



---

## Dr. Carlos Albizu Miranda: The Man And His Contribution To The Field Of Psychology

**Corresponding Author:**

Dr. Joseph O. Prewitt Diaz,  
2008 APA International Humanitarian Award, CSM, Quintas Las Mueas, 240, Francisco Colon Julia, 00736 - Puerto Rico

**Submitting Author:**

Dr. Joseph O Prewitt Diaz,  
Affiliate Professor of Psychology, CSM, Quintas Las Mueas, 240, Francisco Colon Julia, 00736 - Puerto Rico

**Previous Article Reference:** [http://www.webmedcentral.com/article\\_view/1192](http://www.webmedcentral.com/article_view/1192)

**Article ID:** WMC001213

**Article Type:** My opinion

**Submitted on:**23-Nov-2010, 04:06:03 PM GMT **Published on:** 24-Nov-2010, 04:31:49 PM GMT

**Article URL:** [http://www.webmedcentral.com/article\\_view/1213](http://www.webmedcentral.com/article_view/1213)

**Subject Categories:**PSYCHOLOGY

**Keywords:**Psychology, Universidad Carlos Albizu Miranda, Puerto Rican psychology

**How to cite the article:**Prewitt Diaz J. Dr. Carlos Albizu Miranda: The Man And His Contribution To The Field Of Psychology . WebmedCentral PSYCHOLOGY 2010;1(11):WMC001213

**Source(s) of Funding:**

None

**Competing Interests:**

None

# Dr. Carlos Albizu Miranda: The Man And His Contribution To The Field Of Psychology

**Author(s):** Prewitt Diaz J

## Introduction

---

There is an attempt in Puerto Rico, to develop a holistic view of the life and contributions of Dr. Carlos Albizu Miranda to the history of Psychology of Puerto Rico, and what has been his legacy to the World. Most of the commentaries after his transition in 1984 focus on his interest to develop a "Psicología Puertorriquena". No human being acts as moved by the spirit or the psyche. The environment, and the person's perception of that environment, has a direct bearing on the actions of that person. Such was the case with "Don Charlie" as many of us called him. I was blessed by the words of wisdom of this man, now it is my turn to share another perception of his work.

## A dynamic man in a changing world

---

As had occurred to many, Don Charlie joined the U.S. Army and upon his return he found a country on the move. Don Luis Munoz Marin, the first elected governor of Puerto Rico, had set the tone for the future, the image of the "Puertorriqueño (jibaro) eñangotó" was over, the day for the "Puertorriqueño (jibaro) agusaó" was upon us. Don Luis called for "civic engagement". The operationalization of this vision was a people who became (1) socio-politically active, (2) had a sense of civic responsibility, (3) embraced voluntarism, and (4) developed a tolerance for diversity.

Puerto Rico was rapidly changing. Don Charlie completed his bachelor's degree at UPR, gaining one of the insight that would change his professional development: testing of Puerto Rican children with instruments developed in a language other than our native Spanish and with norms developed for a totally different population would not apply in Puerto Rico. Some of his early works with the Department of Education of Puerto Rico were witness to this restless feeling[8]

The Division of Community Education was developed. Fred Wales at the helm and Carmen Isaales gave themselves to the task of educating the Puerto Rican populace into their new role of active actors and

masters of the life. University students were reading La Vida[9], Social class and social change in Puerto Rico[10], and The Family and population control[11] as part of the General Studies curricula. Psychiatrists were trying to study the "Puerto Rican syndrome"[12][13], "Nervios", "susto" y "mal de pelea." In the mid-sixties Dr. Efrén Ramirez studied the emerging use of drugs in Puerto Rico, established the "Centro de Investigación Sobre la Adicción". The School of Public Health were studying in conjunction with their peers in the United States cultural considerations for childhood disorders[14].

## A man at the crossroads takes the high road

---

With this challenge, Don Charlie the young professional went to the Minnesota to work on his Master's degree. While he studied in Minnesota, two professors (McKinley & Hathaway) influenced his work. These two researchers were the instrumental force in the development and cross-cultural validation of an instrument called the Minnesota Multiphasic Inventory[15]. Dr. Albizu Miranda's Masters thesis was related to the Bernreuter personality inventory that was adapted as a subtest of the MMPI[16].

Young "Don Charlie" came back to Puerto Rico with a new knowledge: (1) cross cultural research, that translated in the new Puerto Rican reality, into a knowledge that translated instruments, methodologies, and techniques brought from the outside were not necessarily applicable to the reality of the Puerto Rican, and classism[17],[18] and racism impacted the way in which the world view of a human being were impacted and reflected in psychometric tools. He had two challenges at the time: (1) develop a Psychology program in the University of Puerto Rico that addressed the needs of the Puerto Rican psychologists, and (2) psychometric instruments had to be linguistically and culturally appropriate to the needs of the Puerto Rican children.

While at Purdue University in Indiana, he focused on projective measures and sharpened his academic and practical skills in test and measurement and personality psychology. Upon his return to Puerto Rico he heralded for the development of a Graduate Program in Psychology at the University of Puerto

Rico that would prepare these professionals to address the needs of Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico: culturally, linguistically and conceptually.

He proceeded to change the academic environment and in the decade of the sixties he took several steps to move his agenda forward. He left the University of Puerto Rico and founded the "Instituto Psicológico de Puerto Rico" and the "Centro Caribeño de Estudios Post Graduados". By the beginning of the decade of the 70's Puerto Rican psychology had developed solid foundations. He also forged ahead with a research agenda, issues of assessment were important to tackle since they affected the way people would be clinically categorized. He knew that there was a need to include cultural and environmental aspects in assessment schemes for both adults and children.

## One man with one idea can change the world

The article "Atisbos en la personalidad Puertorriqueña" (Albizu Miranda & Torres, 1958) began to identify some specifics of the personality of the Puerto Rican. This seminal article has motivated hundreds of psychologists in Puerto Rico and Puerto Rican psychologist and psychiatrist in other parts of the world to study the Puerto Rican in different cultural milieus.

In the early days Don Carlos and two colleagues, Norman Matlin, a specialist in mental retardation and rehabilitation, and Howard Stanton and anthropologist began to conduct studies that involved large numbers of young Puerto Rican professionals. For example in the early 60's this three scholars engaged a group of twenty (20) young psychologists to study the prevalence of mental retardation in Puerto Rico[19],[20]. The study was conducted with a sample of 4,771 using the Stanford-Binet Form L and a vocabulary test. They found the determination of intelligence quotient was depended on cultural and economic deprivation. The economically successful was a function of the complexity of the community. They concluded that environmental factors were better predictors of success and reported positive self-images than tests such as those administered to this sample. The other important success story is that the research assistants and psychometrics are now psychologist[21] serving the people of Puerto Rico.

In 1964-1968, Albizu Miranda and Stanton (1966) participated with other scholars in the study of communication, creativity and problem solving ability in three societies (San Juan, Puerto Rico, Minneapolis, Minnesota and Bombay, India.[22] The National

Science Foundation, the University of Minnesota, and the United States Educational Foundation of India financed the study. The study concluded that the difference in problem solving ability, as well as restricted working-class communication and creativity are similar in all three societies, despite vast cultural differences. However, the more urbanized and industrialized the society the smaller the social class differences in problem solving ability.

In the years to follow the decade of the 60's the groundwork of Albizu Miranda and his associates defined the nature of Puerto Rican psychology, its content, the form of study, and the strategic synergies with other disciplines to best understand the psychosocial phenomena impacting the people of Puerto Rico.

## Summary

Don Charlie was challenged by the changes that Puerto Rico was undergoing since he had gotten back from his military service. He assumed his civic responsibility by preparing himself academically and experimentally to understand the task of a new professional in the field of psychology. Through his work in Puerto Rico and at VA hospitals in the States he was able to embrace diversity. His cross-cultural studies are evidenced by engaging his students and colleagues in understanding Puerto Rico vis-a-vis Minnesota and India. He became socio-politically engaged as evidenced by his efforts to develop programs, institutes and a university to prepare Puerto Rican psychologists. I am a product of how he embraced voluntarism; he spent many more hours than necessary, to nurture my intellect and my being, to make me a good psychologist. This is not a random act of kindness but the *modus operandi* of a great man.

## References

- [1] Albizu, C. & Stanton, H. (1964). Factores psicosociales en la rehabilitación vocacional del retardo mental adulto. *Educación*, 13 (11), 37-50.
- [2] Lewis, O. (1965). *La Vida: A Puerto Rican family in the culture of poverty*. New York, NY: Random House.
- [3] Tumin, M. & Feldman, A.S. (1961). *Social class and social change in Puerto Rico*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- [4] Hill, R., Stycos, M.J. & Back, K (1959). *The family and population control: A Puerto Rican experiment in social change*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

- [5] Veterans Administration (1956) "Ataques,' Hyperkinetic Type: The So-Called Puerto Rican Syndrome," Washington, D.C.: Veterans Administration.
- [6] Fernandez Marina, R. (1961) The Puerto Rican syndrome: Its dynamic and cultural determinants. *Psychiatry*. (24) 79-82.
- [7] Canino, I., Canino, G. & Arroyo, W. (1998). Cultural Considerations for Childhood Disorders: How Much was Included in DSM-IV? *Transcultural Psychiatry*. 35(3), 343-355.
- [8] Albizu, C. & Stanton, H. (1964). Factores psicosociales en la rehabilitación vocacional del retardo mental adulto. *Educación*, 13 (11), 37-50.
- [9] Lewis, O. (1965). *La Vida: A Puerto Rican family in the culture of poverty*. New York, NY: Random House.
- [10] Tumin, M. & Feldman, A.S. (1961). *Social class and social change in Puerto Rico*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- [11] Hill, R., Stycos, M.J. & Back, K (1959). *The family and population control: A Puerto Rican experiment in social change*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- [12] Veterans Administration (1956) "Ataques,' Hyperkinetic Type: The So-Called Puerto Rican Syndrome," Washington, D.C.: Veterans Administration.
- [13] Fernandez Marina, R. (1961) The Puerto Rican syndrome: Its dynamic and cultural determinants. *Psychiatry*. (24) 79-82.
- [14] Canino, I., Canino, G. & Arroyo, W. (1998). Cultural Considerations for Childhood Disorders: How Much was Included in DSM-IV? *Transcultural Psychiatry*. 35(3), 343-355.
- [15] Hathaway, S. R., & McKinley, J. C. (1942). A multiphasic personality schedule (Minnesota): III. The measurement of symptomatic depression. *Journal of Psychology*, 14, 73-84
- [16] Albizu Miranda, C. (1950). An Experimental study of middle-class bias in the Bernreuter personality inventory. Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Minnesota. The Bernreuter Personality Inventory (1933), was hugely popular despite telling research failures. The fundamental problem with the Bernreuter lay in the strategy of its construction. The composition of the test items was guided by rational considerations applied to textbooks or case histories on the assumption that subjects would respond to the items as expert opinion suggested they should.
- [17] Hoffman, M.L. & Albizu Miranda, C. (1955). Middle class bias in personality testing. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*. 51(1), 150-152.
- [18] Albizu Miranda, C. (1953). The influence of social class membership upon the selection of certain rorschach factors. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Purdue University.
- [19] Albizu Miranda, C., Matlin, N. & Stanton, H.R. (1966). The successful retardate. A study sponsored by the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration (DHEW), Washington, D.C. (ERIC 027-650).
- [20] Albizu Miranda, C. (1966). Factores psicosociales en la rehabilitación vocacional del retardo mental adulto. *Educación*. 13(11), 37-50.
- [21] See list of the members of the Puerto Rico Psychological Association.
- [22] Strauss, M.A. (1968). Communication, creativity, and problem solving ability of middle- and working class families in three societies. *JSTOR-The American Journal of Sociology*, 73(4), 417-430. Eudaldo Baez-Galib fue uno de los psicólogos Puertorriqueños que participaron en este estudio.

## Disclaimer

This article has been downloaded from WebmedCentral. With our unique author driven post publication peer review, contents posted on this web portal do not undergo any prepublication peer or editorial review. It is completely the responsibility of the authors to ensure not only scientific and ethical standards of the manuscript but also its grammatical accuracy. Authors must ensure that they obtain all the necessary permissions before submitting any information that requires obtaining a consent or approval from a third party. Authors should also ensure not to submit any information which they do not have the copyright of or of which they have transferred the copyrights to a third party.

Contents on WebmedCentral are purely for biomedical researchers and scientists. They are not meant to cater to the needs of an individual patient. The web portal or any content(s) therein is neither designed to support, nor replace, the relationship that exists between a patient/site visitor and his/her physician. Your use of the WebmedCentral site and its contents is entirely at your own risk. We do not take any responsibility for any harm that you may suffer or inflict on a third person by following the contents of this website.