

**The what, why, and how of advancing psychology internationally for all:
Remarks from a Panel Discussion at the 2023 CPA Convention**

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Members of the CPA take many routes to engaging with psychology outside our national borders: as visiting academics, as research collaborators, as advocates for human rights and social justice, as students of cross-cultural psychology, and as science diplomats representing Canada in international scientific bodies. The CPA contributes corporately to global psychology through formal roles in the Global Psychology Alliance, the Psychology Coalition at the United Nations, the International Union for Psychological Science, and the International Relations Committee. International psychology is all of these things and more. This panel discussion, held at the CPA 2023 Annual Convention in Toronto, featured speakers with collectively several decades of experience in this work, who spoke to the opportunities, challenges, and rewards of taking these paths to professional fulfilment. We developed this article for *Psygnature* to share their remarks with a wider audience than was able to attend on the day.

Jennifer Veitch is the Chair of the CPA International Relations Committee and a former Chair of the Canadian National Committee for the International Union of Psychological Science. She also serves in other international scientific unions in leadership roles.

I co-ordinated this panel discussion in the hopes of inspiring others to become engaged internationally. It's been a joy in my life to encounter and to work with people from many other countries on research and advocacy. Encountering broader perspectives enriched my professional life by inspiring new ideas and in the process I made good friends all over.

There are many ways for CPA members, students included, to become formally involved in this work – including by joining the committee I chair, the International Relations Committee. We currently have room for several new members. Your e-mails of interest are most welcome!

John Berry is a Professor Emeritus in Psychology at Queen's University, a long-time affiliate of several overseas universities, and a former Delegate for Canada to the International Union of Psychological Science. He received the CPA Gold Medal Award in 2022, the CPA Award for the

International Advancement of Psychology in 2012, and will receive the IUPsyS Lifetime Achievement Award in July 2024.

“There’s a whole world out there.”

“You can’t be international before you are national.”

These two statements were used to introduce students in my cross-cultural psychology course at Queen’s to the possibilities of doing international work in psychology.

The first statement was meant to raise students’ horizons above and beyond the usual americrap news, TV and films that overwhelmed their views of the world, and that had dominated their courses in psychology and other disciplines. I wanted them to think about the whole world, rather than be limited to one small corner of it.

The second statement was meant to convey the view that everyone needs to be rooted in an understanding of their own place in the cultural world as a basis for understanding others. All action starts somewhere, and it is necessary to understand one’s starting point. Our perspectives and biases, and those of others, need to be examined and challenged in order to do international work.

The field of psychology is related to these two statements because I consider psychology is both culture-blind and culture-bound: It is rooted in, and is limited in scope to, western Euroamerican concepts and samples.

The field of cross-cultural and international psychology is a perspective and movement that attempts to correct these two limitations by examining human behaviour in many cultural contexts. The goal is to eventually understand the common basic processes of all humankind, by sampling widely across all cultural expressions.

Josephine Tan served as the President of the International Council of Psychologists in 2021 and 2022, and is the current Past President (2023 and 2024). She is a clinical psychologist and a faculty member at Lakehead University, with research interests spanning health issues viewed through a gender and cultural lens. She is the 2024 recipient of the CPA Award for Outstanding Achievement in International Psychology.

I will start off by describing my journey into international psychology. I have always been interested in cultural psychology because of the differences in perspectives on many topics (e.g., mental health, parenting and attachment, compliance with authority, etc.) between my ethnic culture (Malaysian Chinese) and my education in psychology that is Euro-centric. Cultural psychology was on the fringe and clinical psychology was “the thing” when I was a clinical psychology graduate student and starting my professional career back in the 1990’s. So, I became interested in mental health issues among Canadian Indigenous peoples as that was the closest that I could come to studying cultural influences in clinical psychology. My clinical work with First Nations residential school survivors and my research with the Nunavut crisis line for Inuit cemented my path into cultural clinical psychology.

I also started attending psychology conferences in the US regularly, and occasionally in other countries, in the early part of this century. This resulted in my getting connected with American psychologists. I became active in APA and with their divisions. The Americans were increasingly interested in psychology and Indigenous peoples, and I found an outlet for my work in the US and among psychologists who were involved in the UN, and with the International Council of Psychologists (ICP). I became active in the ICP which was more into international psychology before the COVID pandemic. Just before the pandemic and during the pandemic, which was around the time when I became the ICP President-Elect and eventually its President, the ICP was working on establishing its unique identity from other psychological associations around the world. To this end, the ICP became known as the international psychological association that focuses on issues relating to human rights and social justice. Under my presidency, we developed and ratified a 5-year strategic plan to guide the organization through to 2026. We also sought to increase and diversify the membership and the Board.

The professional path that I have taken has resulted in my inter-related interests and activities in Indigenous and cultural clinical psychology, diversity and social justice. The bridging across different areas has greatly helped me to see how different fields are connected and to avoid a “silo” mentality. I think it has helped me to be more willing to question and think critically, to engage in dialectical thinking, to be more curious, and to ask more interesting questions (or questions that are interesting to me).

Psychology has always wanted to be a discipline that can have a positive impact on society. Unfortunately, we are often overlooked and left out of consultation by policy-makers and decision-makers in the government. Psychological organizations in different countries are trying to change that by working together on issues of global concern, many of which are reflected in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, there are many opportunities for international psychologists to make a positive difference. However, it is important to appreciate that psychology is not a one-size-fits all type of discipline, even though it has a long history of promoting itself as just that.

There are several challenges that I have encountered in my work, but I treat the challenges as opportunities to find potential answers. A few examples of the challenges are:

- Understanding what international psychology is about – is it simply a matter of exporting Eurocentric-psychology to other countries, and perhaps making some surface adaptations to the local population? Pushbacks from psychologists who work in decolonizing psychology and Indigenous psychology all over the world would say no.
- I am a little concerned that decolonizing and Indigenous psychologies might “split” our discipline into factions. I see their value, but I think that inasmuch as we want to avoid imposing a Eurocentric psychology on the world, we also need to look for what binds us together, how we are similar, what the universal principles of psychology might be.
- I also wonder whether decolonizing and Indigenous psychologies might end up “excluding” people from doing work in this area (or people might choose to self-exclude) because they are not from the “right” heritage or background, and thus might not understand or might bring colonizing perspectives into their work. Passions can flare up when working in this area especially when the work relates to human rights and social justice, and unregulated passion can lead to misunderstanding and division.

- Training students in international psychology – our present curriculum does not easily permit students to learn and be active in international psychology. We need to identify essential courses and role models, and finding research and scholarly opportunities and funding for students to link up with their peers and psychologists in other countries
- Working with colleagues and students from other cultures and countries requires accepting and understanding that there are differences in the way that people relate to one another, the way they approach their work or collaborate, and so on. This comes from having greater exposure to different cultures and nationalities.

Gary Latham is a Past President of the Canadian Psychological Association, the first non-American to be elected President of the Society for Industrial-Organizational Psychology (SIOP), and a Past President of Work and Organizational Psychology - Division of the International Association of Applied Psychology. As President of SIOP he was a founder of the Alliance for Organizational Psychology, an collaboration between major professional associations in the field, including CPA's section CSIOP, with the aim "to bring everyone around the globe to ... a virtual 'big tent', facilitating understanding [and] communication".

Albert Bandura, a former honorary president of CPA, developed a triadic theory of reciprocal determinism that explains the necessity of examining the interrelationships among person variables, the person's behavior, and the person's environment in order to further advance the field of psychology. Industrial-organizational (I-O) psychologists in the 20th century excelled in conducting theoretically empirically driven research on the first two of these three variables regarding employees. Arguably, we have not done as well with the third variable despite the fact that voluminous laboratory experiments conducted by the behaviorists showed that the environment influences behavior. Cross-cultural psychologists, such as John Berry, have shown that human behavior is shaped by cultural contexts in which one developed. The take-away here is that a manager and an employee, especially in a multi-cultural country such as Canada need to understand the culturally based behaviors of one another. Yet the applications of present findings of I-O psychology research are largely restricted to the West. Hence, I urge CPA's I-O psychologists to become involved in our International Interest Group where at the very least we will be exposed to perspectives different from our own.