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Abstract

This chapter describes and analyzes the historical development of psychology in Colombia from its beginning to the present, including its future perspectives. The social and cultural context of the country is presented, with its fundamental characteristics. The psychological ideas that have been developed in Colombia are analyzed, beginning with *indigenous psychologies* and continuing with the influence of the ideas originating from Europe during the Spanish Colonial period, as well as during Independence, the formative period, and the present situation. Psychology as a science and psychology as a profession have been developed in Colombia starting from the second half of the 20th century. The role of psychology in the understanding and solution of social issues is outlined here. The main areas of psychological work and scientific research, the journals published in the country, the conceptual frames of reference of Colombian psychology, and the challenges and problems that it faces, along with the future perspective are described. Colombian psychologists and psychologists of Latin America and of the developing world in general, seek to obtain a delicate balance between a scientific psychology with general universal laws and a psychology that is relevant for the social and cultural context of the country.

Keywords: Colombia, indigenous psychologies, research, professional developments, social commitment, perspective, Latin American psychology

Psychology as a science and as a profession in Colombia has a long tradition. It begins with the ideas held by primitive settlers of the territory concerning topics that we now refer to as psychological, and continues with psychology as practiced during the Spanish Colony, Independence, the Republic, and the social changes of the 19th and 20th centuries, to the present. As a profession in the modern sense, Colombian psychology goes back to 1947, with the first professional training program at the National University of Colombia, predating most countries of Latin America and many others around the globe.

This long tradition as a branch of learning and as a profession explains why psychology in Colombia is a field with a great number of university students,

a great number of professionals in practice, and numerous research and application fields (see Ardila, 1973, 1993, 2004). There are approximately 36,000 professional psychologists and approximately 34,000 psychology students, and 140 professional training programs at the university level, in a country of 44.7 million inhabitants.

Colombian psychology was greatly influenced by European psychology, including the experimental psychology of Wundt, Weber, Fechner, Ebbinghaus, and their successors. In the first stage of psychology as a profession in Colombia, psychotechnics was preminent. Psychotechnics was the name given in to psychotechnology (applied psychology) in Europe, particularly in Spain, and was especially focused on the construction and use of psychological

tests and in the assessment and evaluation of psychological processes. Psychoanalysis, especially Freudian and Lacanian soon appeared; however, it was not as influential and decisive in Colombia as it was in the Southern Cone of South America, in particular in Argentina.

The appearance of behavior analysis was more recent, beginning approximately in 1970. Basic-level studies; the founding of experimental psychology laboratories with an emphasis on operant behavior; psychological applications in diverse fields such as clinical (behavior therapy), educational (behavior analysis applied to education), industrial/organizational (organizational behavior analysis), social (cultural design), and conceptual fields, led to new perspectives in psychology (see Oyuela, 2008).

Psychology in Colombia developed research at a basic level, along with laboratories, professional journals, research programs, and theories, as well as fields of application and professional advances in these areas of application (education, work, sports, law, clinical and health, forensic, advertising). In addition, new contributions have been made in areas such as violence, peace, poverty, and the role of psychological factors in national development. Colombia's unique social and cultural background served as inspiration.

Today, Colombian psychology has achieved a great critical mass, with many conceptual and methodological reference frameworks, a great deal of basic and applied research, and a great number of application fields. The influence of traditional European psychology has diminished in the last decades (except that of Spain) and the influence of U.S. psychology has increased. Relations with Spain have increased and, in general, connections at an inter-American and Latin American levels have grown. Colombian psychology still lacks growth into the international (global) arena.

This chapter analyzes psychology in Colombia from the perspective of its development, both as a scientific discipline and an applied field: the social and cultural context in which it appeared and diversified; research issues and research fields; scientific journals, conventions, and publications; professional organizations and their vicissitudes; the creation of a code of professional ethics for Colombian psychologists; topics related to training at undergraduate and graduate levels; and the future perspective of Colombian psychology in national, Latin American, inter-American, and global contexts. First all, we look at the country and its geographic and demographic characteristics.

Colombia: The Country and the People

Colombia is located in northwestern South America. It has coasts on the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. The Amazon River is located in the south of the country. The geographic area of the country is 1,138,914 km² (439,737 sq mi). The population is 44.7 millions (in 2009), which makes it the third largest Latin American nation in population, after Brazil and Mexico. Colombia borders Panama, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, and Venezuela. The capital city is Bogotá, which has approximately 6 million inhabitants. Other important cities are Medellín, Barranquilla, Cali, Cartagena, and Bucaramanga. The country is named for Christopher Columbus, one European discoverer of the New World. See El Tiempo (2007).

Several ethnic groups coexist in Colombia. The country is racially varied: 64% of the population is *mestizo* (white-Indian), 22% white, 4% Afro-Colombian, 6.5% *mulato* (white-Afro-Colombian), and 3.5% Indians (i.e., native Americans). The majority of the culture comes from Spanish tradition; it is a predominantly urban Western culture, but it coexists with diverse cultural groups and diverse subcultures. Colombia is a multiethnic and multicultural country. The main language is Spanish. The predominant religion is Roman Catholic: 92% of the population has been baptized in that religion and 61% affirms to be practicing Catholics. Other religious groups have increased their importance: Protestants, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Jews, and others account for small percentages of the population; 6% of the population affirms not to belong to any religion.

The demography has changed from rural to urban in the last five decades, and at the moment 76% of the population live in urban areas. The rate of illiteracy is 5.8%, which means that 94.2% of the population can read and write. There are differences between the urban and rural areas. Educational coverage has improved considerably in recent years. Approximately 94% of children have access to elementary education, and the goal is to increase this coverage. Basic education is free and mandatory. Educational levels are preschool, elementary, and high school, spanning 11 years. Next is the university level, with technical, technological, and professional modalities.

Colombia greatly values education, which is reflected in the large number of colleges and universities. Great importance is given to the arts and humanities, and only in the last decades to science and technology. Colombia has a tradition of good

language use, being a homeland of writers and men and women of letters and, in addition, to plastic artists.

Because of the quite varied geography (Andean mountains, two coasts, Eastern plains, tropical, subtropical, and high and cold regions), social and cultural development has been very uneven. Most of the population inhabits cities located in the Andes Mountains and in some of the semitropical valleys. Colombia is a country of regions, with several subcultures that influence its psychology and socioeconomic development. It is a country in which life in urban areas is very different from that in rural areas.

There exists a great economic disparity and noticeable differences between social classes. The middle class has been growing, but division still exists between classes in relation to wealth. The percentage of people who live below the poverty line is approximately 40%, comparable to that of other Latin American countries. This is an extremely high percentage, which implies a great loss of human resources and human potential. Governmental and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) fight for the reduction of poverty.

Psychological Ideas

Throughout history, in the territory of present-day Colombia, many native groups existed, including the Muiscas, Taironas, Caribbeans, Tolimas, Kunas, and others. In all of them have been found ideas related to the human being, family, child-rearing practices, the life cycle, old age, the way to know the world, sexuality, how we learn, how people relate to others, the normal and the abnormal, relationships between genders, harmony between people, and death and the afterlife.

Such ideas were part of the worldview of diverse native cultures before the arrival of the Europeans. It was a traditional knowledge, transmitted orally from one generation to the next, teaching how to understand the world, understand human beings and their society, and interpret the events that happened. This "primitive man as a philosopher" surprised the Spanish colonizers, who sought to Christianize the native people and put an end to their myths in order to "civilize them." Studies of these indigenous psychologies are based on observations that European colonizers made and registered; colonizers who saw the New World from their Eurocentric perspective. They are also based on current observations of little-Westernized native groups. Because it is not possible to carry out completely

valid and reliable research on these pre-Columbian ideas, what we know about the psychological ideas of the primitive inhabitants of the Americas (and of other parts of the world) is quite fragmentary.

The Spaniards brought their own worldview, philosophy, and psychology to the Americas. These were based on Christian ideas, especially Thomistic ideals. The philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas and the psychological implications of such a philosophy were the center of intellectual activity in the universities of the New World. In Colombia, the earliest universities are St. Thomas University, Rosario University, and Javeriana University, all of them founded in the 16th century and run by religious communities. These universities were founded shortly after the Universities of Peru, Mexico, and Santo Domingo, the first universities of the Americas.

The period of Spanish colonialism continued from approximately 1500 to 1810. Lasting more than three centuries, it is the longest period in the history of Colombia and in other Latin American countries. During this extensive period, institutions were created and the influence of Spain was consolidated, with along with its religion, philosophy, language, laws, social structures, production systems, economy, science, and technology.

A very interesting figure of this period was José Celestino Mutis (1732–1808). He was born in Cadiz (Spain) and died in Santa Fe (Bogotá, Colombia). Mutis was a scientist of international importance who completed research work in botany, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, pharmacology, and other areas. He arrived in *Nueva Granada* (Colombia) as a physician for the Viceroy Pedro Messía de la Zerma, and he organized a botanical expedition to classify the plants of the country, their taxonomy, use, etc. He also introduced the ideas of Copernicus and the new scientific movements, first at Rosario University and soon after in the rest of the country. He assembled a group of young scientists who made the first steps in Colombian science.

One of the pioneers of psychology in Colombia is Francisco José de Caldas (1768–1816). He was a pupil of Mutis and espoused the ideas of Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859); he wrote about national character, giving special importance to the influence of climate on behavior. His work *Del Influxo del Clima sobre los Seres Organizados* (*On the Influence of Climate on Organized Beings*, 1808) is probably the first psychological research work done in Colombia. Caldas was also an astronomer, geographer, and naturalist in the broadest sense

of the 19th century. His research was well-known in Europe[See Caldas (1808/1966)].

19th-century Psychology in Colombia

The period of independence from Spain took place between 1810 and 1819 and was characterized by a bloody war led by Simón Bolívar. After the creation of the new Republic, the country tried to break all cultural ties with Spain and instead imported the most advanced ideas from France and England. During the 19th century, the ideas of Jeremy Bentham, J. J. Rousseau, the French Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution were implanted, and everything was done to eradicate what had come from Spain. These changes were carried out in education, including the in the universities, and within the faculties of philosophy, law, and medicine, which was where psychological subjects were most often taught. The psychology of the new republic sought to free itself of Thomist influence and instead move nearer to British empiricism and associationism. Positivism as a conceptual system had a great influence in education, philosophy, and the social organization of all new Latin American nations.

The 19th century in Colombia was a period of great philosophical fervor and of important transformations in society. It was also important in the rest of Latin America and in most of the world. In Colombia, it was centered on the way to free the new nation from Spanish colonial influence and modernize the country. The conflicts between liberal and conservative ideas, between the secular perception of society and the Catholic perception, were fundamental.

The influence of Spain for more than three centuries, between 1492 (discovery), and 1819 (independence), was very important. Spain had introduced an authoritarian regime based on beliefs and Catholic values. It affirmed that a natural order existed in the universe, under which exploitation, oppression, and slavery were justified. Submission to the king and his will was the core of the laws. In addition, the human being had to suffer, pass through a "valley of tears" to reach redemption in the afterlife. This Spanish tradition was deeply rooted in the new republics that obtained their independence from Spain during the first decades of the 19th century, and Colombia (formerly called New Granada) was one of the republics most oriented toward the Spanish culture. The Roman Catholic religion and the Spanish language were considered the backbone of the nation.

In this agitated political turmoil of the 19th century, with its urgent quest to modernize the country, to steer it toward Europe (especially toward England and France), the question was what to do with Spanish tradition. The formation of the state and the incorporation of individuals into the new model of society and its social organization were core ideas at the time, and the dilemma of continuing with Spanish tradition or abolishing it completely caused many struggles and conflicts.

Liberal and conservative ideas acquired very radical and extreme features in Colombia. Liberal philosophy was individualistic, modern, centered in science, industrialization, and in the ability of people to change the society. Conservative philosophical views on the other hand, were respectful of tradition, the Spanish legacy, the mandates of the Catholic religion, and the maintenance of social order. Topics like universal free and mandatory education, the death penalty, the role of religion in politics and education, caused many discussions, polemics, and even civil wars.

In this heated sociopolitical context, psychological ideas were based upon the traditional Catholic philosophy of the notion of the soul, and the way to secularize this notion of soul. Wundt's ideas and German experimental psychology became known in Colombia along with sensationism, associationism, and British empiricism. The role given to psychology depended on the importance given it by the Catholic Church authority.

Many Colombian leaders of this time admired the secular processes of countries like England, France, and the United States, and the new relationship they forged between the individual and the state. In such nations, society was centered upon the cult of the individual, great importance was given to free will, and individual initiative was valued. On the other hand, under the Catholic regime, people were part of the "herd" and personal initiative was censured, as was free competition and the search for material prosperity, which was associated with ambition and pride. The capacity of the individual to think for him- or herself, without help from the Church, was something condemnable, and to be labeled a "freethinker" was very negative.

The secularization of the soul, the influence of German experimental psychology, Cardinal Mercier's ideas from the Catholic University of Louvain, the critics against modern science, Darwinism, physiology, and the search for social advancement versus the respect for the Catholic

tradition, were elements that defined the developmental ups and downs of Colombia's psychology during the 19th century. One of the fundamental concerns was how to balance the conceptualization of the nature of the soul as immaterial and eternal, according to the Church, with the discoveries of modern science (Darwin, Wundt, Bentham).

The Roman Catholic Church held, for much of the 19th century, a privileged role in Colombian society and proved a great influence in politics and education. In intellectual and political debates, sometimes heated enough to cause civil wars, the influence of the Church was supremely relevant—the Church–state relationship, financial privileges, the upbringing of new generations, industrialization and progress—all were crucial issues.

The 19th century in Colombia can be separated into two periods: the Radical Olympus (in Spanish Olimpo Radical) (1849–1884), and the Regeneration (1878–1903). The former was dominated by liberal, anticlerical ideas, defenders of the individual, the federal political organization model, adherents to free commercial trade, and defenders of the workers.

Leaders of the Radical Olympus movement wanted to overcome the trappings of the Spanish colonial legacy. They wished to impose a secular education that would prepare the nation's citizens for freedom. They longed to deprive the Church of its privileges and its central role in society. The main underpinning of the Olympus movement was the Rionegro Constitution (1863), postulated during the progressive government of Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera (1798–1878). Education was considered fundamental to the formation of the new society, and the scholastic philosophy was to be replaced with the "sensualistic" ideas by Bentham, Condillac, Destutt de Tracy, and other English and French thinkers. Knowledge was emphasized as coming from senses, as emanating from reality. As the historian Jaramillo Uribe (1956/2001) points out, "Benthamism as a philosophical doctrine was one of the aspects of the modern spiritual tendency toward the investigation of nature, the observation of facts as part of the development of science . . . and an expression of a yearning to become in touch with empirical reality and the concrete after so many years of meandering speculation and sterile application of concepts and methods of scholastic philosophy" (p. 118).

The human mind, according to these new concepts, would grasp knowledge better when it was enriched with facts coming from sensorial experience.

The function of education was to provide experiences that would lead to the development of knowledge associated with its capacity to influence upon reality. The German Pedagogical Mission, which was brought to Colombia in 1870 by president José Eustorgio Salgar (1831–1885) during his radical and enlightened government, introduced *Pestalozzi pedagogy*, whose basic principles included the premises that every thought about the world had to be acquired by the senses, perceptual knowledge had to be the core for primary instruction, the senses had to be trained and become part of methodically objective teaching, and teaching must go from the known to the unknown.

The psychology on which this pedagogy was based focused on the senses. Habits, observation, and classification are functions of the mind, as is the personal interpretation of phenomena. The individual conscience is the pivot for the development of human action. Memory is cultivated by perception and by ideas and their relationship. Higher education must be based on reasoning and judgment. Using this rationale, it is important to develop habits based on perception, observation, and classification of symbols. A person must interpret the world critically. Differences exist between individuals, and it is important to acknowledge this during the creation of knowledge. The individual's conscience is the core in the development of actions. This psychological frame of reference emerged in the reformed educational system, which was secular (not governed by religion).

The Catholic Church saw this as a huge risk to its predominance, to its role in schools and universities, and to its role as a guide of individual and social conduct. The ally of the Church, the Conservative Party, had great power and sought to defend traditional structures, hierarchies, social classes—everything that had been deeply rooted in New Granada (Colombia) during the Spanish colonial period. Personal independence, materialistic prosperity, and industrialization were linked with Protestantism, not with Catholicism. These ideas were the enemy of tradition and of the existing social structure, a kind of "modernism" borrowed from more advanced countries, especially England, France, and more recently, the United States.

The answer from the Church and traditional society was the so-called Regeneration (1878–1903) that succeeded the Radical Olympus period. The return to traditional values and a search for order in society was the answer to this European-like "modernism." Rafael Nuñez (1825–1894),

president several times between 1880 and 1894, inaugurated in 1878 this so-called "regeneration" of the country. His was a centralistic government, under the guidance of the Catholic Church and in agreement with the Conservative Party. Nuñez had been a progressive leader, an advanced thinker, poet and philosopher, author of various works including the National Anthem of Colombia. But he was convinced that centralism and not federalism, traditional values and not modern values, had to be the core of the country at that moment of its history.

Regeneration, under the command of Rafael Nuñez and Miguel Antonio Caro (1843–1909), sought to find solutions to the problems of civil wars and of the institutional chaos of the country in the traditional values coming from Spain, such as the Catholic religion and the Spanish language. Authority came from God, and it was necessary to re-establish the nation based upon past values. The political Constitution of 1886 established a Concordat with the Holy See, which protected the Catholic Church, giving it back its guiding role in social and political life, including that of education on every level.

The materialism of liberals and Freemasons, free-thinking, sensationism, modernism, and mercantilism had to be replaced by absolute, divine values based on the Catholic Church as mother and teacher. This permitted religious leaders to take an active role in politics, state administration, and the upbringing of new generations. The conservative governments and the Church reestablished their traditional alliance and their main role in the country.

In this confrontation against Radical Olympus, the role of psychology continued to be relevant. Experimental German psychology, with Wundt and his laboratory in Leipzig and his multiple followers, had taken the "soul" as an object of study using methods from experimental science, and had made a counterbalance to traditional religious doctrines. Secularization of the soul under the label of "mind" and "conscience" was something unacceptable for traditional Catholics.

The solution that the Catholic Church found was a neo-Thomist one, led by Pope Leo XIII, who sought to reapply the school of thought of St. Thomas Aquinas as a philosophical frame of reference. According to the pope's encyclical "Aeterni Patris," it was important to advance in modern science and not be against it. Catholic thinkers had to be reminded that faith does not oppose the truth. Discoveries and true thoughts should be welcome,

according to the pope's neo-Thomist view. Cardinal Désiré J. Mercier (1851–1926) was entrusted by the Pope to direct the Superior Institute of Philosophy of Louvain in 1894, and he took charge of forming Catholics interested in the new scientific psychology. Cardinal Mercier insisted that psychology was not a spiritual or materialistic science, and that Catholics must work with it to make it advance. According to Mercier, Thomist thought recovered Aristotelian thought and made it possible to establish the compatibility between physiological phenomena and psychic life, a mutual agreement of "compromise" between science and religion that was very well-received in wide circles of Catholic intellectuals.

For other scholars and historians of Colombian and Latin American culture, this neo-Thomism compliance, which sought to make eclectic alliances between science and religion, did nothing to advance science. Its ideas were only a way to mitigate problems and to integrate discoveries in astronomy (Copernicus), biology (Darwin), and psychology (Wundt) under the Catholic doctrine's frame of reference (St. Thomas Aquinas and Cardinal Mercier), a commitment that did not benefit the development of scientific psychology in Colombia or the rest of Latin America.

A pioneer of Colombian psychology in the 19th century was Manuel Ancizar (1812–1882). He wrote on varied aspects and published many books, among them *Lecciones de Psicología* (*Lessons of Psychology*, 1851), which is the first book written by a Colombian that includes in its title the word "psychology." He described and analyzed numerous aspects of Colombian society and was the first rector of the National University of Colombia.

Manuel Ancizar studied law and was a diplomat, politician, liberal thinker, and traveler. He was also a Minister of Foreign Affairs for the liberal government, an international consultant, and a journalist, and he organized a publishing house (printing press). He directed the Comisión Coreográfica (Choreographic Commission) that had the mission of describing the customs, cultural patterns, and ways of life of the Colombian people. This was the origin of his book *La Peregrinación de Alpha* (*Alpha's Pilgrimage*). His ideas were in tune with the main philosophical trends in Europe and the United States, but were applied to the reality of Colombia in the 19th century. His work as first rector of the National University of Colombia was a challenge to the influential Catholic universities of that time.

20th-century Psychology in Colombia

The 20th century began in Colombia with civil wars and attempts at social and political reorganization. There was also a dawning industrial development with the introduction of English and French technologies. Certain advances in the sciences were observed, for example in astronomy and linguistics. The United States also began to have increased influence in all of Latin America, including Colombia.

The psychology of the first decades of the 20th century was carried out on the part of physicians, educators, and philosophers (see Ardila, 1973, 1993, 2004). We find research on mental retardation, schizophrenia, human development, hypnosis, brain and behavior, sexuality, and family done by Colombian physicians, most frequently as theses required to receive the degree of medical doctor. Books also were written from a psychological perspective on the subjects of health, childhood, development, and even death. For their part, educators were interested in the processes of learning and teaching, in the early education of children, in the role of reward and punishment, and similar topics. Finally, Colombian philosophers were noted for their presentation of theories and speculations about human nature. (See Rodríguez Valbuena, 2003).

The *Escuela Normal Superior* was an institution that flourished in the 1940s and 1950s; its members worked in social sciences, education, and other areas, including courses and research in psychology, anthropology, and linguistics. It was created in 1937 and lasted a few decades.

Luis López de Mesa (1884–1967) has been called the first Colombian psychologist because he was the first to identify himself as such. Actually, he was a physician who specialized in psychiatry and psychology, with degrees from Harvard. He held important positions in the government, such as Minister of Education and Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was rector of the National University of Colombia and a prolific writer. His written work, of great depth and very advanced for his time, includes the subjects of psychology, philosophy, sociology, cultural history, and other disciplines.

A milestone in the history of psychology in Colombia is the foundation of the section of psychotechnics of the National University of Colombia in August of 1939, by Mercedes Rodrigo (1891–1982). This section gave origin to the Institute of Applied Psychology and the creation of the psychology (undergraduate) program on November 20, 1947.

Origins of the Profession

The physicians, educators and philosophers who carried out the earliest work on psychology in Colombia had information about the developments made in Europe and the United States and often quoted the studies of foreign psychologists. However, since there was no professional training in psychology in the country, these efforts were quite scarce and fragmentary.

The first program of professional training in psychology was created in the National University of Colombia by the work of Mercedes Rodrigo (1891–1982), a Spanish psychologist who had arrived in Colombia on invitation from the National University's rector, Agustín Nieto Caballero (1889–1975). Rodrigo was a refugee from the Spanish Civil War; she had studied with Claparède at the University of Geneva, got her degree in 1923, and returned to Madrid. Her life was immersed in several of the important social and political events of the 20th century. Her life and work has been described in detail elsewhere, and she remains one of the most outstanding figures in psychology in Colombia (Ardila, 1988; see also Herrero, 2003).

Other Training Programs

The Javeriana University in Bogotá founded a professional training program in psychology in 1962, the second in the country after the program at the National University of Colombia. Several others followed, not only in Bogotá but also in other cities. The earliest psychology training programs in Colombia are listed in Table 7.1.

In the 1990s, due to the new political constitution of Colombia, universities were given autonomy. This led to the creation of many professional programs in fields such as medicine, business administration, psychology, law, and nursing. At the moment, in Colombia, approximately 140 programs of professional psychology training exist, and they are located in different cities throughout the country. There are approximately 34,000 psychology students at the undergraduate level (5-year professional training programs). See Pérez-Acosta & Perilla (2006).

Graduate Training

The model of psychology training in Colombia differs from the Anglo-Saxon model (B.A. or B.S., M.A. or M.S., Ph.D. or Psy.D.). The model is more similar to the 5-year classical European professional model that includes supervised practices and a thesis. This is similar in other disciplines, such as

Table 7.1 First psychology training programs in Colombia

University and City	Year
1. National University of Colombia (Bogotá)	1947
2. Javeriana University (Bogotá)	1962
3. University of the North (Barranquilla)	1971
4. Catholic University of Colombia (Bogotá)	1971
5. Incca University (Bogotá)	1971
6. University of San Buenaventura (Medellín)	1972
7. University of Manizales (Manizales)	1972
8. University of Los Andes (Bogotá)	1973
9. Metropolitan University (Barranquilla)	1975
10. University of Valle (Cali)	1976
11. University of Antioquia (Medellín)	1977
12. University of St. Thomas (Bogotá)	1978
13. Konrad Lorenz University (Bogotá)	1981
14. Javeriana University (Cali)	1984

engineering, law, economics, etc. This is a professional terminal program. Graduate training is not required to practice the profession.

However, training programs at a graduate level have been created in many fields of knowledge, among them psychology. We have three doctorate programs in psychology (in chronological order, University of Valle, Cali, 2004; University of the North, Barranquilla, 2005; University of the Andes, Bogotá, 2008). In addition, we have master's degree and specialization programs in numerous areas of psychology, approximately 21 programs at a master's degree level (the earliest one at the University of St. Thomas, Bogotá, 1977), in fields such as clinical psychology, behavior analysis, industrial/organizational psychology, consumer psychology, neuropsychology health psychology, forensic psychology, sport psychology, educational psychology, child psychology, psychological assessment and evaluation, social psychology, community psychology, family psychology, and others. The majority of the universities that offer these programs are located in the major cities of Bogotá, Barranquilla, Medellín, Cali, Bucaramanga, and Manizales.

The number of Colombian psychologists with a Ph.D. is small. Of approximately 36,000 practicing psychologists in Colombia, the great majority only have the degree of psychologist (professional,

5-year training program). It is not similar to the B.A. or B.S. of the United States, but rather to the M.A. or M.S., since it allows for professional work, practice, and research. The number of people with a master's degree in psychology is not large, and even fewer people have a Ph.D. These individuals have usually received their doctoral training in the United States, Spain, Belgium, Russia, or Mexico. It is possible that the number of Colombian psychologists with a Ph.D. will increase in the near future, since a certain number are studying at a doctorate level abroad, as well as in Colombia. The required degree for professional work is a psychologist's degree (5-year training, including practical work and a thesis).

Legal Recognition of the Profession

The profession of psychology in Colombia was recognized in 1983 (Law 58). A reform and update of this law took place in 2006 (Law 1090). This law recognizes the profession of psychology in the country and regulates its practice.

There is a code of ethics that has similarities with the American Psychological Association (APA) code of ethics but takes into consideration specific aspects of the country. Colombian psychologists also follow the Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists.

Fields of Professional Work

The most important fields of professional psychology work in Colombia are listed in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 Main areas of professional work

Area	Percent of Practitioners
Clinical Psychology	42.0%
Educational Psychology	20.6%
Industrial/Organizational Psychology	17.6%
Applied Social Psychology	5.3%
Other Areas:	(Less than 1%)
Sport Psychology	
Geropsychology	
Neuropsychology	
Forensic/Criminal Psychology	
Health Psychology	
Family Psychology	

As mentioned before, the psychologist's degree authorizes the practice of the profession; however, there is interest in pursuing graduate studies, to obtain greater expertise and qualifications. Colombian psychologists participate very often in continuing education courses, workshops, and conventions, and are frequent contributors to the Colombian Congresses of Psychology, Inter-American Congresses of Psychology (SIP), International Congresses of Psychology (IUPsyS), and International Congresses of Applied Psychology (IAAP). They also participate in conventions on clinical, experimental, neuropsychological, social/community, educational, economic, industrial/organizational, and other specific topics.

Scientific Research

During the training of a psychology student, whether at an undergraduate or graduate level, scientific research is emphasized. There are courses on research methodology, statistics, laboratory work with animals and human participants (perception, learning, motivation, cognition, and other basic processes), and the use of computers. (see Oyuela, 2008) The work culminates with a degree thesis.

Most Colombian psychologists learn how to do scientific research and how to use it in their professional work. But only a small percentage (around 6%) considers that scientific research in psychology is their main field of action. The rest are research "consumers," not producers of new knowledge. Psychology in Colombia, as well as in other countries worldwide, is predominantly a profession, more closely resembling medicine or engineering than physics or biology (see Ardila, 2007).

Behavior analysis and social psychology are research fields with the greatest number of publications by Colombian psychologists. The first field has a broad research tradition in the country, starting in 1970, although its emphasis has been diversified from being a laboratory science that worked with animal subjects to being a very wide area including human and nonhuman participants. It also includes work in verbal behavior, neurosciences, relational frames, cultural design, and numerous applied works (clinical behavior therapy, autism, behavior analysis in education, in organizations, etc.). Both basic as well as applied research is undertaken, which is primarily carried out in universities and research institutes. For a description of Colombian experimental psychology and the most representative research work, see Oyuela (2008) in his book about the country's psychology laboratories.

Social psychology and community psychology have been fields of great interest in Colombia, and have given origin to numerous publications in specialized journals and books (see, for example, Arango, 2007). This tradition of social research also began in the 1970s, but it has had many ups and downs. Action research, developed by Orlando Fals Borda (1925–2008), based on the work of Kurt Lewin, has had influence in Colombian social psychology and community psychology, as have the ideas of Ignacio Martín-Baró (1942–1989) on liberation psychology. He was a leader of Latin American psychology, interested in political problems and in how psychological science could improve the lives of Latin American people. He was assassinated in El Salvador, and remains one of the great leaders and heroes of Latin American psychology, especially remembered for his work in and commitment to community and political psychology issues (see Aron & Corne, 1994).

In addition to behavior analysis and social/community psychology, many other areas have had a relative development as research fields in the country. Table 7.3 presents the main research fields of Colombian psychology.

Financial support for scientific research comes from *Colciencias* (the Colombian equivalent to the National Science Foundation, or the *Conycet/Conacyt* of other countries). Financial support may also be received from universities, government ministries (of education, health, environment), and from both

Table 7.3 Main research areas

More Research Publications

Social Psychology

Experimental Analysis of Behavior

Other Important Research Areas (alphabetical order)

Clinical Psychology

Developmental Psychology

Educational Psychology

Geropsychology

Health Psychology

Industrial/Organizational Psychology

Measurement and Psychometrics

Personality

Psychobiology and Neuropsychology

national and international private foundations. Although the resources are limited, as is the case everywhere in the developing world, such financial support exists and is used. *Colciencias*, especially, has been instrumental in the support of scientific research in diverse areas, including psychology. See Colciencias (2008).

Colombian psychologists publish in their own scientific and professional journals, as well as in foreign journals, especially those of the United States and Europe. The following journals stand out as venues in which Colombian psychologists publish their research work: *Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología* (Colombia), *Avances en Psicología Latinoamericana* (Colombia), *Revista Inter-Americana de Psicología/Inter-American Journal of Psychology* (Brazil), *Psicothema* (Spain), the *International Journal of Clinical and Health Psychology* (Spain), and *Universitas Psychologica* (Colombia). Most Colombian psychologists publish their research results in journals in Spanish, and only in a very small degree in English-language journals.

Psychological Journals

Colombia has an important tradition of publication in many fields of knowledge, including psychology. In 1956, the journal *Revista de Psicología*, of the faculty of psychology of the National University of Colombia, was issued for the first time. This was one of the oldest psychology journals in the Spanish language (after the *Anales del Instituto de Psicología*, Argentina 1935, and the *Revista de Psicología General y Aplicada*, Spain 1946). It was a journal covering all areas of psychology, in both applied aspects and research, but had only limited. The authors came, in the majority, from the only professional training center existing in the country at the time, the National University; there were, however, foreign contributors and contributions from authors not associated with the University. The *Revista de Psicología* was issued sporadically until the 1980s, when it completely disappeared. It played the important role of being the first and only forum of Colombian psychology during its formative period [see Gallegos (2010)].

The *Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología* (RLP, *Latin American Journal of Psychology*) was published for the first time in January 1969. During the past 40 years, it has become one of the main scientific journals of psychology and the voice of Spanish-speaking psychology. It has been issued without interruption, and it has been included in the most important international databases of psychology, among them the Institute for Scientific Information

(now Thompson Scientific), Scopus, PsychINFO, Scielo, Psycodoc, Latinindex, and many more. It is the most representative journal of Latin American psychology today. It was published for 38 years by the Foundation for the Advancement of Psychology, and is now published by Konrad Lorenz University (Bogotá).

Avances en Psicología Latinoamericana (APL, *Advances in Latin American Psychology*) was first issued in 1982, under the name *Avances en Psicología Clínica Latinoamericana* (*Advances in Latin American Clinical Psychology*). For the past 27 years, it has been published without interruption. It is also included in the main international databases. It has been in close relationship with the RLP. Initially, it was also published by the Foundation for the Advancement of Psychology, but for the last two years, it has been published by the University of Rosario (Bogotá).

Other psychology journals include *Acta Colombiana de Psicología*, *Psicología desde el Caribe*, *Universitas Psychologica*, *Suma Psicológica*, *Revista Interamericana de Psicología Ocupacional*, and others.

Table 7.4 presents the main psychology journals in Colombia, their year of foundation, and the organizations that publish them (in most cases a university).

Conceptual Frames of Reference

Today, Colombian psychology is part of mainstream psychology; it shares the methods, content areas, problems, history, and trends of the rest of the world. In its different psychology departments, topics and problems similar to those found worldwide are discussed and analyzed (for challenges concerning the internationalization of psychology, see Brock, 2006).

On the other hand, as part of the developing world, there is a deep interest in social relevance, in being useful, in seeking its own identity. Most Colombian psychologists work in applied fields, and only a small percentage is dedicated primarily to scientific research. Colombian psychology is first of all a profession. Matters related to social development, social issues, and the well-being of the majority are matters of great concern on the part of psychologists.

Nevertheless, Colombian psychologists have made contributions in areas of basic knowledge, in perception, learning, the neurosciences, evolutionary psychology, lifespan development, social psychology, cognition, personality, individual differences, and others.

Table 7.4 Journals of psychology currently published in Colombia

Name	First Issue	Published by
<i>Acta Colombiana de Psicología</i>	1994	Catholic University of Colombia
<i>Avances en Medición</i>	2003	National University of Colombia
<i>Avances en Psicología Latinoamericana</i>	1982	University of Rosario
<i>Diversitas: Perspectivas en Psicología</i>	2005	University of St. Thomas
<i>International Journal of Psychological Research</i>	2008	University of St. Buenaventura (Medellín)
<i>Psicogente</i>	1998	Simón Bolívar University (Barranquilla)
<i>Psicología desde el Caribe</i>	1998	University of the North (Barranquilla)
<i>Psychología, Avances de la Disciplina</i>	2007	University of St. Buenaventura (Bogotá)
<i>Revista Colombiana de Psicología</i>	1992	National University of Colombia
<i>Revista Iberoamericana de Psicología: Ciencia y Tecnología</i>	2008	Iberoamerican University
<i>Pensamiento Psicológico</i>	2005	Javeriana University (Cali)
<i>Revista Interamericana de Psicología Ocupacional I</i>	1982	Cincel Ltda. (Medellín)
<i>Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, Niñez y Juventud</i>	2003	University of Manizales
<i>Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología</i>	1969	Konrad Lorenz University
<i>Revista Neuropsicología, Neuropsiquiatría y Neurociencias</i>	1999	University of Antioquia (Medellín)
<i>Suma Psicológica</i>	1994	Konrad Lorenz University
<i>Tesis Psicológica</i>	2006	University of Libertadores
<i>Universitas Psychologica</i>	2002	Javeriana University (Bogotá)

The main conceptual emphases or frames of reference of Colombian psychology are the following:

Behavior analysis, both in its basic and applied aspects, as well as in its conceptualization. Psychology laboratories dedicated to behavior analysis (see Oyuela, 2008) exist, as well as research groups, university courses, and numerous applications. Colombian psychology has been behaviorally oriented over the last decades, similar to the orientation of other Latin American nations, like Mexico, Chile, and Brazil. During the 1970s, when the ideas of Skinner, Kantor, and other theoreticians of behavior analysis were introduced, "conflicts of paradigms" appeared that grew to be very violent. At present, behavior analysis, in its modern versions (Hayes, Staats, Rachlin, Baum) is an essential part of Colombian psychology.

Psychobiology and neurosciences. The psychobiological approach to psychological processes has been a continuous field of interest for Colombian

psychologists. Psychobiology has been developed for several decades, as has neuropsychology, as an applied field (clinical neuropsychology). Recently, the interest in evolutionary psychology has been immense. Several laboratories and work groups are dedicated to neurosciences, in the National University of Colombia, the University of the Andes, the Autónoma University of Bucaramanga, and others.

Piagetian and cognitive psychology. The ideas of Piaget and the Geneva School were very well received in Colombia starting in the 1970s, and have greatly influenced education and the processes of teaching and learning. There are researchers and research groups that are scientifically very productive in the areas developed by Piaget and his followers (see, for instance, Puche, 2003). The first doctorate program in psychology that was organized in Colombia—at the University of Valle (Cali)—had a strong Piagetian emphasis.

In addition, cognitive psychology, in versions different from Piaget's, has also had a good reception in the country, including computer modeling of behavior, artificial intelligence, and other topics.

Psychoanalysis. Without ever being as high-priority and predominant as it was in Argentina and Uruguay, psychoanalysis had importance in Colombia. The first psychology professors were mainly psychoanalyst physicians during the 1950s and 1960s. The emphasis was basically Freudian. Clinical psychologists worked from the psychoanalytic perspective and then from a neo-psychoanalytic one. Afterward, Lacan and his ideas were very well-received. In most universities, psychoanalysis courses are taught, but they are more of literary interest than psychological. Nonuniversity centers and psychoanalytic training groups exist, covering all aspects of contemporary psychoanalysis. Psychoanalytical psychologists have made important conceptual and applied contributions.

Humanist psychology. In Colombia, humanism, based on the work of Maslow, Rogers, and many other authors, was known and appreciated. Existential psychology, logotherapy, and the work of Viktor E. Frankl and others were much valued. At present, humanist psychology has been both continued and transformed by positive psychology (Seligman). The studies on optimism, happiness, subjective well-being, etc. are in their highest point in Colombian psychology.

Liberation psychology. Ignacio Martin-Baró, a Spanish psychologist and priest who lived a part of his life in Colombia and El Salvador, proposed a psychological approach with a social commitment that he called *liberation psychology*. Latin Americans took it very seriously, and liberation psychology is considered to be one of the most original contributions of Latin America to psychology. In Colombia, it has influenced political psychology, community psychology, and in general, social psychology.

Vygotski and cultural psychology. The controversies between Piaget and Vygotski to explain human development are well known. There is research on Vygotski at a conceptual level and its findings have been applied to educational areas.

Various approaches and areas of emphasis coexist in Colombian psychology. Some university centers are more dedicated to one point of view than another, but in general, in all universities most of these approaches to psychology are respected. Probably the majority of psychologists share an interest in a unified psychology (see Ardila, 2006) and considers that the era of the "psychological

school" is a thing of the past. In addition, it is considered that an eclectic approach does not necessarily better explain phenomena; the unity of psychology will be obtained with a unifying paradigm and not with an eclectic frame of reference.

Conclusion

Colombian psychology has grown and diversified, from the mid 20th century, when it was a small profession and science centered in the university, to become a very large group of specialists, with a great critical mass.

Today, it is a profession with several thousand practitioners, a science that is doing research with a certain level of refinement, and an area of knowledge with great social acceptance. However, Colombian psychology is not known for being very internationally oriented, and this situation must improve. It has, however, been able to respond to the social problems of the country and to developmental matters, and it is endeavoring to achieve a difficult balance between being part of a universal science and being a contextualized discipline, relevant in the here and now.

Future Directions

On the other hand, probably the most important difficulties and challenges of Colombian psychology are the following:

- The need for a clearer and more defined social image. The social perception of psychology as a science and as a profession should be made clear to the public.
- Organize more graduate training programs at the doctorate and masters levels.
- Obtain better financing for scientific research. As a developing country, Colombia must define its priorities and its budget. Although the problem is not exclusive of Colombia or exclusive of psychology, it is a fact that better funds for scientific research in psychology are required.
- Develop new research and application fields.
- The number of psychology students at the professional (undergraduate) level is very large, and therefore, rational planning is needed in respect to psychology training programs and employment possibilities.
- Research on the great problems of human behavior, integrated to the international context and in concert with inter- and multidisciplinary groups (with biologists, neurologists, mathematicians, sociologists, economists,

anthropologists, and other specialists). Because of its great biodiversity and great cultural diversity, Colombia is a good laboratory for testing psychological findings.

The profession faces these challenges and others. Organized psychology is centered in the Colegio Colombiano de Psicólogos (Colombian College of Psychologists, basically a professional organization), and in the Sociedad Colombiana de Psicología (Colombian Society of Psychology, basically a scientific organization). The national government, universities, psychological research centers, and other institutions have important tasks to carry out for the future development of Colombian psychology.

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