

Moving Human Rights to the Forefront of Psychology

THE FINAL REPORT OF THE APA
TASK FORCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

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FEBRUARY 2021



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

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APA Task Force on Human Rights

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INTRODUCTION

In July 2016, the American Psychological Association (APA) Board of Directors appointed a task force to advise the organization in its work to promote and protect human rights (American Psychological Association, 2016a). This was sparked by the Independent Review (addressed in section 4 of the report) but reflected a long-standing interest in expanding APA's work on human rights. The Task Force on Human Rights members were selected for their expertise in human rights, their engagement on issues that demonstrate a relationship between psychology and human rights, and their knowledge of APA's programs and constituencies.

The Task Force was charged with three overarching tasks

1. To provide a definition of human rights as related to psychology that would both clarify the relationship of human rights to APA's mission and relate it to concepts that have historically guided APA (human welfare, social and ethical responsibility, public interest and social justice);
2. To review APA's recent and ongoing human rights activities and, in particular, to analyze recent comments and recommendations regarding human rights that had been solicited from APA boards and committees; and,
3. To provide recommendations for ensuring APA's ongoing and visible commitment to human rights with consideration given to potentially interested internal and external constituencies who could be involved in APA's programmatic activities going forward.

To accomplish these tasks, the Task Force consulted the literature at the nexus of psychology and human rights, reviewed existing APA resources with relevance to human rights, and surveyed APA Divisions, ethnic minority psychological associations, and active human rights scholars. The findings and recommendations of the Task Force are summarized in this report in five sections.

1. The first section provides a brief background and offers a definition of human rights that is grounded in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and subsequent United Nations (UN) human rights treaties.
2. The second section discusses the relationship between human rights and concepts that have historically guided APA's activities: human welfare, social and ethical responsibility, public interest, and social justice. It also briefly reviews milestones of APA's more direct engagement with human rights.
3. The third section introduces an established framework that makes five explicit connections between science and human rights, and adapts that framework for psychology and APA. This framework provides a nuanced and productive way to define the breadth and scope of the possible integration of human rights into APA's mission and activities.
4. The fourth section tests the value of the framework by using it to examine the Task Force's findings from a review of past human rights activities undertaken by APA entities, and from input on this issue from APA Boards and Committees.
5. the final section looks to the future and recommends that APA explicitly adopt the human rights framework as its organizing structure for ensuring that a commitment to human rights remains at the forefront of the Association's work. This section concludes with a number of specific recommended actions that APA can take to move forward as "an ethical, values-based, scientific, and professional organization committed to human rights" (McDaniel & Kaslow, 2015).

SECTION ONE

DEFINING OF HUMAN RIGHTS AS RELATED TO PSYCHOLOGY

Background and Legal Definitions of Human Rights

Human rights are fundamental entitlements that are inherent to all human beings, derived from the mere fact of being human (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). Within this framework, human rights are universal and inalienable; they apply to all and cannot rightfully be taken away. They are defined in international law, encompassing civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights.

It is important to note that while human rights are guaranteed to all, the degree to which they are actualized in practice is dependent upon power and privilege, often denied to those with marginalized identities, such as individuals of diverse age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, or socioeconomic status. When the rights of marginalized populations are not actively promoted and defended, they remain disproportionately affected by factors such as violence, poverty, and migration, as well as disparities in education, health, income, and wealth. Human rights thus serve as a framework for action: a normative structure with persuasive and legal authority that can be used in pursuit of human freedom, dignity, and equality.

The modern human rights movement began with the adoption of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948. The UDHR includes general protections and specific provisions of relevance to psychology, encompassing civil and political, as well as economic, social, and cultural rights to which all people are entitled “without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status” (Article 2.1). Civil and political rights encompass such rights as the rights to life, freedom from torture, and freedom of information and expression (Articles 3–21). Economic, social, and cultural rights include the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to health, the right to housing, the right to education, and the right to the benefits of science and culture (Articles 22–28). These rights became international law through the adoption of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR; adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1967) and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR; adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1967). Seven other human rights treaties and nine optional protocols were later adopted to clarify and expand human rights law. The nine UN human rights treaties and their optional protocols now comprise the core of international human rights law and are listed in Appendix I.

Additional documents and resources relevant to international human rights law include the UN declarations and statements on the

rights of indigenous peoples and on sexual orientation and gender identity. These are listed in Appendix II. Human rights principles and standards are also reflected in the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2020), an ambitious framework aimed at achieving sustainable development worldwide by 2030.

Finally, also of relevance is the *Genocide Convention* and the International Humanitarian Law, or “Geneva” conventions (the laws of war), which are regarded as “human rights law applicable to armed conflict” (Dosweld-Beck & Vité, 1993, p. 94). In this context, it is relevant to point out that international human rights law recognizes that in limited circumstances—principally in time of war or other public emergency threatening the life of a country—human rights may be derogated, that is, temporarily suspended. However, some human rights are recognized as being of such importance that in no circumstances can they be suspended. These are the right to life, the right to be free from torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, the right to be free from slavery or servitude, and the right to be free from retroactive application of penal laws.

As noted in Appendices I and II, the United States (US) has ratified three of the nine UN human rights treaties, including the *International Convention on Civil and Political Rights*, *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, and *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*. However, the US has not ratified the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families*, the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, nor the *International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances*. Also, the US has not ratified the *Mine Ban Treaty* nor the *Convention on Cluster Munitions*.

Although climate change and environmental justice were not originally considered human rights issues, in recent years there has been increasing awareness that the realization of many human rights depends upon “a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment” (e.g., UN Human Rights Council, 2018). This awareness is particularly salient for social and economic rights such as the rights to food, clean water, and other rights essential to life and health. Impoverished and minority populations, indigenous peoples, women, and children are most immediately at risk from environmental degradations (United Nations General Assembly, 2018). Also, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has argued for the fundamental interconnectedness of human rights and the environment, embodied by the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, nd). For these reasons, the Task Force acknowledges that

climate change and environmental protection are relevant to its mandate.

In 2011, the UN Human Rights Council adopted the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, noting on the three “Pillars” of Protect, Respect, and Remedy. First, member states have the responsibility to protect persons from human rights abuses by businesses or others. Second, businesses must respect and avoid abusing human rights. Third, member states should create legislative and judicial remedies when human rights have been abused by businesses, and businesses should accept responsibility to remedy human rights abuses in which they were complicit (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2011).

The UN *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* recognized the important role of non-state actors in defending and promoting human rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1998). It declared that individuals, non-governmental organizations, and relevant institutions have a responsibility to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, contribute to democratic processes, and increase public awareness through education, training, and research (United Nations General Assembly, 1998). For individuals, and for scientific associations such as APA, a concern for human rights is strongly rooted in a sense of global citizenship -- a sense that one is a part of and responsive to all of humanity (e.g., International Organization for Standardization, 2010; McFarland & Hornsby, 2015).

The Task Force on Human Rights proposes that beyond a general human responsibility, psychologists and their associations have a special obligation to promote and protect human rights and ensure accountability when human rights are violated, based on their unique body of knowledge and scope of practice. Moreover, psychological associations like APA that hold consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) are required to support the work of the UN and to promote knowledge of its principles, programs, and activities, including its work on human rights (ECOSOC Resolution 1995/31). Further, we believe that APA, as the leading organization of psychologists in the US, has a critical role in establishing human rights as a normative frame for its members. Defining Human Rights in Relation to Psychology to the benefits of science and medicine, including mental health and healthy development, in multiple documents:

- **Article 27, UDHR:** “Everyone has the right freely ... to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.”
- **Article 7, ICCPR:** “No one is to be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In particular, no one shall be subjected without his free consent to medical or scientific experimentation.”
- **Article 15, ICESCR:** Governments must: recognize the right of everyone to “enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications,” take steps for the “conservation, the development and the diffusion of science,” respect the “freedom indispensable for scientific research,” and encourage and develop “international contacts and cooperation” in science.
- **Article 12(1), ICESCR:** Recognizes “the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.”

- **Convention on the Rights of the Child:** Defines the rights of children to protection and to their full development.
- **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:** Promotes the rights of persons with disabilities, including mental, intellectual, and sensory impairments.

Although these, together with other important documents, set out the legal framework for the protection of human rights, there is no definition of human rights in relation to psychology explicitly codified in international declarations or treaties. Extracting from human rights laws and fundamental principles, therefore, the Task Force proposes that human rights be defined in relation to psychology and the community of psychologists as follows:

Psychologists, given their particular body of knowledge regarding the science of human behavior and their unique societal role, have a specific obligation to promote and protect human rights. Human rights are fundamental entitlements belonging to all people by virtue of being human. They are codified in international law and include civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights. Within this framework, human rights are universal and inalienable; they apply to all ages and cannot rightfully be taken away. Psychologists have a responsibility to advocate for the human rights of their research participants, students, clients, the families and communities of clients, and marginalized populations made vulnerable by societal inequalities, and to support public policies that advance and oppose policies that violate human rights. They have the freedom to responsibly conduct research, practice psychology, and communicate their knowledge for the benefit of individuals and society. Psychologists can also generate specialized human rights-related knowledge and apply that knowledge to promote the realization of human rights. Individuals and societies have the right to participate in, have access to, and benefit from psychological knowledge and the practice of psychology. Yet, they all have the right to be protected against discrimination, mistreatment, or other human rights violations that might be caused by research in psychology, the conduct of psychologists, and the application of knowledge derived from psychology.

SECTION TWO

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE CONCEPTS THAT HAVE HISTORICALLY GUIDED APA

It is vital for psychologists to understand the historical—and at times fraught—connections between psychology and human rights, but a broad overview goes beyond the charge of the Task Force. In this context, it is important to acknowledge unconscionable instances of the misuse of psychological science and practice, including abuses against ethnic minority populations—such as the application of intelligence tests developed by psychologists during World War I to later support eugenics, racism, and xenophobia—and against sexual and gender minorities, such as usage of a psychiatric diagnostic classification system that regarded homosexuality as a mental health disorder. The Task Force recommends that readers consult *the Cambridge Handbook of Psychology and Human Rights* (Rubin & Flores, 2020) for a more complete picture. As part of its narrower mandate, the Task Force undertook a review of consequential literature on the concepts of human welfare, social and ethical responsibility, public interest, and social justice. These concepts have historically guided activities of APA and are mentioned in key association governance documents and policies.

The concept of **human welfare** was referenced historically in APA's Bylaws and in numerous versions of APA's purpose and mission, later amended as "well-being and dignity." APA's first ethics code in 1953 also referred to the "welfare of man" and the "welfare of the public." In his 1969 APA presidential address, however, George Miller cautioned that the concept of "human welfare" was not sufficiently well-defined. He stated that it tended to be evoked when members sought to persuade APA to respond to issues in the public interest that may not have a clear connection to the scientific and professional interests of psychologists, but that the concept did "little to clarify the logical, informational, or ethical bases for making difficult decisions" (Miller, 1969, p. 1964). He asserted that the primary objective of APA is to advance psychology and that this objective is justified "by our belief that psychology can be used for the public good" (Miller, 1969; p. 1964). Miller described a tension between those in the organization who advocated for playing a more direct role in social change and those who favored a more distanced scientific advisory stance. He suggested that the options for promoting human welfare are not, in fact, limited to these polar positions on social policy reform, but that psychological science can offer unique contributions. He argued that psychology could have a profound impact on human welfare by fostering a social climate that reflects a new conception of human nature, which is driven by positive incentives and has the capacity for cooperation and conflict resolution. His recommendation was that psychologists should primarily concern themselves with "giving psychology away" by introducing sound psychological practices into public institutions in order to diagnose practical social problems and develop detailed plans to address them.

At about the same time, the report of the Ad Hoc Committee of Public Affairs (Tyler, 1969) described a more active approach to APA involvement in public policy. The Committee suggested that the challenges for the organization were how to identify current issues

in the public interest and how best to decide to use the organization's influence to intervene in policy. The report distinguished between three sets of public policy issues—scientific, professional, and social problems—and stated that the justification for APA action increases in direct proportion to the issue's relevance to the majority of psychologists. In issues of broad social relevance, APA would only engage in action if "there is a considerable quantity of research-based information and value consensus is high" (Tyler, 1969, p. 3). The report listed the following possible actions, ranging from greatest to least organizational commitment: engage in grassroots political activity, initiate legislation, influence legislation, commission a position paper, offer information, appoint an ad hoc study group, refer to a Board or Committee, act as a broker or catalyst, encourage research, inform membership, or make a clear decision to do nothing.

Social justice is concerned with issues of equity, equality, and social transformation (Vasquez, 2012; Vera & Speight, 2003). It includes distributive justice, which refers to how advantages and disadvantages are distributed among individuals in society—as well as procedural justice, which refers to fair and equitable institutional processes (Bell, 2007; Fouad, Gerstein & Toporek, 2006; Miller, 1999). Social justice and multicultural perspectives in psychology acknowledge that all forms of systemic oppression, including racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, and class discrimination, create inequities for people at multiple levels, and social justice-informed practice aims toward systemic social transformation of these historically entrenched inequalities (Grzanka, Gonzalez, & Spanierman, 2019; Vera & Speight, 2003). Social justice activism within APA emerged from members' commitments to the civil rights movement (Leong, Pickren, & Vasquez, 2017) and is a defining feature of social, counseling, and community psychology (Vera & Speight, 2003; Prilleltensky, 2001). The attention to social justice within APA has primarily focused on anti-discrimination activism in support of marginalized populations.

In response to these social justice concerns, APA in 1972 established the Board of Social and Ethical Responsibility for Psychology (BSERP), in 1973 established the Committee on Women in Psychology (previously the ad hoc Committee on the Status of Women in Psychology), and in 1980 created the Board of Ethnic Minority Affairs (Pickren & Tomes, 2002). In the early 1990s, BSERP and the Board of Ethnic Minority Affairs were dissolved so that the Board for the Advancement of Psychology in the Public Interest (BAPPI) could provide unified policy guidance to the new Public Interest Directorate (Smith, 1990); the Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs was consequently founded in 1991. In his review of the history of APA structures responsible for public interest activities, M. Brewster Smith (1990) asserted that, although the "bread and butter" activities of psychologists—research, practice, and teaching—are the most important sources of action in the public interest, psychology may well be relevant to the resolution of problems that fall within a human rights purview such as poverty, war, and protection of the natural environment, even though they are not primarily psycholog-

ical problems. Subsequently, in APA's first strategic plan (adopted in 2009), social justice (along with diversity and inclusion) was explicitly referenced as one of APA's Core Values.

Human Rights concerns were initially articulated by APA's Council of Representatives when they adopted a "Resolution on Human Rights" to "reaffirm its grave concern for human rights and human dignity" (American Psychological Association, 1977). This resolution instructed APA Representatives to the 1978 International Union of Psychological Science (IUPsyS) assembly to "convey APA's concern for and dedication to protecting human rights and human dignity in the US and abroad, particularly as these involve such values as equal access to educational opportunities, the freedom of expression by all citizens, freedom of assembly, and freedom of movement and residence." In the 1977 revision of the Ethical Standards of Psychologists, the first sentence of the Preamble echoed these concerns, stating that "[p]sychologists respect the dignity and worth of the individual and honor the preservation and protection of fundamental human rights" (American Psychological Association, 1977, pp. 22-23).

Ten years later, in 1987, the APA Council formally declared that "the discipline of psychology, and the academic and professional activities of psychologists, are relevant for securing and maintaining human rights" (American Psychological Association, 1987). It resolved, "APA applauds the ongoing efforts of the United Nations (UN) to defend and protect human rights and undertakes to recommend the main UN human rights instruments and documents to the attention of its boards, committees, and membership at large."

Psychologists have been active at the UN since its inception (Okorodudu, Kuriansky, Walker, & Denmark, 2020), but in 1987, the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI/Division 9) gained official status as a non-governmental organization (NGO) at the UN and later gained consultative status with ECOSOC in 1991. Expanding psychology's presence at the UN, in December 1999 APA gained approval as an associate NGO with the UN Department of Public Information and in May 2000 was accredited as an NGO in consultative status with ECOSOC. The attainment of NGO status, together with its role as a founding member of the Psychology Coalition at the UN (PCUN), gave APA "a voice in a spectrum of international activities that involve psychology as a science and profession" (American Psychological Association, 2000, p. 2) in shaping global human rights.

In addition to its status as an NGO at the UN, APA has supported other areas of explicit human rights activity, most particularly through its Office of International Affairs and Committee on International Relations in Psychology (CIRP), through its Public Interest Directorate and associated committees, through initiatives by Divisions and other governing bodies that include guidelines, programming, and curriculum development, and as a founding member of the Science and Human Rights Coalition of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). These activities are summarized on the APA human rights activities webpage (APA, n.d.a.; for additional overviews of APA actions with regard to human rights, see Rosenzweig, 1988; Woolf, 2006).

The relationship of human rights to the profession of psychology, and to APA, came under intense international scrutiny in July 2015 following the release of the "Independent Review Relating to

APA Ethics Guidelines, National Security Interrogations, and Torture" (which will be referred to subsequently as the "Independent Review"). The Independent Review was a climactic event in a process that spanned over 10 years, during which many APA members and others raised concerns about the role of psychologists in national security interrogations in the years after the attacks of September 11, 2001 (American Psychological Association, 2006a; Eidelson & Arrigo, 2015; Pope, 2016; Wilks, 2005). This process eventually led to the Association initiating a series of actions to respond to some of the matters addressed in the Independent Review. For a timeline of APA policies and actions taken in the context of interrogation and national security, see the detailed timeline provided on the association website (American Psychological Association, n.d.b.). This history is reviewed in more detail in Section Four of this report.

APA's 2019 strategic plan asserts an unequivocal commitment to human rights, including as one of its Guiding Principles "**Respect and promote human rights.** Focus on human rights, fairness, and dignity for all segments of society." According to the strategic plan, the guiding principles are core values that must inform and infuse everything APA does. Further, one of the Strategic Objectives is to "foster the advancement of human rights, fairness, diversity, and inclusion through the application of psychological science" (American Psychological Association, 2019a).

This brief review suggests a non-linear conceptual evolution of guiding principles over time, from an imprecise and idealistic aspiration toward "human welfare," to a more nuanced and operationalized concept of public interest, with the concept of social justice emerging out of various social movements favoring greater political action in an effort to achieve equality of rights both for marginalized people within the profession and in society as a whole. Throughout this history, APA has devoted attention to the concept of human rights, but, in the opinion of this Task Force, has generally not done so in a manner that was systematic, grounded in an explicit human rights framework, or integrated across the organization. However, APA has laid the groundwork for the meaningful adoption of a human rights framework in its work, which has the potential to integrate the varied concepts that have inspired past social action and locate them within a broader international and historical dialogue that could provide clearer guidance and structure for organizational decision-making on issues related to societal good.

SECTION THREE

THE FIVE CONNECTIONS: AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Moving from a stated commitment to advance human rights toward a meaningful action plan requires a framework both for understanding how human rights can inform APA's actions and for relating the Association's strategies and initiatives explicitly to the concept of human rights. The Task Force considered several approaches that could propel a closer integration of human rights into its mission, goals, organization, and activities, and found Claude's (2002) "Five Connections" between science and human rights to hold the most promise for ensuring effective integration of a human rights perspective into APA. The "Five Connections" analytical framework has usefully guided the AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition and other organizations in the scientific community for many years. In the next section, we introduce that framework, apply it to psychologists and to APA, and suggest how it could support a more effective integration of human rights into APA's work.

Claude (2002) explored the links between science and human rights, suggesting that "[s]cientists are people who unquestionably depend on standards of human rights to protect a value most important to them, their scientific freedom"; (Claude, 2002, p.15) but, that, in turn, scientists had contributions to make to advancing human rights. Claude's exploration of the links between science and human rights contributed significantly to an organizing framework that has guided most of the efforts of the scientific community in addressing human rights in the past decade as led by AAAS and, since 2009, the AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition of which APA is a founding member. The AAAS Five Connections Between Human Rights and Science are as follows:

1. Scientists have human rights, including the freedom to associate with other scientists, to conduct research responsibly, and to communicate scientific knowledge, freedom of movement, and the right to cooperate internationally;
2. Science can be applied for human rights purposes, as for example, using forensic or genetic science to identify bodies in mass graves, or using geospatial mapping to identify such grave sites;
3. Science and its applications can have negative consequences for human rights, such as the application of psychological science to the eugenics movement;
4. International human rights law recognizes a "right to science," that people have the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its application, and that governments should conserve, develop and diffuse science, respect the freedom indispensable for scientific research, and encourage international contacts and cooperation in science; and,
5. Scientists can be a constituency for human rights, bringing their voices to human rights issues through research, teaching, and policy work.

Applying the Five Connections Framework to Psychology



1.

As adapted for psychologists specifically, the Task Force suggests a reframing of the Five Connections for which all psychologists shall strive:

1. Psychologists possess human rights by virtue of being human as well as specific rights essential to their profession and discipline;
2. Psychologists apply their knowledge and methods to the greater realization of human rights;
3. Psychologists respect human rights and oppose the misuse of psychological science, practice, and applications and their negative impact on human rights;
4. Psychologists advance equal access to the benefits of psychological science and practice; and,
5. Psychologists advocate for human rights.

These connections are not hierarchical; rather, they are interconnected and all in support of human rights, as illustrated in the graph on this page.

We expand on each of the five connections below and describe how they can be applied to the conduct of psychologists.

CONNECTION ONE

Psychologists possess human rights by virtue of being human as well as specific rights essential to their profession and discipline.

Psychologists, like all persons, are entitled to all human rights. In addition, for psychological science to flourish, psychologists must enjoy academic freedom, including the rights to seek and receive information, to associate with other scientists or research participants, and to move and travel both within and across international borders, as all these are recognized in the UDHR and ICCPR. Of course, these rights are inextricably linked with the rights of individuals and groups, for example, in the context of human subjects research, a point which is elaborated on in connection 3. The rights of psychologists, like those of other academics, have often been abused. Restrictions have been placed on their ability to collaborate internationally and to attend international conferences, and psychologists have lost their academic positions and suffered arrest for opposing the policies of their governments. Scholars at Risk [2016, 2017] has documented many of these abuses.

CONNECTION TWO

Psychologists apply their knowledge and methods to the greater realization of human rights.

Psychologists, as scientists and professionals, can generate new knowledge relevant to human rights, particularly those of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups who are at risk of human rights violations, and they can apply that knowledge to promote the realization of human rights. Psychological research has shed light on the roots of genocide and other massive human rights violations (e.g., Staub, 1992; 2003), on the roots of war (e.g., Winter, 2017), on the building of peace (e.g., Christie, 2012), and on the psychology of support for human rights (e.g., McFarland, 2015). Psychological research has increased our understanding of the impact of torture on the mental health of refugees (e.g., American Psychological Association, 2010a; Gorman, 2001; Jacobs & Iacopino, 2001; Johnson & Thompson, 2008; Kuo & Arcuri, 2013; Miller, 2004) and our understanding of the sequelae of child soldiering (e.g., Wessells, 2006) as well as the effects of child abductions, modern slavery, and the effects of armed conflict on girls and women (e.g., American Psychological Association Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls, 2014; Betancourt, et al., 2013; Dockett, Okorodudu, Rafferty, & Miller, 2015; McKay, et al., 2010). It has also uncovered the roots of prejudice and the effects of discrimination (e.g., Jones, Dovidio, & Vietze, 2014; Sibley & Barlow, 2017).

Counseling, community, and peace psychologists have been at the forefront of the development of a robust body of literature in the areas of multicultural, feminist, anti-racist, decolonial, liberatory, and social justice knowledge and practice (e.g., Comaz-Diaz & Green, 2013; Enns & Nutt, 2013; Enns & Sinacore, 2005; Fouad, Gerstein & Toporek, 2006; French, Lewis, Mosley, Adames, Chavez-dueñas, Chen, & Neville, 2020; Gone, 2009; Grzanka, Gonzalez, & Spanierman, 2019; Lykes, 2000; Martin-Baro, 1996; Prilleltensky, 2008; Ratts, Singh, Nassar-Mcmillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2016; Vasquez, 2012; Vera & Speight, 2003). This literature has largely been characterized in terms of social justice but shares much common theoret-

ical and values-oriented ground with human rights principles. Community psychologists have also taught us that engaging and involving representatives of research participants to inform how research is planned, conducted, interpreted, and communicated can help to ensure that their human rights are respected and protected, and that failing to consider historical, cultural, and political contexts can undo efforts to conduct objective science or practice (e.g., Fine, 2013).

Environmentally-focused psychologists have explored the connections between human rights and environmental justice to explicitly expand social justice to be inclusive of the quality of the physical environments where people live (e.g., Downey & Van Willigen, 2005; Müller & Clayton, 2013) and have developed the “One Health” framework, recognizing that human health is inseparable from health of animals, plants, and our shared environment (Mackenzie & Jeggo, 2019).

In clinical practice, psychologists may, for example, work to ensure that the human rights of people with intellectual and cognitive disabilities are respected (e.g., World Health Organization, n.d.), assess and treat survivors of torture (e.g., Campbell, 2007; Huminuik, 2017; Patel, Williams, & Kellezi, 2016), or address the psychological development of adolescents as it relates to the imposition of the death penalty on a person who committed a crime when a minor (e.g., Bonnie & Scott, 2013). Psychologists in professional practice, research, consultation, and education can apply knowledge from the Multicultural Guidelines (American Psychological Association, 2017a) to work with diverse cultural groups that are confronted with human rights violations resulting from cultural inequities. The importance of protecting the equity of different cultural perspectives can be seen in the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People (see Appendix II) which refers to the protections of culture as an important aspect of human rights.

CONNECTION THREE

Psychologists respect human rights and oppose the misuse of psychological science, practice, and applications and their negative impact on human rights

The legal responsibility for defending human rights falls on governments to protect their own citizens; however, scientific societies can play an important role in the social reproduction of human rights norms because they function between the level of nations and citizens and seek to exert influence at both levels, and because they are positioned to influence their members to develop and use scientific knowledge in the service of human rights (Huminuik & Wyndam, 2020). Psychological associations play a strong role in establishing normative frameworks to guide responsible scientific research and practice, and these are informed to varying degrees by both professional codes of ethical conduct and human rights principles, if not often explicitly so, as both derive from the same historical commitment to human dignity. Psychologists have a body of knowledge and a unique societal role that confers special ethical obligations and a distinct responsibility to human rights, due to their understanding of human behavior, position of power in relation to vulnerable people, and participation in historical injustices perpetrated against some populations. Psychologists are bound by their codes of ethics to

avoid causing harm to others with whom they work whenever possible and to minimize harm when it is not (Ethical Standard 3.04: Avoiding Harm), and it is important for them to remain vigilant against the potential for negative human rights outcomes of psychological research and practice. Assiduous adherence to ethics codes by professionals can support the protection of human rights, but unless they are fully integrated with human rights principles, ethics codes do not provide sufficient protections. An example of the potential distinction between adherence to ethics codes and respect for human rights is illustrated by the controversy surrounding the 2005 APA ethical guidance related to the involvement of psychologists in military interrogations in national security settings (American Psychological Association, 2005b; UN Committee Against Torture, 2010). Human rights provide a value-added component to ethics as a globally recognized framework of legal protection. Integrating the principles of human rights with codes of professional ethics broadens the standards set out in ethics codes. At the time of writing, the APA Ethics Code Task Force is revising the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (“Ethics Code”; American Psychological Association, 2016c) to be visionary and transformational, including a draft principle on human rights (American Psychological Association Ethics Code Task Force, 2020).

CONNECTION FOUR

Psychologists advance equal access to the benefits of psychological science and practice.

Psychologists can act to uphold the right to the benefits of scientific progress and its applications by working to ensure that the benefits of psychology (e.g., knowledge, clinical services, and interventions) are accessible to all sectors of society. This can include, for example, researching in collaboration with and for the benefit of marginalized populations and communities, sharing research findings about complex behavioral and social issues in clear, easily understandable language, and ensuring equal access to clinical services for low-income populations. Moreover, psychologists can combat faulty science claiming inferiority or socioemotional instability of certain groups (i.e., claiming certain racial and ethnic groups cannot benefit from psychotherapy, perpetuating stereotypes about how different group engage in therapy). Psychologists can also ensure that education in psychology is accessible to all, paying particular attention to the needs of individuals of diverse age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, socioeconomic status, or other status, and work to remove barriers to employment in the field of psychology. Psychologists can pay special attention to the institutional and structural barriers to the widespread inclusion of students and psychologists of color and low income in academia. Psychologists can also ensure that participants in psychological research represent a broad array of diverse identities, helping to increase the representativeness of findings. Finally, by encouraging global cooperation among psychologists and the free flow of knowledge, psychologists can ensure that the benefits of psychological science are more broadly distributed.

CONNECTION FIVE

Psychologists advocate for human rights.

Psychologists have distinct theoretical and applied knowledge that can inform human rights advocacy at various levels. For example, psychologists can advocate for the human rights of individuals in their clinical care. They can participate in monitoring and protective actions to address human rights concerns in specific locations or on behalf of particular populations. Psychologists can utilize their methodological and assessment skills to contribute to the investigation and documentation of individual and systemic human rights violations, which can be used in legal, policy, and social advocacy efforts. For example, psychological evidence of harm is frequently used to substantiate allegations of torture and other human rights violations, thereby increasing the likelihood of success in asylum applications and other legal proceedings (Huminuik, 2017; Pope, 2012). Findings from psychological science have also provided critical support in amicus briefs to challenge attacks on individuals’ rights to autonomy in controlling their own body, their own health care decisions, and their decisions about whom to marry (American Psychological Association, n.d.b.). Moreover, psychologists can advocate for equal access to affordable, effective health care (including to psychological services) and for support for behavioral science research (including combatting efforts to not fund areas of research that might be deemed controversial, such as gun violence and adolescent sexual behavior).

Applying the Five Connections Framework to APA

Just as the Five Connections Framework can be used as an organizing principle for thinking about human rights and psychologists, it can also be used to frame the role of psychological associations in furthering those connections for their members and to protect and advance human rights for all. Thus, APA can:

1. Protect psychologists’ human right to ethically and responsibly conduct their science and practice;
2. Support the development, production, and dissemination of psychological knowledge and methods that can be applied to the greater realization of human rights;
3. Oppose the misuse of psychological science, practice, and applications and their negative impact on human rights;
4. Advance equal participation in and access to the benefits of psychological science and practice; and,
5. Advocate for human rights and provide the resources and tools necessary for its members to do so as well.

To test the potential usefulness of the Five Connections framework to structure the relationship between human rights and APA, the Task Force applied the framework retrospectively in the following review of recent human rights activities undertaken by APA.

SECTION FOUR

REVIEW OF APA ENGAGEMENT WITH HUMAN RIGHTS USING THE FIVE CONNECTIONS FRAMEWORK

APA is not a monolith, and many different parts of the Association have undertaken human rights initiatives to try to move APA forward. The Task Force was tasked to review recent human rights activities undertaken by APA's Central Office, Boards, Divisions, and Committees, and to make recommendations in light of the identified strengths and weaknesses. This is not a comprehensive review of all of the activities and reports from APA or its constituent parts. It is based on a review of existing reports and documents, responses to numerous data collection efforts over the last several years, and the data collected from a survey initiated by the Task Force. Though the Task Force consulted with APA's UN team, this review focused on what APA as an association and its constituent governing bodies have done, and does not include all of the many UN-specific activities undertaken by APA or SPSSI in their roles as NGOs at the UN. A complete list of summary sources reviewed appears in Appendix III. In this section, we present findings from both the document reviews and the survey results, organized by the Five Connections Framework. Although the activities were not performed nor the data collected with this framework in mind, the framework offers a useful way to conceptualize the results and helps us identify strengths and weaknesses in APA's human rights efforts. We present each of the five connections as a question with which to analyze APA's activities.

CONNECTION ONE

How has APA protected the human rights of psychologists to ethically and responsibly conduct their science and practice?

APA has engaged in several activities related to protecting the rights of psychologists, both internationally and within the US. The mission of CIRP includes monitoring the rights of psychologists, and in 1984, CIRP was assigned to take a leadership role in responding to international human rights violations on APA's behalf. The APA Office of International Affairs (OIA) supports CIRP in carrying out its responsibilities. The Office leads APA's work as an affiliate member of Scholars at Risk, a network of higher education institutions and associations that addresses human rights violations against academic scholars around the world (including in the U.S.) and publishes regular reports on academic freedom from a human rights perspective. In 2019 OIA spearheaded an effort in support of the academic freedom of APA member Serdar Değirmencioglu, then-president of Division 48 (Society for the Study of Peace, Conflict and Violence: Peace Psychology), who was being persecuted in Turkey after signing the Academics for Peace petition (APA, 2019b).

APA also addresses the human rights concerns of its members in the U.S., particularly through the Public Interest Directorate, which advocates for equal treatment and fairness in employment for APA members. For example, in response to concerns about discriminatory employment of psychologists during the Cold War and Vietnam War eras, APA created a Committee on Academic Freedom and Conditions of Employment and issued Guidelines for Conditions of

Employment of Psychologists, focused on ensuring free inquiry and promoting working environments of mutual respect and shared responsibility between psychologists and their employers (American Psychological Association, 1986a). In recent decades, APA has focused on domestic discrimination against its members or other psychologists by promoting the recruitment, retention, and training of ethnic minorities and other underrepresented groups (Committee on Ethnic Minority Recruitment, Retention, and Training; Minority Fellowship Program). The Standards for Accreditation for Health Service Psychology include requirements for fair treatment of faculty and students (American Psychological Association, 2015a). APA also strives to protect scientific freedom, for example opposing reports of "banned" words at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (American Psychological Association, 2017c).

APA Boards and Committees have also engaged in activities focused on protecting human rights of psychologists. For example, the Committee on Disability Issues in Psychology (CDIP) advocates for equal access and mentorship for psychology students and trainees with disabilities. Boards and Committees are also concerned with ensuring that APA's internal policies and regulations are consistent with protecting human rights of psychologists, including defending against harassment by governments, such as through the defunding of projects found offensive by some members of Congress (for example, HIV/AIDS related research).

The Task Force found that APA has aspired to defend the international human rights of psychologists and has engaged in some related activities, but has not developed sufficient systematic processes to monitor or respond to the persecution of psychologists (as exist within the American Physical Society, the American Sociological Association, and several other scientific and professional societies). Domestically, APA has focused more on systemic discrimination against groups, for example, combating legislation that violates the rights of sexual and gender minorities, than on individual rights abuses. It is unclear what the organizational mechanism is for APA to identify international and domestic human rights violations or to intervene when they involve harm done to psychologists.

CONNECTION TWO

How has APA supported the development, production, and dissemination of psychological knowledge and methods that can be applied to the greater realization of human rights?

APA has adopted many resolutions and guidelines promoting research on the causes, effects, and preventative strategies for human rights violations. For example, the APA Division of Trauma Psychology (Division 56) developed a Torture Trauma Treatment (3T) Program Initiative to develop resources for psychologists and agencies providing services to torture victims (Trauma Psychology, 2016).

In 2015, following the issuance of the Independent Review (Hoffman et al, 2015), the APA Board of Directors recommended that the Education Directorate “promote a focus on human rights and ethics as a core element of psychology education and training from high school through continuing education offerings” (American Psychological Association, 2015c). *The Psychology Teacher Network* then initiated a series on integrating the teaching of psychology and human rights (McFarland, 2016; Woolf, 2016).

Although the APA annual convention is a promising setting for promoting human rights concerns, attention to human rights topics has not been centered in the convention programming. In 2020, for example, only eight of the 3,000+ sessions explicitly addressed human rights. In contrast, some other scientific societies create an entire meeting track on human rights (e.g., American Association of Geographers, American Statistical Association), or offer publicized side events organized with prominent speakers to address the connections between the discipline and human rights (e.g., American Chemical Society).

Unlike many other organizations (see Appendix IV), APA does not have a Committee on Human Rights. However, many APA Boards, Committees, and Divisions reported engaging in activities related to the application of psychology to realizing human rights, although often without explicit reference to human rights, most notably BAPPI and its respective committees. The Committee on Socioeconomic Status (CSES) has used its newsletter to disseminate psychological knowledge to members of its listserv on the impact of poverty on mental health, specifically citing the UDHR Articles 23 (Right to work) and 25 (Right to an adequate standard of living). The Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity (previously named the Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, & Transgender Concerns) has developed resources to support parental rights of lesbian and gay parents (American Psychological Association, 2005a), and practice guidelines to promote non-discrimination within psychological practice for sexual and gender minorities (American Psychological Association, 2011a; 2015b). The Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs and the Society for the Psychological Study of Culture, Ethnicity, and Race (Division 45) co-sponsored the Resolution on Racial/Ethnic Profiling and Other Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Law and Security Enforcement Activities (American Psychological Association, 2001a). The Board of Professional Affairs (BPA) reported on its role in overseeing the development of guidelines for psychological practice with marginalized and socially disadvantaged populations. In another example, CDIP developed a Resolution on the Maltreatment of Children with Disabilities and a Resolution on the Americans with Disabilities Act to address bias and discrimination toward individuals with disabilities (American Psychological Association, 2008a; 2016b).

In our review of APA guidelines, the Multicultural Guidelines (American Psychological Association, 2017a) refer to human rights in guideline #5 (“seek to promote human rights”) but refer to human rights as a contextual principle with less attention to what this would look like on the level of action or intervention. The LGBT guidelines make no explicit reference to human rights except to note human rights organizations as resources at the end of the document.

With respect to climate change and human rights, APA is an observer organization at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate

Change (IPCC) – the UN body for assessing the science on climate change—enabling the association to nominate writers and reviewers of IPCC reports and send representatives to various IPCC meetings around the world. APA published the report of the Task Force on the Interface between Psychology and Global Climate Change (2009) and co-authored a report with Eco-America on *Mental Health and Our Changing Climate: Impacts, Implications, and Guidance* (Clayton, Manning, Krygsman, & Speicer, 2017). APA also co-convened with the Order of Portuguese Psychologists in 2019 *the International Summit on Psychology and Global Health: A Leader in Climate Action*. The Society for Environmental, Population, and Conservation Psychology (Division 34) has long conducted research on environmental issues relevant to human rights, joined by the decade-old annual sustainability preconference at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology (Division 8). APA issued a Resolution Affirming Psychologists’ Role in Addressing Global Climate Change (American Psychological Association, 2019b), which called for the creation of a Task Force on Climate Change, that was recently formed by the Science Directorate to address “social disparities in impacts of climate change, environmental/climate justice, and related aspects of human rights” (American Psychological Association, 2020).

While numerous activities have been undertaken to apply psychological knowledge and methods to the greater understanding and realization of human rights—and this is certainly not a comprehensive list—the Task Force found that this work has been conducted without an explicit human rights framework and has generally not occurred in direct partnership with human rights organizations or experts. This includes work on the connection between healthy environments and human rights, which does not appear to be a high priority for psychologists. Additionally, the rights of some populations have received more attention than others, for example, little attention has been paid to indigenous groups.

CONNECTION THREE

How has APA opposed the misuse of psychological science, practice, and applications and their negative impact on human rights?

APA’s responsibility to oppose the misuse of psychological science and practice and their negative impact on human rights derives explicitly from the Ethics Code. The Ethics Code sets forth rules of conduct for psychologists in their scientific, educational, and professional roles. The APA Ethics Committee, with support from the APA Ethics Office, is tasked with enforcing the ethical conduct of psychologists, educating psychologists about ethical standards, protecting the public against harmful conduct by psychologists, and helping APA to achieve its objectives related to ethics. In coordination with the Ethics Committee, the Ethics Office provides consultation to members and the public, as well as educational programming, with the goal of promoting the ethical conduct of psychologists and protecting the welfare of the public. In addition to the Ethics Code and the Ethics Office, two other institutional structures within APA have responsibilities that are relevant to respect for human rights in psychological research -- the Committee on Human Research (CHR) and the Office of Research Ethics. The missions of both the office and

the committee are to promote the responsible conduct of research, including ensuring that the rights and welfare of human participants in research are protected. In coordination with CHR, the office engages in advocacy and educational activities, including disseminating guidelines for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. The work of the office and committee is guided by the Nuremberg Code (Trials of War Criminals before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals, 1949) and the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979).

The current version of the Ethics Code was developed in 2002, became effective in 2003, and was amended in 2010 and 2016. In the 2002 version, the most far-reaching implication for human rights protection was a change to Standard 1.02 regarding conflicts between ethics and the law, regulations, or other governing legal authorities. In 2002, the Ethics Code was amended, allowing psychologists who experienced a conflict between an APA ethical obligation and a law or order from a superior to “adhere to the requirements of the law, regulations, or other governing authority,” without being deemed to have committed an ethical violation if they followed certain steps. Human rights were explicitly mentioned in the Introduction and Applicability section in relation to conflicts between the Ethics Code and the law, regulations, or other governing legal authorities, but that language was not included in the corresponding Standard 1.02. Among the concerns that were later raised about this amendment were that it could be seen as allowing for a “Nuremberg defense” in cases of human rights violations (for example, Pope and Gutheil, 2009). Yet, when amended in 2002, the intent of Standard 1.02 was to provide guidance to psychologists facing legal conflicts primarily involving issues of confidentiality, e.g., where psychologists were subpoenaed to provide their therapy notes in court cases (American Psychological Association, 2010b). In 2010, the language of Standard 1.02 was amended to make explicit that human rights could not be violated. Given that these 2010 amendments occurred in the context of a divisive debate that had clear human rights implications regarding the ethics of psychologists’ participation in national security interrogations, the Task Force on Human Rights reviewed the history of actions surrounding these amendments. All of the following information is derived from APA sources and is available on the webpage, “Timeline of APA Policies & Actions Related to Detainee Welfare and Professional Ethics in the Context of Interrogation and National Security” (American Psychological Association, n.d.b.).

In 2005, APA’s Board of Directors appointed the APA Presidential Task Force on Psychological Ethics and National Security (“the PENS Task Force”) to examine whether psychologists’ involvement in national security-related activities was addressed adequately in the Ethics Code. The PENS Task Force report upheld the 2002 APA Ethics Code and the obligation of individual psychologists to act consistently with the 2002 Ethics Code in interrogations of detainees in national security settings, based on the assertion that psychologists had the knowledge and skill to help military personnel obtain valuable information to protect national security, and ensure that interrogations were safe, legal, and ethical (American Psychological Association, 2005a). APA’s Board of Directors adopted the PENS report as policy by official emergency action on behalf of the Council of Representatives in July 2005 despite growing concerns that mental health professionals in the military were caught in an ethical

dilemma between observing international human rights norms and following the orders of their superiors in locations such as the Guantanamo Bay detention facility (Lewis, 2004; Wilks, 2005).

Between 2005 and 2008, APA issued many statements and adopted resolutions reaffirming psychologists’ consultative role in military interrogations and/or condemning torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, and attempting to clarify the distinction between the two (for example, Anderson, 2005; American Psychological Association, 2005b, 2006b, 2007a, 2008b; Brehm, 2007; Brehm & Anderson, 2007; Koocher, 2006; Moorehead-Slaughter, 2006). In 2007, APA submitted a statement to the US Senate Intelligence Committee in which it presented the key recommendations of the PENS report and two subsequent resolutions that reiterated APA’s absolute prohibition against torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment and the need for psychologists to comply with human rights instruments relevant to their roles. The statement also asserted that “conducting an interrogation is inherently a psychological endeavor,” and called for the establishment of a research “center for excellence” that would yield findings on effective means of eliciting information from detainees in national security settings (American Psychological Association, 2007b).

A major shift in APA policy occurred in 2008 when a member-initiated petition was introduced and approved by a vote of the APA membership to restrict the roles of psychologists in what were deemed to be unlawful national security detention settings. The petition stated that psychologists may not work in settings where “persons are held outside of, or in violation of, either International Law (e.g., the *UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* and the Geneva Conventions) or the US Constitution (where appropriate), unless they are working directly for the persons being detained or for an independent third party working to protect human rights” or providing treatment to military personnel (American Psychological Association, 2008c). A letter was sent soon thereafter to then President George W. Bush to inform him and his administration of the new limits on psychologists’ role in interrogations in unlawful detention sites (American Psychological Association, 2008e). A similar letter was sent to then President Barack Obama in 2009. This letter also acknowledged with regret the recent disclosure following the release of the US Senate Armed Forces Committee Report and the Justice Department memos that some psychologists “were involved in designing and advocating harsh interrogation techniques” and recommitted APA to safeguarding the welfare and human rights of detainees (Bray & Anderson, 2009). Numerous letters were also sent to federal agency officials and members of Congress on key legislative committees to inform them of APA’s new policy. An APA Presidential Advisory Group was appointed to provide guidance to Council regarding the implementation of the petition resolution (American Psychological Association, 2008d), and the petition resolution was formally adopted by the Council of Representatives in 2009, entitled, “Psychologists and Unlawful Detention Settings with a Focus on National Security.” In the same year, APA’s Council of Representatives approved a new vision statement that included a goal of becoming an “effective champion of the application of psychology to promote human rights, health, well-being and dignity” (Farberman, 2009).

In 2009, the APA Ethics Committee issued a statement that it “will not accept any defense to torture in its adjudication of ethics complaints,” (American Psychological Association, 2009b) and APA’s Board of Directors released an open letter to its membership in which it pledged to monitor, investigate, and adjudicate reports of unethical conduct by APA members (American Psychological Association Board of Directors, 2009). Furthermore, the Council of Representatives voted to direct the APA Ethics Committee to amend Ethical Standard 1.02 (American Psychological Association, 2009d).

In 2010, the Ethics Code (American Psychological Association, 2016b) was amended to insure the inviolate nature of human rights as a foundational principle within the APA Ethics Code. Previously, when psychologists attempted to resolve conflicts between the Ethics Code and laws, regulations, or governing legal authority, a psychologist could elect to adhere to the legal authority even if the psychologist actions violated human rights. The 2010 revision made evident that such human rights violations are not acceptable under the APA Ethics Code.¹

In 2013, the Council of Representatives voted to rescind the PENS report and adopted the “Policy Related to Psychologists Work in National Security Settings and Reaffirmation of the APA Position Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment” (American Psychological Association, 2013). This document consolidated and reconciled all of APA’s policies related to torture, professional ethics, detainee welfare, and interrogation in the national security context, including six Council resolutions (1986, 1987, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009), including the membership petition resolution.

In October 2014, a book by New York Times journalist James Risen, “*Pay Any Price: Greed, Power, and Endless War*,” included allegations that APA had colluded with the Bush administration, the CIA, and the US military to support torture (American Psychological Association, 2014b). APA subsequently commissioned a review by outside legal counsel to “conduct an independent review relating to allegations that, following the attacks of September 11, 2001, the APA colluded with US government officials to support torture with regard to the interrogations of detainees who were captured and held abroad” (American Psychological Association, 2014c).

The independent review was released in July 2015 (Hoffman et al., 2015) and drew conclusions about the PENS process, the handling of ethics complaints, and the relationship between key APA officials and government agencies. It stated that there was undisclosed coordination between APA officials and military psychologists that resulted in ethical guidance for psychologists in national security settings that was no more restrictive than Defense Department interrogation guidelines. Ultimately, the report makes clear that, despite known and significant concerns about the potential for conflict between application of the Ethics Code and human rights considerations, APA did not craft specific and unequivocal ethics policies in defense of human rights.

APA apologized for the “‘deeply disturbing’ findings and organizational failures,” and the Board of Directors announced steps to correct those shortcomings (American Psychological Association, 2015d), related to the Ethics Office, to organizational procedures, and to checks and balances. Although not all have yet been fully acted upon, highlights related to human rights include the following recommendations:

- The Council of Representatives will amend the Guidelines for Council Resolutions to ensure that all relevant future policies are anchored in APA core values, including promoting human rights, human health and welfare, and ethics;
- The Board of Directors will establish a mechanism for immediate oversight in the processing of filed ethics complaints, including review of current adjudication and investigative procedures, and transparency and accuracy in the disclosure of current ethics office practices;
- The Board of Directors will increase APA’s engagement around human rights activities and its collaboration with other organizations regarding these issues;
- The Board of Directors will ask that an Office of Human Rights be established with an Advisory Committee; and
- The Board of Directors will recommend that the Education Directorate promote a focus on human rights and ethics as a core element of psychology education and training from high school through continuing education offerings.

1 The text of the previous Code and the Amendments as noted in underscoring and strikethrough are as follows:

Introduction and Applicability

If psychologists’ ethical responsibilities conflict with law, regulations, or other governing legal authority, psychologists make known their commitment to this Ethics Code and take steps to resolve the conflict in a responsible manner. ~~If the conflict is unresolvable via such means, psychologists may adhere to the requirements of the law, regulations, or other governing authority~~ in keeping with basic principles of human rights.

1.02 Conflicts Between Ethics and Law, Regulations, or Other Governing Legal Authority

If psychologists’ ethical responsibilities conflict with law, regulations, or other governing legal authority, psychologists clarify the nature of the conflict, make known their commitment to the Ethics Code, and take reasonable steps to resolve the conflict consistent with the General Principles and Ethical Standards of the Ethics Code. ~~If the conflict is unresolvable via such means, psychologists may adhere to the requirements of the law, regulations, or other governing legal authority.~~ Under no circumstances may this standard be used to justify or defend violating human rights.

1.03 Conflicts Between Ethics and Organizational Demands

If the demands of an organization with which psychologists are affiliated or for whom they are working are in conflict with this Ethics Code, psychologists clarify the nature of the conflict, make known their commitment to the Ethics Code, and to the extent feasible, resolve the conflict in a way that permits adherence to the Ethics Code. ~~take reasonable steps to resolve the conflict consistent with the General Principles and Ethical Standards of the Ethics Code.~~ Under no circumstances may this standard be used to justify or defend violating human rights.

[N.B. Strikethrough and underscoring indicates amended language, as quoted in APA website]

On July 7, 2015, the Council of Representatives voted 157-1 to prohibit psychologists from participating in national security interrogations. Subsequent actions included establishing a blue-ribbon panel to “attend to the potential conflicts between human rights and other considerations,” and appointing this Task Force on Human Rights (American Psychological Association, 2016a). APA’s 2015 policy changes are summarized in *Key Provisions of the New APA Policy* (American Psychological Association, 2015e).

Other notable changes were made by the Board of Directors following receipt of the report of the APA Commission on Ethics Processes (APA Commission on Ethics Processes, 2017). For example, APA adopted a new organizational conflict of interest policy for members of Boards, Committees, and Task Forces; formed an Ethics Code Task Force to revise the Ethics Code; simplified the ethics adjudication process; and committed to an expansion of ethics outreach and education for members (American Psychological Association Board of Directors, 2019).

Since the release of the Independent Review, its conclusions have been contested and various constituencies within and external to APA continue to debate the issues related to psychologists’ roles in national defense and operational applications, as well as in settings where systematic violations of human rights have been documented (Huminiuk & Wyndham, 2020). In August 2018, a proposal was voted down by the Council of Representatives that would have allowed psychologists to provide mental health care to detainees at detention sites that would be considered unlawful according to APA policy. While this latest proposed amendment failed, it demonstrated that some aspects of the roles of psychologists in national security settings remain unresolved for some (American Psychological Association, 2018c).

In the surveys we reviewed in which APA Divisions, Boards, and Committees reported on “human rights-related” activities, several activities pertain to preventing the misuse of psychological research and practice, including related to torture. For example, the Society for the History of Psychology (Division 26) reported that members of the Division “were involved in uncovering APA’s involvement in torture and prompting the organization to make changes.” Various Divisions (including 9, 10, 24, 26, and 32) called for an opportunity to address the findings of the Independent Review and for APA to show its commitment to human rights. The Society for the Study of Peace, Conflict and Violence: Peace Psychology (Division 48) has initiated many APA Council resolutions and policy positions prohibiting psychologist involvement in torture, including the 2013 reconciliation of policies, reaffirmation of APA’s position against torture and annulment of the 2005 PENS report, and the 2015 amendment of the 2013 ban on psychologist participation in national security interrogations.

Many other efforts were reported that were implicitly related to curbing the misuse of psychological science and practice that could adversely affect human rights, although explicit human rights language or reference to human rights instruments were not used. For example, BPA and the Ethics Committee supported the Society for Indian Psychologists (SIP) in writing a commentary on the APA Ethics Code, which draws attention to equality rights for Native American peoples (Garcia & Tehee, 2014). SIP and other ethnic minority psychological associations have helped the Ethics Code Task Force, currently revising the Ethics Code, consider issues such

as a more collectivist approach to ethics, the importance of a human rights framework, and the relevance of sociohistorical context and culture.

The Society for Humanistic Psychology (Division 32; 2013) was a lead sponsor in an Open Letter to DSM-5 that expressed concern that some proposed revisions might be problematic for social justice and vulnerable populations, and addressing the danger that the revised manual might “risk labeling sociopolitical deviance as a mental disorder.”

The Task Force found that while APA aims to respect and promote human rights, the organization’s opposition to the misuse of psychological science and practice has been inconsistent and has not been grounded in human rights principles and law. Without a highly developed and systematic analysis of the potential human rights implications of the misuse of psychological knowledge and practice, the organization was unprepared and acted in piecemeal fashion to identify and try to address very serious allegations of abuse as they arose. Because the organization, its policies, and the Ethics Code are not oriented around a clearly defined and operationalized human rights framework, APA failed to demonstrate its capacity to protect the public from the misuse of psychological knowledge and practice. It also failed to protect its members from the ethical dilemmas of working in environments in which systemic human rights violations have occurred.

CONNECTION FOUR

How has APA advanced equal participation in and access to the benefits of psychological science and practice?

APA, particularly through the Public Interest Directorate, has engaged in efforts to apply “the science and practice of psychology to the fundamental problems of human welfare and the promotion of equitable and just treatment of all segments of society” (American Psychological Association Public Interest Directorate, n.d.). Relevant work includes publishing reports on *Resilience of Refugee Children After War* (American Psychological Association, 2010) and *Crossroads: The Psychology of Immigration in the New Century* (American Psychological Association, Presidential Task Force on Immigration, 2012), supporting a project on promoting safe and supportive schools (American Psychological Association, n.d.c), and creating the International Psychology Network for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Issues (n.d.d.). The APA Council of Representatives has also adopted guidelines on providing psychological services to multicultural and minority populations (American Psychological Association, 1990) and on multicultural education and training of psychologists (American Psychological Association, 2002b; 2017a), as well as a policy statement on racial and ethnic profiling (American Psychological Association, 2001a). Psychology Teachers in Community Colleges, APA’s affiliate member network that represented and supported psychology teachers within the two-year college community (since combined with the 4-year educator network, resulting in the Committee on Associate and Baccalaureate Education (CABE)), endorsed a right to education by explicitly citing UDHR Article 26. CABE works directly with students from marginalized populations.

Equal access to the benefits of science has been taken up explicitly by various Boards, Divisions, and Committees using a

human rights framework. For example, the Committee for Rural Health (CRH) states explicitly that its mission is driven by a belief that accessible and affordable comprehensive health care is a basic human right regardless of socioeconomic status, diversity issues, and geographic location, and advocates for increased availability of services in rural communities. And Division 14 (Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology) has a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) committee focused on developing and assisting allies for LGBT employees at work.

The *APA Monitor on Psychology* is an APA member benefit, which is also available to non-members on a subscription basis. The Monitor has, on occasion, published stories related to human rights, including the role of psychologists in applying their skills to address individual human rights needs (e.g., “Protecting human rights,” April 2016, Vol 47, No. 4). In 2012, APA launched its webpage on human rights (American Psychological Association, n.d.e.), which contains basic overviews on human rights, a variety of materials for educators on integrating the teaching of human rights and psychology, and opportunities for advocacy to advance human rights. While in subsequent years APA has made a significant contribution to human rights promotion by presenting human rights-related material on its website, no systematic publicizing of this resource is evident. Human rights is ranked 230 of the 501 topics pages on the APA website according to readership.

Connection 4 can also be applied internally to the Association, ensuring equitable access to APA influence and leadership. For example, individual constituencies have fought for decades to have their legitimacy and integrity respected and to be identified as viable members of the APA community. Although there is a Society for the Psychological Study of Culture, Ethnicity and Race (Division 45), a number of Ethnic Minority Psychological Associations (EMPAs) – e.g., the Association of Black Psychologists, the Asian American Psychological Association, the National Latinx Psychological Association, the Society of Indian Psychologists – have developed their own organizations partly in response to disaffection with APA, asserting that their unique perspectives and contributions were not valued and honored within the APA governance structure. Yet to this day, these constituencies struggle for rights within governance—at the time of writing, there is a Council effort underway for the fourth time to achieve a vote on the Council of Representatives for the EMPAs, which requires a Bylaws amendment vote by the APA membership. If human rights were at the center of APA’s decision-making, each of these constituencies might have experienced inclusion and dignity negating the need for their circuitous quests for voice. APA leadership has reached out to engage with EMPA leaders for many years through the Council of National Psychology Associations for the Advancement of Ethnic Minority Interests (CNPAAEMI) and more recently through the Alliance of National Psychological Associations for Racial and Ethnic Equity. Council has also taken strides in recent years with the creation of the Council Diversity Working Group, but more remains to be done.

Disparities in mental health outcomes, differential access to psychological services, and limited and/or delayed translation of scientific findings are significant areas of human rights concern within APA’s direct purview. While the Task Force found clear evidence of activities from many constituents of APA that address

equal access to the benefits of psychology, these activities are, for the most part, carried out without explicit reference to human rights instruments and without an intentional human rights frame.

CONNECTION FIVE

How has APA advocated for human rights and provided the resources and tools necessary for its members to do so as well?

There are five primary ways in which APA, as an institution and through its members, has advocated to encourage governments—including both the US and foreign governments—to meet their obligations to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights:

1. Developing policies and resolutions on monitoring and protecting human rights;
2. Submitting amicus briefs to US courts;
3. Conducting outreach to the US Congress and Executive Branch;
4. Informing the decision-making of foreign governments; and
5. Participating at the UN.

Policies and resolutions regarding human rights monitoring and protection

APA has undertaken a wide range of advocacy activities through Council policy, various offices of the Public Interest Directorate, the newly integrated Advocacy Office, and Divisions.

The Council Policy Manual compiles the policy actions taken by the Council of Representatives from 1960 to the present (American Psychological Association, n.d.g.). Many of these policy actions focus on issues with direct human rights implications, such as racism, affirmative action and equal opportunity, identity-based discrimination and violence, criminal justice (including the death penalty), poverty and socioeconomic status, migration, and climate change. Several resolutions of particular relevance to professional psychologists concern the rights of people with mental illness, including the 1999 Resolution on Stigma and Discrimination against People with Serious Mental Illness and Severe Emotional Disturbance (American Psychological Association, 1999). This resolution supports efforts to eradicate stigma, uphold the dignity of persons with mental illness in all clinical and research practices, and ensure fair access to treatment. As another example, the 2004 APA Resolution on Outpatient Civil Commitment (American Psychological Association, 2004b) recognized that people with serious mental illness have the same right to personal liberty as other citizens and that women and members of racial and ethnic minority groups are especially vulnerable to discrimination related to involuntary incarceration and treatment.

As discussed above, the APA Public Interest Directorate applies psychology to the fundamental problems of human welfare and social justice and the promotion of equitable and just treatment of all segments of society through education, training, and public policy. It addresses human rights monitoring and protection on issues of aging, HIV/AIDS, disabilities, sex and gender, gender identity and sexual orientation, ethnic minorities, socioeconomic status, and children, youth and families. For example, the Committee on Children,

Youth, and Families has led or contributed to many relevant policy statements, including one on the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* (American Psychological Association, 2001b) and another on Violence Against Children by Governments (American Psychological Association, 1989).

In 2012, BAPPI began a human rights initiative asking APA Boards and Committees to identify their initiatives and activities in fulfilling APA's goal of being "an effective champion for human rights," and to provide recommendations for APA initiatives on human rights that BAPPI could then develop (this BAPPI initiative provided much of the data for this section of the Task Force report). Since then, BAPPI has organized conference programs on human rights at APA's annual conventions, at the biannual conferences of Division 9 (Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues) and Division 27 (Society for Community Research and Action), and at the 2012 International Congress of Psychology.

Submission of amicus briefs

The Committee on Legal Issues and the APA Office of General Counsel work in conjunction with psychological experts and outside counsel to draft amicus briefs in cases on issues about which psychology has relevant scientific knowledge or information to share with courts of law. Many of the policy issues at the core of these amicus briefs address clear human rights questions, including, for example, the execution of child offenders, the rights of persons with disabilities, the right to refuse medication, and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. APA has submitted over 150 amicus briefs, approximately one-third of which have been to the US Supreme Court (American Psychological Association, n.d.f.), many of which touch on human rights-related issues.

Outreach to Congress and the US Administration

APA's Advocacy Office supports human rights by advocating for relevant legislation and regulatory policies through strategies such as briefing members of Congress and their staff and Executive branch officials, commenting on evolving legislation and regulations, and testifying at congressional hearings and briefings. The Office has advocated for US ratification of key international human rights treaties, including the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, has provided feedback to the Department of State's Commission on Unalienable Rights, and has worked in support of the rights of sexual and gender minorities, women, low-income people, aging people, immigrants, and other marginalized groups. Domestically, the office has tackled human rights issues within a civil rights frame, focusing on such issues as voting rights, criminal justice reform, domestic violence, and equal employment opportunity. The Office has also contributed to discussions concerning health policy and the reduction of inequality.

Informing international governments' decision-making

APA has in the past stated its support for universal human rights and adopted policies aimed at condemning human rights abuses internationally. In 1980, the APA Board of Directors protested the internal exile of Andrei Sakharov in the Soviet Union and reaffirmed APA's support "for the right of scientists to exercise their scientific and professional skills, be accorded social recognition, and the opportunity to communicate with colleagues in other lands" (American Psychological Association, 1987, p. 162). In 1984, APA's Board of Directors, wanting "to develop guidelines pertinent to APA's involvement in defense of international human rights," (American Psychological Association, 1984, p. 676) created a Joint Subcommittee on Human Rights, comprised of representatives of CIRP and BSERP. The Subcommittee's report, adopted by the Council of Representatives in January 1984, recommended a number of ascending actions that APA could take, often in cooperation with other organizations, including "information gathering," "sending a letter of concern," "cooperating in action taken by other US Groups," "instituting legal action (such as at UNESCO or the UN Commission on Human Rights)," or "making a site visit" (American Psychological Association, 1984). In regard to this last recommendation, APA sent a mission to Chile "to investigate that country's use of torture and other violations of human rights" (Rosenzweig, 1988, p. 83). In 1986, the Council of Representatives adopted a resolution stating that "the American Psychological Association condemns torture wherever it occurs" and that "the American Psychological Association supports the UN Declaration and Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment" (American Psychological Association, 1986) and a second resolution "that the American Psychological Association deplores and rejects the apartheid system" in South Africa and urging American psychologists "not to collaborate in projects sponsored by the South African government until human rights reforms are instituted" (Fox, 1987, p. 666).

In recent years, APA has followed a de facto policy of not making direct criticisms or requests of foreign governments' laws and policies based in part on the belief that this would be an unhelpful or improper course of action for an American association, particularly without outreach to or from that country's national psychological association. On the occasions that it has engaged in these actions, it has been in the case of severe rights violations with very direct links to psychology, typically in collaboration with other NGOs or with national psychological associations, often in the country in which the human rights abuse has taken place. For example, in 2014, APA, together with psychological societies from other countries, sought to inform the decision of Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni regarding a pending "anti-homosexuality" bill. Museveni stated that he would use scientific evidence about the origins of sexual orientation as the basis for his decision on whether to sign the bill, a key provision of which required the punishing of same-sex relationships with up to life in prison. APA and the national psychological associations that co-signed the letter pointed to contemporary research on the nature of homosexuality and the potential outcomes of implementing the type of measure proposed in the bill.

Participation at the UN

APA holds special consultative status with ECOSOC and is affiliated with the UN Department of Global Communications (formerly the Department of Public Information). APA is also a member of the Conference of NGOs in Consultation with the UN and was a founding member in 2012 of the Psychology Coalition of NGOs Accredited at the UN, a group of psychology and psychology-related organizations with NGO status. Then and now, the activities of APA are undertaken almost exclusively through non-staff representatives and interns. Their activities are aimed at informing global policies by providing policy makers with evidence-based psychological information and resources relevant to social issues. These activities generally take the form of workshops, presentations, and other events, and occasional advocacy statements.

A review of the *2018 Annual Report of the APA at the UN* (American Psychological Association, 2018b) reveals the centrality of human rights in the activities undertaken by APA representatives at the UN. Topics are wide-ranging, including the rights of older persons, women's empowerment, social and economic challenges, climate change, and human rights as they illuminate issues facing international psychology. An important feature of these activities is that they are not limited to addressing human rights issues in treaties explicitly accepted or ratified by the US, a point that is relevant given the relatively limited number of treaties to which the US is a party and the inconsistent approach to international law taken by successive administrations. This fact is important as APA considers whether its standards for human rights are those embraced in international conventions, declarations, and international humanitarian law, or are those specifically accepted by the US.

APA Divisions are also engaged in relevant UN activities. For example, SPSSI (Division 9) has NGO status at the UN. The Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (Division 14) UN team has also participated in efforts regarding human rights at the UN, such as sessions of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

The Task Force found that APA engaged most directly with Connection 5, but the work has rarely been guided by an explicit human rights framework, except for the UN team. It seems clear though, that through its status as an NGO and through its public statements on policy or case law, APA and its constituents have understood that the Association has an important role to play as a voice for advancing human rights.

From an advocacy standpoint, a human rights framework could underlie APA's strategy, providing a coherent framework for activities and prioritization. In addition to calling for US ratification of other human rights treaties, the language of human rights could be strategically employed where helpful, drawing on international obligations that the US has made through ratification of a specific treaty (e.g., with regard to voting, criminal justice reform, and non-discrimination generally), and tying APA's efforts to related domestic human rights work.

Conclusions drawn from the Five Connections Analysis

Human rights are fundamental. They exist for all people in all times, they provide a higher order structure than the laws of states and professional codes, and they are intrinsically connected to the study and practice of psychology. Psychologists have special human rights obligations given their knowledge of human behavior and emotions, their power in relationship to vulnerable people, their ethical contract to society and their potential to do harm. In the preceding section, the Task Force described five connections between psychologists and human rights that outline obligations of psychological organizations and analyzed the manner in which APA has acted in accord with each of these connections. Through our study of the literature on the concepts that have historically guided APA and our review of the Association's activities, we conclude that APA has demonstrated an implicit recognition of its human rights obligations throughout its history. However, we found that it has often acted in piecemeal fashion. Without the clarity or commitment that a fully operationalized theoretical framework would provide, APA has been hampered in its ability to consistently and effectively promote and protect human rights.

In considering Connection One, how APA has worked to protect the human rights of psychologists, we found that both through its central office and its constituent boards and committees, APA has declared aspirations and engaged in some activities but has not directly evoked human rights instruments or principles. APA could more effectively promote academic freedom by explicitly evoking the UDHR and ICCPR to address the rights of psychologists to seek and produce information and to freely associate and move within and across international borders; as well as the right to be free from harassment or threats to employment, detention, or bodily harm for opposing the policies of their governments. The Task Force did not find evidence of systematic processes to respond to the persecution of psychologists (as exist, for example, within the American Physical Society, the American Sociological Association, and several other societies). Furthermore, APA has focused on systemic discrimination against marginalized populations, such as discriminatory legislation, more than it has on individual human rights abuses, and seems to have done less international human rights work than some other professional organizations. While the AAAS, Committee of Concerned Scientists, National Academies of Science, and Scholars at Risk create awareness of human rights violations against scientists, most work must be carried out by discipline-specific societies to identify, monitor, and intervene in particular cases. It is unclear what the organizational mechanism would be for APA to intervene in such cases.

Regarding Connection Two, how APA has fostered the development of psychological knowledge and practices that promote greater understanding and realization of human rights, the Task Force identified many knowledge products and applied initiatives that resonate with human rights principles, but found that most of this work has not been informed by an explicit human rights framework or in direct partnership with human rights organizations or experts. With APA leadership, training programs and professional development initia-

tives can be developed to promote an understanding and application of human rights principles and instruments among psychologists. APA can promote research on human rights issues, further the inclusion of a human rights framework in psychology education and training at all levels, disseminate human rights-related knowledge through the annual Convention, advocate for the inclusion of human rights principles in the criteria for funding for federal research, and encourage the publication of human rights work in APA journals.

APA can also pursue several activities that promote access to human rights. From an industrial-organizational perspective, APA could take the lead on developing workplace protections for marginalized populations, including individuals of diverse age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, or socioeconomic status. Using a human rights frame would connect protections to international standards and thereby draw support from global efforts toward the promotion and protection of human rights. This would enable national governments working to address these issues to frame the discourse in terms of rights that must be protected and fulfilled, complementing and strengthening the language of “inequities.”

Among APA’s guidelines for psychological practice, only the Multicultural Guidelines make explicit reference to human rights; others implicitly embrace the spirit of human rights through references to respect, equity, nondiscrimination, and access. None of the guidelines currently provide specific direction on how to operationalize a human rights framework for professional practice. APA could develop practice guidelines for psychologists delivering clinical services in international humanitarian contexts that provide a clear human rights frame; for example, that outline psychologists’ obligations to ensure an equitable right to care, monitoring for violations of human rights, emphasizing psychologists’ needs for education about international human rights statutes, and holding organizations, governments, and/or governmental agencies accountable to demands for transparency. Educational resources for psychologists with dual obligations or in coercive settings, such as detention centers, regarding their obligations to the Istanbul Protocol (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1999) would also be important.

In reflecting on Connection Three, how APA has worked to oppose the misuse of psychological science and practice and their negative impact on human rights, the Task Force concluded that there is a lack of relevant foundational human rights knowledge within the organization, including among central office staff and volunteer leaders, which undermines its ability to protect the public and its membership. In its recent history, without a highly developed and systematic analysis of the potential human rights implications of the misuse of psychological knowledge and practice, the organization acted in piecemeal fashion to identify, understand, and address very serious allegations of human rights violations as they arose. Because the organization, its policies, and the Ethics Code are not oriented around a clearly defined and operationalized human rights framework, grounded in human rights principles and international law, APA did not have the institutional capacity to protect the public from the misuse of psychological knowledge and practice. It also failed to protect its members from the ethical dilemmas of

working in environments in which systemic human rights violations have occurred. As APA and its members have experienced a disruptive tension between obligations to respect the Ethics Code and observe US law, the Task Force suggests that international human rights can provide a higher-order structure upon which to resolve this tension. Human rights imperatives are not synonymous with national security interests or guild interests, but they do align with the highest aspirations of the profession as articulated in the General Principles of the Ethics Code. Accordingly, they are an appropriate source of guidance for the organization and the profession.

In considering how APA has strived to ensure that all people receive the benefits of psychological science and practice, Connection Four, we found clear evidence of activities from many constituents of APA to ensure equality of access, but generally carried out without explicit reference to human rights instruments or principles, and without an intentional human rights frame.

Finally, the Task Force reviewed APA’s human rights advocacy efforts, Connection Five, and found that through its status as a UN-affiliated NGO, its public statements on policy or case law, and its many advocacy activities, APA is strongly positioned to advance human rights. However, while numerous activities are undertaken that resonate with human rights principles, an explicit human rights framework has rarely guided advocacy efforts outside of the UN-affiliated NGO work. A human rights framework could allow advocacy priorities to emerge with greater clarity and provide a coherent decision-making strategy.

More broadly, APA could adopt human rights principles into its business activities, along the lines of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2011). Following the work of AAAS, APA could adapt these guiding principles, assessing compliance with human rights through: (1) articulating APA’s human rights values as reflected in its strategic plan, mission, policies, and statements, and determining if any key human rights values are missing (2) engaging stakeholder groups—staff, governance leaders, members, meeting attendees, and others in the APA community—to determine the extent to which they believe the APA lives up to its human rights values; (3) conducting qualitative work to understand better the responses to the survey and propose steps for improvement.

In short, if APA were to adopt a human rights framework, international human rights instruments and principles, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, would become foundational to strategic planning and would inform all organizational programs and operations. APA would act to promote and defend people’s free and equitable participation in civil and political life, their freedom from discrimination and repression, and their economic, social, and cultural wellbeing; and would work to reduce the suffering caused by individual and systemic violations of human rights. APA would prioritize research and the application of practices to help achieve these objectives.

SECTION FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are divided into three sections: (1) Organizational values and institutional structures; (2) Policies and procedures; and (3) Programs and activities.

Organizational Values and Institutional Structures

RECOMMENDATION ONE

The first and overarching recommendation of this Task Force is that APA align its ethics, governance, and programmatic activities with human rights principles and practices as articulated in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the UN human rights treaties and optional human rights protocols, the UN human rights declarations on sexual orientation and gender identity, and on indigenous peoples, the *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, and the standards of international humanitarian law (the laws of war), also attending to the need for a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment for the realization of human rights.

APA's standards for human rights should not be limited to those conventions and declarations ratified or signed by the US. Adopting a clearly defined and operationalized human rights approach to its activities would have multiple advantages for APA: It would:

- Ground the values of the organization in the international movement for human rights;
- Provide a roadmap for establishing organizational priorities in the short-, medium-, and long-terms as expressed in APA's strategic plan and other guiding documents;
- Inform the cultivation and management of relationships with stakeholders, including funders and donors, governmental and private sector clients, students, teachers, and faculty members, patient and other community groups, and other members of civil society;
- Enable an assessment of gaps in APA activities, business practices, and policy engagement;
- Provide a consistent standard by which to inform guidelines and other association norms; and,
- Protect APA and psychologists from violating human rights through providing greater clarity of expectations.

RECOMMENDATION TWO

APA use the Five Connections Framework as adapted for psychology to make explicit the connections between human rights and psychology when enacting its mission, goals, and objectives.

The Five Connections Framework is drawn from international human rights principles, which have developed through a consensus-building approach over the past century. As noted earlier, the Task Force believes that using this framework will encourage APA to: demonstrate concern for people's ability to participate in civil and political life; work to increase freedom from discrimination and repression; support economic, social, and cultural well-being; and work to reduce the suffering caused by individual and systemic violations of human rights. In adopting this framework, APA would prioritize research and the application of practices to help to achieve these objectives and would demonstrate to its constituents and the international community a clear commitment to human rights and an understanding of psychology's history related to human rights.

RECOMMENDATION THREE

APA ensure that the guiding principle for APA's strategic planning and implementation, "Respect and promote human rights and focus on human rights, fairness, and dignity for all segments of society" be applied across all goals and objectives.

Human rights are already listed as a sub-topic of Strategic Objective 1 (Use psychology to make an impact on societal issues), but are relevant to all of APA's Strategic Objectives. Incorporating human rights into Strategic Objective 2 (Prepare the discipline for the future) could entail, for example, encouraging more psychology students to be trained to work with survivors of torture or environmental disasters. Incorporating human rights into Strategic Objective 3 (Elevate the public's understanding of psychology) could entail, for example, utilizing APA's communications channels to promote psychologists' contributions to aiding asylum seekers or rehabilitating child soldiers. Incorporating human rights into Strategic Objective 4 (Strengthen APA's standing as an authoritative voice for psychology) could entail, for example, establishing APA as the leading authority on the human rights responsibilities of psychologists.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR

The APA Central Office and governance system ensure centralized coordination to oversee and maintain engagement with human rights at the organizational level.

APA should ensure attention is given to all Five Connections between psychology and human rights, identifying gaps in the association's efforts regarding human rights and opportunities that can reasonably be addressed within the limits of APA's resources. APA should periodically assess human rights resolutions/policies and activities to assess progress in their implementation.

APA should engage in regular dialogue with organizations that monitor domestic or international human rights, focusing on those most relevant to psychology. Responses to such developments would involve collaboration with Communications and Advocacy staff to produce public statements or letters to government officials in response to human rights abuses.

APA should work actively and deliberately to include the voices of all psychologists, centering the voices of marginalized populations, such as indigenous groups and religious minorities.

APA should leverage existing activities to promote an understanding of and respect for human rights among psychologists, for example, through incorporating a human rights-focused track into APA's Annual Convention and through publishing more human rights-focused content in outlets like the APA website and the *Monitor on Psychology*. APA should encourage its Divisions to consider the Five Connections framework in their work, bringing a human rights focus to their teaching, research, practice, and advocacy activities.

APA should create specific and measurable metrics to track, such as number of human rights presentations at the annual convention, number of articles on the website that focus on human rights, and number of articles per year in the *Monitor on Psychology* that address an aspect of the intersection of psychology and human rights.

Domestic and international human rights work should be brought together through collaboration between CIRP, the Office of International Affairs, the UN team, BAPPI, and the Public Interest Directorate.

Policies and Procedures

RECOMMENDATION FIVE

APA take steps to ensure awareness among its members that respect for human rights holds a central role in the Ethics Code.

As stated by the APA Commission on Ethics Processes, "[p]sychologists have both moral and pragmatic professional reasons to serve as protectors of human rights, especially in circumstances where these rights may be placed at risk (American Psychological Association, 2017b, p 4)." As such, APA and its members should consider human rights as inseparably tied to the ethical standards by which psychologists are bound through the mandates and modes

of operation of the Ethics Office. Toward this end, the 2020 Draft Ethics Code Principles currently under review includes human rights and social justice as new principles (American Psychological Association Ethics Code Task Force, 2020).

RECOMMENDATION SIX

APA develop and conduct regular systematic human rights trainings for APA staff, governance, and membership.

Opportunities for training of APA staff, governance, and membership on human rights could be created, drawing on examples of activities being undertaken by other scientific societies. Such activities might include the hosting of semi-regular webinars on topics at the intersection of psychology and human rights or specific trainings on human rights dimensions of clinical practice, community engagement, and other activities in which psychologists are regularly involved. Human rights trainings can be invited by psychologists with a grounding in human rights and diversity of perspectives, including those with marginalized identities, with multicultural, feminist, anti-oppressive, community, and/or liberatory orientations to psychology, those trained in non-Western systems of psychology, or those with experience in community or systemic intervention.

RECOMMENDATION SEVEN

APA undertake periodic human rights assessments that incorporate organizational accountability in the event of human rights abuses.

Following the example of AAAS, APA should periodically undertake transparent and participatory internal human rights assessments to evaluate the extent to which the policies, structures, programs, and practices of the association are consistent with the human rights principles it espouses and whether new procedures should be established to respond in the case of abuses coming to light in the future. For greatest transparency and effectiveness, any such assessment should be designed and managed by an external team of experts in the field. In the event that is not possible, the assessment should be designed and undertaken in consultation with such experts. Based on the findings of these assessments, APA should take actions that are proactive, responsive, and reparative.

Such assessments should be conducted at regular time intervals as part of a continual process of reflection and critical evaluation of organizational accountability in relation to human rights.

Programs and Activities

RECOMMENDATION EIGHT

APA prioritize human rights advocacy and develop a consistent process to inform public policy and legal decision-making for the protection of human rights. In addition to domestic work, APA's advocacy for human rights should extend to international human rights concerns, including in some situations making direct requests or criticisms of foreign governments, working as appropriate and possible with other national psychological associations, through NGOs at the UN, or in some cases via individual communications.

APA's new C6 organization grants expanded public policy capacity (American Psychological Association, n.d.h.). This increased public policy work should be grounded in human rights, which would provide a strategic framework for advocacy. Political realities should not be neglected when discussing specific issues—for example, some politicians would not be receptive to a human rights framing—but utilizing a human rights framework would provide a firm international grounding for advocacy on not just civil and political rights, but also economic, social, and cultural rights. This human rights framing should extend to all relevant APA public statements. In combination with the psychological science and association policy supporting APA's stances on topics such as the needs of detained immigrants or COVID-related health disparities, for example, human rights would provide a firm legal and moral foundation for advocacy.

As an international organization with members and affiliates from all over the globe, it is appropriate for APA to engage with foreign governments on the topic of human rights concerns, especially in the case of severe human rights abuses with clear relevance to psychology.

While there are innumerable human rights issues of concern, and the organization cannot take action in all instances, the five connections framework can provide guidance on how to prioritize action. Action can be taken when:

- The rights of psychologists are threatened.
- Psychological knowledge or insights can be applied.
- Psychological research or clinical practice has positive or negative implications.
- It is necessary to support clients or clinical populations at risk.
- The issue is of such moral gravity that APA and its members should lend their authority and prestige.

RECOMMENDATION NINE

APA develop, promote, facilitate, and encourage the teaching of content and materials on human rights as a core element of psychology education and training for high school and postsecondary students, and in continuing education.

In the 2013 APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major, one of the five learning goals (Goal 3) is “Ethical and social responsibility in a diverse world.” The description of the goal indicates that students should become familiar with professional ethics in psychology and “begin to embrace the values that will contribute to positive outcomes in work settings and in building a society responsive to multicultural and global concerns” (American Psychological Association Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major Version 2.0, August 2013, p. 15). While this goal supports the need to address the issues of human rights, social justice, and ethical principles in general, it should be revised to include an explicit grounding in human rights.

There is currently no mention of human rights in the Standards of Accreditation for Health Service Psychology that govern doctoral training in psychology, and no formal requirement that practice guidelines consider human rights concerns. APA-accredited graduate programs and APA guidelines should include a focus on human rights.

In subsequent review and revision of educational learning goals and practice competencies and guidelines, the association should consider the breadth of the Five Connections human rights framework to better prepare psychologists for situating their work in an understanding of international human rights. Students should be trained to evaluate how their work can advance or potentially restrict the human rights of those they serve, to integrate the contributions of multicultural, feminist, liberation, and decolonial literatures in psychology, and to attend to participatory and action-oriented research ethics. Psychology faculty and those in training positions should be encouraged to ensure that their students are exposed to international human rights principles, the history of human rights concerns in psychology, and the Five Connections framework in the classroom, in their research, and in their applied and clinical training settings.

RECOMMENDATION TEN

APA encourage the growth and development of human rights research in psychology.

APA should advocate for research priorities and research funding at the national level that advances knowledge about the importance of human rights to psychological health and well-being and expands the understanding of the causes and effects of human rights violations. APA should work to ensure that criteria focused on human rights be included in grant review procedures at the national and organizational levels. For example, APA could develop explicit guidance on how review criteria focused on “broader impact” could manifest attention to the importance of human rights. Finally, APA should work with the American Psychological Foundation (APF) to encourage APF to broaden its attention to human rights issues.

RECOMMENDATION ELEVEN

APA encourage and support psychologists working with populations at risk of human rights violations both domestically and outside of the US

APA should present the promotion and protection of human rights as a viable career path or service opportunity for psychologists. This could be achieved through creating human rights-related guidelines, such as working with survivors of torture or populations at risk from environmental damage; supporting the creation of internship or postdoctoral fellowship programs specific to human rights; creating a mentorship program to match graduate students interested in the topic with senior or mid-career professionals; or providing opportunities to volunteer in the service of human rights. For example, APA could promote and publicize the AAAS On-Call Scientists program, providing opportunities for psychologists to volunteer with human rights organizations through clinical practice, research design, program evaluation, and trainings.

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APPENDIX I

The Nine Core International Human Rights Treaties and Their Optional Protocols

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966, 1976)*

First *Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966, 1976). This optional protocol establishes a “right of petition” that allows individuals or groups to petition the Human Rights Committee that a nation has violated their civil and political rights.

Second *Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty* (1989, 1991).

International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966, 1976).

International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965, 1969).*

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979, 1981).

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1999, 2000), establishing a right of petition, and allowing investigation of possible “grave or systematic violations” of the Convention by a nation.

Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984).*

Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (2002, 2006), allowing independent investigation of a nation's detention facilities to verify that torture is not occurring.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, 1990);

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2000, 2002)*

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2000, 2002)*

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure (2011, 2014), establishing a right of petition against a nation for violating the rights of the child.

International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1990, 2003).

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006; 2008).

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006, 2008), allowing a right of petition against states for violating these rights.

International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (2006, 2010).

* = Treaties ratified by the United States.

Note: The first date following each treaty refers to the date of its adoption by the UN General Assembly, the second to when the required number of nations had ratified it to make the treaty international law. Detailed information on each convention is available on the website of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CoreInstruments.aspx>.

APPENDIX II

Additional Relevant UN Statements

UN General Assembly

The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (13 September 2007)*

Joint statement on human rights, sexual orientation, and gender identity (18 December 2008)*

Human Rights Council

Resolution on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity (17 June, 2011)*

Human Rights, sexual orientation, and gender identity (2 February, 2014)*

Protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (15 July, 2016).²

International Humanitarian Law Treaties

The four Geneva Conventions. Dating in development from 1864 to 1977, the *Geneva Conventions* address the treatment of war wounded and prisoners of war, the protection of civilians during conflict and while under enemy occupation.*

Convention on the Laws and Customs of War on Land (1899, 1925). Also known as the *Hague Conventions*, they prohibit the bombardment of undefended cities and the use of particular weapons such as expanding bullets and poisonous gases.*

Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction (1972, 1975), also called the Biological Weapons Convention, banning all biological weapons.*

Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (1980, 1983).*

Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction (1993, 1997), also called the Chemical Weapons Convention, banning all chemical weapons.*

Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (1997), also called the Mine Ban Treaty, banning all anti-personnel land mines.

Convention on Cluster Munitions (2008, 2010), banning munitions with multiple warheads or “bomblets.”

* = Statements signed and treaties ratified by the United States.

Note: Detailed information on each treaty is easily located online. See also McFarland and Zamora (2020), for a summary of the contents of each human rights treaty, of the Genocide Convention, and of each international humanitarian law treaty.

2 The United States was not a member of the Human Rights Council when this resolution was adopted.

APPENDIX III

Summary of Sources

To conduct this review and to show how the Five Connections Human Rights Framework could be applied to APA's work, we reviewed the following extant sources: a staff report regarding human rights activities developed for APA's Board of Directors in 2015; four surveys of Boards, Committees, Divisions, and experts in 2009, 2010, 2012, and 2012-14; the APA website, particularly the web pages of the Executive Office and the four Directorates—Science, Practice, Education, and Public Interest; APA reports; and previously collected data on activities and concerns of APA Boards and Committees.

In addition, the Task Force surveyed APA Divisions, EMPAs, and active human rights scholars. The survey asked about human rights-related activities undertaken, what respondents would see as the most valuable outcome that could arise from the Task Force's work, whether there were specific activities that respondents believed APA could or should engage in to advance human rights; who the key constituents are that the Task Force should contact; and whether the respondent saw a distinction between human rights and social justice. Thirty-four of 92 entities surveyed provided responses, a 37% response rate.

The Task Force also analyzed APA governance documents (including APA's mission statement and strategic plan, accreditation guidelines, Bylaws, and relevant policies), solicited input from the APA Office of International Affairs and APA's UN team, and analyzed documents, organizational structures, and recommendations from external groups, including AAAS, Psychologists for Social Responsibility (PsySR), the EMPAs, and the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations.

Several activities were added subsequent to the Task Force survey based on APA staff knowledge of human rights-related initiatives.

APPENDIX IV

Scientific Associations with a Human Rights Committee, Office, or Similar Structure

American Anthropological Association
American Association for the Advancement of Science
American Mathematical Society
American Physical Society
American Public Health Association
American Political Science Association
American Sociological Association
American Statistical Association
International Studies Association
National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine
New York Academy of Science



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