

# SUSANews



## The **SIETAR**USA Newsletter

Society for Intercultural Education  
Training and Research

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## President's Letter

Dear friends,

With memories of last year's holiday season still fresh in our minds, many of us are still warmed by thoughts of gifts, large or small, received from our friends and relatives.

For SIETAR-USA, we just finished giving ourselves the special gift of a great conference in November. We once again celebrated learning and friendships and had some first encounters that will very likely turn into new friendships. Year after year first-timers to the SIETAR-USA conferences talk about the unexpected and wonderful feeling of being at home in an unfamiliar place. We hear that we are a particularly welcoming and inclusive bunch, perhaps because we fondly remember our own early inroads to the intercultural field. I hope that as we grow and become a larger organization, this welcoming quality will remain and strengthen. As different as we all are, one of the things that we have in common is our personal passion for what we do—and it shows.

The SIETAR-USA Board is already at work on making the 2007 conference the best ever. We hope that many of you will consider submitting a proposal to present next November (watch for the call for proposals to be on our website [www.sietarusa.org](http://www.sietarusa.org) any day now) and that all of you will come to Kansas City, Missouri for our 8th Annual Conference. Look around you. There are people you know who would love to join the SIETAR family, who haven't yet been invited. Please do invite them. If you've felt at home among strangers with SIETAR, start by sharing that feeling. Think also about people and organizations you know—some of them might be interested in sponsoring the conference or introducing their intercultural and diversity work to all of us. But they have to hear about us first. From you!

The annual conference is a central event for SIETAR-USA. Such celebrations and milestones are important. But what else are we up to for 2007?

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Being a professional organization, what other things can we do to enhance the professional lives of our members? How can we advance our field? How can we best support culture-minded people in making our world a better place – a place where we have a chance to dialogue our way through differences, not to fight about them?

Questions, questions, questions... These and more questions are soon coming your way. The SIETAR-USA Board is finalizing a questionnaire that will be sent to all of you. We want to get your feedback and your suggestions to guide our thinking about future steps for 2007 and beyond. Most of all, we want to know how you might like to get more actively involved.

I see it as a big part of leading our organization to ask questions. I believe that questions make us think and give us a chance to hear other people's ideas. My promise to you, my New Year's resolution, is that I will listen to what you have to say. The best way to reach me is by sending an email to [tatyanaf@corecomm.net](mailto:tatyanaf@corecomm.net). Don't be a stranger!

Best wishes to you and your loved ones and enjoy the New Year—in whatever ways you celebrate!

— **Tatyana Fertelmeyster**, *SIETAR-USA President*

## Executive Director's Note

**A**t the close of a SIETAR USA conference, the volunteers who have worked hard to mount the event generally issue a sigh of relief. They also feel a bit “let down” because the results of months of work went by so quickly and they have hardly had time to enjoy the fruits of their labor. All of them are grateful for the appreciation expressed both on site and in the final evaluations.

Everyone involved in this year's conference did an outstanding job and deserves that appreciation as well as new angel wings!

While we are delighted with positive feedback, we are also open to suggestions and we receive many, as you can imagine. Some are extremely useful and we make every effort to accommodate those suggestions in future years.

Others, while reasonable, can be impossible to implement and it seems appropriate to explain some of the reasons why it appears that we may not be listening. First, we do the best we can to obtain reasonable hotel rooms but it is not always possible to get the rates that everyone would like (hotel rooms will be more expensive next year than they were this year, for example). This is especially true in some of the more desirable locations where hotels are not only hard to get in prime locations but far exceed the prices people can afford. Second, we have tried to include tours to local places several times with mixed results so while we do our best to “include” local cultural sites, it is not always possible. We will continue to explore these options. Next year, the conference hotel is in a downtown location within walking distance of many attractions and Kansas City is a very interesting and very diverse city. Third, one or two people suggested that the conference be reduced to 2 ½ days. If you think that is a good idea, we would love to hear from you.

This year we made our first attempt at obtaining conference evaluations electronically, in addition to paper evaluations at the end of the conference. While it has its limitations, it has been an efficient way to collect your responses and I hope you found it reasonably easy to do.

Finally, we received lots of compliments on the quality of the conference sessions, on the efforts of the local arrangements committee and the conference committee, and, especially, on the quality of the keynote and plenary speakers. Thank you for those comments. This is a totally voluntary effort so your compliments and the pleasure of working with each other are our compensation.

We invite you to join us in future volunteer efforts and wish you a very fine 2007.

— **Peggy Pusch** *Executive Director*



# New SIETAR Global Web Site

By Peggy Pusch and Maria Jicheva, *SIETAR Global Council*

Dear SIETAR Friend:

We are happy to let you know that we have put a new website online at <http://www.sietar.org>. We hope it will support your activities and give a more coordinated impression of SIETAR to web visitors.

**Do you want your regular local SIETAR events to appear on the SIETAR Global website?** The site includes a list of regular SIETAR events, and we would like to feature your regular events here. We wish to keep website maintenance costs to a minimum, so the list does not include information about specifics (location, dates etc) but will be linked directly to your website.

If you wish your event to be featured in this way, please send a short (1-2 line) description of the event, like the examples here: <http://www.sietar.org/events.htm>. If you also have a webpage specifically for the event, please send that link.

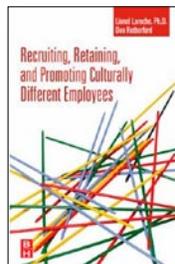
**Are you personally involved in SIETAR Global activities?** If so, please send your photo, name, title, and a one-line description of your work, like the examples here: <http://www.sietar.org/about.htm>.

**Have you seen the new policy on members?** The Global Council recently decided to end the "Associate" member category and to invite national SIETARs to allow members who are outside their normal area to join. There is more information about this at <http://www.sietar.org/join.htm>.

**Do you have other comments about the site?** Now is a good time to let us know what you think. Please contact us at <http://www.sietar.org/contact.htm>

# Announcements

**Book by long time SIETAR-USA presenter and member.**



**NEW!**

**Recruiting, Retaining and Promoting Culturally Different Employees** (Paperback)

by **Lionel Laroche and Don Rutherford**

*"This book is a great success on several fronts. It identifies and frames the key issues extremely well, the examples are fascinating and always to the point, and the advice is well thought out and very practical. Recruiting, Retaining and Promoting Culturally Different Employees leaves the reader wanting more, not because the authors have left anything important out but because their insights are so valuable."*

— **Craig Storti**, *Intercultural Consultant and Trainer, and Author of The Art of Crossing Cultures*

**Book Description:** The USA and Canada welcomes every year significant numbers of immigrant professionals who have high levels of formal education (Bachelors, Masters and Ph.D.) as well as extensive experience; yet a significant fraction of these immigrants are unemployed or underemployed. The purpose of this book is to help US and Canadian organizations make full use of the significant human capital that immigrants represent. Look for it through major web-based book retailers.



## New Journal 'Cultural Sociology'

**First issue March 2007:** *Cultural Sociology* is the first journal explicitly to be dedicated to the sociological comprehension of cultural matters. It will act as a key meeting point for sociological analysts of culture coming from a wide range of theoretical and methodological positions, and from a great variety of national contexts. It will be a locale where different analytical traditions in cultural sociology and the sociology of culture can engage with and learn from each other.

**Call for Papers:** *Cultural Sociology* is now seeking articles for early issues of the journal. Articles should be between 5000 and 8000 words. Book reviews should be between 800 and 1500 words. Authors will be asked to provide a CD or diskette of the final version. Submissions will be refereed anonymously by at least two referees. The journal uses the Harvard system of referencing with author's name and date in the text, and a full reference in alphabetical order at the end of the article. All submissions should be sent electronically (preferably as Microsoft Word documents) to Dr David Inglis at: [culturalsociology@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:culturalsociology@abdn.ac.uk)

## Local Group News



### SIETAR Austin

SIETAR Austin reports it has a full-time membership of over sixty members and over 300 names on their email list. The chapter has been very active by offering programs and workshops covering many areas of interests in the intercultural field. Please visit their website at [www.sietarAustin.org](http://www.sietarAustin.org) for more information on past events. In particular they highlight two programs: one in September "Intercultural Relocation: Fantasy and Reality" and one in October "Identity and Language Learning" with Marshall Brewer, former SIETAR International Vice-President. They also hosted an Intercultural Café in September, which drew over 50 people and on December 9 had a big turnout for their delicious international food and engaging conversation. Plans for 2007 are already underway. A picture of the Intercultural Cafés are included here, as well as a picture of 'SIETAR Austin meets SIETAR Houston' at the SUSA Conference in Albuquerque on November 1-4.



### SIETAR Chicagoland

You are invited to a Special Holiday Party to celebrate the multi-cultural diversity of the Holiday Season with SIETAR-Chicagoland members on Saturday 13th January 2007. The party will be held at Olga Collin and her husband Philip's house in the near northern suburbs. It's located just a few minutes walk from Golf Metra station. Please contact Regina (Gina) Klaesges at 630-802-0781 or [ginakla@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ginakla@sbcglobal.net) for more information or if you want to be added to our mailing list for future events.

### SIETAR Metro New York City

The SIETAR Metro NYC chapter migrated to a new web site this year [www.sietarnewyork.org](http://www.sietarnewyork.org). On the Web site there are details of recent events. Of particular interest is a day devoted to conflict resolution with Guest speaker Lisa Sun, of Lisa Sun Consulting and Training, in October. Details are on the site.

### SIETAR Washington D.C.

Throughout 2006, SIETAR Washington D.C. was active with meetings that focused on a variety of topics. In November they had a 'Panel of intercultural Trainers' with insights from David J. Bachner, Laurette Bennhold-Samaan, Julia Gaspar-Bates, Ursula Leitzmann, and Stephen Moles. In July, with all of the recent world wide sports—World Cup, Wimbledon, Tour de France—the meeting was an opportunity to talk about how sports contribute to globalization, cultural awareness, and exchange programs. In June, Stephen Moles and Judee Blohm piloted a new simulation called "Resilia" that was developed through a collaboration of the Peace Corps and the North American Simulation and Gaming Association.

From Left: Linda E. Edwards (SIETAR Houston), Anne Pham-Macharia (SIETAR Austin), Kelli McCloud-Schingen (SIETAR Houston) and Jenell Scherbel (SIETAR Austin.)

# SUSA 2006 Annual Conference: Session Highlights

**The editors have been collecting summaries of sessions held at the SIETAR USA conference. The first two appear below; more will be included in future newsletters.**

## Culture or Personality

**Presented by Ann Marie Lei**

*Summary by Susan Dyer*

There was an exciting atmosphere as an overflowing crowd anticipated the session, “Culture or Personality,” based on the Insights Discovery Personality Profile, facilitated by Ann Marie Lei.

Ann Marie posed the question: “How do I know the difference between a cultural or a personality trait?” We proceeded to experience a mini workshop from Insights by identifying our major energies on a grid, with each personality type represented by a color. I was a Red, others preferred Blue, Green or Yellow personality profiles. This model was based on the work of Dr. Carl Jung and was developed specifically for the work environment. It is focused on improving self-awareness, interpersonal and team effectiveness, provides a simple framework, and has high validity and reliability.

Ann Marie used a group exercise to explore the strengths and weaknesses of each color’s personality type. Each color energy has an opposite energy, which is our least preferred personality type. She showed us how these opposite intensities can be measured to demonstrate the degree of balance between them. However, we need to appreciate our opposite side and can learn to use all quadrants of the model depending on the context to give balance to our unique personality.

She compared the Insights model to the popular Myers-Briggs Type Inventory. She gave examples of how both models can be used in the work place to examine how we focus our energy and how we like to be rewarded. For example, do we prefer concrete rewards like money or public commendation, or do we prefer team rewards and frown on any recognition which singles one person out in front of others?

She then drew this all together by pointing out how we can integrate personality theory into our work as interculturalists. The models focus on understanding self and others so we can learn to adapt to others and connect more effectively for improved relationships and results. Isn’t this the same approach we apply in cultural and diversity training? Like Geert Hofstede said, to examine culture, we first look at the individual, then move to cultural characteristics, and finally consider how this all fits into a universal model.

Thank you Ann Marie, for a thought provoking and enjoyable session.

## Crossing the Disciplines of Gender: Transitioning in the Work Place

**Presented by Vicki Anderson, Jeffrey Cookson & Rob Pusch**

*Session Summary by Rita Wuebbeler*

A small but very interested and enthusiastic crowd attended this workshop focusing on the personal stories of two transgender people transitioning in the workplace: Rob Pusch, a female-to-male (F-to-M) transgender person based in Syracuse, NY, and Vicki Anderson, an Albuquerque-based male to female (M-to-F) transgender/transsexual who Jeffrey and Rob found by contacting the local Albuquerque transgender group.

Both Rob and Vicki talked very openly about their experiences of transitioning in the workplace and shared some poignant stories and examples including legal-ethical implications of transitioning as well as health and medical issues.

Rob transitioned in a university setting, where we might expect people to be somewhat liberal. In his case this proved to be true because his work environment was relatively supportive during his transition process which began in 1993 with telling his co-workers, followed by a common law name change in 1995 (Social Security, HR files, Driver’s License), then continuing with taking hormones, and finally having a mastectomy and chest reconstructive surgery in 2006. In general, F-to-M transgender people tend to become quite invisible in their communities, whereas M-to-Fs tend to be more visible according to Rob.

Vicki who is a M-to-F told us about her story transitioning while employed in the accounting department of an

engineering R&D firm with 8,000 employees located in Albuquerque. Most of the engineers are male and most of the administrative staff are female. Vicki started her process by wearing more colorful clothes at work and telling the people she trusted about her transition. She made an official announcement at a department meeting telling her co-workers “I am transsexual.” She said she expected rejections, but most people just said: “That’s nice” and moved on. All in all, the reaction was positive with a few people preferring NOT to have face-to-face contact with her from then on.

According to Vicki, the typical transition process has changed over the past few years with people transitioning BETWEEN jobs before and NOW more often doing the transition on the job.

However, a host of challenges and problems remain for transgender people including things that seem ‘small and unimportant’ to people who are NOT transgender. For example: the bathroom question, i.e., what bathroom do you use at what stage in your transition and what do the company policy and your co-workers say about it? Some states allow unisex bathrooms, others don’t.

Other issues include health insurance cards (even if you are a fully transitioned F-to-M on the outside, for example, your health insurance card still has to say ‘female’ in order for you to receive proper regular medical care, and in an emergency, a hysterectomy, for example), birth certificates (some states allow changes on the birth certificate, some do not; requirements to make this change vary from state to state, but usually require completion of sex-reassignment surgery), and passports (the most difficult document to have a gender change recorded on).

Some best practices for handling transitioning in the workplace from an employers point of view are:

- Let the transgender employee drive how THEY want to handle the transition, i.e., how to announce their process (via message, meeting or other means).
- Allow transgender people to use the restroom for the gender they are representing.
- Write your transgender/transsexual policy BEFORE you have your first trans employee.

Two things struck me as I listened to Rob’s and Vicki’s stories about their complex and challenging process of transitioning for THEM and everyone around them—not only from a physical but also from an emotional, spiritual and intellectual perspective:

1. Even though we often speak of GLBT issues as if they were ONE group’s issues (GLBT = Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual and Transgender), the questions and choices that transgender people face are often very different from what the Gs, Ls and Bs deal with, simply we are primarily dealing with questions of GENDER and not sexual orientation. However, GLB people can make good ALLIES to Transgender people.
2. As someone who considers herself fairly educated in questions of sexual orientation, gender identity, etc. I know very little about what transgender people really go through on their transition journeys – so education is very much needed on an ONGOING basis. This presentation did an excellent job of educating us.

Thanks so much to Rob and Vicki for telling your stories and to Jeffrey for helping to put this panel together.



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