the public to report fraud. Behavioral research sheds light on several barriers preventing people from reporting corruption such as fear of retribution. The behavioral insights team plan mitigated this by offering complete anonymity. Secondly, people may be deterred by the hassle of reporting. This was alleviated through designing messages that articulate a clear and easy set of steps to report corruption. The result was a free, user-friendly SMS/text message based reporting tool that did not require internet access or any particular application and which did not report sender’s information. To send an SMS, the sender simply stated the ‘where,’ ‘when’ and ‘what’ of the corruption case being reported. The outcome of this project was phenomenal, with thousands of users reporting corruption and hundreds of cases under investigation. This initiative achieved its goal of fighting corruption which is a crucial aim of SDG 16 and received the 2015 UNDP Innovation Fund award. http://www.asia-pacific.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/ourwork/development-impact/innovation/projects/png-phone-against-corruption.html. These instances are a clear demonstration of the usefulness of psychological applications in social interventions implemented by U.N. programs. Psychological concepts have either contributed in the creation of the intervention, helped improve it, or helped formalize strategies that can aid future interventions.

Conclusion:

The papers our interns presented at the Eastern Psychological Association represent only one aspect of their contributions last year. Their talent, dedication and versatility throughout the year consistently amaze our team of psychologists and we swell with pride at their achievements. Our intern program is not simply an ‘add on,’ but rather we view our interns as future leaders and champions of social justice and human rights. We stand together with H.E. Peter Thomson, President of the U.N. General Assembly who at this year’s Youth Skills Day declared that “Investing in young people, and realizing the demographic dividend, is one of the most effective, long-term and exponential investments governments can make to achieve the 2030 Agenda and realize a future that is safe, secure and prosperous for all.” We hope that by presenting a glimpse into some of the work our interns have produced integrating their research in psychology with human rights concerns that our readers will perceive the promise that young psychologists provide for a future vibrant field and for the hopes of humanity.