<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Type of program:</th>
<th>Symposium</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Title of program:</td>
<td>Psychology in the Middle East Broadly Construed: Past, Present, and Future</td>
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<tr>
<td>First index term</td>
<td>39 International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second index term</td>
<td>54 Philosophical/Theoretical</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Brief Content Description:</td>
<td>This symposium brings together scholars from the Middle East and its broader region for a rare opportunity to discuss the status of psychology’s past, present, and future in the region. Presenters are indigenous psychologists who hail from the region</td>
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<td>4. Division to submit this proposal:</td>
<td>52 - International Psychology</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Length of time requested on program:</td>
<td>50 min.</td>
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<td>6. Chair(s) of the session:</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Title of presentation: Psychologizing Iranian psychology and American psychology
Electronic Archiving: Yes
Coauthor: 

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Membership status: APA Member
Title of presentation: The psychological impact of Ashura on Iranian people
Electronic Archiving: Yes
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Title of presentation: Psychology in Armenia today: 30 years after the earthquake
Electronic Archiving: Yes
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- Title of presentation: The Place & Function of Psychology & Counseling in the Middle East/N. Africa: A Lebanese Perspective
- Electronic Archiving: Yes
- Coauthor:

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9. Accommodation request: None
10. Submit for CE: False

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This symposium brings together scholars from the Middle East and its broader region for a rare opportunity to discuss the status of psychology’s past, present, and future in the region. Presenters are indigenous psychologists who hail from, or have taught in, several nations in the region, including Iran, Lebanon/Syria, and Armenia.

The first paper examines similarities/differences between Iranian/American psychologies, including distinctions in mindset/self-concepts. Placing the topic within the deteriorating national relations since 1979’s Iranian Revolution, the author examines reasons for tensions between the nations’ peoples that relate both to social/political differences, and to deep-set differences in the psychological selves constructed, provocatively asking “What is it about Iran’s psychology that Western psychology fails to understand?”

The second paper offers a close examination of the significance of the historic event of Ashura, which commemorates the death of Husayn ibn Ali, Prophet Muhammad’s grandson. This Islamic holy day, which dates back to about 1400 years ago, has had a great impact on Iranian identity/psychology, and has served as a major source of values for Iranians, and has implications for mainstream Western psychology as well.

The third paper examines the past, present, and future of psychology in the Republic of Armenia, whose psychology was deeply impacted by 70 years of communist rule (1921-1991) and a massive 1988 earthquake.

The fourth paper begins with a brief review of the psychosocial customs, community structures, relational dynamics, and cultural mediators present in the Middle East/North Africa (MENA). The author then examines both traditional regional beliefs/practices as well the advantages/disadvantages of importing Western models/interventions of psychology, highlighting the status of psychology/psychiatry in academic universities/hospitals.

The symposium concludes with integrative comments from a discussant who has published four books on international psychology, has taught internationally, and is a fellow of APA's International Psychology Division. Time is allotted for questions.
(1) Psychologizing Iranian psychology and American psychology

It has been about four decades since the darkening of relationships between Iran and the USA, following the 1979 Iranian Revolution. What is it about Iran’s psychology that Western psychology has failed to understand? Is Western mainstream psychology able to discern and perceive the Iranian psychology? Can the methods and practices within the context of Western psychology provide a rigorous understanding of Iranian culture and Iranian people? What is it that is failing? What other alternative methods of analysis would have worked better for fathoming the nature of impediments that hampered the improvement of relationship between the two sides? What were the cognitive and emotional factors that contributed to the annihilation of the bilateral relationship?

This paper addresses such questions, demonstrating how a mindful intercultural understanding of Iranian psychology is a vital resource for understanding strategies to achieve a global peace.

The talk, by a psychology professor at an Iranian university, enumerates the features that impede the process of understanding Iranian psychology, suggesting treatment interventions that may explicate the pathological causes of the gap in the grammar of understanding.

A careful analysis of the intercultural factors is presented with a focus on both conscious and unconscious components. The paper argues that deep down within the individual, among the seemingly sociopolitical and strategic elements of disparity between the two nations, there stands a number of psychological factors that may have escalated the tension.

Issues regarding the mindlessness of current purported expert theories, negative interpretation biases, the entanglement of present discussions within mindlessly established pre-existing categories, and an emphasis on a taxonomy from a single perspective are discussed parallel with the author’s psychological analysis.


(2) The psychological impact of Ashura on Iranian people
The historic event of Ashura, which commemorates the death of Husayn ibn Ali, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, is an Islamic holy day that is especially significant in Iran. This event, which dates back to about 1400 years ago, has had a great impact on Iranian identity and psychology, and has poured nationalistic and religious enthusiasm and fervor into Iranian culture. The event has served as a major source of values for Iranians, and continues to operate even more increasingly in Iranian life. Ashura is the tenth day of the month of Muharram where the fourth Imam of Shias, Imam Hussain, along with his seventy two of his disciples and followers including his eighth month old son were martyred in the battle field of Karbala by Yazid, the ruler of the time. Imam Hussain rejected to pledge with Yazid, who was distorting the Prophet Mohammad’s Islam and was indulging in corruption, hypocrisy, oppression, injustice, despotism and encroachment upon the rights of people.

This paper explores the underlying psychological components of the event and examines how it continues to influence people’s lives not only in Iran but in many places all across the world, including the USA and Chicago. The paper discusses the roles and functions of authenticity, wholeness and wellness in Ashura and its connectedness to the human inner soul/self and demonstrates how the event often plays a significant role in the phenomenological psychology of Iranian people. The paper also indicates how understanding psychological components of Ashura may build a potential resource for Western mainstream psychology. The authors of the paper are psychology professors from Iran and the USA.

Modern psychology in the ancient Republic of Armenia has a long and tortuous history (Nalchadjian & Takooshian, 1997), punctuated by 70 years of communist rule from 1921-1991 (Vardanian, Takooshian, & Karakashian, 1991; Jeshmaridian & Takooshian, 1994), and the massive earthquake of 1988 (Gevorgyan, Avetisyan, & Takooshian). This presentation, by several Armenian and Armenian-American scholars, offers a concise overview of the long past, present, and likely future of psychological science and practice in the Republic of Armenia.

PAST. The ancient Armenian nation is located in the Caucasus Mountains, where Biblical accounts note Noah’s Ark landed near Mount Ararat. Psychology has a long pre-history in Armenia, which has a rich philosophical tradition that spans three millennia.

PRESENT. From 1917-1991, in the Soviet era, psychological science in all 15 republics was on a short leash, adhering to tenets of dialectical materialism following a 1936 CPSU edict. Psychology practice (psychotherapy) has grown dramatically since the devastating 1988 earthquake, that created so much trauma in the region.

LIKELY FUTURE. Based on the 30 years since 1988, psychological science and practice will continue to flourish...


(4) The Place & Function of Psychology & Counseling in the Middle East/N. Africa: A Lebanese Perspective
We briefly review the tapestry of psychosocial customs, community structures, relational dynamics, and cultural mediators present in the vast region of the Middle East/North Africa (MENA). We examine the inherent practices/natural therapies already taking place there for centuries, even before psychology/counseling/psychotherapy became developed disciplines on their own.

We explore the psychosocial strengths of these communities and the healthy emotional-mental features and sound therapeutic practices already present there.

What are the advantages/disadvantages of importing Western models/interventions of psychology/counseling? How do local people react to such new concepts, approaches, values, and methodologies? Is there a similar need for individuals to seek counseling in the same way/degree Westerners do in industrialized nations?

We highlight the status of psychology and psychiatry in academic universities and hospital centers. Is there a public awareness about mental health and illness in the MENA region? How do people look at these services or use them?

Psychology and counseling are not as developed or as popular as they are in the west. Indeed, most academic institutions group these disciplines together under a Social Studies Department.

Close interdependent bonds and tight-knit communities characterize most MENA societies. People enjoy the benefits of emotional support and cultural richness, which provide natural remedy, nurture, support, and emotional healing, without even labeling those practices as psychological.

We conclude that most people in MENA (like those in still developing nations) can tolerate hardship and pain much more than people living in more affluent or comfortable countries. In sum, what is clinical/abnormal in one culture can be totally acceptable/normal in another.