

American Psychologist

Ruben Ardila (1942-2025)

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IN MEMORIAM

Ruben Ardila (1942–2025)



Ruben Ardila, one of the most active and influential Latin American psychologists in the international sphere, passed away in Bogotá (Colombia) on January 14, 2025. Born in San Vicente de Chucurí, Colombia, on July 7, 1942, he was married to Ana Lucia Gonzalez in 1964, but she died a few years later; they also had a son, David Ruben (b. 1969), currently an active physicist in the United States.

Ardila chose to become a psychologist at the National University of Colombia, whose program had just been established by a Spanish psychologist in exile, Mercedes Rodrigo, a person he always admired. After graduating, he tried writing novels and took a long trip halfway around the world. Finally, he got a PhD in psychology under William J. Arnold at the University of Nebraska, United States, in 1969.

Ardila became a professor at his “alma mater,” later moving to other universities and eventually returning to his first department. He wanted to promote scientific psychology in the Latin American world, paying great attention to social problems.

As a great teacher, he trained many outstanding disciples. He also created a collection of manuals on learning, work psychology, behavior therapy, origins of human behavior, and so forth and made important contributions to the history of psychology: “Psychology in Colombia: Social and Historical Context” (1993), “Psychology in Latin America, Past, Present and Future (1986),” and “The Pioneers of

Psychology” (1971). Moreover, he edited a global overview, *Psychology in Latin America: Current Status, Challenges and Perspectives* (2018), collaborating with numerous specialists. His first article on this subject appeared in *American Psychologist* (1968), and very recently he collaborated as editor with Ana Jaco-Vilela and Hugo Klappenbach on *The Palgrave Biographical Encyclopedia of Psychology in Latin America* (2023). He also founded the *Revista Latino Americana de Psicología* (*Latin American Journal of Psychology*, 1969) and *Avances en Psicología Clínica Latinoamericana* (*Advances in Latin American Clinical Psychology*, 1981).

He was deeply interested in theoretical questions related to the unity of psychology and offered an “experimental synthesis of behavior,” trying to combine the Skinnerian analysis with some cognitive approaches and a view of the sociohistorical reality of the person. His books, *Walden Three* (1979) and *Experimental Synthesis of Behavior* (1988), present this personal construction. Another fruit of this concern was his collaboration with Mario Bunge in *Philosophy of Psychology* (1987) that offers a more general approach.

Ardila organized congresses (e.g., the 15th Inter-American Congress of Psychology, Bogotá 1974); he founded psychological societies and was president of the Colombian Federation of Psychology (1970–1974) and of the Inter-American Society of Psychology (1974–1976). Moreover, he became a board member of the International Union of Psychological Science (1992–2000) and of the International Association of Applied Psychology (here chairing Division 18, History of Applied Psychology in 2006–2010).

He received numerous awards (included the “APA award for contributions to the international advance of psychology,” 2007) and Honorary Doctorates from the Universities of Rosario (Argentina) and “Ricardo Palma” and “Inca Garcilaso” of Peru. He was elected a member of the Academia Colombiana de Ciencias Exactas, Físicas y Naturales in 2007.

Ruben Ardila was, personally, an open intellectual, with broad scientific interests and deep social concern, fond of traveling and conversing with disciples and friends who spread throughout the world. We will keep his memory alive.

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