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# LA SOCIEDAD INTERAMERICANA DE PSICOLOGÍA

# Interamerican Society of Psychology: History and Current Status

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Interamerican Society of Psychology (in Spanish, Sociedad Interamericana de Psicología and often referred to as SIP) is an association of psychologists from throughout the Americas that has been in existence since 1951. Its purpose is to foster scientific and professional collaborations among psychologists and those in related fields from the countries of North America, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America and to promote the development of the behavioral sciences in the Western Hemisphere. The Society provides venues for psychologists to interact across national boundaries and thus contributes to international understanding.

## ACTIVITIES

The Interamerican Society of Psychology achieves its goals through several important activities: congresses and other meetings, publications and Internet communication, task forces, and awards. Each of these is explored below.

**Congresses and other meetings.** The Interamerican Congress of Psychology, held biennially, has been a key means for psychologists in the Americas to exchange information, make contacts and establish cross-national collaborations. In addition, it provides an overview of the current status of psychology in the countries of the Americas. For many psychologists in Latin America, the congress has been the most accessible and important international conference focusing on all areas of psychology.

In recent years, in addition to traditional areas of psychology, congresses have paid special attention to community social psychology, political psychology, social action, health psychology, educational applications, AIDS prevention, and theoretical aspects of psychology as a science. Congress organization is done by a coalition of psychologists in the host country, and the scientific program is organized with the support of an international advisory group. The Interamerican Congress of Psychology has played an important role not only in bringing together psychologists from throughout the hemisphere, but also in promoting the development of psychology in each host country. Most congresses are attended by a large contingent of students, who benefit greatly from meeting and listening to psychologists they have previously known only from their writings.

SIP sponsors meetings as well as workshops in specialized areas of psychology such as health psychology, both during the congress and at other times. These meetings can provide focused training or opportunities for smaller groups of psychologists to interact.

**Publications.** The two principal Society publications are the *Interamerican Journal of Psychology* and the *Interamerican Psychologist*. Each of these provide members and other psychologists with important information and opportunities to share their research and other interests.

The *Interamerican Journal of Psychology* has the following objectives: 1) to reflect the developments that are occurring in psychology from the theoretical, applied and professional perspectives; 2) to promote the development of psychology in the Western hemisphere (the Americas) through communication and professional collaboration; and 3) to reduce professional and scientific isolation of professionals in the discipline. The Journal appears twice yearly and publishes reports of original empirical studies, theory development, critical reviews of the literature, and methodological contributions. Articles cover all areas of psychology, particularly clinical and social, followed by developmental, instrument development, cognitive and cross-cultural. Articles can be in any of SIP's languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese or French), but are most frequently in English or Spanish. In 1998, Irma Serrano-García of Puerto Rico assumed editorship of the journal.

The *Interamerican Psychologist* is a bulletin that provides members with information about the Society and its activities, current events, task force reports, and short articles.

**Internet communication.** An additional SIP-related resource and venue for informal international exchange has been IAPSY-L, the Interamerican Psychologists' List, an Internet-based listserv group founded in 1990 by Bernardo M. Ferdman, an Argentine-born organizational psychologist in the United States. Open to all, as of February 1999 the list had over 300 members from more than 25 countries.

**Task Forces.** SIP sponsors several task forces that focus members on common interests within a particular area. In 1998, these groups addressed environmental, clinical, family, health, educational, and community psychology, as well as history of psychology. Some task forces, notably community psychology, maintain large and vital international networks and publish newsletters.

**Awards.** As a way to stimulate and reward excellence in the research and practice of psychology, SIP awards several prizes. Every two years SIP presents the Interamerican Psychology Award to one English- or French-speaking and one Spanish- or Portuguese-speaking psychologist who have contributed to the development of psychology as a science and as a profession in the Americas. In addition, at each congress SIP awards a prize for the best article published in the *Interamerican Journal of Psychology* in the previous two years and two Interamerican Student Prizes, for the best graduate and undergraduate research.

## HISTORY

SIP was founded on December 17, 1951 by a group of behavioral scientists meeting in Mexico City during the congress of the World Federation of Mental Health. The first officers (1951-1953) were Eduardo Krapf (Argentina), President; Werner Wolff (U.S.A.),

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Vice-President; and Oswaldo Robles (Mexico), Secretary-General. Wolff later served as Secretary-General from 1953 until 1957. Initially, SIP was intended as a small organization that would bring together prominent psychologists from the nations of the Americas for international academic and professional exchange, and function as an international umbrella organization for national or regional branches, each represented by an associate vice-president, a position introduced in 1955. These localized organizations either did not last very long or failed to develop. Also, in the early years, the focus tended to be on the United States, Mexico, and the Caribbean, with a large contingent of members from Mexico and relatively few from South America. In 1953, SIP had 50 members. This grew to 300 members in 1955, 450 in 1960, and 924 in 1964. Over time, SIP developed to include a much broader group of members, including both academics and practitioners interested in international exchange, and representatives from more of the countries in the hemisphere.

SIP's governing structure has undergone various modifications. The treasurer was added in 1953. From 1957 to 1961, there was a Director of Publications. In 1957, two executive secretary positions, one for North America and one for Latin America, were introduced. In 1959, these were expanded to three positions, one for the United States and Canada, one for Mexico and Central America, and one for South America. At the same time, two vice-presidents were added and the seven associate vice-presidencies were converted into four Regional Representative positions. In 1966, these were removed from the board. Later, a system of elected national representatives was instituted.

A key way for SIP members to meet and exchange ideas has been the Interamerican Congress of Psychology. Since its founding until 1999, SIP held 27 congresses in different cities of the Americas. The first congress, held in Santo Domingo in 1953, included approximately 50 participants. About 200 people attended the second congress, in Mexico City in December 1954, where SIP adopted its constitution, which was later revised to its current form in August, 1988. Until 1959, congresses were held annually. Since then, congresses have been every two years, usually in odd-numbered years. The most recent Interamerican Congresses took place in Havana (1987), Buenos Aires (1989), San José, Costa Rica (1991), Santiago, Chile (1993), San Juan, Puerto Rico (1995), São Paulo (1997), and Caracas (1999). Congress attendance in each decade has ranged from 300 to 900 persons in the 1960s, from 700 to 4,000 in the 1970s, from 1,500 to 2,500 in the 1980s, and over 2,000 in the 1990s (See Table 1 for the full list of congresses, venues and attendance statistics).

In 1967, SIP initiated the *Interamerican Journal of Psychology*. The journal's first editor was Carl F. Hereford (U.S.A.). Later editors were Luiz Natalicio (USA), Horacio J. A. Rimoldi (Argentina), Gordon Finley (USA), Luis Laosa (USA), and José Miguel Salazar (Venezuela). The Journal has published articles from authors of 19 countries, 14 of them in the Americas. Authors most frequently come from Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Puerto Rico, the United States, and Venezuela. Outside of the Americas, authors most frequently come from Spain. The language most frequently used in the Journal has changed over the years. While in 1977-87, there were 63 English and 38 Spanish articles, in the

decade of 1987-97 there were 44 in English and 92 in Spanish. The Journal has published special numbers on Family Therapy and on the Effectiveness of Psychotherapy. It has also published a Forum on cross-cultural psychology, a special section on Interviews with Pioneers of the SIP, and a section in English on the development of the discipline in Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela.

Table 1: Interamerican Congresses of Psychology, 1953 -1995

Number	Place	Year	Attendance
I	Santo Domingo, República Dominicana	1953	50
II	Ciudad de México, México	1954	200
III	Austin, Texas, United States of America	1955	150
IV	Río Piedras, Puerto Rico	1956	250
V	Ciudad de México, México	1957	350
VI	Rio de Janeiro, Brasil	1959	399
VII	Ciudad de México, México	1961	650
VIII	Mar del Plata, Argentina	1963	600
IX	Miami, Florida, United States of America	1964	300
X	Lima, Perú	1966	466
XI	Ciudad de México, México	1967	900
XII	Montevideo, Uruguay	1969	392
XIII	Panamá, Panamá	1971	700
XIV	São Paulo, Brasil	1973	3072
XV	Bogotá, Colombia	1974	2800
XVI	Miami, Florida, United States of America	1976	720
XVII	Lima, Perú	1979	4000
XVIII	Santo Domingo, República Dominicana	1981	1600
XIX	Quito, Ecuador	1983	2000
XX	Caracas, Venezuela	1985	2500
XXI	La Habana, Cuba	1987	1500
XXII	Buenos Aires, Argentina	1989	2540
XXIII	San José, Costa Rica	1991	2500
XXIV	Santiago, Chile	1993	2500
XXV	San Juan, Puerto Rico	1995	2000
XXVI	São Paulo, Brasil	1997	2200
XXVII	Caracas, Venezuela	1999	

SIP's newsletter, the *Interamerican Psychologist*, more informally known as the Bulletin, began publication in 1957 under the editorship of Victor D. Sanua. The Bulletin has appeared between one and three times yearly.

The Society has given the Interamerican Psychology Prize since 1976. Recipients of the Spanish/Portuguese prize include Rogelio Díaz-Guerrero (Mexico), Arrigo L. Angelini (Brazil), Jacobo Varela (Uruguay), Rubén Ardila (Colombia), Aroldo Rodrigues (Brazil), Emilio Ribes (Mexico), Eduardo Rivera Medina (Puerto Rico), José Miguel Salazar (Venezuela), Maritza Montero (Venezuela), and Rolando Díaz-Loving (Mexico).

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Posthumous awards were given to Carlos Albizu Miranda (Puerto Rico) and Ignacio Martín Baró (El Salvador). Recipients of the English/French prize have been Charles Osgood, Wayne H. Holtzman, Harry Triandis, Herbert C. Kelman, Martin Fishbein, Robert J. Newbrough, Joseph Matarazzo, Sydney Bijou, Gerardo Marín, and Florence Denmark of the United States, and David Bélanger of Canada.

Since 1991, SIP has awarded Interamerican Student Prizes to students from Spain (María Ximena Arias Garzón, Hector Díaz Martínez), Mexico (Gabina Villagrán Vásquez), United States (Andres J. Consoli, Faith Parks), and Venezuela (Catalina Gandica de Gisbert, Isabel Rodríguez Mora, Carlos Silva, and María Hernández).

In 1997, SIP instituted a prize for the best article in the Interamerican Journal of Psychology during the prior two years; the first winner was M. Brewster Smith (USA) for his article "Psychology and truth: Human science and the post-modern challenge" (Vol. 30, No. 2, 1996, p. 145-158).

#### CURRENT MEMBERSHIP

Today, SIP continues to be the only pan-American general psychological association, bringing together psychologists in all sub-areas of the discipline, especially in clinical, social, community, and educational psychology. Psychologists from 25 countries are currently SIP members, including some from Spain and other countries outside the Americas. Countries with the largest number of SIP members include Argentina, Brazil, Puerto Rico, and the United States. Other countries with large SIP membership include Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela.

#### OFFICERS AND ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

Members of SIP's Board of Governors serve two-year terms. Elected officers include the President, who initially serves as President-Elect and later as Past-President, three Vice-Presidents, one for each region, and the Treasurer. SIP's presidency alternates between two regions: the United States and Canada on the one hand, and Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America on the other. Three Executive Secretaries, one for each region, are named by the incoming president with Board approval. The Secretary-General, named by the President with Board approval, is SIP's Executive Officer, managing member relations and the central office. Table 2 lists the Presidents and Secretaries-General of SIP from 1951 to 2001.

Elected officers for 1997-1999 included Barbara VanOss Marín (USA), President; Susan Pick (Mexico), President-elect; Euclides Sánchez (Venezuela), Past-President; Maritza Montero (Venezuela), Vice-President for South America; Guillermo Bernal (Puerto Rico), Vice-President for Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean; John Adair (Canada), Vice-President for the United States and Canada; and Bernardo M. Ferdman (USA), Treasurer. Wanda Rodríguez Arocho (Puerto Rico) serves as Secretary

General and the Executive Secretaries are Alice Eagly (USA), for US and Canada; Josefina Zaiter (Dominican Republic), for Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean, and Mary Jane Spink (Brazil) for South America.

**Table 2:** Presidents and Secretaries-General of the Interamerican Society of Psychology, 1951-2001

YEARS	PRESIDENT (COUNTRY)	SECRETARY-GENERAL (COUNTRY)
1951-1953	Eduardo Krapf (Argentina)	Oswaldo Robles (Mexico)
1953-1955	Oliver Brachfeld (Venezuela)	Werner Wolff (USA)
1955-1956	Willard C. Olson (USA)	
1956-1957	Otto Klineberg (USA)	
1957-1959	Guillermo Dávila (Mexico)	(Regional Executive Secretaries)
1959-1961	Gustavo M. Gilbert (USA)	
1961-1963	José A. Bustamante (Cuba)	
1963-1964	Harold H. Anderson (USA)	
1964-1966	Carlos A. Seguin (Peru)	Víctor D. Sanua (USA)
1966-1967	Wayne H. Holtzman (USA)	Carl F. Hereford (USA)
1967-1969	Rogelio Díaz-Guerrero (Mexico)	Luiz F. S. Natalicio (USA)
1969-1971	Robert M. Malmø (Canada)	
1971-1973	Arrigo L. Angelini (Brazil)	
1973-1975	David Bélanger (Canada)	
1975-1977	Rubén Ardila (Colombia)	Gerardo Marín (Colombia/USA)
1977-1979	Herbert C. Kelman (USA)	
1979-1981	Aroldo Rodrigues (Brazil)	
1981-1983	Luiz F. S. Natalicio (USA)	
1983-1985	Isabel Reyes Lagunes (Mexico)	Héctor Betancourt (USA)
1985-1987	Harry C. Triandis (USA)	
1987-1989	José Miguel Salazar (Venezuela)	Ana Isabel Alvarez Salgado (Puerto Rico)
1989-1991	Gerardo Marín (USA)	
1991-1993	Angela Biaggio (Brazil)	Eduardo Nicenboim (Argentina)
1993-1995	Martin Fishbein (USA)	
1995-1997	Euclides Sánchez (Venezuela)	
1997-1999	Barbara VanOss Marín (USA)	Wanda Rodríguez Arocho (Puerto Rico)
1999-2001	Susan Pick (Mexico)	

National Representatives of SIP are elected for two year terms by psychologists in their own country. These representatives promote and facilitate communication and cooperation between the Society and national scientific and professional psychological organizations, disseminate information about SIP at a national level and report to the Secretary General about local activities. They play an important role in broadening the impact of SIP at the local level.

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**Relationships with other organizations.** The Society has strong ties with various national and international psychological organizations, including among others the American Psychological Association, the Colegio Oficial de Psicólogos, Spain's national psychological association, the International Association of Applied Psychology, and the International Union of Psychological Sciences. These organizations often co-sponsor events such as the Iberoamerican Congresses of Psychology and publications, such as the Annals of clinical psychology produced in Spanish (Olabarria & Fernández, 1997).

#### REFLECTIONS ON THE FUTURE

The history of the Interamerican Society of Psychology mirrors the history of psychology in the countries of the Americas. As psychology in these countries has developed, training has improved and the numbers of psychologists has increased, the influence of psychology and the importance of Interamerican collaborations has increased. In a similar way, the future of the Society is tied to the continuing development of psychology in the Americas.

Many changes have taken place in psychology in the Americas since 1951 when the Society was founded. Latin America has become a powerful producer of psychologists and psychological knowledge and research. The United States, once so insulated from the rest of the world, has become much more ethnically diverse. The importance of cross-cultural work continues to increase. Recent changes in technology such as the advent of the internet have affected how the SIP functions, making communication much easier.

This book is a reflection of changes in the Society, which is taking on new initiatives, such as a publication series. The book was developed by one of our National Representatives, Modesto Alonso, in close collaboration with Board member Alice Eagly. The authors have provided rich information about psychology in their countries, offering a diverse picture from country to country. The Society is extremely grateful to Modesto and Alice as well as all the authors. We expect that this volume will provide useful information to many persons seeking to understand where psychology has been and where it is going in the Americas.

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