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Psychological research in Berlin, the host city of ICP 2008: Editorial

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Many readers of this journal are well aware that the 29th International Congress of Psychology (ICP) will take place on 20–25 July, 2008, in Berlin, Germany, under the auspices of the International Union of Psychology (IUPsyS). Psychologists in Germany, and in particular in Berlin, are extremely excited to have the opportunity to host this event and are very much looking forward to welcoming participants from around the world. The congress—the third International Congress to take place in Germany—is earning the reputation of being the largest International Congress ever and one of the most exciting. To date, more than 81 invited addresses and 179 invited symposia, covering the entire range of psychological research, have been confirmed, with contributions coming from eminent scholars from all continents.

Berlin is a capital of the arts, of culture, and of science. Three universities with psychology departments, as well as a major psychology research institution, reside in this city: the Humboldt University, the Free University, the University of Technology, and the Max Planck Institute of Human Development.

The goal of the present Special Section of the *International Journal of Psychology* is to make readers aware of the broad diversity of psychological research that is conducted in these four institutions. Due to space limitations, we cannot provide a representative overview of all ongoing research activities in Berlin—there is simply too much to report (a broader overview of the variety of topics covered at each academic institution will be provided at the International Congress). Therefore, for this issue we have asked colleagues from these four institutions, who are involved in the congress organization, to present an example of research from their own labs.

The first article, by Ulman Lindenberger, Shu-Chen Li, Martin Lövdén, and Florian Schmiedek, gives an overview of the conceptual agenda of the Center for Lifespan Psychology at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development. Two current research projects illustrate the agenda.

The authors of the second article, Robert Gaschler and Peter Frensch, describe a research project in cognitive psychology that is currently being conducted at the Humboldt University. The broader goal of the project is to explore the mechanisms that underlie cognitive skill acquisition. Its more specific goal is to determine whether information reduction, one of many routes to achieving mastery in cognitive skill, can be described as an item-specific or an item-general process.

The third article, by Manfred Thüring and Sascha Mahlke from the Berlin University of Technology, deals with usability, aesthetics, and emotions in human/technology interactions. The authors report that systems that differ in terms of factors such as aesthetic qualities and emotional experiences affect the perception of instrumental and noninstrumental qualities as well as users' overall appraisal of the system.

The fourth article, by Ralf Schwarzer (Freie University) and Nina Knoll (Charité Universitätsmedizin Berlin), presents a theoretical and empirical overview of social support in the context of critical life events. Studies are reported that were designed to shed light on the functional roles of social support and adaptation within the stress and coping context.

We do hope that this Special Section serves as an appetizer to spark broad interest in the multifarious psychological research in Berlin. We would also be pleased if it functions as a reminder to sign up for the congress and to submit a presentation abstract via the congress website <http://www.icp2008.org/>