

Toward One World of Psychological Science

July 01, 2000

Editor's Note: In the May/June issue, a column by Bjork and Ceci listed several individuals involved in developing reports for APS's new journal, *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*. The editorial team led by Keith Raynor (investigating the question "what is the most effective way to teach reading for various types of learners?") also includes Barbara Foorman.

My setting, as I write this column, differs wildly from my office at UCLA, and not just because there is a complete absence of clutter. I am in my room at the *Kloster Seeon*, a monastery in Bavaria that has been converted to a retreat and conference center. The monastery, which dates back to 999, is stunning, both in its architecture and in its physical setting, which was once an island but is now a peninsula of land that juts out into Lake Secon.

I am not at the *Kloster* (Cloister) to be rejuvenated or healed, although I must admit to hoping that just being in this serene setting might have some such consequences. Rather, I am here to attend a Final Colloquium on Information Processing in Social Context, co-organized by Klaus Fiedler and Fritz Strack. The attendees, with the exception of a few guests, including myself, are participants in a six-year *Schwerpunkt* (focused research) program funded by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*, Germany's National Science Foundation.

Attending this conference has underscored for me the speed at which we are moving towards one world of psychological science. Geographical borders are no longer what group us as behavioral scientists. It is our issues, methods, values, and theoretical or applied goals that define us and create kindred spirits and collaborators. Even language is losing the power to separate us. Owing to a combination of factors, English is becoming the language of our science.

The speakers at this conference, who are mostly gifted young investigators from Germany and other nearby European countries, are all presenting their work in English—effortlessly, or so it seems to me. They also seem completely conversant with the research literature worldwide that is of relevance to their work.

This conference is but one of many signs that we are moving rapidly towards a single world of psychological science. During the last couple of years of my term as editor of *Psychological Review*, for example, about 40 percent of the submissions came from outside the United States. Bi-national and multinational research funding has been created by various organizations. Scientific societies in different countries, such as the European Association for Experimental Social Psychology and the Society for Experimental Social Psychology in the United States, have held or are planning joint meetings. The Western Psychological Association is holding its 200 I meeting in Hawaii as part of an effort to foster relationships with scientists and societies in Pacific-rim countries. And so forth.

The influence of the Internet, of course, cannot be overstated. It has fostered and fueled collaboration

and communication among researchers and scholars around the world in a way that would have simply been unthinkable several decades ago.

As I see it, the move toward one world of psychological science can only invigorate our field and speed our finding answers to the basic research questions that motivate us—questions that transcend geographic borders. It is an exciting and energizing development. Issues having to do with the application of psychological science also transcend borders. One reason I was invited to this conference is that the attendees wanted to hear about *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, our Society's new journal.

In Europe, as in North America, there is a growing recognition that the best of psychological science is a societal resource—and that we have an obligation to find vehicles, such as *PSPI*, to communicate our findings and their implications in ways that inform the public and public policies.

As President of APS, I would like to see our Society take concrete and innovative steps towards the goal of becoming a more international society. The values and goals that unite *us* as members of APS are not unique to residents of North America.

The Board of Directors shares that sentiment. Multiple initiatives, such as creating an international Fellows program, are being considered or being implemented, and we have taken steps to make the Society a visible presence at the International Congress of Psychology in Stockholm.

Last year when we were considering whether to change our Society's name (but not its initials), many advocates argued that "Association for Psychological Science" is a less parochial name that would foster our efforts to become a truly international society.

It was a close vote, but that and other arguments failed to convince enough members of our Society to favor such a change, so we remain the American Psychological Society. But the fact that "American" is nested within "APS" should not deter us from making APS a home for psychologists worldwide who share the values and goals that are the foundation of APS.