

# LATINA/O PSYCHOLOGY TODAY

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear NLPA Members,

Welcome to the first issue of *Latina/o Psychology Today* (formerly *El Boletín*) edited by Dr. Héctor Adames together with associate editor Dr. Nayeli Chávez-Dueñas and student editors Ms. Jessica Pérez-Chávez & Ms. Mackenzie Goertz, & special interest group (SIG) column coordinator, Dr. Regina Jean Van Hell. Together with the *Journal of Latina/o Psychology*, LPT is one of two NLPA's official publications that our members receive.

I want to thank Dr. Héctor Adames and his team for this first issue as well as all the contributors you will have the pleasure to read in the following pages.

NLPA's mission is to advance psychological education and training, scientific practice and organizational change to enhance the overall well-being of Latina/o populations. NLPA is the professional home for Latina/o psychologists, graduate and undergraduate students, as well as our allies. We are mental health professionals, researchers and educators interested in matters concerning Latina/o psychology. As I see it, NLPA is the hope for a better psychology, one that is committed and responsive to the needs of our people, one that is engaged in the much needed social transformations that affirm the human rights, and human dignity of our people, one that accompanies and bears witness to the suffering and the strength of our people. We are a committed group of psychologists and psychologists-in-training that labor and advocate for social justice. Moreover, NLPA is also our personal *esperanza*, as the association helps us to honor our diverse roots, co-construct a sense of familia, belonging, and plural identity while we overcome anomy and solipsism. I thank you very much for your membership. ¡Viva NLPA!

## ASSOCIATION UPDATES & GRATITUDE

As NLPA president I am privileged to know how hard our members work on behalf of our association. I want to acknowledge the elected and appointed members of the Leadership Council with whom I've had the privilege of working with throughout this year. I also want to express my deep appreciation to Dr. Cynthia Guzmán, NLPA 2014 *Conferencia* Chair, and the chairs and co-chairs of the Special Interest Groups, as well as the co-chairs of the 2014 Awards Committee, Drs. Dianna Marisol González and Eduardo Morales (*continue on page 2*).



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Special thanks go out to Mr. Ricardo Aguirre, from Abrazo, who runs our website and instruments our membership process and database, among other NLPA matters. I want to express a deep appreciation to Dr. Héctor Torres Associate Professor at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology (TCSPP), who has led the Presidential Agenda for 2014 focusing on understanding Latina/o identities across borders and international engagement. Please contact Dr. Torres if you would like to be part of this initiative as advanced by the International Workgroup. I invite you to read the results of the international survey in the article by Mr. Jared Day, Dr. Torres, and NLPA International Workgroup contained in this edition of LPT.

NLPA's 2014 Leadership Council has been quite active, focusing on many important projects. First and foremost, we committed ourselves to transparency and inclusiveness in the development of our agenda and decision-making processes. As such, we have invited members to submit agenda items, shared our minutes with the membership, and sought member input on all significant matters. Second, we committed ourselves to solidifying our membership and have facilitated the process of membership renewal while keeping people informed about their membership status through individual monthly reminders. This was accomplished together with Dr. Tiffany Schiffner, our recently appointed membership chair, and Mr. Ricardo Aguirre. I am pleased to share that our membership has surpassed the 500-member mark! Third, we have undertaken a sizable list of important association matters. While an exhaustive list can be seen through our published minutes, I would like to highlight some of the accomplishments here.

- After much consultation and a participatory process, we have updated our logo to a version that reflects more clearly our inclusive and affirmative stance (thanks Ms. Serenity Sersecion and Dr. Héctor Adames!).
- We have responded proactively and collaboratively to the crisis of the unaccompanied immigrant minors, our sons and daughters, members of our large familia. Three teams have been created to lead our response efforts including:
  - **Team 1**- focusing on a Position Statement, led by Dr. Carrie Castaneda-Sound and Dr. Rogelio Serrano
  - **Team 2**- Site Visits, led by Dr. José Cervantes,
  - **Team 3**- Collaboration and Advocacy, led by Dr. Roy Aranda.
  - I would like to acknowledge NLPA's SIG Undocumented Student and Immigrant Family Allies (USIFA) led by Dr. Lorena Navarro, and Dr. Ivelisse Torres Fernandez, and our member Amanda Clinton for their work on matters related to the unaccompanied minors.
- We have networked nationally and internationally on behalf of NLPA by collaborating with our sister ethnic minority psychological associations and APA in the context of the Council of National Psychological Associations for the Advancement of Ethnic Minority Interests (CNPAAEMI), which includes a representative from APA's Division 45, and the Alliance of National Psychological Associations for Racial and Ethnic Equity.
- We have reached out to the Interamerican Society of Psychology (SIP) and presented at its Regional Congress of Psychology in El Salvador.
- Lastly, we have attended, presented, and hosted a gathering of NLPA members at the International Counseling Psychology Conference in Atlanta, Georgia.

### **OUR NLPA CONFERENCIA**

2014 is a very exciting year for NLPA as we plan to celebrate our 10 year anniversary at the Biennial *Conferencia* scheduled to be held at the Hotel Albuquerque in Albuquerque, New Mexico from October 23-25, 2014. The theme of our 2014 *Conferencia* is DREAMers, Immigration, & Social Justice: Advancing a Global Latina/o Psychology Agenda [*DREAMers, Inmigración y Justicia Social: Avanzando una Agenda Global de la Psicología Latina*]. For more information about our *Conferencia*, including hotel, airline, and program, please visit [www.nlpa.ws/biennial-conference](http://www.nlpa.ws/biennial-conference). Dr. Cynthia Guzmán, NLPA 2014 *Conferencia* Chair and I have been working diligently organizing the *Conferencia*. Cynthia and I want to thank Dr. Elizabeth Vera (professional member), Dr. Melissa Morgan Consoli (ECP), and Ms. Cristalís Capielo (student member) who have served as the Scientific Program Committee, together with many anonymous reviewers.

On the evening of October 23<sup>rd</sup>, NLPA's *Conferencia* will begin with a formal *Bienvenida* and cocktail reception with live entertainment. On October 24<sup>th</sup>, conference attendees will enjoy a full day of scientific programming with keynotes by psychologist Dr. Isaac Prilleltensky and author Dr. Ana Castillo, and a cultural event with nationally recognized DREAMer and activist Gaby Pacheco. On October 25<sup>th</sup>, conference attendees will have another full day of scientific programming with a keynote by psychologist Dr. Carola Suárez-Orozco, as well as take part in the Noche de Gala: Awards Dinner & Dance. TCSPP is the APA approved sponsor of CE programming; NLPA is extremely grateful to TCSPP for its support of NLPA's *Conferencia*.

NLPA will be hosting the meeting of the CNPAAEMI Leadership Development Institute (CLDI) on Thursday October 23<sup>rd</sup> and the annual meeting of the Alliance on Sunday October 26<sup>th</sup>. In addition, on the morning of Sunday October 26<sup>th</sup> conference attendees will have the opportunity to engage in a community engagement activity at Los Jardines Institute (a community garden in the South Valley of ABQ).

Additionally, in the spirit of collaboration and cooperation, NLPA and the New Mexico Psychological Association (NMPA) are hosting consecutive conferences. NMPA's annual conference entitled The Intersection of Culture, Cultural Competence, and Evidence Based Treatment will take place on Thursday October 23<sup>rd</sup> at the same facility (please visit [www.nmppsychology.org](http://www.nmppsychology.org) for more information about NMPA's conference). TCSPP is the APA approved sponsor of CE programming during NMPA as well.

### MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

There are many benefits to being a member of NLPA, including receiving hard copies of our publication, the *Journal of Latina/o Psychology*, edited by our distinguished member Dr. Azara Santiago-Rivera, and associate editors Drs. Consuelo Arbona, Esteban Cardemil, Edward Delgado-Romero, and Andrea Romero.

In addition to our respected journal, members also receive:

- discounted rates for *conferencia* registration,
- access to professional development and advocacy opportunities,
- participation in NLPA's Special Interest Groups (check them out at [www.nlpa.ws/special-interest-groups](http://www.nlpa.ws/special-interest-groups)),
- access to *Latina/o Psychology Today* (LPT),
- participation in events such as *Charlas* (thanks Dr. Ezequiel Peña!), and Meet Our Members (thanks Dr. Regina Jean Van Hell!),
- enrollment in NLPA's listserv, and more!

NLPA's *familia* is a particularly welcoming network for graduate and undergraduate students, as well as early career psychologists. Being a member of NLPA provides opportunities for mentoring, networking, and continuous professional development. Please reach out to our elected Student Representative Ms. Rachel Reinders at [rreinders@uwalumni.com](mailto:rreinders@uwalumni.com), or our appointed Student Development Coordinator, Dr. Valerie Minchala, at [vminchala@fullerton.edu](mailto:vminchala@fullerton.edu) for more information about student engagement in NLPA. If you are an early career psychologist, please contact Dr. Megan Strawsine Carney, our elected Early Career Representative at [mstrawsinecarney@gmail.com](mailto:mstrawsinecarney@gmail.com) to get connected.

On behalf of NLPA's 2014 Leadership Council, I thank you again for your membership. Should you have any questions about NLPA, please feel free to contact me at [aconsoli@education.ucsb.edu](mailto:aconsoli@education.ucsb.edu) or any of our Leadership Council members ([www.nlpa.ws/leadership-council](http://www.nlpa.ws/leadership-council)).

Enjoy reading the first issue of LPT,

**Andrés J. Consoli, Ph.D.**

NLPA 2014 President

Department of Counseling, Clinical, & School Psychology

Gevirtz Graduate School of Education

University of California Santa Barbara



## SCHOLARSHIP AS A FORM OF SOCIAL JUSTICE: LEAVING A RECORD FOR TOMORROW

HECTOR Y. ADAMES, PSY.D.<sup>1,2</sup>

**Editorial**

It is a great honor to be appointed to serve as the editor of *Latina/o Psychology Today* (LPT), the National Latina/o Psychological Association's (NLPA), official bulletin! LPT offers an exclusive inside look into the world of our *querida* NLPA organization and contributes to the growing and evolving ideas of Latina/o Psychology. In addition to the events and accomplishments of NLPA and its members, each issue features content centered on a particular topic considered important to the membership. Thus, LPT aims to provide a space where students and professionals can contribute thought provoking information that enhances NLPA's mission.

The current issue centers on the theme: *Dreamers, Immigration, & Social Justice*, which aligns with the 2014 NLPA biennial conference. Each of the articles in the issue have been peer-reviewed and offers a small glimpse into the social realities of different Latina/o communities. In the first article, Dr. J. Manuel Casas was invited to contribute to the first issue of LPT. Dr. Casas' article focuses on how immigration can be harmful to an individual's mental health. In the second article, Dr. Nayeli Y. Chavez-Dueñas, Ms. Mackenzie Goertz, and I discuss the complexities surrounding the unaccompanied refugee children from Central America. Dr. Ivelisse Torres Fernandez's

contribution addresses the mental health needs of borderland children. Lastly, Dr. Edil Torres Rivera provides us with a brief overview of Puerto Rican history and discusses the complexities in conceptualizing Puerto Ricans as immigrants, citizens, neither, or both.

Finally, my editorial team and I would like to introduce *Voces Del Pueblo*, a new and ongoing section of LPT, which provides a space for individuals from the community to become active participants in the construction and dissemination of knowledge regarding Latina/os. In this first issue, Ms. Jessica Perez-Chavez, Ms. Xochitl Cruz, and Mr. Jose Gonzalez provide a compelling narrative on the challenges undocumented youth in the United States are facing, even after the passage of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals). By inviting and welcoming the diverse voices from our *pueblo*, we move a step closer to a more whole Latina/o Psychology.

In closing I would like to encourage us all to think of writing as a form of social justice. As scholars of color, we need to write; when we write, we leave a record for tomorrow. Thus, I invite every member of our NLPA *familia* to contribute to LPT in the near future. I hope that each issue of the bulletin continues to capture the richness, complexities, and resiliencies of our Latina/o community.

*j Juntos/as Podemos !*  
Together we can

Hector Y. Adames  
Editor

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## OUR MISSION

To advance psychological education and training, science, practice, and organizational change to enhance the health, mental health, and well-being of Hispanic/Latina/o populations.

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## CAUTION: IMMIGRATION CAN BE HARMFUL TO YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

J. MANUEL CASAS, PH.D.<sup>1,2</sup>

**Professor Emeritus  
University of California, Santa Barbara  
INVITED ARTICLE**

Issues and turmoil associated with immigration have perennially emerged on the American scene since its early history. While the present day immigration phenomenon could be approached from a wide variety of perspectives, I focus on the traumatic impact that the immigration process can have on the mental health and well being of the immigrant. For more information relative to immigration as a whole, I refer you to the *Report of the APA Presidential Task Force on Immigration* (American Psychological Association, 2012) on which I served as one of the authors.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

Migrating to the United States (U.S.) for varied reasons including extreme poverty, lack of educational opportunities, violence perpetrated by gangs and cartels, wars, seeking refuge, fleeing from environmental catastrophes, and trying to reunify with family members has resulted in the fact that today this country has approximately 40.4 million immigrants—the largest number in its history (Passel

& Cohn, 2012). This number represents a 28 percent increase over the total in 2000. As a nation of immigrants, the U.S. has successfully negotiated larger proportions of newcomers in its past (14.7% in 1910 vs. 12.9% today).

The undocumented immigrant population grew dramatically from less than one million in 1980 to a peak of nearly 12 million in 1996. Between 2007 and 2009 however, this population declined by one million, coinciding with the recent recession (Passel & Taylor, 2010). The current estimate of the undocumented population is 11.7 million. It is worth noting that the high number of undocumented immigrants has been maintained despite record numbers of deportations, approximately 400,000 each year, stepped-up Border enforcement and the passage of draconian state laws to crack down on illegal immigration in states like Alabama, Arizona, and Georgia (Passel, Cohn, & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2013).

Immigrant youth are the fastest growing child population in the U.S. Currently, 16 million children have at least one parent who is an immigrant. Today, nearly 23% of youth under the age of 18 have immigrant parents. By 2030, it is projected that this age group will have grown to 30%. The majority of these youth are U.S. citizens. Nationwide, approximately 5.5 million children have at least one undocumented parent, 4.5 million of whom were born in the U.S. making them U.S. citizens.

Because of recent events, it is difficult to provide an accurate count of undocumented youths. However, a recent estimate put the number of undocumented youths as representing approximately 1.7 million of the population. Interestingly, a

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Note: Portions of this paper are based on the Report of  
the APA Presidential Task Force on Immigration (2012)  
on which Dr. Casas served as one of its authors.

significant number of these children have been living in this country most of their lives and know no other homeland.

Most recently, the number of undocumented and unaccompanied youth has been increasing significantly. About three years ago, federal agents annually intercepted some 8,000 unaccompanied minors entering the U.S. illegally. By last year, the number had jumped to nearly 26,000. Since October an estimated 57,000 minors (ages five and up) have crossed the border, most of them unaccompanied and the majority coming from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras (the poorest and most dangerous countries in the hemisphere). This number is nearly double the number of young immigrants caught crossing during the same period a year earlier. A low projection for the rest of this year is that a total of 80 to 90,000 of such youngsters may attempt to cross into this country. The Border Patrol estimates that by the end of next year, 142,000 such youngsters will be apprehended.

Given these demographics, psychologists are, and increasingly will be, working with immigrant adults and children regardless of their immigrant status. As such, psychologists need to develop an understanding of the immigration process and the array of mental health problems that are frequently associated with the process.

## PRESENTING PROBLEMS

While most immigrants adapt well to their new lives, a good number of them experience diverse mental health problems at varied stages of their lives that are the result of traumatic experiences and problems associated with the immigration process (American Psychological Association, 2012).

### Trauma-Based Problems

Traumatic experiences can occur at various stages of the immigration process: pre-migration trauma or events that are experienced before migrating; traumatic events that are experienced during the transit to the new country; and ongoing traumatic experiences in the new country.

### Pre-Migration Trauma

Since traumatic situations or events that can impel individuals to leave their countries of origin were

previously identified, I solely focus on violence given the fact that it is presently receiving a great deal of attention. Before doing so I direct attention to a mediating factor that is strongly impacting the resolve of the potential immigrants to leave their homelands. The factor to which I refer is the rampant rumor, mainly fueled by “cayotes”, that children who reach the U.S. receive residency permits.

While accepting the fact that extreme poverty continues to serve as a reason for immigrating, it is the “unspeakable” and uncontrolled violence (i.e., murder, rape, and kidnapping) that is the over riding factor in forcing many individuals to leave their countries of origin. This is especially true for those individuals, and in particular, the three out of four children, who are fleeing from the violence that is rampant in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador: Honduras has the world’s highest murder rate, El Salvador ranks fourth and Guatemala fifth. Having to live in constant fear and subject to daily traumatic experiences, a growing number of individuals from these countries feel impelled to flee or send their children in search of a safer and better life in the U.S. (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2014).

To fully understand the complexity of the violence that is forcing these individuals to flee their countries of origin, it behooves us to see them not only as victims of the violence that is presently occurring but also as victims of a violence that has its roots in past and ongoing U.S. policies and practices. To this point, it is important for us to consider the fact that historically, the U.S. determined the economic destiny of Central America—poverty for the majority of people—through its economic policies and practices; it supported authoritarian and dictatorial governments as it saw fit; it looked the other way and/or ignored the mass killings of indigenous people like the Mayan in Guatemala; it has failed to significantly reduce the U.S. demand for drugs (i.e., marijuana and cocaine) that keeps the cartels, that are responsible for a great deal of the violence from which these people are fleeing, in business; and, while drugs are being smuggled north, U.S. policy facilitates the smuggling of guns south. More than a quarter-million guns are slipped across the U.S.-Mexico border each year, according to a 2013 study by the University of San Diego’s Trans-Border Institute. Ironically with respect to gangs, U.S. deportations of foreign-born criminal gang members to their countries of origin helped to create and maintain the gangs that are prompting the flow of

minors north. Given this perspective, there is no question that violence needs to be seriously addressed bilaterally by both sides of the border in order to effectively reduce the traumatic challenges and problems associated with the immigration process.

### **Trauma During Transit**

Living situations are so bad in the countries noted above, that both children and adults feel they have no options but to travel thousands of miles and brave hunger, dehydration, robbery, extortion, sexual abuse, kidnapping, and murder to reach the U.S. (Villagra, 2014). Experiencing such events greatly contributes to the development of diverse mental health problems. Given the limitation of space, I choose to direct attention to traumatizing events, situations, and practices that actually occur on the U.S. side of the border, if and when, a child and/or an adult is caught by the border patrol and enters the formal immigration process. These events illustrate the humanitarian, systemic, legal, and economic problems that the U.S. has to address in its efforts to deal humanely with undocumented immigrants. While the focus is on youths, the situations that I highlight impact undocumented persons of all ages.

From a systemic and legal perspective the problem is what to do with the 57,000 youths who are already here and those who are on their way. The initial process for handling these youths is governed by the 2008 Wilberforce law that requires border agents to take the youths into custody and within 72 hours turn them over to the Department of Health and Human Services to house and care for them until a hearing can be held. The reality of things is that it is next to impossible to meet this deadline. The system is overwhelmed—housing facilities, though frequently less than adequate, are filled beyond capacity, lawyers are unavailable and some youths have complained about mistreatment or lack of food and medical care. Furthermore, while initial hearings/interviews should be held within 10/15 days, the average wait time is 111 days. The waiting time increases if the youths are not deported and enter the immigration court system. The average case takes 578 days to make its way through this system. Currently, there are 366,758 cases pending. Astonishingly, because of legal maneuvering, some cases have stretched as long as five years (Becerra, 2014). During the time that the youths are waiting for their case to be determined, they are placed in a variety of settings. If the youths are separated from

family and held in detention facilities, there is a high likelihood they will develop physical and/or mental health problems.

From a legal perspective, the problem is that the playing field is not level for these youth. Unlike individuals charged with criminal offenses, those detained on immigration violations do not have the right to a court-appointed attorney during deportation proceeding. So, if the detained person/child can't afford a lawyer, he or she often faces the judge alone regardless of their age.

### **Trauma in New Country**

Once they are in this country, immigrants, and the undocumented in particular, continue to be subject to varied traumatic experiences including, substandard living conditions, lack of adequate living resources—unemployment, racial profiling, ongoing discrimination, exposure to gangs, immigration raids in the community, the arbitrary checking of family members' documentation status (e.g., Arizona SB 1070, Secure Communities Act), forcible removal or separation from their family for an indeterminate period of time, discovery upon returning home that their family has been taken away, violation of their home by authorities, placement in detention camps or in child welfare, and deportation to their country of origin.

Such traumatic experiences and transitions at any age and at any stage of the immigration process can produce a range of psychological problems, including poor identity formation, inability to form relationships, PTSD, acculturation stress, intergenerational conflict, high distrust of institutions and authority figures, inability to concentrate, acting-out behaviors, eating disorders, loss of motivation (i.e., lowered aspirations and expectations), depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation.

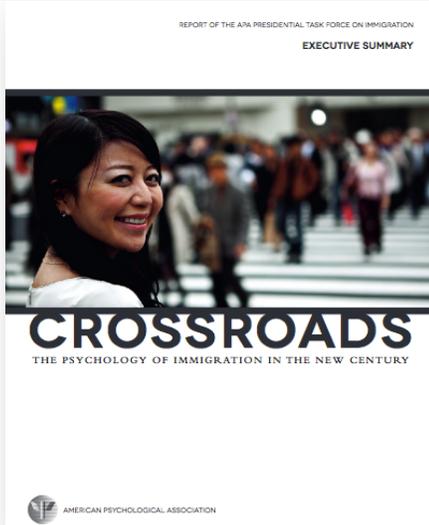
Knowing the traumatic impact that the immigration process can have on the mental health and well being of the immigrant is only the first step in working with immigrants. In addition, it is of the utmost importance that mental health workers be adept in applying those guiding principles that have been shown to be effective in providing services to the immigrant.

For more details and references relative to the content of this article, refer to the *Report of the APA Presidential Task Force on Immigration* (2012).

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**DR. J. MANUEL CASAS** received his doctorate from Stanford University with a specialization in counseling psychology. He is Professor Emeritus at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Dr. Casas has published over 140 articles. He is the co-author of the *Handbook of Racial/Ethnic Minority Counseling Research* (1991) and is one of the editors of all three editions of the *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling* (Sage, 1995, 2001, 2010). His research interests include resiliency in Latina/o families and the identification and implementation of culturally appropriate mental health services. In 1998, he was honored by Julian Samora Research Institute as one of the founding persons of Chicano Psychology. In 2004, Dr. Casas was honored as a Distinguished Professional by NLPA.



## THE 2011 APA PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE ON IMMIGRATION

**Members of the task force appointed by 2011  
APA President Melba J.T. Vasquez, PhD include:**

(Chair) Carola Suárez-Orozco, Ph.D.  
Dina Birman, Ph.D.  
J. Manuel Casas, Ph.D.  
Nadine Nakamura, Ph.D.  
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Michael Zárate, Ph.D.  
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To Access the Full Report or the Executive Summary Please Visit:  
[www.apa.org/topics/immigration/report.aspx](http://www.apa.org/topics/immigration/report.aspx)

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## ESPERANZA SIN FRONTERAS: UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITIES SURROUNDING THE UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE CHILDREN FROM CENTRAL AMERICA

NAYELI Y. CHAVEZ-DUEÑAS, PH.D.<sup>1,2</sup>

HECTOR Y. ADAMES, PSY.D.<sup>1</sup>

MACKENZIE T. GOERTZ, B.A.<sup>1</sup>

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*Love recognizes no barriers. It jumps hurdles, leaps fences, penetrates walls to arrive at its destination full of hope* (Maya Angelou, 2014, para. 1).

Mass migration of individuals from Latin America to the United States (U.S.) is not a new phenomenon; however, most of the discussions on immigration are typically centered on the experiences of adult immigrants (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Most recently, some attention has been paid to the number of immigrant children crossing the U.S. Mexican border who typically come from countries in Central America and Mexico (Women's Refugee Commission, 2012). These minors are crossing the border without authorization and with no adult family member or guardian; hence, the term "unaccompanied minors."

The total number of unaccompanied minors has significantly increased in the past three years. Between 2004-2011, immigration officials at the U.S. Mexico border apprehended approximately 6,800 unaccompanied minors (NIJC, 2014a). Moreover, during the 2012 and 2013 fiscal years, the number of unaccompanied minors detained doubled to 13,000

and 24,000 children respectively. Currently, the number of minors held in custody by immigration officials has reached what many describe as a "humanitarian crisis." For instance, it is estimated that in 2014, approximately 90,000 unaccompanied minors will attempt to enter the U.S. without documents (NIJC, 2014b). Unfortunately, U.S. government officials are not adequately prepared to handle the arrival of unaccompanied minors despite the fact that such migration has been going on for a few years. Similarly, the public at large is grappling with understanding and responding to this group of immigrant minors who are seeking refuge in the U.S.

In an effort to contribute to an understanding of the complexities surrounding the experience of unaccompanied Central American minors, this article provides a brief overview of the contextual factors that propel these children to migrate north. The authors then describe some of the challenges that unaccompanied minors may experience in their journey and arrival into the U.S. The article concludes with recommendations to increase awareness, advocacy, and research with this vulnerable population. Of note, this article focuses on unaccompanied minors from Central America as the majority of the children from Mexico face a different legal process\* and are deported immediately or within two days of being in the custody of U.S. government (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2014). Overall, the intent of this article is to shed light on the challenges faced by unaccompanied minors, while stimulating and inspiring mental health professionals to think about specific ways to collectively support our unaccompanied *hermanitas/os* [little brothers and sisters].

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\*Note: Mexican children from indigenous areas may be able to receive "unaccompanied alien child designation" alongside children from Central America (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2014). Although unaccompanied Mexican minors share some immigration experiences with children from Central America, they also experience unique challenges, which require a separate space to be adequately discussed.

**YA ME VOY: REASONS FOR LEAVING**

*In our dreams we have seen another world, an honest world, a world decidedly fairer than the one in which we now live (Subcomandante Marcos, 2002, p. 18).*

Each year thousands of children risk their lives as they make the long and arduous journey to the U.S. In 2013, approximately 41,890 unaccompanied minors traveled into the U.S. with a majority of the children (51%) coming from Central America, 45% from Mexico, and the remaining 4% from other countries. More specifically, the minors from Central America came from the following countries: Guatemala 20%; Honduras 17%; El Salvador 14%; other countries 14%. Table 1 provides the total number and percentage of unaccompanied minors by country of origin for the years 2011, 2012, and 2013. The decision for an individual to leave their country of origin in pursuit of “better opportunities” is most often made in the context of challenging life circumstances (e.g., financial, social, educational, political), especially for a child.

In fact, research looking at the motives behind such large-scale migration of unaccompanied minors to the U.S. has identified the high rates of crime, gang and cartel related violence, and poverty as reasons for migration (Kennedy, 2014; NIJC, 2014b). Furthermore, when unaccompanied children were asked to identify the main reasons why they immigrated to the U.S., they reported pervasive threats from gangs and the fear of violence as the main reasons why they wanted to go north (Kennedy, 2014; Women’s Refugee Commission, 2012). For instance, 59% of male minors from El Salvador, and 61% of female minors describe the fear of violence as the main reason for immigration (Kennedy, 2014). More specifically, Salvadorian male minors describe fearing assault or death for

refusing to join a gang, while female minors reported fear of being raped (Kennedy, 2014; Women’s Refugee Commission, 2012). El Salvador is not the only country where there is violence; according to the CIA (2012), Honduras has the highest murder rate of the world with 86 people killed for every 100,000. For some areas of Central America, poverty was reported as the most common reason why children immigrate (Kennedy, 2014; NIJC, 2014b). Finally, more than half of all unaccompanied minors (61%) also report that they have one or both parents in the U.S., and thus family reunification adds incentive to leave their countries of origin (NIJC, 2014a). Interestingly, the increase in the number of unaccompanied children attempting to cross the border has coincided with the increase in anti-immigrant U.S. legislations. These new laws have made it more difficult for immigrant adults to travel back and forth between their countries of origin and the U.S. Hence, immigrant adults are unable to visit their children back in their home countries.

**EL CAMINO HACIA LA ESPERANZA:  
THE ROAD TO HOPE**

In a series of interviews conducted by the Women’s Refugee Commission (2012), immigrant minors said that leaving their home countries was a safer option than staying. They also reported that immigration was their only hope for a better future. The minors expressed “a willingness to risk the uncertain dangers of the trip north to escape the certain dangers they face at home” (Women’s Refugee Commission, 2012, p. 8). In their journey north and into the U.S., Central American children cross multiple borders. They traverse through treacherous landscapes, in a journey that can last up to two months. The minors often walk, swim across rivers, and crawl through tunnels (Catholic Relief Services, 2009; Women’s

**Table 1.** Apprehended Unaccompanied Minors by Country of Origin

| Country         | 2011   |      | 2012   |      | 2013   |      |
|-----------------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|------|
| El Salvador     | 1,452  | (8)  | 3,437  | (13) | 6,220  | (14) |
| Guatemala       | 1,608  | (9)  | 3,915  | (15) | 8,262  | (20) |
| Honduras        | 999    | (6)  | 3,091  | (11) | 7,055  | (17) |
| Mexico          | 13,000 | (73) | 15,709 | (58) | 18,754 | (45) |
| Other Countries | 716    | (4)  | 901    | (3)  | 1,599  | (4)  |
| Total           | 17,775 |      | 27,053 |      | 41,890 |      |

Source. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2014). Percentages are in parenthesis.

Refugee Commission, 2012). Most immigrant children begin their trip by taking a bus to Mexico.

Once in Mexico, children board on top of cargo trains commonly known as *el tren de la muerte* or *la bestia* [the train of death or the beast], described as the most dangerous mode of transportation for both adult and minor immigrants who are traveling from Central America to the U.S. (Catholic Relief Services, 2009). To protect themselves from falling off, immigrants riding *la bestia* often tie themselves down with ropes; however, accidents are common with a significant number of migrants dying or losing one or both limbs after falling off the train (Catholic Relief Services, 2009). They are also exposed to extreme temperatures with little or no food and water. Moreover, children are likely to witness and/or become victims of violent acts including: physical attacks from drug cartels, gangs, and the Mexican police, as well as rape, robberies, kidnapping, and the like (Catholic Relief Services, 2009). Although some children travel with smugglers/guides who are paid to help them arrive to the U.S. safely, this does not guarantee protection. In fact, many minors traveling with guides report experiencing abuse by the very people who are paid to bring them into the U.S. It is also common for children traveling with smugglers to be left with no food and water at warehouses for days at a time or to be abandoned in the desert (Women's Refugee Commission, 2012). For an in-depth account of the journey of unaccompanied minors to the U.S., readers are encouraged to see Sonia Nazario's Pulitzer Prize award winning book *Enrique's Journey*. In this beautifully written and powerful book, Nazario (1998) narrates the journey of Enrique, a Honduran unaccompanied minor, who crossed multiple borders to be reunited with his mother in the U.S.

### **AT THE BORDER OF HOPE AND UNCERTAINTY: MAJOR CHALLENGES FOR IMMIGRANT MINORS**

Many unaccompanied minors are on a quest for safety and protection; unfortunately they are often met with additional challenges once in U.S. territory. One of the main challenges includes detention. Upon apprehension at the border, unaccompanied immigrant children are often placed in Customs and Border Protections facilities (CBP) pending transfer to an Office of Refugee Resettlement facility (ORR). The conditions at CBP facilities are often inhumane,

degrading, and frightening for children. For instance, the holding cells are extremely cold, windowless, and lined with fluorescent lights which are on 24 hours a day. Moreover, children lack access to showers and appropriate spaces for recreation. Many of the minors have also complained that they are not provided with enough food to eat or water to drink. Finally, the facilities are so crowded that children have to take turns laying on the concrete floor to sleep (Women's Refugee Commission, 2012). Overall, CBP facilities are not designed for the long-term detention of children; therefore, detention of minors is not to exceed 72 hours in such facilities (Women's Refugee Commission, 2012). Unfortunately, advocacy organizations have reported that children are often held in CBP and CBP like facilities for periods of up to two weeks (Women's Refugee Commission, 2012).

Once children are transferred from a CBP to an ORR facility the conditions they experience depend on whether they are held in surge (i.e., locked temporary shelter program) or in a regular facility, which is designed for longer-term detention (Women's Refugee Commission, 2012). Given the lack of space in longer-term facilities, unaccompanied minors have been primarily held in surge facilities. Thus, unaccompanied minors tend to be held in facilities for long periods of time with no education or recreational activities available.

To some, detention centers may appear to be a convenient solution but it is also an expensive option with long lasting medical and psychological ramifications for children (Center for Gender and Refugee Studies, 2014). For instance, detention has been found to increase fear, anxiety, and frustration in children (Farmer, 2013). Moreover, the stressors associated with detention can exacerbate preexisting mental health conditions (Catholic Relief Services, 2009; Center for Gender and Refugee Studies, 2014). As a result, immigrant children are in most need of empathy, compassion, and supportive mental health services rather than detention and imprisonment (Refugee Studies Centre, 2013).

Another challenge experienced by unaccompanied minors in the U.S. is the lack of legal representation. In fact, unaccompanied children lack the financial resources, which prevent them from having access to legal representation; moreover, they are unable to connect with attorneys who are willing to take their case on a pro-bono basis (NIJC, 2014b). As a result, unaccompanied minors, with limited formal education and English-language skills, often

represent themselves alone before trained government attorneys and immigration judges (Refugee Studies Centre, 2013).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The tremendous challenges that propel unaccompanied minors to make the dangerous journey to the U.S., coupled with the dehumanizing experiences they face once in American territory, call for mental health professionals to consider how best to serve this vulnerable community. The following recommendations are offered for mental health professionals interested collaborating on this humanitarian effort.

### Increasing Knowledge & Awareness for Self & Others

#### Inform self:

- Learn about the context in which the immigration of unaccompanied minors takes place. This will help to minimize blaming the children and/or parents for making the decision to leave their home countries despite the risks.
- Become aware of your own reactions to the immigration of unaccompanied minors to the U.S. and the impact these reactions may have on your work with his population.

#### Inform others:

- Use your professional networks to share information and dispel myths about unaccompanied minors.
- Provide information for the public on the realities and needs of immigrant children. Participating in media interviews, writing blogs and columns, and disseminating information through social media may help accomplish such a goal.
- For mental health professionals working in academia, we recommend you integrate information about the experiences of unaccompanied minors into your teaching by making the material relevant to students and their training.

### Advocate

- Use your professional role and expertise in mental health as a platform to advocate for the rights and humane treatment of unaccompanied minors.

- Advocate for psychologists and other mental health professionals to participate in organizations and groups working to support immigrant children and their families.
- Use your membership and influence in professional organizations to advocate for the development of special task forces dedicated to developing strategies to support and promote a humane and dignified treatment of unaccompanied minors.

### Research

Given the scarcity of research on the immigration of unaccompanied Central American minors to the U.S., exploratory and qualitative methods of inquiry may be necessary to deepen our understanding of such complex national and international phenomena. To facilitate such inquiry, the following research recommendations are offered:

- Future qualitative research should elicit the narratives of unaccompanied minors. Areas of inquiries can include the minors' description of their lived experiences a) prior to immigration (i.e., threats, violence, poverty); b) during their journey to the U.S. (i.e., violence, kidnappings, abuse, physical injury); c) after their arrival into the U.S.'s territory (i.e., abuse by U.S. officials, fear of deportation, reunification with family).
- Studies looking at the short and long-term consequences of keeping unaccompanied immigrant children in detention centers would be important to investigate. Such evidence can help in promoting and advocating for more humane treatment of children seeking refuge and protection in the U.S.
- It may also be fruitful for mental health professionals to investigate the factors that facilitate adaptation among children who immigrate to the U.S. alone.
- It is important to explore and examine interventions and techniques that are effective in the treatment of migrant children who have experienced traumatic events pre, during, and post-immigration. The results of such inquiry may help inform individual and family interventions.

**UN FINAL SIN FRONTERAS:  
AN ENDING WITHOUT BORDERS**

In closing, we invite mental health practitioners and researchers to continue to learn about the challenges and struggles faced by this important segment of our Latino/a population. Knowing about the complexities surrounding the immigration of minors to the U.S. will help create a humane and dignified welcoming that all children deserve. For most of these children hope has sustained their motivation to persevere, *como decimos los Latinas/os*, “*la esperanza es lo ultimo que muere* [like many Latino/as say, “hope is the last thing that dies”]. Our Central American unaccompanied immigrant minors are seeking nothing more than hope for a better tomorrow that is free of violence, abuse, and hunger; goals that every child deserves.

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## CRUZANDO FRONTERAS AND HEALING CHILDREN'S SOULS: ADDRESSING THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF BORDERLAND CHILDREN

IVELISSE TORRES FERNANDEZ, PH.D.<sup>1,2</sup>

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Children and youth today face multiple challenges and stressors that impact their mental health and psychological wellbeing. In fact, it is estimated that close to 20% of school age children will present behavioral and/or emotional problems that will impact their academic, social, and behavioral outcomes (National Research Council and Institutes of Medicine et al., 2009) and less than 50% will receive mental health services (Reinke, Herman, Stormont, Brooks, & Darney, 2010; U.S. DHHS, 2001). Furthermore, children in the borderlands encounter an additional set of challenges that place them at higher risk of developing mental health and other related problems. For instance, the literature identifies historical trauma, poverty, language barriers, acculturation, marginalization, and limited access to services as some of the challenges faced by children in the borderlands (Aguilera & Lopez, 2008; Gudino, Lau, & Hough, 2008; Hernandez - Wolfe, 2013). In addition, a high level of trauma related to the ongoing drug violence in Mexico has become a sad and challenging reality that the youth in the border regions of the United States (U.S.) encounter (Leiner et al., 2012; Torres Fernandez, Rios, James, Martinez, & Bravo, 2012; Torres Fernandez & Torres-Rivera, in press).

Borderland children include a broad group of both unauthorized and authorized immigrants and children who were born in the U.S. from immigrant parents, and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation children whose parents were also born in the U.S. Two groups that have received attention in recent years are individuals who have been impacted directly by the drug war in

Mexico and most recently, the unaccompanied minors who are crossing the U.S. border without authorization and are being held in massive shelters. Although these children often present with very profound emotional wounds and complex psychological needs, they have been understudied; thus, very little is known about how best to serve this vulnerable population (Leiner et al., 2012). The lack of awareness amongst mental health providers on how to best serve these children places them in an even more vulnerable position; thus, making their plight a serious social justice issue that requires close consideration and immediate action by the government as well as the mental health community.

The goal of this article is twofold: one, to increase awareness about the unmet mental health needs of children in the borderland; two, to share my experiences working with this population over the past six years. The lessons learned as well as the challenges and rewards involved in social justice advocacy work with this population are provided. Finally, the article ends with recommendations for individuals providing services to children in the borderlands. Ultimately, my hope is to inspire others to join in the efforts to raise awareness and promote social justice advocacy for this vulnerable yet resilient population and highlight the critical need of creating safe spaces for borderland children. Every child and youth has the right to seek freedom, heal from trauma, and reclaim control over his or her young life. This is an individual right that no government should take away.

### CRUZANDO FRONTERAS

My work with immigrants in the borderland, and children and families with low SES over the last six years, has not only increased my awareness about the power of resilience, but also broaden my conceptualization of social justice advocacy. This conceptualization goes beyond a mentality of

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“helping the less fortunate” to a social justice stance that embraces and promotes empowerment, self-efficacy, and instills hope. These core principles have guided my work as a researcher, scholar, and social justice advocate.

Over the years, I have learned a great deal about the detrimental effects of violence, oppression, and marginalization in the lives of children on both sides of the border. Children who have been exposed to violence, trauma, and negative stereotypes may often feel they “lack the ability” to question the validity of those negative messages (Torres Fernandez et al., 2012; Torres Fernandez & Torres-Rivera, in press). In other words, these children’s voices have been silenced by the pervasive tendency to think they lack awareness, social support, and inner strength. Thus, it is this author’s assertion that the development of coping and social skills will buffer children from such deficit thinking mentality while at the same time increasing their sense of self-efficacy.

### **Cruzando Fronteras Outreach Project**

*Cruzando Fronteras* was an outreach project initiated in partnership with a borderland school district in 2011. The project was created in response to concerns related to the emotional consequences of the continuous exposure to violence in the U.S.-Mexico border among school age children (Torres Fernandez et al., 2012). *Cruzando Fronteras* had two primary goals. The first goal was to help students deal with the emotional consequences of violence in the border by developing a curriculum targeting social-emotional learning and healthy coping strategies. The second goal included the creation of a safe space where children can share and process their stories by using liberation psychology, narrative approaches, and storytelling (Torres Fernandez, & Torres Rivera, in press).

Throughout the course of the program, students engaged in the development of storybooks, which afforded children the opportunity to share their stories of trauma and grief. (Torres Fernandez et al., 2012). Sharing the stories was incredibly powerful since it allowed children to realize they were stronger than they thought. The stories allowed children to identify the strength of their supportive family system, instill hope amidst all the challenges they were facing, and gained strength to gain some sense of control over their lives (Torres Fernandez &

Torres-Rivera, in press). One of the most powerful outcomes of this project was the analysis of the children’s narratives.

### **Voices from the Youth at *Cruzando Fronteras***

The analysis of the children’s narratives yielded several themes including: social justice, *familismo* (importance of family), grief and loss, and the impact of the drug war (Torres Fernandez et al., 2012). Regarding social justice, it became apparent that even though the children lack some basic needs, they have very giving and noble hearts. Most notably was their desire and motivation to learn and be successful at school. In this respect a 5<sup>th</sup> grader wrote about her desire to learn (i.e., having access to good education and books) and to live in a safe environment:

*“ Yo quiero estar más en la escuela para aprender más cosas...quiero tener muchos libros para leer. Yo quiero que ya no hayan más malos porque nos asustamos mucho ”* [I want to be more time in school so I can learn more...I want to have many books to read. I wish there is less bad people because they scare us a lot].

Another theme that emerged from these narratives was related to family as a primary source of support. The following excerpt of a 4<sup>th</sup> grader beautifully articulates how important family was for the children:

*“ Mi deseo es que mi familia se recupere y ganaran más dinero y que mi papá no se fuera para los Estados Unidos porque mi papá se quería ir...yo quiero ayudarlos a trabajar para ganar más dinero. No quiero que mi familia se separe ”* [My wish is that my family could earn more money and that my dad wouldn’t leave to the United States because my dad wants to leave...I want to work so I can help them with more money. I don’t want for my family to separate].

The last two themes were probably the most heartbreaking. In the process of working with the children, it was obvious the violence has a tremendous impact on their young lives and that the emotional scars left by these events impact them. This excerpt from a 4<sup>th</sup> grade girl exemplifies the story of many children whose parents or relatives have gone missing:

*“A los 7 años me entere que mi padre habia desaparecido (apenas mi mamá y mi papá se habian divorciado)”* [At 7 years old, I found out that my father had disappeared...my mom and dad had just divorced].

*Cruzando Fronteras* changed the lives of everyone who was part of it. The feedback received from participants and teachers from the borderland school centered primarily around three areas: one, in the creation of safe spaces to process trauma and grief; two, the provision of coping strategies and social-emotional skills; three, the promotion of pro-social behavior and a safer school climate (Torres Fernandez et al., 2012). *Cruzando Fronteras* also changed the lives of the service providers. The project increased awareness of our privileges. The next section will provide a brief reflection of the lessons learned.

### LESSONS LEARNED

*Cruzando Fronteras* changed my perspective not only on the mental health of children in the borderlands, but also increased my awareness on the need to incorporate a variety of approaches to be an effective provider. Regarding the mental health needs of children, we need to understand that they are complex and unique individuals. Although all children have been exposed to violence, trauma, and grief, each child experiences and copes with their experiences differently. Moreover, children have their own unique strengths and internal (emotional) resources that allow them to cope with such difficult situations. On the other hand, when examining treatment approaches, practitioners need to become comfortable combining Western approaches with more non-traditional modalities such as liberation psychology and indigenous perspectives. In order to accommodate to the unique needs of each child, providers need to exercise

flexibility while honoring the multiple intersecting identities (i.e., race, gender, culture) that each child embodies.

There are many rewarding aspects inherent in the service provided to others, particularly children. Over the years, I have witnessed children empowering themselves while retelling their stories of trauma and grief. Despite the hardships they face, I have also observed them develop a positive outlook on life. I have also experienced how resourceful children are and how little credit we give them. One of my fondest memories of *Cruzando Fronteras* was a letter I received from a student where she wrote: *“gracias por consolarnos y preocuparse por nosotros”* [thanks for consoling and caring for us]. Her words are a beautiful reminder of my mission to serve, to give unconditionally, and instill hope. *Cruzando Fronteras* has broadened my understanding not only about children’s mental health needs but also about the importance of listening to the stories, supporting children while they create meaning, and empower children to believe that there is *esperanza a pesar de la adversidad* [there is hope despite the adversities].

### RECOMMENDATIONS WHEN CRUZANDO FRONTERAS

The most challenging aspect of doing social justice work has probably been learning the ability to earn the trust and respect of the communities I intend to serve. Unfortunately, “outsiders” are not very welcomed in these communities, for good reasons, as there is often the perception they want to take advantage of the community. This perception is often grounded on previous experiences of oppression and discrimination. This “negative” perception of outsiders has been described in the literature as healthy cultural suspicion (Boyd-Franklin, 2006; White & Cones, 1999). “Such cultural suspicion is normal, expected, healthy, and considered a resiliency factor resulting from strategies employed by ethnic minorities to cope with a long standing history of oppression and discrimination” (Adames, Chavez-Dueñas, Fuentes, Salas, Perez-Chavez, 2014, p. 154).

Therefore, it is imperative that mental health providers take time to get to know their communities well and earn their trust. The following six recommendations are offered:

1. Listen carefully to the stories before intervening or imposing limited views or opinions onto others.
2. Assess for immediate needs and prioritize.
3. Develop a realistic action plan that takes into account the unique social, political, and historical context of the communities you are serving.
4. Build on the strengths of the community rather than focusing on what is “wrong.” The use of deficit models, not only perpetuates oppression and marginalization, but also demoralizes and disempowers oppressed communities.
5. Understand that you are a “stranger”; thus, if you want to earn the trust and respect of the community, your actions, and not your words should demonstrate it.
6. Be humble. Remember it is a privilege to serve and learn from these resourceful communities. You are there to help them move forward instead of putting them down.

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## DREAMING ABOUT CHOICES & ACCESS: SOÑADORES LUCHANDO POR UN MEJOR MAÑANA

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### VOCES DEL PUEBLO ARTICLE

*Voces Del Pueblo* is a new & ongoing section of LPT, which provides a space for individuals from the community to become active participants in the construction and dissemination of knowledge regarding Latina/os.

*"You see when we started calling ourselves DREAMers, it was not just because of the DREAM Act, we called ourselves DREAMers because before we even set foot on this land, our parents believed and dreamt of a better future..." (Gaby Pacheco, 2013).*

The first author (Perez-Chavez) became involved in the undocumented youth movement in 2006 when she was a high school student. She organized with groups such as *DREAM ACTION* and the *Immigrant Youth Justice League (IYJL)*. After graduating from her community high school, Jessica Perez-Chavez cofounded *International Dreamers*, a mentorship support group for undocumented high school students. In this article, she shares the stories of two undocumented youth from Mexico who have dealt with the implications of their immigration status and are adjusting to being DACAmented.

In the summer of 2012 President Obama signed an executive order that would grant more than 521,815 undocumented youth, deferred action and an opportunity to work legally in this country

(USCIS, 2014). Laura did not receive her work authorization permit until months after she graduated from college. That summer she checked the mailbox constantly, anxiously hoping that among the utility bills and alumni mail that she would pull out her USCIS (United States Customs Immigration Services) envelope with her DACA documentation. When she finally received her DACA letters, she was beyond ecstatic. "This is it, I can finally go out to the real world," she remembers thinking. Those letters in her hand then, represented the brighter future that her parents and her teachers had promised her all along.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) grants authorization of employment to undocumented youth who entered the country before their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday and who have been in the United States (U.S.) for five or more years consecutively since 2007 (USCIS, 2014). Filing an application costs approximately \$500, a pricey fee for obtaining a work permit that is valid for only two years. DACA is not the DREAM Act, nor is it a pathway to citizenship, or even permanent residence. Even though nothing guarantees that this program will exist two years from now, it gives many undocumented youth hope that there is some light at the end of the tunnel. Now, two years after Laura applied to DACA, she sat with me to reflect on her

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Note: Various aspects of the individuals interviewed in this article, including the specific cultural background and history, have been altered in order to protect the anonymity of the interviewee.

journey as an undocumented student. What follows is a synopsis of our *plática* [conversation].

### **EL SUEÑO Y LA LUCHA DE LAURA: LAURA'S DREAM & STRUGGLE**

In high school Laura did not think much about what came *after college* because she was so overwhelmed with how to even get to college. With the support and guidance of mentors she was able to earn various scholarships that helped her pay for her first year of college. Although she did not know what would happen after she used those funds, she kept her head up and graduated valedictorian from high school, hoping that by the time she graduated from college the DREAM Act would save her. Like she had in high school, she worked very hard her first year of college and was able to transfer into a university that offered her a full-ride. When asked what had set her apart to receive a full-ride, Laura responded: *"I was very determined and ambitious and I think a lot if it had to do with having the right people on my team. My parents never questioned my ability to get into a university, in fact they expected me to not only get into a university but also come out from one with a degree. There was the moral support from my parents and there were also a number of individuals whom I shared my story with and who instantly supported me. I had a college counselor who pushed me to visit private universities in the East Coast, a number of mentors who helped me edit my personal statements a million times, and friends who shared scholarship opportunities with me. They guided me and looked after me. Their unconditional love and support pushed me to apply to the best universities and to never sell myself short."*

Despite having a strong support system, Laura reported that her second and third years of college were very difficult academically and emotionally. She remembers how she would often worry about her undocumented loved ones back at home and the risk of them being deported. Going to a university so far away from home was extremely challenging for Laura. While she knew that she would be receiving a solid education from a

prestigious university, something she hoped would enhance her job opportunities, she was placed in a position where she could no longer physically support her family. In the end, she knew it would pay off and that she would be able to finally help support her family financially; she would have a bachelor's degree, experience under her belt, and even a publication in a top tier journal in the sciences. However, unlike her college peers, she did not look forward to graduation. Laura feared that despite all of her hard work in college, she would again hit another roadblock.

For many undocumented students, college graduation came and went, leaving them still unable to legally apply for a job and unable to move forward. As Laura's own graduation approached she felt her journey heading into uncertainty and doubt. She avoided thinking and talking with peers about her plans after college because not only was it unclear and complicated, but it was also an added stress to her course work. It was the same feeling she had at the end of her senior year in high school, that despite all her hard work, nothing was secured. She wondered if she would be able to find a stable job or even if she would be able to attend a graduate school. Though there were a lot of questions left unanswered, Laura continued to attend her classes and continued to be a leader on her campus. *"When things would get difficult, I thought about my family. I pictured them in my head working odd jobs and in dangerous factories. I needed to continue not just for my own professional advancement, but also for my family who struggles every day."*

Her life turned around the year she became a senior in college; it was at that time DACA was signed. After graduating from college Laura still could not apply for jobs because she did not yet have DACA status; she was left in job limbo, which left her feeling restless and anxious. When she finally obtained her DACA status, eight dreadful months passed before she finally found employment. Although the wait was long, Laura felt grateful that she was afforded several opportunities for which other DREAMers had to wait years after graduating. Having DACA status has not only allowed her to work lawfully, but also obtain a driver's license, and

know for certain that tomorrow she will not be deported. Even with all these benefits, Laura still feels unsettled.

Despite being a DACA recipient, Laura still feels disheartened because nothing has changed for her undocumented parents. They have no special status that protects them from deportation. Just a year ago, police arrested Laura's father for driving without a license. When she learned that her father was in jail, a thousand thoughts crossed her mind. Would I.C.E. get involved? Would he be placed in deportation proceedings? Laura and her family got very little sleep that night. Despite from *el susto* [the scare] and the fines her family would have to pay, Laura's father and family endured; her father was not deported. Unfortunately, hundreds of thousands of others have not had the same luck. Estimates sum up to over 2 million deportations since President Obama took office (Golash-Boza, 2014). To some this may just be a number, but to many families this is a crude and painful reality. For Laura and her U.S.-born siblings, this number represents the everyday risk of being separated from her parents.

DACA has without a doubt changed many lives. This program has given many young people, like Laura, the confidence to drive by police officers without panicking and to travel around the country without hesitation. Undocumented youth may be less afraid, but not necessarily fearless. In a recent study by Roberto Gonzalez from Harvard University, DACA beneficiaries reported feeling less worry about being deported and were less afraid of law enforcement. However, 76% of respondents said they worried "some to all of the time" about their loved ones being deported (Gonzalez & Bautista-Chavez, 2014). For many, there continues to be no sense of security for their families.

Another unsettling reality is that DACA does not address the barriers to a post secondary education, as recipients are still left ineligible for federal financial aid, and in many states, for in-state tuition as well. After moving back to Chicago, Laura returned to her high school alma mater where she met and spoke with undocumented high school students who continue to struggle with finding sufficient funds to attend college. Laura introduced

me to Ivan, a bright student who was eager to go on to college and who in many ways mirrored Laura's experience.

### EL SUEÑO Y LA LUCHA DE IVAN: IVAN'S DREAM & STRUGGLE

Ivan remembers being 4 years-old and crossing the barren desert. He and his mother immigrated to Chicago where his father had already settled. Ivan had no idea what to expect, all he knew was that his family was in search of a better life. He never imagined that he would have to quickly accustom to a new culture, learn a new language, and essentially adapt to a new way of living. He had left a country where he did not live in fear, to a country where fear was a constant feeling.

Ivan underwent a difficult time during grammar school because he had to learn a completely new language. He would often hear other kids make fun of his accent and pronunciation. However, Ivan did not let his negative experience in grammar school stop him from getting an education. He continued on to high school only to find himself feeling more isolated and alone. *"It felt like I was the only undocumented student in the school. I alienated myself from my peers because I was afraid they would reject me the second they found out I was undocumented. I was so afraid of rejection that I often lied about my status."*

Later that year, through a conversation about traveling, Ivan met three undocumented students. They quickly became close friends and Ivan was able to see and understand that he was not alone. *"I stopped isolating myself from others and I joined various clubs. I also participated more during class and went from being ranked #181 in my class to rank #36 my senior year,"* he said proudly.

When President Obama signed DACA, Ivan's parents regained some hope. Ivan felt relieved to know that all his hard work in school was going to pay off. He would be able to seek employment and not have to worry about loopholes or "working under the table." He was also thrilled to be able to obtain a state ID, a driver's license, and have a work

permit. When Ivan finally obtained his DACA acceptance letters he was overjoyed.

In addition to the work permit and the deferred action, DACA also increased the pool of scholarships available for undocumented high school students. Ivan applied to six scholarships his senior year, but unfortunately did not receive any. With no scholarships to help him pay for college, he was left with only a few options: work multiple jobs in order to pay for community college or put off college until he is able to save enough money to pay for it. Ivan, with a saddened face, said he would like to continue with his education without having to take a gap year, but said that realistically he does not have the resources to pay for tuition. Ivan reported feeling very stressed these days. Despite having good grades in high school and despite having DACA, Ivan is still unable to gather the resources necessary to pay for college.

### DREAMING ABOUT CHOICES & ACCESS

Both Ivan and Laura came to this country as children not really knowing or understanding the struggles they would face because of their immigration status. They emerged in the educational system and quickly learned that they would have to work twice as hard in order to take one step forward. They both now have DACA status, which has certainly changed their lives. DACA gave these two young people the opportunity to do many things that they were unable to do before, such as obtaining a driver's license and a job. Though DACA has given thousands of undocumented youth some security, they continue to be undocumented. These young people still cannot travel outside of the country and reunite with their family members. They are also ineligible for federal financial aid for college and graduate school, making their path to higher education very blurry. Moreover, the fear of being separated from their parents continues to haunt them at night.

In the upcoming months in 2014 thousands of undocumented youth will be renewing their DACA applications. The renewal of DACA applications calls for celebration, but it also calls for reflection on this program's limitations. DACA does

not benefit all undocumented immigrants nor does it address the financial roadblocks undocumented youth face in accessing a college education. It calls for reflection on the continued struggles of their overworked parents, cousins, uncles, and aunts who are still unDACAmented, and still undocumented. Many of the *soñadores* [dreamers] know their parents are the original DREAMers, the one's who left everything they knew so their children could have everything they never had. Though a step forward, DACA does not provide a comprehensive solution to the continued struggle of our undocumented brothers and sisters living in the United States without proper documentation. *"Deferred action or not, I'm still undocumented. It's going to take a lot more than a driver's license and a work permit to make me believe that things are changing..."* (Jesús Iñiguez, 2012).

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## PUERTO RICANS AS IMMIGRANTS, CITIZENS, NEITHER, OR BOTH? A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF HISTORY

EDIL TORRES RIVERA, PH.D.<sup>1,2</sup>

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What is an immigrant and a citizen, and who decides? As defined in the literature, immigrants are individuals who migrate to another country for permanent residency, whereas citizens are legally recognized individuals of a state or commonwealth (Rivera Ramos, 2001). Laypeople, as well as scholars, may have different perspectives and may wonder whether these two constructs apply to individuals from Puerto Rico; in other words, are Puerto Ricans citizens of the United States (U.S.) or immigrants to the U.S.? From a legal perspective, the answer is simple in that Puerto Ricans are legally recognized as U.S. citizens. However, the history and sociopolitical realities of Puerto Ricans are complex and go beyond simple definitions and legalities, especially given the fact that Puerto Rico continues to be a territory of the U.S. (i.e., a colony). The purpose of this article is provide a brief overview of Puerto Rican history in order to promote dialogue on whether Puerto Ricans can best be conceptualized as immigrants, citizens, neither, or both.

### THE EARLY HISTORY OF PUERTO RICO'S COLONIZATION: A STATE OF CONFUSION SINCE THE BEGINNING

Puerto Rican history spans over 500 years, including its “discovery” by Cristobal Colón (Christopher Columbus) on his second voyage on November 19, 1493 (Díaz Soler, 1994). It is interesting to note that when Colón first set foot on *Borinquén* or *Borikén* (the name given to the island by its indigenous inhabitants), he found a group of natives that anthropologists and historians believe were part of the Arawak culture (Díaz Soler, 1994) and whom the

Spaniards would later call *Tainos*. The natives or Arawaks of Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic had a political and economic system that was more advanced than that of any other native Indians from the other Antilles according to some historians (Gómez Acevedo & Ballesteros Gabriois, 1978; Sued-Badillo, 1989). Unfortunately, within 100 years of Puerto Rico’s colonization by the Spaniards, the influence of genocide, slavery, and disease led to the disappearance of the island’s native Indians (Gómez Acevedo & Ballesteros Gabriois, 1978; Sued-Badillo, 1989).

Interestingly, Puerto Rico was not colonized immediately after it was discovered. Rather, the island was colonized in 1509 when Juan Ponce de León returned to the island for the second time (Scarano, 1993). Thus, it is the visit of Ponce de León that marked the actual colonization of Puerto Rico by the Spaniards (Scarano, 1993). This colonization period was characterized by confusion and indecision on the part of the Spanish government regarding how and who would administer island matters (Scarano, 1993). In fact, Fernándo de Aragón, the King of Spain, engaged in a dispute with Colón's family regarding how the island was to be governed. The confusion about what to do with Puerto Rico did not end until 1511, giving the island its first two years of political uncertainty (Torres Rivera, 2005). The political ambiguity experienced by the citizens of Puerto Rico during the colonization time marked the beginning of a pattern of confusion regarding the status and rights of individuals living in the island.

Spain’s main interests in Puerto Rico revolved around the economic exploitation of the island’s natural resources. However, this interest did not last long since the reserves of gold on the island were exhausted by the second half of the 16th century. During this time Spain discovered more fortune in Mexico and Peru where massive reserves of gold and silver were found (Scarano, 1993). In

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1700, Spain was compelled to protect the Crown's possessions in America, and consequently assigned a strategic function to Puerto Rico, converting the island to a key position in the defense of Spanish treasures in the Americas (Scarano, 1993). Thus, the pattern of political ambiguity continued in Puerto Rico. That is, Spain gave Puerto Rico a great deal of attention and importance for periods of time and later ignored the island and its citizens completely. This pattern persisted until the next colonization of Puerto Rico by the U.S. in 1898 following the Spanish-American War. During this time Puerto Rico became a possession of the U.S. by the Treaty of Paris (Díaz Soler, 1994; Scarano, 1993).

The colonization process that took place under the Spaniards was characterized by two-sided implications. For instance, during the 17<sup>th</sup> century with the discovery of gold in South America the island was practically abandoned and Spain began to bring Corsicans to repopulate the island (Pico, 2006). This pattern continued when the U.S. colonized Puerto Rico, which has produced some identity crisis and confusion for the Puerto Rican psyche (Gherovici, 2003).

### **PUERTORICANESS: THE NATIONAL CULTURE**

So, what is a Puerto Rican? Or how can Puertoricaness be distinguished from other Latino/as? While a number of social scientists might argue that today's Puertorican culture began to develop before the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see Cordasco & Bucchioni, 1975), Scarano (1993) has indicated that Puertoricaness culture began in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During this time Puerto Rico entered into what historians refer to as the "Golden Age," characterized by an abundance of urban development and material prosperity (Scarano, 1993). In addition, Puerto Ricans attained progress in the arts and education. These achievements contributed to the formation of a national identity (Scarano, 1993). It is in this century that, for the first time, the customs and characteristics of the native Puerto Ricans made their way into the Creole literature (Scarano, 1993). The characteristics that later would define "Puertoricaness" appeared in a number of publications and the nationalistic attitudes of the Puerto Rican people became apparent (Scarano, 1993). Some of these characteristics included: *respeto* [respect], *familismo* [familism], *personalismo* [value that places emphasis on personal interactions], *dignidad* [dignity], and

*lealtad* [loyalty].

Since the invasion of Puerto Rico by the U.S. in 1898, Puerto Rico has remained a neo-colony within the U.S. political system (Torres-Rivera, Torres Fernandez, & Hendricks, 2013). That is, Puerto Rico belongs to, but is not a part of, the U.S. Nevertheless, Puerto Ricans have been classified as U.S. citizens since 1917. This colonialism is defined mainly by the island's economic dependency on the U.S. and the politics surrounding the island's relationship to the U.S. (Meléndez & Meléndez, 1993). Moreover, colonialism can also be observed in the mentality of Puerto Ricans and often is referred to as colonial mentality (Colón, 2011), another form of internalized racism. Colonial mentality for Puerto Ricans in particular occurs when "characteristics seen as evidence of weakness or inferiority are used as excuses to govern and guide them. In this manner, the colonized generally end up believing that they are truly inferior and accept the situation forced upon them without questions" (Varas-Díaz & Serrano-García, 2003, p.104).

Complete political dependence and control of Puerto Rico by the U.S. continued until 1947 when, under the Jones Act of 1917, Puerto Ricans were given the right to elect their own governor (Rivera Ramos, 2001). Thus, in 1948 Puerto Ricans elected their first Governor, Don Luis Muñoz Marín, by popular vote. Under Don Luis' leadership a new political status was instituted, referred to as the *Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico* or E.L.A. [Free Associated State of Puerto Rico or Commonwealth], following the platform of the *Partido Popular Democrático* [Democratic Popular Party, or PPD]. This status was approved by the U.S. Congress and made into law on July 25, 1952 (Fitzpatrick, 1987). The new status provided Puerto Rico with some autonomy; however, the U.S. federal laws were enforced, making Puerto Rico an unincorporated territory of the mainland. Being a Commonwealth of the U.S. provides the Puerto Ricans the opportunity to develop political parties with different ideologies. How Puerto Ricans think about political status (independence, statehood, and commonwealth) helps to maintain political and ethnic confusion among the islanders. For instance, there is a small but very vocal group that demands the independence of the island led by the *Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño* or PIP. Another group advocates for the statehood of Puerto Rico or its annexation to the U.S. and is led by the *Partido Nuevo Progresista*, or PNP. As mental health

providers and scholars, we see that "...the problem of status is not a simple matter of government, but rather a deeply rooted problem of identity..." (Fitzpatrick, 1987, p. 31) and as such, is an issue of mental health.

### **Puertoricaness**

A number of social scientists have linked the genesis of crime in Puerto Rico to the ambiguity of Puerto Ricans' identity as well as the social dislocation and underground economics of the island (Torres-Rivera, & Phan, 2005). As a result of the colonial status and economic dependence of the island to the U.S., many Puerto Ricans possess little control over their own economic viability (Bourgeois, 1995). In fact, the median income for Puerto Ricans in 2012 was \$19,515 per household. Moreover, the unemployment rate that same year was reported to be 14%, aligning with the island's unemployment rates in recent history, which have not gone below 13% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Therefore, some sociologists and mental health professionals argue that the reported high levels of criminality in Puerto Rico are a direct and indirect consequence of the desperate economic condition that the citizens of the island are forced to endure (Bourgeois, 1995; Torres-Rivera, Torres Fernandez, & Hendricks, 2013).

When looking at the historic and current impact that the political ambiguity of Puerto Rico has had on its habitants, it becomes evident how difficult it is to categorize Puerto Ricans as immigrants or as citizens of the U.S. On the one hand, Puerto Ricans who travel to the mainland may share similar experiences with other immigrants of Latin America (e.g., process of acculturation, learning a second language, racialization). On the other hand, although Puerto Ricans are legally U.S. citizens, they do not enjoy the full benefits of those born in the mainland (e.g., they cannot vote in presidential elections). Therefore Puerto Ricans can be best described as a colonized people of the U.S. Given the limitation of space and scope of this article, it is difficult to explain in detail the colonization process; however, the reader is referred to Laenui's Processes of Decolonization (2000) which provides a restructure of Virgilio Enriques stages of colonization. Based on these stages, Puerto Ricans people can be identified as currently existing in the fifth stage of colonization (i.e., a co-opting and control of the expression of cultural values and practices *within* the dominating structure of the colonizer). This framework suggests that

colonization is not a simple matter of real estate and political control. Rather, it is a complex process that also involves colonizing the psychological and social worlds of the people that are being colonized.

### **CONCLUSION: SURVIVING WITHIN THE COMPLEXITY OF ANOTHER CULTURE**

In summary, the complex political and economic history of Puerto Rico coupled with the realities of habitants infers the conclusion that Puerto Ricans are neither immigrants nor citizens, but rather in some ways they are both and in some ways neither. Thus, I posit that this dual status impacts the way Puerto Ricans see themselves (identity) and each other (community). Perhaps this complexity of the Puerto Rican culture is best described in Cordasco and Bucchioni's (1973) quote which states, "*¿Quiénes somos? Somos un pueblo compasivo porque hemos sufrido mucho; somos un pueblo pacífico, en cuyo escudo de Armas el pueblo de San Juan Bautista tiene un cordero que a mí se antoja que no es otro que el que quita los pecados del mundo... Somos un pueblo donde la vergüenza todavía vale más que la plata, donde la honradez todavía vale más que cualquier otra medalla de honor. Somos un pueblo que tiene tres patrias, y sin embargo no tenemos dominio sobre ninguna de ellas hasta la fecha*" (p. vi). Translated this means, "Who are we? We are a country with compassion because we have suffered, we are a peaceful country, where in the coat of arms in the town of San Juan Bautista, a lamb symbolizes the cleansing of the world's sins. We are a country where the *vergüenza* [feelings of shame] is worth more than money, where honesty is still worth more than any other medal of honor. To this day we are a country with three motherlands, but without the domination of any of them" (p. vi).

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**DREAMERS,**  
**IMMIGRATION,**  
**& SOCIAL JUSTICE**  
 ADVANCING A GLOBAL LATINA/O PSYCHOLOGY AGENDA

*Artist's Note:*

In line with this year's conference theme, our logo is represented by a globe dream catcher that honors the plight and aspirations of our DREAMers and symbolizes the belief that growth comes as we connect with others, the same way our Latin@ agenda strengthens as we join a global community. This agenda in turn is supported by rich and diverse cultural experiences, represented by the unifying hands. The beads depicting the main Latin@ communities also recognizes our diversity and differences, and when unified, they form the five points of a star. Finally, the feathers signify the importance of spirit in Latin@ healing and psychology.

Artist: Melody Capielo

[www.meliscreative.com](http://www.meliscreative.com)

**NLPA2014**

October 23-25 • Albuquerque, NM

**For Questions Regarding NLPA 2014 Biennial Conferencia Please Contact:**

Cynthia E. Guzmán  
 2014 Conference Chair  
[conference@nlpa.ws](mailto:conference@nlpa.ws)

Andrés J. Consoli  
 NLPA 2014 President  
[aconsoi@education.ucsb.edu](mailto:aconsoi@education.ucsb.edu)

## CONGRATULATIONS, PROMOTIONS, & TRANSITIONS

### AWARDS

**Alinne Barrera, Ph.D.** is the recipient of the 2014 Div. 12 *Samuel M. Turner Early Career Award* for distinguished contributions to diversity in clinical psychology.

**Edward Delgado-Romero, Ph.D.** is the recipient of the 2013 Div. 45 *Distinguished Career Contribution to Research Award*.

**Mihaela Epurianu Dranoff, Ph.D.** is one of the recipients of the *APA Achievement Award for Early Career Professionals*. The recipients were selected from a pool of candidates based on their achievements and leadership in the field of psychology.

**Elvia Lorena Navarro, Ph.D.** is the recipient of the 2013 APA Board of Professional Affairs' *APAGS Distinguished Graduate Student Award in Professional Psychology*.

**Edil Torres Rivera, Ph.D.** is the recipient of the 2014 *Distinguished International Researcher* awarded by The Chicago School of Professional Psychology (TCSPP). The award is to honor that one faculty member, in the judgment of the faculty that demonstrates a record of scholarship that establishes himself/herself as a scholar with substantial contributions in the areas of international research and scholarship.

**Melba J.T. Vasquez, Ph.D.** is the recipient of the 2013 Div. 45 *Asuncion Miteria Austria and John Robinson Distinguished Mentoring Award*

### PROMOTIONS & TRANSITIONS

**Ignacio D. Acevedo-Polakovich, Ph.D.** was granted tenure and promoted to Associate Professor at Central Michigan University.

**Patricia Arredondo, Ed.D.** was appointed President of The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, Chicago Campus.

**Alinne Barrera, Ph.D.** was appointed (one of two) Associate Director of Clinical Training in the Clinical Psychology PhD Program at Pacific Graduate School of Psychology, Palo Alto University in 2014. In addition, she was appointed Associate Director of the Institute for International Internet Interventions for Health (i4Health), Palo Alto University in 2012.

**Nayeli Y. Chavez-Dueñas, Ph.D.** was promoted to Associate Professor at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, Chicago Campus.

**Milton A. Fuentes, Psy.D.** was appointed Professor and Department Chair for the Washington, DC Clinical Psy.D. program at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology.

**Brandy Piña-Watson, Ph.D.** will begin a tenure track Assistant Professor position at Texas Tech University in Counseling Psychology Program.

**Azara L. Santiago-Rivera, Ph.D.** was appointed Dean of Academic Affairs at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, Chicago Campus. She also continues in the role of Director of the National Center for Research and Practice—Latino Mental Health.

**Hector Torres, Psy.D.** was promoted to Associate Professor at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology in 2012.

# FELICIDADES COLEGAS !

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS BY NLPA MEMBERS

The recent publications of NLPA members are listed in this section as a service to the membership, and with the intent of facilitating the exchange of new information among Latina/o professionals and individuals interested in Latina/o mental health.

It is LPT's policy to include in this section all submissions by members that (1) have been published since the last issue of the bulletin, and; (2) can be best described as books, full chapters in edited books, or articles in peer-reviewed publications.

### BOOKS

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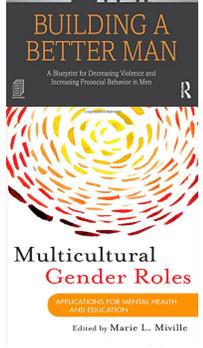
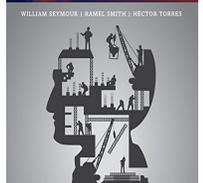
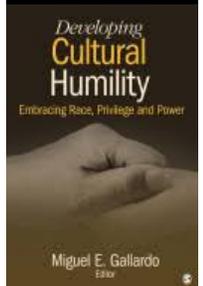
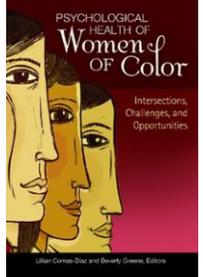
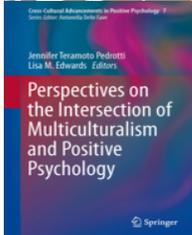
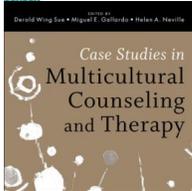
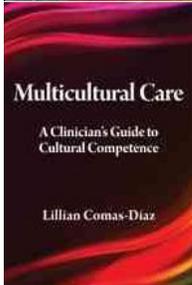
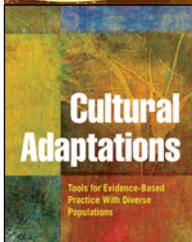
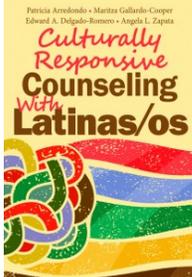
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## TECHNICAL REPORTS & MANUALS

Fuentes, M. A., & Silva, J. M. (2013). Manual para facilitadores de ACT: La entrevista motivacional guía de apoyo para el Programa ACT/educando a niños en ambientes seguros [A manual for ACT facilitators: The motivational interviewing companion guide for the ACT/Parents Raising Safe Kids Program]. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

## BRIEF REPORT ON NLPA'S INTERNATIONAL SURVEY

As part of NLPA's 2014 presidential agenda on Latina/o identities across borders, Dr. Andrés Consoli (2014 NLPA President) appointed Dr. Héctor Torres as the National Latina/o Psychological Association's (NLPA) International Liaison. As a result, the *NLPA International Workgroup* was formed to address questions on migration, bilingualism, poverty, and colonization from an international perspective. Numerous barriers challenge the access to international perspectives including the dominant perception of the English language as the golden standard for well-respected publications, consequently limiting who may be able to contribute to international perspectives. The NLPA International Workgroup is focusing on identifying resources and other means to increase access to broader international lens to help inform the general membership.

As an initial step, the NLPA International Workgroup developed and administered an online survey among NLPA members that included questions on resources, opportunities, and challenges related to conducting international work. The main goal of the survey was to facilitate awareness, identify international opportunities, and promote professional development. In addition, the survey aimed at identifying current international communication structures and efforts that are in place. A total of 22 out of approximately 500 members (4.5%) completed the survey, the results of which are summarized below. Given the low response rate to the survey, the results are not representative of the membership's opinions on international work; however, we present the results as a way to begin to generate thoughts around international work and recruit more members to complete our survey.

### International Engagement & Resources

Participants were asked to list the international professional organizations to which they belonged; organizations included: *Sociedad Interamericana de Psicología* [Society for Interamerican Psychology] and Division 52 of the American Psychological Association. The survey also asked about upcoming conferences and similar educational opportunities, where *Congreso de la Sociedad Interamericana de Psicología* [Interamerican Congress of Psychology], was the most mentioned. When survey participants were asked about international resources, the list included: SIP ([www.sipsych.org](http://www.sipsych.org)), APA International Office (<http://www.apa.org/international/>), Division 52 (<http://div52.org/>), and APA- CIRP (<http://www.apa.org/international/governance/cirp/>). In addition, survey participants identified the Alliant University and The Chicago School of Professional Psychology (TCSPP) as schools that offered programs with an emphasis on international working in the field of mental health.

### International Work, Barriers, & Research Interests

Eleven out of the 22 respondents to the survey indicated that they were engaged in some type of international work. Specifically, the respondents identified teaching as being the most common international activity. Argentina, Guatemala, and Mexico were countries in which respondents have taught. Those working internationally in service-related activities reported working in Guatemala and Honduras. Countries where research activities have taken place included Argentina, Croatia, Guatemala, Honduras, and Puerto Rico. Participants doing personal work abroad listed Argentina and Mexico. For policy, one single survey participant reported doing work internationally; however, the country was not listed. Lastly, participants were inquired about the barriers faced when working or attempting to work internationally. Respondents identified the following four main barriers: lack of resources and funding, lack of available time, lack of familiarity with possibilities, and Institutional Review Board and human protection issues.

## Interests & Future Steps

Participants were asked to list topics that they would be interested in exploring further within an international context. The most prevalent topics of interests included: resilience factors, ethical considerations, cultural values, diversity, identity, community psychology, program evaluation, research, and multicultural supervision. Survey participants were asked to list ways that NLPA could support future endeavors; the most commonly reported suggestion was in the areas of grants and funding. Furthermore, several other members reported interests in collaboration on projects, consultation, and research. Participants also reported that information on international opportunities be made available in one central location such as the association's website.

Finally, survey participants were asked to share any additional thoughts about NLPA addressing international issues. Responses were encouraging and supportive of this initiative. The following are selected examples of the responses to this question:

- “An invitation to think out of the box and to expand the possibilities of considering international issues not necessarily from the USA to abroad but in a more reciprocal and complementary perspective”
- “Worthwhile opportunity”
- “We need to ...strengthen our community internationally.”
- NLPA can get people "rolling".
- “I feel it is overdue to turn our attention to the international arena.”
- “I think it is time to take a fresh look at who Latinos are in their country of origin so that we better understand their experience of acculturation.”
- “We will be even more useful if we learn from and collaborate with others, as will they. Thanks for your interest!”
- “Thanks!”

The process of internationalization has affected the world economically, politically, culturally, and socially. To discuss the limitations or advantages of the trend of internationalization is outside the scope of this brief report, but what can be said, is that such a trend may be unavoidable. Therefore, as the world increasingly continues to internationalize, it is essential that psychology continues advancing in a similar direction in order to continue to be relevant and effective (Lorelle, Byrd, & Crockett, 2012). Given the United States' (U.S.) geographical proximity to Latin America, and the current demographic trends of the U.S. (Ramirez, 2002), developing an accurate international perspective and related competencies is imperative for mental health professionals engaged in areas of Latino/a mental health.

Ethical and practical dilemmas related to application and study of psychology in international context must be confronted openly. Literature on international mental health has clearly documented evidence on how ethnocentrism and the westernization of psychology has led to problematic outcomes including the misdiagnosis of racial/ethnic minorities, poor quality of care for racial/ethnic minorities, and high rates of premature termination from therapy among racial/ethnic minority clients (Lorelle, 2012; Sue & Sue, 2012). Therefore, it is an ethical responsibility to develop sensitive, respectful, and appropriate policies and procedures to engage in the international practice, education, and research of psychology.

The challenge of internationalization is a complex one that must continue to be faced by the field and our organization. Our survey was one of the initial steps towards NLPA becoming more intentional in this effort. As previously stated, the modest response rate to this survey is a limitation, as answers are not representative of the general NLPA membership. However, this information is a good starting point to move towards an NLPA with a broader international perspective. At this time the survey continues to be open. If you did not have an opportunity to complete it before, you may still do so by following this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/VBTV2R5> For more information on how to be involved in NLPA's International Workgroup or if you would like to share international resources, please contact Dr. Héctor Torres at [HTorres@thechicagoschool.edu](mailto:HTorres@thechicagoschool.edu).



# LEADING & INSPIRING: CELEBRATING OUR NLPA PRESIDENTS



We Asked Our Presidents to Complete the Following Statement:

## Leadership Is . . .

*(In Order of Presidency From Left to Right)*

Patricia Arredondo, Ed.D.

...*Liderazgo del alma* is about empowering individuals, groups, and communities to channel their values and talents to the benefit of humankind.

Azara L. Santiago-Rivera, Ph.D.

...the ability to communicate & implement shared goals, collaborate with others, see the best in people, & create opportunities for them to thrive.

Joseph M. Cervantes, Ph.D.

... *(forthcoming)*

Edward A. Delgado-Romero, Ph.D.

...balancing tradition & the future while not losing sight of the present.

Milton A. Fuentes, Psy.D.

...the conduit through which goals are accomplished, dreams are realized, connections are established, justice is ensured, differences are respected, unity is pursued, process is honored, losses are mourned, and  *exitos* [triumphs] are celebrated!

Lynda D. Field, Ph.D.

...having the courage to speak up & share your point of view while also respecting the views of others, the willingness to make personal sacrifices in order to work for something you believe in, and the ability to inspire others to do the same.



Andrés J. Consoli, Ph.D.  
2014 President

...the capacity to persuade people to believe that we are better off sharing, collaborating, & co-constructing.  
¡*La unión hace la fuerza!*



Marie L. Miville, Ph.D.  
2014 President-Elect

...engagement, empowerment, and expression that facilitates centralizing the voices of our marginalized communities and increasing our capacities for learning, understanding, and advocacy.



**Type of Membership (Check One):**

New Membership

Membership Renewal

By signing you acknowledge to have reviewed NLPA's bylaws (visit [www.nlpa.ws/bylaws](http://www.nlpa.ws/bylaws)) and agree to obey to them while a member of NLPA. **Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Degree: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Title/Position: \_\_\_\_\_

List any Professional License/and or certificate: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Ethnic Self-Identification (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_

**Clinical, Research, & Teaching Interests:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Fees** (Please visit the association's website for description of membership category. Check all that apply):

Undergraduate Student \$30

Community Member \$30

Graduate Student \$50

International Member \$50

Early Career Psychologists \$75  
Within ten years receipt of  
doctorate degree

Institution \$100

Professional \$95

Life Time Member \$800

Allied Professional \$95

Voluntary Contribution, please specify amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Would you like to be included on the NLPA Listserve?**

Yes

No

Have you ever been convicted of a felony, expelled from a professional organization on ethical or professional grounds, or had your license to practice revoked? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, please add additional documentation explaining the circumstances around the conviction, expulsion, or revocation. E-mail documents to [info@nlpa.ws](mailto:info@nlpa.ws)

Would you like to join any of the following Special Interest Groups (SIG) and be included in their communications? See descriptions on SIGs at [www.nlpa.ws/special-interest-groups](http://www.nlpa.ws/special-interest-groups) Select up to three:

BIL

Bilingual Issues in Latino/a Mental Health

CAF

Latino/a Child, Adolescent, & Family Psychology

EBP

Evidence Based Practice with Latino Populations

LGBTQI Orgullo

Latino/a: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

ML

Mentors y Lideres: Apoyando a Futuros Profesionales

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**Mail form with payment payable to NLPA**

**Attn: Ricardo Aguirre**

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