

ON THE COVER

An Ocean of Data by Gonzalo Bacigalupe

This article is based on a video interview on November 9, 2023, with the artist.

It goes without saying that we rely on multiple sources of data across many aspects of our daily lives. In this information age, data are essential to understand the world around us and are applied to decision making and problem solving broadly in various realms of life. As psychologists, we value empirically based evidence in learning and interpreting the world—in research, in clinical applications, and in advocating for policy and larger systems changes. We use data, but we also adapt to the realities presented to us by its multiple sources, variable quality, and rapid changes in how numbers and technology are applied. How we access, use, and interpret data is critically important, yet not without its challenges. The cover of this issue of *American Psychologist*, *An Ocean of Data*, brings an artistic perspective to the perception of data.

The artist, Gonzalo Bacigalupe, EdD, MPH, is a native of Santiago, Chile, who, since the COVID-19 pandemic, has split his time between Chile and Boston, where he is a professor of Counseling Psychology in the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Massachusetts Boston. After originally studying economics during the Chilean dictatorship, he gravitated toward fields that could inform policy and build on an understanding of social dynamics and interactions. He came to the United States after securing the equivalent of a master's degree in psychology from the Catholic University of Chile and working as a psychologist there. He then obtained a doctoral degree at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and a master's degree in public health from Harvard University.

Bacigalupe is an expert in working with data, as an experienced researcher studying complex problems such as trauma, disaster reduction, preventative health care, political and family violence, health equity, the climate crisis, and COVID-19. His knowledge of complex social systems and how systems function and change, based on his training as a family therapist, is essential in his approach to psychology and to art. See <https://bacigalupe.wordpress.com/> for details on Bacigalupe's accomplishments.

With respect to art, Bacigalupe has no formal training, although some members of his family were skilled in art

and photography, especially an uncle. He always enjoyed photographing people and landscapes during his travels and in his work. However, in 2016, he began to view creating art as integral to his life. The precipitant was in 2016 when he broke his right shoulder doing disaster relief work in Chile. He began using his nondominant (left) arm to paint and to distract himself from pain. He first used acrylics, watercolors, and graphite. During travel to Japan, Bacigalupe had discovered pigments and inks and developed these more to create his own unique pigments. He has a distinctive perspective in his painting—he paints with the canvas flat on a large table. In this way, he uses the perspective of a drone to capture aerial views and to mimic map-like patterns in the earth and the slight movements of a camera that generate more abstract renderings.

An Ocean of Data reflects Bacigalupe's love of his native country, Chile. The perspective and colors represent the ground and the texture of the earth, the drama of the Andes mountains, the lush forests, the valleys, and, of course, the ocean. The painting is also inextricably linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. Looking closely at the painting, there are numbers throughout. They are sequential numbers, 1, 2, 3 ... and upward into much larger numeric values. Each number is a person and a story associated with each individual. We count people, for many reasons. In the case of the pandemic, we counted people who died, about 62,000 in Chile. Yet, Bacigalupe wants us to ponder these data more intensely. If you follow the numbers, a sense of movement emerges, much like the waves and tides in an ocean. The data are essential but they do not tell the story of all the pain and loss we experienced during the pandemic.

This month's cover is well suited for this special issue of *American Psychologist* on ethics and data. The painting can prompt us to go beyond the data, to remember the people and their stories. Data are critically important but can also be challenged in portraying the big picture and maintaining respect and curiosity for individual lives.

 Anne E. Kazak
Art Editor