

# Leading the way

**Hispanic psychologists in APA leadership positions are helping psychology adapt to major U.S. demographic changes.**

**BY LEA WINERMAN**  
*Monitor staff*

As the Hispanic population of the United States skyrockets, psychology has work to do to keep pace with that growth. But there is evidence that the work has begun: A number of Hispanic psychologists are leading efforts to provide culturally competent care (see page 58) and ensure that the field is open to all ethnic-minority students (see page 68). The following psychologists—all in APA leadership roles—provide six examples.

**Patricia Arredondo, EdD  
Chair, Board for the  
Advancement of Psychology  
in the Public Interest (BAPPI)**

Patricia Arredondo has spent her career working to increase diversity in businesses, universities and other organizations. In 1985, after leaving the counseling faculty at Boston University, Arredondo founded a Boston-based consulting company called Empowerment Workshops. The company worked with organizations as varied as banks, retailers and mental health clinics that wanted to attract and keep a more diverse work force and change their organization's climate toward minorities.

In 1999, she returned to academia as a psychology professor at Arizona State University, and this month she will take on the newly created role of associate vice president and senior adviser for university initiatives at the

school.

At Arizona state, she's focused on studying the persistence of ethnic-minority students in higher education—how to ensure that students who start graduate and undergraduate programs are able to complete them.

In both the business and the academic world, Arredondo says, increasing diversity has moved beyond simply recruiting a more diverse group of workers or students to look at the barriers those students and workers face and the support they're provided.

"It's key to have some deliberate services and resources in place for people who come into a new system where they've been underrepresented—either women, sexual minorities or ethnic minorities," Arredondo says. "Those might be academic resources, or social, or mentoring—all of those are important."

Arredondo, who also studies multicultural counseling competencies, was influenced by her own experiences growing up as a daughter of Mexican immigrants in Lorain, Ohio, which had a small Hispanic population at the time. She also was one of the few Latina students in her college and graduate school programs.

"I don't always wear my Latina status on my sleeve," she says "but it definitely has been a strong influence in my moving in this direction."

Arredondo also says that she's grateful that she's had the chance to work as BAPPI chair, on diversity issues as well as on topics like socioeconomic status and other social-justice issues.

"BAPPI is a focal point for social justice concerns," she says, "but these



**Dr. Patricia Arredondo works to help businesses and universities attract and retain ethnic minorities.**

issues are not just public interest issues; they can't be relegated to just one directorate. APA as a whole is doing some wonderful social-justice work."

**Guillermo Bernal, PhD  
Co-chair, Ethnic Minority  
Caucus of APA's Council of  
Representatives**

When Guillermo Bernal entered the clinical psychology graduate program at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, in 1972, he found that he was the first and only Hispanic student in the program. Bernal, who was born in Cuba and raised in New Jersey, studied family interactions. He was interested in studying Hispanic families, and even wrote up a proposal to do so for his dissertation.

"But at the time, I didn't have a mentor who was interested in that," he says. So Bernal shelved the topic and wrote his dissertation on couples' interactions instead.

Several years later, though, he got his chance. He moved to the



**Dr. Guillermo Bernal studies depression in adolescents at the University of Puerto Rico.**

University of California, San Francisco, psychiatry department and was given the task of developing psychological services for the ethnic-minority groups that the university hospital served—including Latinos. One of his first decisions was to separate patients into units according to the languages they spoke, so that they could receive services without translators. "It seems like the minimum thing to do," he says, "but at the time there was a lot of resistance."

**"I think ideas, like cultural diversity, that were always at the heart of Div. 27 are now at the heart of psychology in general."**

*Ana Mari Cauce  
University of Washington*

Bernal has continued to work in the Hispanic community ever since. In 1986, he moved to the University of Puerto Rico. Doing psychological research in a Spanish-speaking context,

he says, has some challenges—including finding adequate psychological measures.

"You have to develop or translate most measures and instruments from English, and then test their psychometric properties to ensure they're equivalent to the original instrument," he explains.

As co-chair of the Ethnic Minority Caucus, Bernal says, his job is to ensure that ethnic-minority interests are heard in APA's Council of Representatives—as they were two years ago, for example, when APA adopted guidelines on multicultural education and training.

Right now, he says, the council is working to increase ethnic-minority representation at all levels of APA governance.

"My hope is that we can work to help shape a psychology that is more reflective of the diversity of contemporary society in terms of race, ethnicity, language, gender, sexual orientation and disabilities," he says. "Such a psychology will be in a position to respond to changing social needs."

**Ana Mari Cauce, PhD  
President,  
Div. 27  
(Community  
Psychology)**

Ana Mari Cauce first became interested in community psychology as an undergraduate at the University of Miami. Cauce—who emigrated from Cuba to the United States when she was 3 years old—found a work-study job with a professor who was translating the Stanford-Binet intelligence test for the Cuban population.



**Dr. Ana Mari Cauce says that the current wave of immigration from Latin America and Asia will shape the United States as much as the last wave, from Europe in the 19th century, did.**

The work drew her, she says, into the field of community psychology. "My first publication was on intelligence testing in Latino populations," she says, "and there were just about zero publication venues for work like that at the time. There was a sense of 'who's really interested in this little group?' But it ended up getting published in the *American Journal of Community Psychology*."

Over the past few decades, Cauce says, mainstream psychology has come around. "I think ideas, like cultural diversity, that were always at the heart of Div. 27 are now at the heart of psychology in general," she says.

Cauce herself has stayed in community and clinical psychology. Now, as the chair of the psychology department at the University of Washington, she studies at-risk adolescents—particularly homeless teens and those who've grown up in abusive families.

She also hopes to begin a large-scale study in collaboration with sociologist Rand Conger, PhD, of the University of California, Davis, that will follow a cohort of first- and second-generation Latino youths through adolescence.

"What I've always enjoyed about psychology," Cauce says, "is that it appeals to both my head—the ideas and intellectual stimulation—and to my heart."



**Dr. Lillian Comas-Diaz often works with immigrant and international clients in her general private practice in Washington, D.C.**

**Lillian Comas-Diaz, PhD  
President-elect, Div. 42  
(Independent Practice)**

As the president-elect of Div. 42 (Independent Practice), Lillian Comas-Diaz says that she wants to encourage psychologists to incorporate culturally diverse therapeutic approaches into private practices.

"Traditional and indigenous cultures have rich healing traditions that we can benefit from," she says.

Also, she says, she wants to encourage more culturally diverse professional psychology students to consider private practice as a viable option.

"Doing private practice liberated me in many ways—it gave me more autonomy and flexibility," says Comas-Diaz, who is also a clinical professor in the George Washington University Department of Psychiatry. And, she adds, the need for a more culturally competent work force of private practitioners is growing as society becomes increasingly multicultural.

"More people from different cultures will want psychotherapy, and will

expect psychotherapists who are proficient in multicultural psychology," she says.

Comas-Diaz was born in Chicago to parents who had migrated from Puerto Rico. She spent her early childhood in Illinois, but when she was 6 years old her family moved back to Puerto Rico.

"I had to deal with issues of cultural and language adjustment very early," she says.

She stayed in Puerto Rico through college and a master's degree in clinical psychology, and then moved to the mainland to complete her doctorate at the University of Massachusetts and then work in an inner-city community mental health clinic in Connecticut—another cultural adjustment.

Those personal experiences have helped shape her professional career, Comas-Diaz says. She has developed a career researching and writing about how culture, gender, social class and mental health

intersect, as well as practicing multicultural psychotherapy. She has directed a Hispanic clinic at the Yale School of Medicine, directed APA's Office of Ethnic-Minority Affairs during the mid-1980s and helped found the APA journal *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*.

Now, she says, in her general private practice in Washington D.C., she also works with immigrants, people of color, Americans who have lived abroad and international clients—everyone from couples who come from different cultural backgrounds, to immigrants from Arab countries who are dealing with society's biases against them.

"Cultural adaptation requires energy, creativity and time," she says. "You have to learn to coordinate your cultural values with a different environment."

**Cynthia de las Fuentes, PhD  
President-elect, Div. 35  
(Society for the  
Psychology of Women)**

As president-elect of Div. 35 (Society for the Psychology of Women), Cynthia de las Fuentes says that she wants to reach out to younger women and to women of color by expanding the definition of feminism so that it's relevant to their lives. Many young women, she says, take for granted that the women's movement has accomplished its goals—like equal pay for women, or reproductive rights—and don't realize that there is still work to be done. They also don't identify with old stereotypes of feminism and feminists.

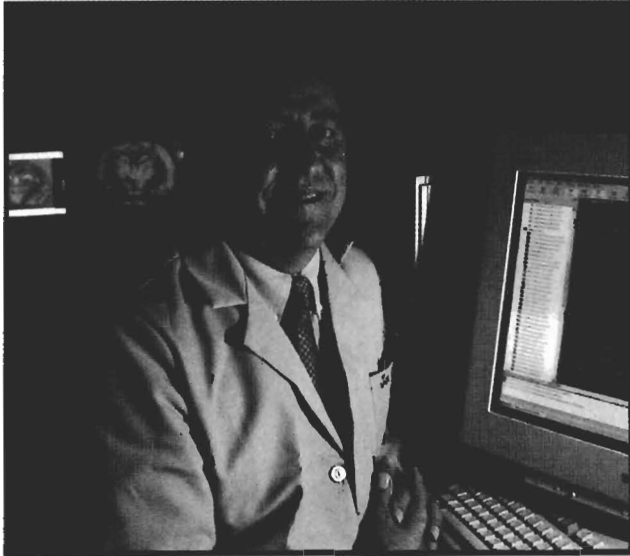
"In some ways," she says, "I think feminism has sometimes become the 'f-word' to these women."

De las Fuentes wants to change that. A psychology professor at Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio, she studies both multicultural psychology and the psychology of women, and how those two areas interact. Her mentor in this area, she says, was psychologist Melba J.T. Vasquez, PhD, a former president of Div. 35.

"She was working in the counseling center at UT—Austin when I was in graduate school there," de las Fuentes says, "And she just took me under her



**Dr. Cynthia de las Fuentes studies both feminist and multicultural psychology. She sees those two areas becoming more inclusive of each other.**



**Dr. Joe Martinez has balanced a career in neuroscience with a lifelong interest in multicultural psychology.**

wing." De las Fuentes says she's interested in learning about people's intersecting identities, like female and Latina, and how the two work together. This area of study, she says, has become more accepted in recent years.

"You would think that all feminists would be multiculturalists," she says, "but in the past that hasn't always been true. And conversely, the history of multicultural psychology has sometimes excluded women." But, she says, she believes that is changing now, particularly as more women with intersecting identities become active in APA.

### **Joe L. Martinez, PhD** **Associate editor,** **American Psychologist**

Joe Martinez's long career that has straddled two fields: neuroscience and multicultural psychology. Martinez, whose doctorate is in physiological psychology, is a neuroscience professor at the University of Texas at San Antonio and the director of the Cajal Neuroscience Institute there. His more than 200 published papers focus on the neurobiology of learning and memory.

"What we're trying to do," he says, "is understand how the brain stores information—how do memories become permanent?"

Throughout his career as a neuroscientist, though, Martinez has also maintained an interest in making psy-

chology a more multicultural field. He says that when he received his doctorate in 1970, there weren't many Hispanic psychologists with PhDs.

He became involved in the fledgling "Chicano psychology" field, helping to organize conferences and, in 1977, editing the book *Chicano Psychology*, which included research by Mexican-American psychologists in areas like bilingual education

and culturally sensitive mental health services.


Martinez continued to do research on acculturation throughout his time as a biopsychology professor at the

University of California, Berkeley, in the 1980s and 1990s—but, he says, always more as a hobby than a vocation.

More recently, Martinez has combined the two strands of his career by mentoring ethnic-minority students in neuroscience. In fact, he received the 2003 Award for Education in Neuroscience from the Association of Neuroscience Departments and Programs. He directs the Summer Program in Neuroscience, Ethics and Survival at the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Mass., part of APA's Minority Fellowship Program in Neuroscience.

The program, Martinez says, gives students a chance to meet role models—successful minority neuroscientists—and learn "survival skills" like grant writing and how to get a postdoctoral position.

"It's been going on for 18 years," Martinez says, "and many alumni say it's one of the most significant things they've done in their career." Ψ



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ignorance

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