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## PRESENTATION: SPECIAL ISSUE ON FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY

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The increase in violence, delinquency and damage inflicted on victims has spawned the interest of researchers, students, State governments and society at large in the last few years, because of the desire to prevent these problems. This situation has given place to a progressive increase in scientific production related to the study of behavior and psychological processes exhibited by diverse actors within the legal scope, which confirms the important level of development that Forensic Psychology has achieved in Iberoamerica.

In this frame of expansion, and in agreement with the mission of Revista Diversitas, this special issue is a valuable opportunity to give visibility to reflections and knowledge created by Forensic Psychology researchers in countries such as Colombia, Spain, and Mexico, through collaboration in regional and international contexts.

The articles included in this issue reflect relevant and current research lines, which go beyond the study of those responsible for the execution of violent crimes (a frequent topic in Legal Psychology) and include an integral overview emphasizing victimological analyses, concern for professionals who care for both aggressors and victims, and the Justice System, through a more formative than retributive role, which opens diverse alternative possibilities to filing and promotes peaceful conflict solution.

Authors address psycho-legal problems from a systemic perspective, where phenomena may not be seen through a merely individual lens, but they are placed into context within a naturally social reality.

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The writers of this special issue agree, although from different perspectives, that the importance of several actions should be emphasized. These include: identifying factors associated to criminal behavior and the sequels of crime for victims; join efforts in the design and application of crime prevention protocols (and its effects); adapt programs to the features and conditions pertaining to target populations; and create and apply knowledge based upon scientific evidence.

Another shared topic among the articles here assembled is the importance given to measurements and objective assessments of psychological variables studied by the world of Law. About this, we must emphasize the use of instruments specifically designed for the assessment of problems in legal contexts, such as child abuse, psychological consequences of crime on victims, violence (sexual and family) risk, and reckless driving, among others. It is evident that the adoption of these instruments by the Hispanic world provides significant key factors to the efforts put into crime and victimization prevention. Nevertheless, this aspect is also seen as sensitive and with room for improvement, since more research is still needed on design and validation of appropriate instruments for the legal scope of Latinamerican contexts.

It is also important to point out that both men and women are included in the research samples analyzed in these articles, and this agrees with the heartfelt need for more gender studies. Such is the case of research on male and female offender; and the study about victims, which included a sample of males - in analyses of family violence crimes, only female populations are often found.

The study of less frequent, but no less important, topics in Forensic Psychology is also an important point. These topics include reflection about the reasons for joining armed groups; the relationship between personality, driving styles, fines and accidents; and the importance of psychotherapeutic techniques such as biofeedback and autoreflective emotional writing in order to protect confidentiality and exonerate Legal staff from legal responsibility.

Topics such as those discussed in this special issue support the idea that Forensic Psychology may contribute to the process of justice application and delivery, since the scientific base and the historical process of this discipline enable significant advances in serving crime victims, mediation processes, psychopathological forensic assessment, criminal profiling, and a broad field of work and research in everything that involves human behavior analysis related to Law in every possible expression.

Nevertheless, Forensic Psychology may only contribute to improving justice systems if some thought is given to the need of a more objective structure of its practice, a certified exercise by its operators, a credited presence in courts, and an updated legislation recognizing the contribution of Forensic Psychology to justice procurement and delivery. In this line, the objective structure of Forensic Psychology practice involves that the theoretical grounds and the application of this discipline are backed by scientific research.

Certified practice of operators in the field of Forensic Psychology ought to be given upon clear and accurate criteria and a membership-based Collegiate Body regulating the practice of experts, encouraging the strengthening of Forensic Psychology and limiting intrusiveness, malpractice, etc. The statement of this point is, on its own, a logical result of

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the advancement of Forensic Psychology, which leads to new challenges stemming from its professional practice.

Credited presence of Forensic Psychologists in courts is one of the effects of the previously mentioned points. Mandatory goals of Forensic Psychology in Latin America include that the voice of Forensic Psychology is needed in the court of justice, that the expert report has an influence on the decision made by the Judges, that the victim is taken care of with professional passion, that the offender is objectively evaluated and treated.

Finally, legislation recognizing the contributions of Forensic Psychology may be understood as that opening its categorical criteria to vis-à-vis communication with other disciplines; that doesn't restrict hierarchical exercises to corporativism, but includes other scientific knowledge, specially that dealing with restorative justice and the defense of human rights.

We trust that the articles presented here contribute to these reflections, motivate academic exchange among professionals researching or practicing within the applied field, promote prevention and reduction of crime and damage experienced by victims, and generally motivate the creation, spread, and application of knowledge stemming from Psychology in order to improve Justice Systems.