

Report on the Advanced Research and Training Seminars (ARTS) 2006

Ingrid Lunt

ARTS Coordinator, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

Heidi Keller

ARTS Coordinator, University of Osnabrück, Osnabrück, Germany

THE ARTS PROGRAM

The Advanced Research Training Seminars (ARTS) program, co-sponsored by the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP), the International Union of Psychological Science (IUPsyS), and the International Association of Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP) provides intensive training in research methodologies and new directions in psychological science to early career scholars from low income countries. ARTS seminars have been held biennially since 1992 in conjunction with and near the location of major international congresses of psychology (the International Congress of Psychology, the International Congress of Applied Psychology, and the International Congress of Cross-cultural Psychology).

Objectives of the ARTS program

The ARTS program has three main objectives:

1. to enhance the research skills and knowledge of scholars (normally early career) from low income countries through advanced research training;
2. to bring to international congresses scholars from low income countries who might otherwise be financially unable to attend;
3. to provide a space where researchers from different countries may learn from each other, develop collaborative networks, and develop a more international understanding.

In addition, the ARTS program enriches international psychology in a number of ways. It provides an important but rare opportunity for interaction and shared experiences among colleagues from low income and other countries, it helps ensure the representation of psychology from all countries at

international congresses, and it contributes to a broader perspective on theory and method by allowing different perspectives on psychology to be shared among scholars from different regions of the world.

Selection of topics and conveners

The general aim of the ARTS program is to provide three different but complementary seminars. Typically one seminar is focused on basic science or methodology, and two address substantive topics of relevance to potential participants. The coordinators attempt to develop seminars that have not been offered in recent ARTS programs.

In the 2 years prior to ARTS 2006, proposals were solicited from potential conveners. Proposals were evaluated and selected by the coordinators, in consultation with an ARTS Advisory Committee, comprised of previous ARTS Coordinators (John Adair, Cigdem Kagitsibaci, Ype Poortinga). The selection was also based on information gathered at a meeting at the International Congress of Psychology in Beijing with present ARTS participants and ARTS alumni, who provided feedback on the program and suggestions for future topics.

Three ARTS workshops were offered for 2006 in Greece:

- **DESIGN AND METHODS IN CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Athens, July 14–16

Convener: Professor Fons van de Vijver, PhD, Tilburg University, Netherlands and North-West University, South Africa

- **STRESS, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN THE FACE OF MAJOR TRAUMA**

Athens, July 21–23

Convener: Professor Stevan E. Hobfoll, PhD, Distinguished Professor, Kent State University, Ohio and Summa Health System

- **UNIVERSAL AND ETHNOCYNCRATIC COUPLE PATTERNS: FROM EVOLUTION TO CULTURE AND FROM THEORY TO RESEARCH**

Spetses, July 8–10

Convener: Professor Rolando Diaz-Loving, PhD, Faculty of Psychology, National Autonomous University of Mexico

Selection of participants for ARTS 2006

The ARTS program was advertised broadly (on the ARTS websites, see for example www.am.org/iupsys/arts/arts-home.html; on psychology congress websites and in association newsletters). Participants were selected according to a set of criteria including a match between the applicant's credentials and the specific seminar topic; an assessment that the participant would benefit from the seminar; a judgment that the participant's presence would lead to a "multiplier" effect, that is, that it would carry forward to impact others (colleagues and students) in the applicant's home country; and geographical diversity. Preference was also given to first-time ARTS attendees.

There were a total of about 75 applicants to ARTS, with an age spread from under 30 to over 50 years. The geographical distribution was broad: applicants came from Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Mozambique, Lesoto, Oman, Philippines, India, Cameroon, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, Iran, Romania, Armenia, Mauritius, Malaysia, Russia, Mexico, Brazil, and Chile.¹

Although the goal of the program is to support younger psychologists, and although age is a selection criterion, the normative age for applicants and participants was not chronologically young, as less than 10% of the applicants were under age 30. Although substantial numbers were in their 30s, the modal age was older, in the 40–49 age range. Because of its capacity building focus, ARTS is aimed at scholars who are young in terms of their research experience or position at the university. In addition, younger scholars do not apply in large numbers to ARTS, perhaps because psychologists in the process of establishing their

careers have not yet begun to think of participation in international psychology.

As noted elsewhere in this report, listing on the Congress website seems to be one of most effective means of reaching potential participants, thereby confirming that interest in the International Congress is a likely precursor to their knowledge of and interest in the ARTS program.

The number who participated in the ARTS program this year was lower than the number who were selected—in 2006 the number of "no-shows" was larger than usual, a fact that will be taken into serious consideration for the next ARTS in 2008.

ARTS support for participants

Although no ARTS participant is ever fully funded, the ARTS contribution to seminar participants is substantial. Each participant is supported for the seminar (tuition, course materials, seminar room), and receives accommodation for 3 nights (or more if travel availability requires it), meals for 3 days, airport transfers, and a travel grant for partial reimbursement of travel expenses. Participants are expected to raise at least a small proportion of the required travel and participation funds themselves. No support is provided for accommodation or meals during the associated international congresses (ICAP, ICP, ICCCP), but every participant is encouraged to submit a paper or poster and to attend at least one of the congresses.

Congress registration fees for ARTS participants have varied for each congress. A recent recommendation to the three sponsoring associations (IUPsyS, IAAP, and IACCP) was to develop a consistent registration concession policy that would be negotiated and would apply to future congress organizers so that Congress attendance for ARTS participants is part of the Congress's capacity building program, not part of the ARTS budget. Some 2006 ARTS participants also received scholarship support to cover registration and accommodation costs during the congress.

Contribution to ARTS and fundraising

The success of the ARTS program rests on donations from individuals and organizations. Until now, fundraising for ARTS has presented a major challenge as it has been carried out individually for each program in each ARTS year. Presently the supporting organizations and ARTS coordinators are developing strategies for more

¹This list includes all those who were accepted into ARTS; some of these participants did not ultimately attend.

sustained and longer-term funding that would also enable more secure planning.

The 2006 ARTS was generously supported by the following organizations: *Sponsoring organizations*: International Union of Psychological Science; International Association of Applied Psychology; International Association for Cross-cultural Psychology. *Contributing organizations*: American Psychological Foundation; The Royal Society, UK; British Psychological Society; Canadian Psychological Association; German Psychological Society; Norwegian Psychological Association; Netherlands Institute of Psychologists; UNESCO via the International Social Sciences Council. *Contributing institutions*: These institutions made substantial contribution through staff time of those organizing the ARTS programme: University of Oxford, UK; University of Osnabrück, Germany; Tilburg University, Netherlands; Kent State University, Ohio, USA; National Autonomous University of Mexico; University of Athens, Greece with local arrangements.

Without the assistance of these supporters, the ARTS workshops and the excellent program for ARTS would not have been possible.

Evaluation of ARTS 2006

The ARTS programs were evaluated on the final day of each seminar by means of a questionnaire with open-ended items that provided feedback about general ARTS program functioning and about each specific ARTS seminar.

Evaluations for the 2006 ARTS were completed by 32 participants. Participants responded that they were primarily informed about the ARTS program from Internet sites or from the Congress website, suggesting the crucial importance of web-based advertising for the program. Most of the participants applied for the ARTS workshop because the topic was relevant to their research, or because they wished to extend their knowledge of cross-cultural and methodological issues. There were a range of expectations of the workshop (many related to methodological issues). For most of the participants these expectations were met.

As in previous years, most participants indicated that the seminar topics related in a general way to their interests, rather than exactly matching the topics on which they were working. This reinforces the view that selection criteria should include both fit to the seminar topic and the potential for broader impact when participants take the knowledge they have gained back to

students or colleagues in their department or country. For most participants the primary source of funding was grants from ARTS for travel assistance. Only a small minority of participants indicated they had received travel funds from a university or an agency within their own country.

Participants' suggestions for ways in which ARTS could be improved included: earlier acceptance notification, greater diversity within the participant group, and greater opportunities for social interaction. To expand, participants indicated that it was essential to be notified of their acceptance to ARTS before the deadlines for paper submissions to the associated congresses. Earlier acceptance notification could also result in cheaper air tickets. Some participants suggested increasing the number of ARTS participants to "have a more diverse and representative group" and to increase interaction and knowledge. A further suggestion was the arrangement of group activities in the evenings after the seminars to contribute to interaction, camaraderie, and to enhance the atmosphere for instruction.

Other suggestions raised new ideas and questions for the Coordinators for future ARTS to contemplate. These included: the benefits of a mixed group of developed world and majority world participants in ARTS seminars; the development of mechanisms to identify and encourage participation by younger and upcoming scholars; the value of the present limits on the number of times a person can participate in ARTS; and a suggestion that investing in one person's education may have greater long-term impact than spreading opportunities around.

Coordinators, conveners and instructors regularly hear the appreciation expressed by participants in their seminars. A sample of comments from the evaluation questionnaires includes: "the convener is excellent, he is the expert in the field"; "liked the small size of the group which allowed for free, informal exchange of ideas and unhesitant questioning"; "we had discussion and cross-fertilization of ideas after the seminar which carried on in the evening in our own rooms"; "it is very useful to empower researchers in developing countries who are less fortunate in terms of opportunities and exposure to learning materials."

Many of the participants formed collaborative networks, which they intended to maintain on return to their home countries, thus enabling research collaboration. This momentum will be sustained by the creation of a network of ARTS Associates (former ARTS participants), which will enable research collaboration to be sustained and developed.

Suggested topics for future ARTS

Several participants expressed a need for training on statistical analysis/research methodology including such topics as data analysis, documentation and interpretation, the use of statistical packages, research methodology in general, and various specific techniques, such as qualitative methods, confirmatory factor analysis, and structural equation modelling. Clusters of other topics mentioned included: (a) organizational behaviour, developing leadership, and integrating research into decision-making processes; (b) cross-cultural counselling, stress, behaviour change, and better self-efficacy; and (c) emic test construction and test development. The challenge for the Coordinators is to match the skills and interests of volunteer conveners with the topics of interest to potential participants.

Coordinators for ARTS 2006

Ingrid Lunt and Heidi Keller were Coordinators for ARTS 2006 and will continue for the ARTS 2008 programs developed in conjunction with the International Congress of Psychology in Berlin in 2008.

Conclusion

The three 2006 ARTS workshops were positively evaluated, and appeared to result in significant learning, meaningful exchange and the formation of research networks and collaborations. A challenge for the program continues to be fundraising, sustainability, and maximizing impact. These challenges are being addressed by the Coordinators and capacity building committees in each of the sponsoring organizations.