

Global Students for a Global Psychology

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April 2014 Student Notebook Announcements

- The Student Notebook is seeking advanced graduate students to contribute articles on developing a programmatic line of research and navigating the job market. To find out more information or submit an article, contact the Student Notebook editor, Allison Skinner, at apssc.sneditor@psychologicalscience.org.
- Want to promote psychological science at your campus? Join the APSSC [Campus Reps Program](#) today!
- The APSSC Hotel Match-Up Program is provided as a service to APS student members seeking to reduce their convention-related expenses by finding other students who are interested in sharing the cost of accommodation at the annual convention. Allison Cantor, APSSC Membership and Volunteers Officer, collects information from students interested in the program and only distributes this information to other applicants in the Hotel Match-Up Program. Please email [Allison Cantor](#) for more information.

APS has long been an advocate of an integrative and international psychology. The organization, which started out as the American Psychological Society, changed its name in 2006 to reflect its global and scientific approach to the field. Today, approximately 19.3% of its members and 13.9% of its student affiliates list a nation other than the United States as their country of residence. Furthermore, APS is actively working with other international organizations on initiatives such as the *Global Observer* (which summarizes research conducted outside of the US), the [International Convention of Psychological Science](#) (ICPS; an international and integrative scientific convention to be held in Amsterdam in 2015), and the Postdoc Exchange program (offering opportunities for exchanges around the world), among others. However, there is much more that can be done to globalize psychological science, and students can play an important role in this pursuit.

Taking concrete steps to strengthen psychology as an international discipline is increasingly important for American psychologists and institutions. The US is the largest producer of scientific scholars and literature, and its psychological organizations and publications have a great impact on psychological science. As such, initiatives like the ones adopted by APS can serve as catalysts for shifts toward new and more culturally informed paradigms. Multiple studies have shown how phenomena previously presumed to be universal, such as the fundamental attribution error and the Müller-Lyer illusion, are actually moderated by cultural variables. Furthermore, some researchers have argued that the replicability of our effects could be improved through more comprehensive theories that include hypotheses about cultural and experimental intermediary variables. Thus, individual and organized efforts to strengthen psychological science can benefit from international and cross-cultural research

integration and collaboration.

What Students Can Do

Participating in a cultural exchange is an excellent way of achieving a deeper understanding of psychological processes. Cultural exchanges can help us become more aware of our own cultural biases and allow us to obtain new perspectives on our research and the world. Fortunately, whether you are an undergraduate or graduate student, there are opportunities for you to experience psychology from the vantage point of other cultures. Some of the most prestigious study-abroad programs include the Fulbright grants, managed by the US Department of State, and the Erasmus Programme, managed by the European Union. For students interested in experiencing “non-Western” cultures, the Fulbright program in particular has a wide variety of host countries available for students to experience.

Alternatively, if these immersive and somewhat lengthy programs do not fit your needs, there are shorter and more focused options. For example, some of the specialized psychological societies (e.g., the European Association of Social Psychology) offer summer school exchange programs and international teaching fellowships. Moreover, many universities have additional cultural exchange opportunities available, and APS offers the aforementioned Postdoc Exchange, through which early-career psychologists can go abroad to continue their research training after graduate school.

Cultural exchanges can be a valuable tool for advancing a global understanding of psychological science, but becoming a global scholar involves much more than studying abroad. Some of our cultural biases are subtle and hard to identify, and this problem calls for a frequent reexamination of our own assumptions. Matsumoto and Jones recommend cross-cultural and international collaborations as a way to potentially avoid ethnocentric conclusions.

Reading journals published outside of the US (as well as US journals that value cross-cultural research) can also be a helpful tool for understanding other points of view and cultivating new research ideas. Furthermore, those who know more than one language can read an even wider variety of articles and help disseminate those findings by incorporating them into research (i.e., citing or replicating the findings and extending them to other populations).

Additionally, attending international conferences can provide insight into what others around the world are investigating, which may even lead to the establishment of cross-cultural research collaborations. Students can also support and participate in organized efforts to make psychology a more global discipline. For example, the [Open Science Framework](#) is currently working on various international replication projects in which students can become collaborators. I also encourage students to take a look at the opportunities that APS offers in this respect and to learn how to get involved (e.g., see www.psychologicalscience.org/global).

Students From Developing and Non-Research-Intensive Countries

Students from developing nations or countries without a research-based academic curriculum face unique challenges in their attempts to become valued members of the international community of psychological scholars. As a student from a developing nation (the Dominican Republic), I have

encountered some of these obstacles in my journey to becoming a researcher. Many of these challenges start with graduate school applications. For instance, although equally as capable as students from developed countries, many students from developing nations have limited access to the resources necessary to obtain admission to graduate programs in developed countries (e.g., funds, access to participants and research experiences, recommendations from doctoral-level professionals, etc.). While this is clearly an obstacle for students who seek a career in scientific research (with many of their home nations not offering doctoral-level research programs), it also limits the import of these underrepresented perspectives into host countries, and into psychological science at large. In light of these issues, here is some advice for students from developing countries who are thinking of applying to graduate school (particularly in the US):

Make good use of online resources. Inform yourself about the requirements of graduate programs, and explore different alternatives to meet these expectations.

Apply for international scholarships. You do not need to wait until graduating from college to do this. For example, receiving the US State Department's Global Undergraduate Exchange Program scholarship allowed me to spend an academic year in the US, interact with passionate and knowledgeable faculty, and acquire some very useful research skills. There are also many graduate-level programs you can apply to, including the previously mentioned Fulbright and Erasmus scholarships.

Consider getting a master's degree before applying to PhD programs. Completing a terminal master's program before applying to PhD programs has the potential to greatly improve your chances of admission and make you a more competent scientist. Furthermore, working with other labs before entering a PhD program will provide you with a wider network of contacts and additional perspectives from mentors and collaborators. Some masters programs are even fully (or at least partially) funded, making it possible for low-income students to obtain the degree.

Participate in the [APS Mentorship program](#), which allows undergraduates from all over the world to receive mentorship and career advice from experienced graduate students.

Recognize and leverage your unique cultural experiences to your advantage. As an international student you can potentially bring underrepresented perspectives into psychology and your university. Be aware of this strength, and don't be afraid to share the ways in which your environment has informed your views and research.

Concluding Remarks

The study of human psychological processes and behaviors must be approached as an international and integrative endeavor. As students, we can begin working towards building a stronger psychology by participating in cultural exchanges and becoming aware of alternative perspectives. We should not wait for others to think about and test how our scientific findings would fare in different situations and populations. It's important that we are all actively involved in the development of theories and programs that foster a more replicable and generalizable psychological science.

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