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GUEST EDITORIAL

THE ETHICAL IMPERATIVE

The question of the responsibility of SIETAR for the behavior of its members has been carefully avoided throughout the brief history of the organization. It may be the mark of a maturing organization that the issue is showing considerable life as reflected by the Paige and Martin and Hamnett and Porter chapters in the *Handbook of Intercultural Training* (Landis and Brislin, in press). As well, a panel dealing with the issue at the recent Long Beach conference was quite well attended. If these signs are harbingers we can expect vigorous debate and controversy over the next few years. The purpose of this brief note is to summarize the SIETAR conference panel as a way of initiating a robust discussion of organizational as well as intellectual-philosophical issues.

The discussion revolved around a number of questions which were common to the variety of domains in which intercultural "specialists" are engaged: administration training, research, and publication of materials. A listing of the more prominent questions includes:

- (1) How do we assure that materials which purport to be tools of intercultural orientation are not used for exploitative purposes?
- (2) What is the trainer's responsibility when effective and ethical behavior in the target culture violates the client's own cultural values?
- (3) Does transfer of technology imply changes in values? If so, are there special responsibilities on the part of the trainer?
- (4) In the case of research and exchange programs, what are the responsibilities of the host culture in providing a suitable working environment?
- (5) In the area of publication of materials, should such information reinforce SIETAR's "stated intercultural mission"? Does SIETAR have a responsibility to evaluate materials whether published under the Society's sponsorship or not?

It was clear from the discussion both during the panel and after that the above issues as well as questions about what SIETAR is, or should

be, are of considerable interest. The lack of formal guidelines and standards which can guide the marketing of services by members is most likely a shortcoming which will have serious effects on our future as a Society.

The consensus of the panel was (a) that SIETAR must work toward the articulation and publication of standards of ethical conduct for its members, (b) that SIETAR is responsible to its membership for establishing standards of performance and setting entry level qualifications for work in the intercultural field, and (c) that SIETAR is responsible for providing new entrants in the field of intercultural education, training, and research an "institutional memory" so that the substance of these and other debates can be handed down.

Finally, it was strongly recommended that SIETAR begin now the work of setting its ethical standards. The authors hope that publication of this summary will initiate the kind of debate necessary to move the Society finally into the realm of true professionalism.

Susan Howards, Hellenic College—Panel Chair
Toby Frank, American Language Academy
Peggy Pusch, Intercultural Press
George Renwick, Consultant

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