Welcome to the summer issue of Psychology International!

Giving away and getting back

Merry Bullock, PhD
Senior Director, Office of International Affairs

The Office of International Affairs and its governance advisory group the Committee on International Relations in Psychology (CIRP) share a mission – to promote, develop and foster the international face of APA. As I begin my tenure directing the office, I join a group of people who are devoted to an international perspective – including Sally Leverty, International Affairs Assistant and mainstay of the office, CIRP chair Joy Rice, PhD and the other 8 members of the committee (Eileen Borris, PhD, Judith Torney-Purta, PhD, Georgia Chao, PhD, Lillian Comas-Diaz, PhD, Ray Fowler, PhD, Thema Bryant-Davis, PhD, Juan Sanchez-Sosa, PhD and Danny Wedding, PhD), and APA’s delegation to the UN, headed by Florence Denmark, PhD (with Harold Cook, PhD, Deana Chitayat, PhD, Corann Okorodudu, PhD, Deborah Ragin, PhD, and Harold Takoooshian, PhD). In the broader APA context, we are joined by the members and officers of APA’s Division 52, as well as by countless members who have international interests, experience and expertise. I join these colleagues with gratitude for their enthusiasm and delight in matters international.

This is an exciting time for psychology’s outreach, development and policy initiatives in the international arena. It is a time that offers ideal conditions for pursuing a mandate to increase the scope of APA’s international activities. I begin this process with an ambitious vision of outreach – to APA’s members, students and affiliates to foster increased exposure and interaction with psychology around the world, to international colleagues to foster increased interaction with APA and American psychologists, and to international decision makers to increase their perception of the value and importance of psychological science and application in addressing current

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challenges in the global arena.

In the months to come I hope to engage you as the Office of International Affairs and CIRP develop strategies to facilitate APA’s international programs and activities. We welcome your suggestions, knowledge, wisdom, contacts and experience to help us engage psychology and psychologists and to help us all become better global psychologists.

One way that we invite your participation is through this newsletter. This issue marks the first electronic publication of *Psychology International*, which will be published monthly, sent broadly to APA’s international affiliates and made available to all of APA’s Divisions and members via the website. It will serve as a vehicle for news, information, announcements and calls for action. Through *Psychology International* and through a newly designed website, the Office of International Affairs intends to become your one-stop resource for links to information you can use on international activities, organizations and opportunities for research, study, comment and action. We also welcome input from International Affiliates to allow us to serve as a conduit for information, ideas and initiatives from colleagues around the world.

Another avenue for participation is to help us increase APA’s international network. We will be working diligently to find opportunities to inform decision makers who work in the international arena about psychology’s wealth of behavioral science data – from US federal agencies such as the State Department and the CDC to global organizations such as the World Bank, International Development Fund, WHO and the UN. We have one model of that activity through NGO status at the UN, where APA’s delegation works hard to be sure that psychology is at the table when initiatives and resolutions are in the planning and implementation stage. If you are engaged in research, consulting or applied activities with international bodies, please let us know so that we can serve as an informational resource and matchmaker.

This newsletter is being published at the time of APA’s 113th Annual Convention. There is a vibrant program spanning all aspects of psychology with participants from over 50 countries. You can view the broad scope of international research and participants on the web ([www.apa.org/international](http://www.apa.org/international)) or by picking up a list at the International Booth in the Convention Center. See you there!

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**International Overview**

**CIRP—an Overview of initiatives and activities**

The Committee on International Relations in Psychology met in March 2005. The members of the committee are Joy Rice, PhD (Chair), Eileen Borris, PhD, Thema Bryant-Davis, PhD, Lillian Comas-Diaz, PhD, Georgia Chao, PhD, Ray Fowler, PhD, Judith Torney-Purta, PhD, Juan-Jose Sanchez-Sosa, PhD and Danny Wedding, PhD. Dr. Chao was elected 2006 chair.

CIRP serves as the oversight group to APA’s UN team and has been named by Council (along with the Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs (CEMA) to take the lead in developing appropriate follow up processes to the recommendations by the Task Force on the World Conference Against Racism.

The highlights of the spring meeting were extensive discussion of the WCAR report and the recommendations for CIRP follow-up, a joint meeting with CEMA on the report, dissemination, follow-up, and use of the APA Resolution on Cultural and Gender Awareness in Psychology, facilitation of CIRP division liaisons, appointment of a UN Oversight Subcommittee, and selection of award winners for the David Travel Award and the International Scientific Meeting Support Fund.

CIRP’s convention highlights include a two-hour symposium “Globalization of Psychology—
Implications for of the 2004 APA Resolution on Culture and Gender Awareness,” co-sponsored by the Policy and Planning Board. (August 20, 3:00-4:50 p.m., Washington Convention Center, Meeting Room 144A); a Conversation Hour with APA’s Task Force on Internationalizing the Undergraduate Curriculum (August 19, 11:00-11:50 a.m., Washington Convention Center, Meeting Room 156); and a Conversation Hour with APA’s United Nations NGO Representatives (August 20, 2:00—2:50 p.m., Washington Convention Center, Meeting Room 204A).

As in years past, the highlight of CIRP’s convention program is its annual Reception for International Visitors. This year’s reception will be Friday morning, August 19, from 9:00 to 9:50 a.m. at the Grand Hyatt Washington Hotel, Farragut Square and Lafayette Park Rooms. CIRP also hosts an annual breakfast for its Division Liaisons and division presidents.

In addition to CIRP’s program, APA will recognize three international award winners. Gary B. Melton, PhD, professor of psychology and director of the Institute on Family and Neighborhood Life at Clemson University, and Charles Spielberger, PhD, ABPP, Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus at the University of South Florida, are co-recipients of the APA Award for Distinguished Contributions to the International Advancement of Psychology. Eduardo Almeida, PhD, is the recipient of the APA International Humanitarian Award. He is a senior faculty professor at Universidad Iberoamericana Puebla, Mexico, and the 2004-2006 President of Proyecto de Animación y Desarrollo, A.C. (PRADE) an NGO created in 1974 for the improvement of the well-being of peasant and indigenous people by promoting an authentic regional social transformation.

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Looking Back with Thanks

Joan Buchanan

At the end of January, 2005, I left my position as Director of the APA Office of International Affairs. I want to take this opportunity to tell you what a pleasure it has been knowing you. Over the 16 years I have been in this job, I have had contact with hundreds of psychologists from every part of the globe. You have certainly enriched my life and expanded my horizons.

Since 1989, the world has changed significantly. Given political changes, the atlas I used when I first came to this job is no longer accurate. In fact, we are now on our third atlas, which is already a bit out of date. The fax machine was a relatively new introduction to the office when I began this job. I remember that faxing was reserved for urgent matters, and that most of the office communications were done by old-fashioned letters sent via the postal service. Slowly, this was replaced by the ubiquitous e-mail that now dominates everyone’s life. While I have left bookshelves full of reference books and the APA Central Office Library still exists, the Internet is now the major source of information when searching for contacts, researching stories for the newsletter, or simply satisfying one’s curiosity about arcane facts and trivia.

I thoroughly enjoyed working in the Office of International Affairs. Each year brought visitors from every part of the globe, and during the 1990’s we even had a visitor’s program for representatives of recently formed psychological associations from such areas as Eastern Europe and Africa. And each year I represented APA at one of the major psychological Congresses (of the Interamerican Society of Psychology, the International Association of Applied Psychology, and the International Union of Psychological Science), held in every part of the world.

As the staff liaison to the APA Committee on International Relations in Psychology (CIRP), I was lucky to work with a wonderful group of people. Many CIRP members have held leadership roles in APA, so they know the Association and how it works. And always their enthusiasm was contagious and productive.

(Continued on page 4)
As the years passed, APA became more and more internationally oriented. I cannot claim credit for this. I think it was due to an increased awareness of global issues and the fact that Raymond Fowler, APA’s CEO during most of my tenure, was keenly interested in international concerns. This helped set the stage for APA’s accreditation as a non-governmental organization (NGO) with the United Nations in 2000. Through its work at the UN, the Association has become a legitimate player on the world stage. We have a wonderful team of representatives working in New York and, thanks to their hard work, psychology is now working side by side with other longer-term NGOs. Finally, I want to thank each Psychology International reader, all current and former members of CIRP, my wonderful assistant Sally Leverty and her predecessor Marian Wood, and the Association leadership. You have all been a joy to work with and I will remember you fondly.

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APA at the United Nations
Florence L. Denmark, PhD,
APA's Main Representative

The United Nations is a unique international organization of close to 200 sovereign States. It was founded after the Second World War to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations and promote social progress, better living standards, and human rights. In addition to government representatives from each of these sovereign States, many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are also affiliated with the UN. These organizations range from religious groups to service organizations to professional groups and comprise a veritable alphabet soup of acronyms. Many psychological associations are represented, including SPSSI (Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues), ICP (International Council of Psychologists), IAAP (International Association of Applied Psychology), AWP (Association for Women in Psychology) and others.

APA has been accredited to the United Nations since 2000, and currently has 5 NGO representatives. I was designated the Main Representative in 2004, replacing Corann Okorodudu, PhD who served in that role from 2000 to 2004. Corann remains part of the delegation along with Harold Cook, PhD, Deborah Ragin, PhD, and Harold Takooshian, PhD. In 2005, Deanna Chitayat, PhD began a five year term of service, replacing Thema Bryant-Davis, PhD, who moved to California and now is a member of the Committee on International Relations in Psychology (CIRP). In addition, Neil Rubin, PhD has served as a volunteer to pursue some of our special projects at the UN. The current group of delegates has staggered terms of office ranging from three to five years.

The APA-UN team reports to CIRP, with its administration coordinated through the Office of International Affairs under Merry Bullock, PhD., who recently became Senior Director after serving for many years as the APA Associate Executive Director for Science. Merry joins Sally Leverty and takes over from Joan Buchanan, who headed the Office of International Affairs for many years until she left APA in 2005.

The Spring and early Summer were busy for the APA UN/ NGO team of representatives. We were all active, engaged in a multiplicity of activities, with leadership positions in various UN/NGO Committees. Whereas many societies are devoted to a single issue, e.g., the International Association of Gerontology, APA is a multifaceted organization. (Continued from page 3)
Thus, the representatives are active in a variety of UN Committees including ageing, the family, human settlements, status of women, mental health, children’s rights, human rights, UNICEF, AIDS and the planning committee of DPI (Department of Public Information). We meet monthly as a group in addition to our own committee(s) meetings. Some of our leadership roles include Vice-Chair of the Human Settlements Committee (Takooshian); Co-Chair of the NGO Committee on Children’s Rights (Okorodudu); Coordination of the Sub-Committee for the Elimination of Racism of the NGO Committee on Human Rights (Okorodudu); Executive Committee membership for both the NGO Committee of the Family (Cook); and Chair of the NGO Committee on Ageing (Denmark).

Deanna Chitayat, PhD has organized a program for a midday presentation during the DPI annual conference. The title is, “Peace and conflict resolution: Psychological Perspectives.” (see sidebar, page xx) Neil Rubin created an initiative to promote awareness of the dangers to the security and psychological well-being of peacekeepers, humanitarian workers and UN personnel.

We all attend briefings each Thursday sponsored by the Department of Public Information and several of us have presented papers for various UN Commissions and the General Assembly members. We meet with other NGO psychologists and also present information about our activities at various professional meetings. We will do so at this year’s APA (Saturday, August 20, 2 pm).

If you have any questions about the UN, feel free to contact any member of the team. If you would like to visit the UN, please let me know so I can make arrangements (fdenmark@pace.edu). ψ

September, 2004 gathering of psychologists working at the United Nations — including APA, IAAP, IUPsyS, AIWA, SPSSI, ICP

What are the UN Millenium Goals?

In 2000 the UN General Assembly passed a resolution to support principles of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, and respect for nature, and shared responsibility as the basis of international relations. One result of this resolution was the development of the UN Millenium Goals listed below (see www.un.org/milleniumgoals for more information).

UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG)

By the year 2015, all 191 United Nations Member States have pledged to meet these goals

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

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The US National Committee for Psychology: a mandate for action!

American psychology just received a mandate to be more active in the international arena. The US National Committee, a group of psychologists appointed by the National Academies of Science to represent U.S. interests in international science union activities and to represent psychology’s interests among other science disciplines, just received a grant of over $400,000 for four years to carry out its activities. Read all about the Committee and its activities in the story below.

U.S. National Committee for the International Union for Psychological Science
Board on International Scientific Organizations

THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES
Advisers to the Nation on Science, Engineering, and Medicine

U. S. National Committee for Psychology: “Global Ambassadors for Science”

Elaine Lawson
Staff Liaison to the USNC, National Academies of Science

The U.S. National Committee for Psychology (USNC) is a committee of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) made up of nationally recognized scientific psychologists who promote science internationally. This committee is the official non-governmental U.S. representative to international umbrella organizations such as the International Council for Science (ICSU) that represents science broadly, or the International Union of Psychological Science (IUPsyS) that represents psychology globally. In short, members of the USNC for Psychology are “global ambassadors for science.”

The IUPsyS, the global psychology body for which the USNC is the US national member, is an international, nongovernmental, professional organization devoted to the promotion of psychology as a science and profession. IUPsyS’ 70 National Members represent psychology in each country and are drawn from national psychological societies and national academies. The National Academy of Sciences is the U.S. national member, represented through the USNC, whose members are nominated by a broad range of psychological associations. In addition to serving as the global voice for psychology, the Union identifies issues that affect the conduct of science across disciplinary and national boundaries, including the free circulation of scientists, open dissemination of research publications, barriers and challenges to research collaborations and international training. In addition, the Union engages in capacity building activities to support the development of research skills in developing countries, and supports the development of organized psychology. The union also identifies and addresses major issues of importance to science and society and conducts projects that contribute to science and to science in the service of societal goals.

U.S participation in IUPsyS is important and fulfills a unique role in the national science infrastructure. In general, the USNC:

- communicates with international colleagues through participation in the Unions’ and General Assemblies;
- interacts with Union governance to ensure strong governance and sound financial management;

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• helps identify and support the best candidates for election to Union offices;
• provides a forum for dialogue between U.S. scientists and foreign colleagues;
• promotes an international perspective by organizing travel grant programs to participate in international scientific congresses with special emphasis on support for early career scientists and scientists from underrepresented backgrounds; and,
• facilitates the dissemination of information about Union activities through journals, newsletters, and websites.

Most recently, the USNC has begun an exciting four-year program of activities thanks to a grant from the National Science Foundation. Below is a summary of the activities the USNC will be working on through 2009.

Collaborations with Individuals, Industry, and Governments (Workshop on International Collaboration)
The USNC is preparing an online survey, assessing challenges and opportunities to international collaborative research. The survey, to be launched during 2006, will provide detailed narrative information on the life cycle of international research collaborations and their unique opportunities and challenges.

The USNC will then convene an international workshop focused on assessing barriers, challenges, and opportunities for international collaborative research in the social and behavioral sciences that involve human subjects and will begin to identify solutions for facilitating such research. At the workshop the USNC and invited participants will review data resulting from the online survey, discuss the factors that seem to predict a successful collaboration, and then draft a “best practices” guide based on the workshop findings. The guide will be widely disseminated to individuals and organizations, both in the US and abroad.

Science for Policy (Conference on Scientific Access in Psychology)
The majority of activities of the national committees relate to “policy for science” or how the health of the research enterprise can and should be built and nurtured. But as more and more general policy decisions have a scientific or technical element to them, the USNC is undertaking activities in this area are aimed at improving scientists' ability to contribute their expertise to public debates and policymaking.

The USNC will convene international scientists who will discuss access issues in the conduct of research and policy regulation in their respective fields. Information and data collected at this conference will be published in a conference summary distributed throughout the psychology community. This information will also provide the framework for a pilot project that will eventually lead to a database that provides information about scientific access for social and behavioral scientists.

Compilation of Access Information
The USNC will develop a plan for a pilot test of a web-based database that will be organized in such a way that scientists can access country by country information about policies, regulations, or government offices that are responsible for the type of research being conducted in that country. Useful information, such as the country’s rules and regulations regarding tissue samples, data ownership, and institutional review board approvals will be added to the database. If this pilot test is successful, the committee will then develop a project proposal to conduct site visits to the major regions of the world of interest to social and behavioral scientists in order to build upon the web-based database. This database will provide a valuable service to the psychology research community.

Data Management and Publishing (Symposium on Social and Behavioral Aspects of Technology and Information Systems)
The dramatic impact of new information and communication technologies on the production,
distribution, archiving, and management of information is felt throughout the scientific community. The USNC and other committees at the NAS undertake activities related to equitable access to electronic resources, the changing nature of the editorial process, legal issues of copyright, archiving in an electronic environment, ethical and privacy issues, and economic models of publishing. They also examine data management problems with the goals of improving the quality and accessibility of data and facilitating international cooperation among those who collect, organize, and use data. The USNC will sponsor a symposium, perhaps at an AAAS meeting, on the social and behavioral aspects of science and technology information communication. The symposium will feature scientists who are conducting research on interactive machine learning, human and machine learning, and human-computer interaction. The USNC will also work with ICSU's Committee on Data for Science and Technology (CODATA) on issues of importance to data centers and networks. The impact of legislative protection of databases will be discussed with the committee with a goal of involving the union and other international communities.

Scientific Openness and Responsibility

The USNC is alarmed about limits on scientific openness and the increased restrictions on foreign students and scholars. While recognizing the need to safeguard national security, the committee believes that substantial delays in the processing of visa applications are causing considerable disruption to scientific interactions and U.S. graduate programs, and endangering the competitiveness of U.S. science. The USNC has joined forces with the wider scientific community to monitor current policies and procedures regarding the issuance of visas. It will explore partnerships with business and cultural organizations that are addressing visa problems, believing that only a broad coalition of all those affected by the new rules will be able to maintain the open exchanges on which science depends.

The special projects of the USNC described above are in addition to their core mission of fostering U.S. participation in international science and fortifying communication linkages between the United States and international scientific communities. To support these underlying and ongoing goals, the national committee meets regularly, maintains ties with professional societies and other organizations, and supports their International Union.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS—APA

Nominations and supporting materials for the following international awards may be sent to the Office of International Affairs at the APA address. Questions about the awards should be directed to Sally Leverty at (202) 336-6025 or sleverty@apa.org.

APA Award for Distinguished Contributions to the International Advancement of Psychology

APA's Committee on International Relations in Psychology (CIRP) is seeking nominations for this award. This award recognizes distinguished and enduring lifetime contributions to the international cooperation and advancement of knowledge in psychology. Candidates may be from any country. Nominations should include a supporting type-written statement of up to 500 words that traces the nominee's cumulative record of enduring contributions to the international advancement of psychology; a current vitae, a list of relevant publications and letters of support from three to five people familiar with the nominee's work.

International Humanitarian Award

The International Humanitarian Award recognizes extraordinary humanitarian service and activism by a psychologist or a team of psychologists, including professional and/or volunteer
work conducted primarily in the field with underserved populations.

"Extraordinary humanitarian services" is defined as professional activities initiated by psychologists, working alone or in association with others, to help alleviate severe stress and restore psychological well-being to a group of people in a variety of difficult circumstances, including but not limited to survivors and/or victims’ families following a significant event such as a natural or person-induced disaster, a national or international incident, a civil war or a forced migration; or to a community of any size in which long-term political, economic, social and/or other circumstances have caused severe stress and psychological problems for a substantial portion of that community.

Nominees need not be APA members. Recipients are individual psychologists or teams of psychologists working under the aegis of local, national and international organizations that provide psychosocial and humanitarian services. Nominations should provide ample and clear documentation to substantiate extraordinary service that has improved the lives and contributed to the well being of people in either large or small geographic areas anywhere in the world. Documentation should include, but is not limited to, descriptions of the difficult conditions constituting severe threats to the security, stability, welfare or development of communities; specific actions, including personal risk, taken to improve conditions; demonstrated skills, knowledge, dedication and persistence brought to bear on work within specific communities; and the social and political activism displayed in rebuilding or transforming communities and/or fostering the empowerment of community members to act on their own behalf.

Applications will be screened by APA’s Committee on International Relations in Psychology, which will make recommendations to APA’s Board of Directors for its designation of the awardee. Applications must include a letter of application; a 500-word narrative description of extraordinary humanitarian services and activism within specified time frames; a curriculum vitae; three letters of recommendation; and other supporting documents deemed essential to a full presentation of the applicant’s work.

APPLICATION for APA International Conference Support

The Office of International Affairs has established an annual fund to provide support for international meetings and conferences attended by psychologists from around the world. Need will be considered in selecting recipients and in determining the amount of support. Applications for funding should address the following points: a brief description of the applicant’s organization, including the mission statement and other relevant documents that describe the organization; a description of the organization’s relationships with APA; an overview of the event’s objectives and activities, including a preliminary program; a description of the organizational structure that will carry out the event; the budget for the event, including a portion requested from APA and other funding sources; and a description of the event’s proposed products (e.g., monographs, CD-ROM). For more information and complete application guidelines, contact the APA Office of International Affairs, 750 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002; international@apa.org (e-mail). Applications are due no later than March 30, 2006.
APA Organizes “Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue” for the September UN-NGO Conference

APA UN representatives have organized a presentation for the UN-NGO conference on Peace and conflict resolution: Psychological Perspectives. The presentation will feature a panel discussion by prominent social scientists on how to resolve conflict, violence, and build peace post-conflict. The focus will be on the role of children, who continue to play a significant part in the fighting forces in some of the world’s most bitter conflicts, especially in Africa, where up to 100,000 children are being used in large-scale conflicts.

The session, chaired by APA NGO Representative Deanna Chitayat, PhD (Dean Emeritus, Hofstra University), will include: Michael Wessells, PhD (Peace Psychologist, Senior Child Protection Specialist, Christian Children’s Fund, Virginia; Works in Africa and East Asia); Alcinda Honwana, PhD (Program Director, Social Science Research Council, formerly at the UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict; Social Anthropologist from Mozambique, worked in Darfur); Dan Christie, PhD, (leading researcher in peace psychology. Professor of Psychology, Ohio State University); and moderator Harold Cook, PhD (Professor Emeritus of Psychology, Columbia University, and NGO representative for the American Psychological Association and the International Union of Psychological Science).

Fordham University to Host Conference on Psychology/UN

During the 2004 NGO Conference, psychologists representing six nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) at the United Nations gathered for a one-hour meet-and-greet They resolved to start a periodic gathering of psychologists interested in UN action. This gathering will occur in concert with the 2005 UN Conference on September 7-9 in New York City.

On September 6, 2005, Fordham University in New York City will host a half-day conference on "Behavioral science and the global agenda: Making a difference in the 21st century." Featuring workshops, a plenary session, and a reception the conference actively welcomes all to meet and hear some of international psychologists from the USA and overseas. Four one-hour workshops will focus on practical "how-to" topics specific to psychologists: (a) Giving behavioral science away to decision-makers and practitioners, (b) Partnering with media, (c) Publishing our international work, (d) Making psychology a household word. Pending student interest, a fifth workshop might focus on student involvement in international and U.N. work.

Participants will receive a packet of international publications, including the U.N. Millenium Development Goals and state-of-the-world brochures, the Freedom House rating of democratic nations, and material from international psychology groups.

The conference, co-sponsored by several psychology organizations, will take place in the Fordham Faculty Lounge (113 West 60 Street in Manhattan). For details, contact organizers Harold Takooshian at 212-636-6393 or Anie Kalayjian at kalayjiana@aol.com.

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Psychology in Latin America

Héctor Fernández Alvarez, PhD
President, Interamerican Society of Psychology

Latin America is a vast geopolitical region that includes over 30 countries with many cultural characteristics in common such as: language (dominant languages are Spanish and Portuguese), religion (most inhabitants are Catholic), and political systems (most are democratic republics). The majority of these countries also experience extremely difficult socio-economic situations, placing the territory within the Third World. On the other hand, there is great socio-ethnic diversity, due largely to the different migratory waves that populated the area. During the past 100 years, Central America and the Caribbean have received strong cultural influences from the United States while South America has been influenced more by Europe.

These influences has been particularly strong within psychology. Thus referring to "a" Latin American psychology is imprecise. There are various psychologies within Latin America that have some common elements:

- Academic psychology, as an independent discipline, developed as recently as the mid twentieth century. Universities began offering courses after the Second World War.
- Psychology’s development has been dependent on its evolution in other regions, in particular the United States and Western Europe.
- The practice of psychology has focused on social, clinical, and community psychology.
- Ethnopsychological problems are particularly relevant to its development.

The various specialties and areas of psychology have been prompted by a variety of organizations.

The Interamerican Society of Psychology (SIP) has fostered active exchanges among all psychologists of the region since its creation. Founded in Mexico, in 1951, by the earlier efforts of such psychologists as Rogelio Díaz Guerrero, SIP has regularly held biennial congresses where psychologist of all specialties and countries can meet. The most recent Congress, the 30th, took place in Buenos Aires, Argentina in June, 2005 (see details at www.sipsych.org ). In 2004 SIP held its First Regional Congress in Guatemala, which was well attended by psychologists from Central America and the Caribbean.

Undergraduate and Graduate Education

Education and training in psychology during the first half of the past century was mainly linked to philosophy and medicine, disciplines whose influence was evident in the first training programs that were developed. From the inception of independent disciplines, psychology was considered a general, professional field open to different theoretical frameworks. Undergraduates receive a "licenciatura" or licensure, a degree that usually requires 4-5 years of study and that is more specialized than the BA degree students receive in the U.S.

During the past 20 years, the number of universities that offer degrees in psychology has grown exponentially. In countries such as Mexico and Brazil, there are over one hundred institutions. The increased maturity of these programs has fostered attention to scientific issues, although a professional bent is still present (Di Doménico & Vilanova, 1998). Women

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are more numerous than men among students and clinical psychology is the most frequently chosen specialty.

Graduate programs have also greatly increased in number. For many years, psychologists in Latin America could obtain only undergraduate degrees in their countries and had to travel to other regions to complete graduate studies. Most aspiring psychologists traveled to the United States, England or France. This situation began to change slowly with Brasil being very active in developing a policy for graduate studies. Since the 1990’s the situation has changed rapidly and today universities in most countries offer graduate training.

The ethical dimension of academic and professional training is a given within university programs. It acquires particular relevance given the rapid social changes that impact most countries of the region (Villegas & Marassi, 2003).

**Legal and Normative Aspects**

The profession of psychology was not immediately validated as the result of the development of university programs. This issue was particularly significant for clinical and health psychologists who saw their activities ruled by medical regulations and norms. For many years, psychologists’ role was limited to working as psychiatrists’ aides. Brasil pioneered the development of policies and laws to legitimate psychology as an independent profession. After the 1970’s, the qualification and accreditation of professional psychology was approved in many countries, including Venezuela (1975), Colombia (1983), Puerto Rico (1983), Argentina (1985) and Bolivia (1987). The accreditation of psychologists within health settings allowed their work to be recognized within social prevention and security services. Costa Rica and Venezuela were the first to sanction these regulations.

In Puerto Rico, since 1994 and following in U.S. footsteps, the doctoral degree is required for the practice of clinical psychology. This is supported by the understanding of the nuances and difficulties the task entails within health settings (Alvarez & Vélez-Pastrana, 1995). In many countries, psychology colleges and associations are promoting the creation of commissions to regulate the accreditation of clinical psychology. The National Accreditation Comission of Clinical Psychology in Chile was the first to develop an operational system in this regard.

**Psychology: Discipline and Profession**

According to data from 1999, Latin American has 344,000 psychologists for a population of 740 million people, a proportion of 47 to 100,000 (Alonso & Eagly, 1999). Most are engaged in professional practice both in private and public settings. Research has lagged behind for many years, mainly due to lack of financial resources and of a graduate training infrastructure. This situation has been changing and many academic centers in the region have developed research efforts. Although financial resources are still scarce, the hard work of psychologists and multicenter efforts involving collaboration with institutions in developed nations have furthered the progress of research endeavors.

Psychologists have contributed significantly to the development of social and community psychology, particularly in mental health settings (Montero, 2003). This participation has taken place within national programs as well as in initiatives sponsored by the Panamerican Health Organization. These efforts are a significant contribution to transcultural psychology.

**Publications**

Many efforts have been implemented within the region to promote psychological publications. On many occasions, limited financial support made printing consecutive volumes an impossibility, leading to much frustration. Despite these hardships, some
Psychology journals have been able to publish quality papers consistently. Some examples include the *Acta Psiquiátrica y Psicológica de América Latina* published uninterruptedly in Argentina since 1951, and more recently *Acta Psicológica Mexicana*, published within the Psychology Department at the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma* since 1982, and *Teoría e Pesquisa*, edited by the *Universidad de Brasilia* since 1985.

SIP has published the Interamerican Journal of Psychology (RIP) in its four official languages (Spanish, English, French, and Portuguese) since 1967. (For more information visit [www.psicorip.org](http://www.psicorip.org)). Its objectives include presenting psychology’s developments in the Americas and promoting the activities of professional and academic societies. The RIP, whose current editor is Silvia Koller of Porto Alegre, Brasil continues to be a mechanism to promote the region’s psychological production (Serrano-García & Resto-Olivo, 2003). The enormous effort that this editorial task implies is directed to affording Latin American psychology the visibility it deserves, highlighting the extraordinary work psychologists develop in the region, despite considerable limitations.

As President of SIP, I invite you to enjoy and learn from the diversity, innovativeness, social commitment and excellence of Latin American psychology. Please join us in Mexico City for our next congress in June 2007.

**References**


