

Moving Toward a Global Psychology

Changing Theories and Practice to Meet the Needs of a Changing World



Vickie M. Mays
Jeffrey Rubin
Michel Sabourin
Lenore Walker

University of California, Los Angeles
Tufts University
University of Montreal
Walker & Associates

Increasingly, the United States is becoming internationalized as a result of sophisticated communication technologies that put us in touch with countries known previously to only a few, through economic development and multinational investment, and by the immigration of people who are sometimes fleeing hostile homelands. U.S. citizens, like others abroad, will need to be responsive to the demands of a multiethnic, multiracial, and multinational society. The challenges of this changing world can and will range from such dilemmas as ethical decisions of who can and will have access to expensive technology that saves and prolongs life; to the development of conflict management strategies for peaceful coexistence with neighbors whose behaviors, beliefs, and values are strongly shaped by their religious, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic circumstances. With the inauguration of this section, U.S. psychology is invited to consider its contribution to meeting the needs of a changing society.

of developed nations—the European communities, in particular—as well as developing nations. However, U.S. psychology, more and more, is also expanding its knowledge and practice base from its links with the developed and developing countries. This happens through the convening of congresses, joint publications, training workshops, research collaborations, practice consultations, and especially something as seemingly mundane as electronic mail.

One goal of this new section on international psychology in the *American Psychologist* is to foster bidirectionality for the exchange of psychological knowledge, ideas, and practice from developing and other industrial-

Editor's note. *International Perspectives in Psychology* will be featured intermittently in the *American Psychologist*. This inaugural section was developed and edited by Vickie M. Mays, Jeffrey Rubin, Michel Sabourin, and Lenore Walker, who conceived of it while serving on the American Psychological Association's Committee on International Relations in Psychology (CIRP).

Correspondence concerning this section should be addressed to Lenore Walker, Walker & Associates, 50 South Steele Street, Suite 850, Denver, CO 80209. Electronic mail may be sent via CompuServe to 74443.1415.

Author's note. Vickie M. Mays, Department of Psychology, University of California, Los Angeles; Jeffrey Rubin, Department of Psychology, Tufts University; Michel Sabourin, Department of Psychology, University of Montreal, Montreal, Quebec, Canada; Lenore Walker, Walker & Associates, Denver, CO.

Jeffrey Rubin died before this section was completed. We dedicate this inaugural section of *International Perspectives in Psychology* to his vision of the contributions that psychologists offer to the resolution of international conflicts on behalf of world peace.

M. Brewster Smith assisted in the final editing of the manuscript. We would like to thank the members of CIRP—Leonore Loeb Adler, Guillermo Bernal, Stephanie Dudek, Irma Serrano-Garcia, Rita Dudley Grant, Florence Kaslow, Hedwin Naimark, Hagop Pamboukian, and Denis Nissim-Sabat—for their help with this section and Rochel Gelman and Mark Rosenzweig for their comments on a draft of this article. Thanks are also due to Donald K. Freedheim, Patrick H. DeLeon and staff members Joan Buchanan and Marian Wood for their assistance in the formation of this section.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Vickie M. Mays, Department of Psychology, 1283 Franz Hall, P.O. Box 951563, University of California, 405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563. Electronic mail may be sent via Internet to mays@psych.sscnet.ucla.edu.

The 1990s has been a time of tremendous social, political, and economic change both abroad and in the United States. We have witnessed the assassination of Itzak Rabin in the name of peace, the breakup of the old Soviet Union, and the horrifying fighting between the Bosnians and the Serbs. At home, we have experienced domestic terrorism in Oklahoma, civil disturbances in Los Angeles that are reminiscent of riots of the 1960s, efforts to dismantle affirmative action, and changes to the delivery of health services through managed care. It is a profoundly changing world. Psychology as a science and profession has not been immune to these events (Russell, 1984; Sexton & Hogan, 1992).

It has been suggested (Moghaddam, 1987) that there are "three worlds" of psychology research and practice. One is the world of psychological knowledge and application that is drawn solely from within the United States. A second is that body of knowledge and practice developed by other industrialized countries. Finally, a third is that which is wrought in developing countries. Within this triumvirate, U.S. psychology has been imported and serves as an important source of influence for a number

ized nations in the hopes of influencing and broadening the knowledge and practice base of psychology here in the United States. U.S. psychology is often criticized as being deeply rooted in the cultural values and behaviors of American principles of individuality, abstract ideals, and rationalism (Kim, 1995) and, as such, is not as responsive to the needs of some of its citizens and residents.

A second goal is to facilitate greater awareness of the body of knowledge of practice and research of psychology in other countries in the world community. Some countries such as France, Hungary, New Zealand, and the former Soviet Union perceive less influence in the development of psychology from research and practice in the United States, but more from within their own countries (Sexton & Hogan, 1992). The psychology in some countries, such as Hong Kong and Japan, embraces a combination of both Eastern and Western influence on their body of knowledge and practice of psychology. And still others, such as Brazil, Norway, Ireland, and Romania, acknowledge the strong influence of Western Europe, Britain, and the United States (Sexton & Hogan, 1992).

We hope that this section on international psychology will contribute to changes in the insular nature of U.S. psychology. The insular behavior of U.S. psychologists in which we read and cite so little of the work of our colleagues outside of the United States (Sexton, 1983) must change if U.S. psychological research, practice, and theories are to expand beyond their Western boundaries. The Lunt and Poortinga (1996) article in this inaugural section illustrates this point. Despite early commentaries by South African psychologist Simon Biesheuvel in the 1940s on the race and intelligence debate (Biesheuvel, 1943), that work has largely been ignored in U.S. critiques of the work of Jensen back in 1969 and Herrnstein and Murray (1994) more recently. Lunt and Poortinga (1996) view this insular behavior as one that hampers the internationalization of psychology.

It is not only in the citing of such work, but in the diversification of reviewers who can point out omissions in reviewing articles in U.S. journals that such shortcomings will change. The *American Psychologist* and other American Psychological Association (APA) journals, in their efforts to internationalize psychology, have added colleagues from outside of the United States to their editorial board and reviewer pool.

As the United States grows more internationalized through immigration, multinational economic development, and increasingly sophisticated international telecommunication methods, the science and practice of psychology must change if it is to be successful in contributing solutions to national social problems (Adair & Kagitçibasi, 1995). With this growth, psychology in the United States has appropriately moved beyond addressing itself only to problems in laboratory or clinical settings. Public service psychology of the 1990s finds itself at the table, helping to negotiate peace, developing water policies, or evaluating the housing designs of urban planners (King & Collins, 1989). As Sexton (1985) advocated as far back as 1985, more than ever, U.S. psychology, if it

is to be useful to society, must address the tough problems in this country—"terrorism, race relations, interethnic conflicts, crime, violence, world peace and population control" (Sexton, 1985, p. 429). The best strategy for solving problems of this nature is not in isolation, but through communication, collaboration, and the giving away of efficacious solutions from colleagues worldwide who have labored to generate innovative solutions to solve these universal problems (Sexton, 1985). It is the bidirectionality of knowledge, such as the introduction of East Asian psychology to the United States, in which we come to learn that interrelatedness to others, as exemplified "in Japan through the concept of *amae* (dependence) (Doi, 1981) or *chong* (affection) in Korea (Choi, Kim & Choi, 1993) and *mientze* (face) in China (Ho, 1976)," is at the core of human behavior (Kim, 1995, p. 667). Or in Latin American psychology, human interaction is also defined by a culture of relatedness in which the group takes primacy over the individual (Diaz-Loving, Reyes-Lagunes, & Diaz-Guerrero, 1995). All of these, as well as European (Hall & Miller, 1992-1993) or Indian psychology (Adair, 1995; Sinha, 1994), can expand U.S. psychology to develop a more complete body of knowledge on which to base solutions for solving problems of human behavior.

The growth of psychology in each country will be a function of the resources and prevailing intellectual, political, and social practices of that country (Hall & Miller, 1992-1993). In the mid-1980s, there were well over 60,000 psychologists who belonged to the APA. As the rate of growth of psychologists decreases in the United States, other countries, such as Israel, with a ten-fold increase (2,500), South Africa, and Spain, are experiencing rapid growth (Rosenzweig, 1982; Sexton & Hogan, 1992). However, although the United States may always have a larger number of persons in the profession, that does not diminish the influence that the European, Latin American, African, or Asian psychological communities as well as others may have on the psychological community in the United States (Hall & Miller, 1992-1993), if we open ourselves to their psychologies. Sexton and Hogan (1992), in recognizing the growth of other countries in the field of psychology and the potentially diminished role of U.S. psychology in the world psychological community (Rosenzweig, 1982), posed two possible scenarios for psychology in the United States. First, U.S. psychology could continue to foster and develop unidirectional professional activities, taking in little of the theory and practice of other psychologies. The result will surely be an increasingly fragmented U.S. psychology that is at risk for failing to meet the psychological needs of its own U.S. population, with its rapidly growing multicultural, multinational, and multiracial population. Another scenario is that U.S. psychology through the influence of the professional development of psychology of other countries will grow to become a more inclusive and responsive psychology that is posed to meet the international challenges of the next century.

It is that latter vision that was shared by the members of the Committee on International Relations in Psychology of the APA in the desire to launch a special section on international psychology in the *American Psychologist*. As U.S. psychology educates itself about the psychology of other nations, it will better understand the limits of its science, practice, and professional development for the betterment of all of its citizens.

This first inaugural section highlights European psychology, as the 1990s have been a time of cataclysmic political change in Europe, particularly in Eastern Europe (Hall & Miller, 1992-1993). The Pawlik and d'Ydewalle (1996, this issue) article projects the zeitgeist of international organizations in psychology. The authors also identify the current problems facing international psychological research. Pawlik and d'Ydewalle, like the authors of the second article, Lunt and Poortinga, emphasize the value for all of international cooperation in psychological research. Both sets of authors incite us to use our skills to rise to the challenges of the future from a changing world of high technology, population growth, crowding, longer life expectancies, and multiethnic living, all of which contribute to a world in need of guiding societal ethics, conflict management, behavioral health education, and disease-prevention strategies. These are tasks well suited for international psychology.

The third article in this first series is one that draws the reader's attention to the influence of the cultural context on the development of psychological science. Gergen, Gulerce, Lock, and Misra (1996) challenge the prominent role that Western psychological science occupies and call for a psychology of "practical cultural significance" (p. 496) investigating people's behavior in such domains of behavior as ethnic and religious conflict, the effects of technology on society, studies of health that explore people's trust in medicine, and child abuse. Gergen and his colleagues advocate developing a psychological science that functions as a practical mechanism for constructing psychology's response for the future.

Each of these articles challenges us to think more broadly about the use of our psychological organizations, our practice skills, and research to solve "global climatic change" (Pawlik & d'Ydewalle, 1996, p. 493) in human behavior. These articles serve as a beginning for the new section on international psychology. In upcoming sections, you will hear from colleagues throughout the world, focusing on issues of importance and sometimes of controversy, but articles in which the goals will be to broaden U.S. psychology. It is also with this new section that we invite the reader to correspond about international issues with the Committee on International Relations in Psychology through the director of the Office on International Affairs in Psychology, Joan Buchanan (via Internet at

jbx.apa@email.apa.org), on topics that you would like to see covered. Offers to serve as a reviewer for this new section also should be addressed to Joan Buchanan.

REFERENCES

- Adair, J. G. (1995). The research environment in developing countries: Contributions to the national development of the discipline. *International Journal of Psychology*, 6, 643-662.
- Adair, J. G., & Kagitçibasi, Ç. (1995). Development of psychology in developing countries: Factors facilitating and impeding its progress. *International Journal of Psychology*, 6, 633-641.
- Biesheuvel, S. (1943). *African intelligence*. Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations.
- Choi, S. C., Kim, U., & Choi, S. H. (1993). Korean culture and collective representation. In U. Kim & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *Indigenous psychologies: Experience and research in cultural context* (pp. 193-210). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Diaz-Loving, R., Reyes-Lagunes, I., & Diaz-Guerrero, R. (1995). Some cultural facilitators and deterrents for the development of psychology: The role of graduate research training. *International Journal of Psychology*, 6, 681-692.
- Doi, T. (1981). *The anatomy of dependence*. Tokyo, Japan: Kodansha International.
- Gergen, K. J., Gulerce, A., Lock, A., & Misra, G. (1996). Psychological science in cultural context. *American Psychologist*, 51, 496-503.
- Hall, J. H., & Miller, T. W. (1992-1993). Public service psychology in the 1990's. *International Journal of Mental Health*, 4, 87-95.
- Herrnstein, R. J., & Murray, C. (1994). *The bell curve: Intelligence and class structure in American life*. New York: Free Press.
- Ho, D. Y. F. (1976). On the concept of face. *American Journal of Sociology*, 81, 867-885.
- Jensen, A. R. (1969). How much can we boost IQ and scholastic achievement? *Harvard Educational Review*, 39, 1-123.
- Kim, U. (1995). Psychology, science, and culture: Cross-cultural analysis of national psychologies. *International Journal of Psychology*, 6, 663-679.
- King, R. C., & Collins, J. K. (Eds.). (1989). *Social applications and issues in psychology*. Amsterdam: Elsevier Science.
- Lunt, I., & Poortinga, Y. H. (1996). Internationalizing psychology: The case of Europe. *American Psychologist*, 51, 504-508.
- Moghaddam, F. M. (1987). Psychology in three worlds: As reflected by the crisis in social psychology and the move toward indigenous third-world psychology. *American Psychologist*, 42, 912-920.
- Pawlik, K., & d'Ydewalle, G. (1996). Psychology and the global commons: Perspectives of international psychology. *American Psychologist*, 51, 488-495.
- Rosenzweig, M. R. (1982). Trends in developmental and status of psychology: An international perspective. *International Journal of Psychology*, 17, 117-140.
- Russell, R. W. (1984). Psychology in its world context. *American Psychologist*, 39, 1017-1025.
- Sexton, V. S. (1983). *Is American psychology xenophobic?* Presidential address presented at the annual meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association, Baltimore.
- Sexton, V. S. (1985). Psychology in the future: A communication challenge. In J. L. McGaugh (Ed.), *Contemporary psychology: Biological processes and theoretical issues* (pp. 427-431). Amsterdam: Elsevier Science.
- Sexton, V. S., & Hogan, J. D. (1992). *International psychology: Views from around the world*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Sinha, D. (1994). Origins and development of psychology in India: Outgrowing the alien framework. *International Journal of Psychology*, 29, 695-705.