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Psychology and modern life challenges: The 2nd Middle East and North Africa Regional Conference of Psychology, Amman, Jordan, 2007

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INTERNATIONAL PLATFORM FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS

Psychology and modern life challenges: The 2nd Middle East and North Africa Regional Conference of Psychology, Amman, Jordan, 2007

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The Second Middle East and North Africa Regional Conference of Psychology was held in Amman from 27 April – 1 May 2007 under the Royal Patronage of Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah and the auspices of the International Union of Psychological Science, the International Association of Applied Psychology, and the International Association of Cross-Cultural Psychology. It was hosted by the Jordanian Psychological Association whose President was Dr. Asaad Zuby. The President of the Conference and the Local Organizing Committee was Dr. Adnan Farah, the Chair of the Scientific Program Committee was Dr. Mohammad Rimawi, and the Chair of the Regional Advisory Committee was Dr. Marwan Dwairy. The Conference succeeded in attracting participants from 28 countries, including 15 from the Middle East and North Africa region. The Scientific Program explored ways and means to promote the role of psychology in meeting life challenges at regional and international levels. The Conference concluded with the signing of a formal Declaration which called upon governments, academic and professional institutions and organizations, non-governmental organization and other civil society groups, and the United Nations, to work together and to make every possible effort individually and collectively to achieve these goals.

La seconde Conférence régionale de psychologie du Moyen-Orient et de l'Afrique du Nord s'est tenue à Amman du 27 avril au 1er mai 2007, sous le Patronage Royal de Sa Majesté la Reine Rania Al-Abdullah de Jordanie et sous les auspices de l'Union internationale de psychologie scientifique, de l'Association internationale de psychologie appliquée et de l'Association internationale de psychologie interculturelle. C'est l'Association de psychologie de Jordanie, sous la présidence du Dr. Asaad Zuby, qui en assumait l'organisation. Le président de la Conférence et du Comité organisateur local était le Dr. Adnan Farah, le président du Comité du programme scientifique, le Dr. Mohammad Rimawi, alors que le président du Comité aviseur régional était le Dr. Marwan Dwairy. La Conférence a réussi à attirer des participants en provenance de 28 pays, dont 15 du Moyen-Orient et de l'Afrique du Nord. Le programme scientifique présentait différentes façons et différents moyens de promouvoir le rôle de la psychologie pour répondre aux défis quotidiens qui se posent aux niveaux régional et international. En conclusion, les participants de la Conférence ont procédé à la signature d'une Déclaration formelle qui demande aux gouvernements, aux organismes et institutions professionnels et académiques, aux organismes non-gouvernementaux, ainsi qu'aux Nations-Unies, de travailler ensemble en faisant tous les efforts individuels et collectifs possibles pour atteindre ces objectifs.

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La Segunda Conferencia Regional de Psicología para el Norte de Africa y para Oriente Medio se celebró en Amman del 27 de Abril al 1 de Mayo del 2007 con el patrocinio de su Majestad la Reina Rania Al-Abdullah y los auspicios de la Unión Internacional de Psicología Científica (IUPsyS), de la Asociación Internacional de Psicología Aplicada y la Asociación Internacional de Psicología Transcultural. El anfitrión fue la Asociación Jordana de Psicología que preside el Dr. Asaad Zuby. El presidente de la Conferencia y del Comité Local Organizador fue el Dr. Adnan Farah, el presidente del comité científico fue el Dr. Mohammad Rimawi, y el presidente del Comité Asesor Regional fue el Dr. Marwan Dwairy. Participaron en la conferencia representantes de 28 países, quince de ellos de Oriente Medio y del Norte de África. El programa científico exploró modos y medios de propiciar la intervención psicológica a la hora de promover cambios en el estilo de vida regional e internacional. La Conferencia concluyó con la firma de una Declaración convocando a los gobiernos, a las instituciones académicas y profesional, a organismos no gubernamentales, a otros grupos sociales y a las Naciones Unidas para actuar de modo conjunto y aportar todo tipo de esfuerzos individuales o colectivos para la consecución de tales metas.

OVERVIEW

The 2nd Middle East and North Africa Regional Conference of Psychology (2nd MENA RCP) was held in Amman, Jordan from 27 April – 1 May 2007. This was the seventh regional conference organized under the auspices of the International Union of Psychological Science (IUPsyS), the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP), and the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP). Regional conferences are held every two years in between the large international congresses held under the sponsorship of IUPsyS and IAAP. They were introduced as a joint venture among IUPsyS, IAAP and IACCP to review the current state of psychology in a particular region and foster its development by increasing communication between scientific researchers and professionals, disseminating psychological knowledge and expertise, and supporting the organization of psychology within the region. Previous regional conferences have been held in Guangzhou, China (Knowles, 1996; Zhang, 1996); Mexico City, Mexico (Knowles, 1998); Durban, South Africa; Mumbai, India (Barnes & Knowles, 2003); Dubai, United Arab Emirates (Sabourin & Knowles, 2004); and Bangkok, Thailand (Knowles, 2006).

SPECIFIC FOCUS

The 2007 regional conference was held under the Royal Patronage of Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah and received financial support from the Jordanian Psychological Association and the Committee on International Relations in Psychology (CIRP) of the American Psychological Association (APA) as well as IUPsyS, IAAP, and IACCP. It was hosted by the Jordanian

Psychological Association whose President was Dr. Asaad Zuby. The President of the Conference and of the Local Organizing Committee was Dr. Adnan Farah. The Scientific Program Committee was chaired by Dr. Mohammad Rimawi, and the Regional Advisory Committee was chaired by Dr. Marwan Dwairy. Four Workshops were allocated Continuing Education (CE) credits by the APA which is the first time such CE credits were available to participants of a regional conference.

Over 150 participants attended the Conference and these came from 28 countries, including 15 MENA countries (Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, West Bank & Gaza, and Yemen) and 13 other countries (Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Singapore, South Africa, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States of America).

Historical background of psychology in the region

As described in the review of the 1st Middle East and North Africa Regional Conference of Psychology that was held four years ago in Dubai, psychological thought in the Middle East and North Africa is deeply embedded in the language and classical literatures of those civilizations dating back several millennia. For example, along with mathematics, astronomy and medicine, psychological and philosophical concepts were used to explain phenomena like hysteria, epilepsy, delusions and dreams (Sabourin & Knowles, 2004). The study of the mind dates back at least 1,000 years and although it was considered to be an integral part of philosophical discourse it

included a practical emphasis on healing both mental and psychosomatic disorders.

The early decades of the 20th Century saw the advent of the scientific study of psychology when Egypt and Lebanon became the first Arab countries in which modern psychology began to emerge. Other countries such as Syria, Iraq, and Sudan introduced scientific psychology around the middle of the 20th century with most of the remaining Arab countries following in the 1960s. As in most Western countries, the Universities were the cradle of this development. Today the MENA region has an overall population of well over 100,000,000 people and in it the number of trained psychologists is steadily growing.

THE SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM

The content and structure of the 2nd MENARCP was planned around the general theme of "Psychology and Modern Life Challenges" and, as would be expected, the majority of its presentations reflected the issues and concerns of the Middle East and North Africa. The Scientific Program encompassed 20 Keynote Addresses, 6 Workshops, 4 Round Table Discussions, and 56 Individual Papers—which, for the sake of analysis, have been grouped under seven major themes:

- (1) the role of psychology in disasters and crisis intervention;
- (2) psychological aspects of terrorism;
- (3) psychology, psychiatry and mental health issues;
- (4) cross-cultural issues;
- (5) wider, etic issue and local, emic issues;
- (6) fundamental experimental psychology; and
- (7) the profession of psychology.

Each will now be briefly discussed.

Theme 1: The role of psychology in disasters and crisis intervention

Because life in recent decades in a number of countries in the region has been characterized by traumatic events affecting many people, and because exposure to multiple traumas is common, it is not surprising that the largest number of papers at the Conference could be grouped under this heading. A good deal of the public health, epidemiological, psychological and psychiatric research reported at the Conference examined the consequence of invasion and occupation, and covered issues relating to war, suicide, death and trauma as well as natural disasters. The common

findings were a higher rate of mortality and increased levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), tension, stress, depression and death obsession. Other effects of traumatic events included pessimism, anhedonia, fatigue, somatic complaints, weak concentration and sleep problems.

For example, two studies from Kuwait concerned the effect of the 1990 Iraqi invasion on Kuwaiti civilians who remained in their home country during the occupation and the effect of the current war in Iraq on the memory of young Kuwaitis. The first study reported a 20 per cent higher rate of fatality plus dramatic changes in health and mental health, especially PTSD. The second study found that the young Kuwaitis experienced intrusive images of tortured and mutilated bodies, and either obsessive, anxious vigilance about the war or complete disengagement, as well as increased post-invasion aggression, use of drugs and alcohol, and promiscuity. Many of these young Kuwaitis also reported increased mistrust, nationalism and ethnic chauvinism, no sense of future or future planning, numbness and emptiness, and insecurity and confusion about human accountability, i.e., who to blame for their traumatic experiences.

In another study, the relationship between stressful events and aggressive behaviour was examined among university students. It was found that the most common aggressive behaviours were aggression toward self, aggression towards others, and aggression directed toward university academic staff, in that rank order. A study conducted for the national Police Service in Iraq on what has been described as "the most dangerous job in the world" (*The Washington Times*, February 23, 2005) confirmed that recruits to the Police Service experienced high levels of trauma and stress and showed elevated levels of PTSD symptoms. Another study investigated the effect of war broadcasting upon children with respect to PTSD and supplementary disorders such as depression and anxiety. Results showed that PTSD disorders varied with age and sex, with female children as the most vulnerable group. Significant correlations were also found between PTSD, depression and anxiety.

In keeping with the high levels of trauma and stress experienced by those who are directly involved in horrific events, research has also shown similar problems of trauma and stress in those indirectly involved in these events such as relief workers and counsellors. The consequences of this type of work were discussed in a Capacity Building Workshop titled "Peace in the Middle

East: What can Psychologists do?" This forum brought together representatives from the national psychology societies and associations in the region. Participants shared their experiences in undertaking this kind of work. One point to emerge from the discussions was a call for attention to the positive changes that can follow disasters, often called post-traumatic growth. This emphasis was supported by results from a study conducted after the earthquake in Turkey where it was found that relief work was perceived to be an important life experience that was bolstered by feelings of self-efficacy, compassion, and the significance of community solidarity. Similar results were also reported after the earthquake in Algeria where techniques including the psychotherapy of relieving and collective sharing were used, and where psychology now constitutes one of the pillars of public health.

Other papers also dealt with the application of crisis intervention techniques specific to particular crisis situations, models of crisis intervention, assessment instruments in crisis intervention, crisis intervention planning, and service delivery in a variety of local agencies. For example, one study reported on the effectiveness of a counselling program in alleviating the severity of PTSD among Palestinian children who experienced Al Aqsa Intifada.

Theme 2: Psychology, psychiatry and mental health issues

Psychology in the Middle East plays a major role in the assessment of mental health, and the profession works in close collaboration with other professions, especially psychiatry, medicine, and law. Papers in this group dealt with mental health screening, assessment and management of different disorders, comparisons of efficacy of drug and non-drug treatment programs, the promotion of mental health and well-being, and advances in behavioural medicine, psychiatry, and law. The following is a summary of examples of papers addressing the specific topics of family violence, Alzheimer's, drugs and drug addiction, and health care delivery.

Family violence. The results of one study found that the perpetrators of family violence were characterized by low intellectual function, impulsivity, poor socioeconomic status, sadism and psychopathic traits. The victims were mostly females and children who sustained both physical and psychological harm. Conditions such as

anxiety disorders, uni- and bipolar mood disorders, borderline personality disorder and antisocial personality disorders were frequently the consequences of family violence. It was also reported that, because violence could be either the cause and/or the effect of these conditions, a vicious circle may arise to compound the problem.

Alzheimer's. This study examined the effect of Alzheimer's on the caregiver—often a family member who presides over the degeneration of someone they dearly love while being required to cope with personal insults, negotiating unrealistic requests, and witnessing a continuous slide of the patient into derangement. For many it is a thankless, twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week task that the caregiver is required to accept with grace and goodwill. In this context, this paper focused upon what has come to be called "Caregiver's Dementia", a term used to describe the overpowering symptoms of stress, fatigue, and forgetfulness that often come with the role of the Alzheimer's caregiver. It was explained that the term is not intended to refer to a biological dementia but to a stress-induced psychological condition that has become increasingly common: One estimate is that approximately half of all caregivers struggle with this form of clinical depression.

Drugs and drug addiction. One study examined the relationship between drug use and anger. Using the Spielberger State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, it was found that drug-addicted patients recorded statistically significant higher levels of both trait and state than anger than non-addicts. This research also described a treatment program that was based on increasing the addict's understanding of the nature of anger emotion, mechanisms for dealing with it, and mechanisms for preventing relapses in the condition. The efficacy of the therapeutic program in decreasing state and trait anger was significantly different compared with that of control group. Another study examined attitudes toward drug addiction among Iranian high school students and showed that more positive attitudes toward drugs and drug addiction were associated with field of study (humanities), home conditions (extended households lacking friendly relations), and leisure activities (more positive attitudes among students who did little to no exercise and who spent their spare time with friends). The results also showed that boys had more positive attitudes toward drugs and drug addiction than girls.

Health care delivery. In recent years, psychotherapeutic interventions have shifted toward a new orientation in which the focus is on a patient's strengths and resources rather than on their weaknesses or limitations. A variety of terms such as solution-oriented, solution-focused, brief, strategic, narrative, and constructivist therapy have been used to describe this new approach to psychotherapy. A Workshop provided an introduction to this model and covered a range of topics including: underlying assumptions to create possibilities; how to define problems; co-creating conversations for change through 'solution talk'; changing how the problem is viewed; changing the patterns of actions and interactions surrounding the problem; depathologizing by rewriting "spoiled identity" stories; possibilities and collaboration to avoid blaming with clients using their expertise; and creating a positive vision of the future for clients and their families. Another Workshop dealt with emotional intelligence (EQ) and coached participants in the use of methods to increase people's understanding of their emotions, the components of EQ, and the resources available to manage effectively.

Theme 3: Cross-cultural issues

This group of papers examined the influence of culture on human behaviour and explored similarities and differences in behaviour, attitudes and values across cultures. The research in this set of papers dealt with topics such as perception, cognition, intelligence, consciousness, development, gender, mental health, emotions, nonverbal communication, and social interaction.

For example, one study was undertaken in the context of the rapid economic growth of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) that has been fuelled by the growth of a large expatriate community comprised of temporarily relocated nuclear families. Research has shown that the majority of such overseas assignments are unsuccessful for at least one member of the family, frequently one or more of the children. This study described and analyzed children's attitudes and awareness of expatriation in the UAE and looked at various affective, cognitive and social aspects of their understanding of expectations and adaptations as they moved between cultures.

Cultural relocation can be on a more permanent basis requiring individuals not only to re-evaluate their identity but also to deal with other issues such as relationships to family, relationships to

country of origin, perceptions of the receiving country, and social interactions within school and community. In another paper, four case studies in Kuwait were presented to examine how adolescents attempt to construct personal identity within the host society and cope with issues such as race, class and culture. The principal results showed that individuals do not need to sacrifice their personal or social selves but can lead dual lives within their particular social context. These results were similar regardless of sex and/or age. They also indicated that a critical factor affecting adolescents' ability to resolve conflicts arising from the competing demands of multiple cultural worlds involved bonds or attachments among significant adults at home and at school.

The preservation of ethnic identity has also been an issue for psychologists and educators concerned with the threat to ethnicity and the vulnerability of self-esteem and well-being among ethnic minority groups. Another study investigated the relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem among fourth-generation Armenian high school students in Lebanon.

A number of studies focussed upon differences across cultures. The results of this research may be summarized as follows:

- (1) A study of over 17,000 university undergraduates recruited from 20 Islamic countries found significant sex differences in 18 groups from 11 Islamic countries in which females tend to be higher in depression;
- (2) A study in Palestine found that boys' socio-emotional well being was most strongly associated with "father accessibility" and "quantity of father interaction with their children", whereas girls' socio-emotional well-being was most strongly associated with fathers' sensitivity;
- (3) A study in Jordan on body esteem/self esteem and phobia/depression showed significant correlations in both sexes between body esteem, self-esteem, depression and social phobia. The correlations between body esteem, self-esteem and depression were strongest for females; the correlations between body esteem, self-esteem and social phobia were strongest for males.

A major project in this field of research was the topic of a Keynote Address. Seventy-four cultures around the world have now been mapped according to seven underlying value systems that describe the distinguishing characteristics of the cultures of different nations and ethnic groups. The current phase of this project is focusing upon

comparing and contrasting the value priorities of Muslim minorities and majority groups in Europe.

Religion and psychological characteristics were compared in a number of studies. One study investigated the relationship between altruism and religiosity in a United States Christian sample and a Jordanian Muslim sample. It was found that orthodoxy, fantasy, empathy, and extrinsic religious orientation correlated significantly with altruism in the United States sample, and that extrinsic and intrinsic religious orientation correlated significantly with altruism in the Jordanian sample. One of the Keynote Addresses also dealt with religious beliefs across countries and compared the role of the family in influencing the development of values in dominant religions such as Christian Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam.

Theme 4: Etic and emic issues

Today, many of the world's problems such as influenza pandemics, SARS outbreaks, terrorism, forced migration, refugee struggles, and immigration are global. To address these problems, there is a need to pool resources, strengthen collaboration, and share knowledge and experiences. In one paper, a model to reach across disciplines and international boundaries to bring together partners to provide education, training, and research programs in the primary care, behavioural health-care, and public health area was presented. This model included creating a Global Health Consortium. A Keynote Address focused upon some of the major issues that are likely to affect psychology around the world. These include the effects of pre-college education, the relationship between the demographics of a society's psychology and the society's human population, the increasing participation of psychological scientists in interdisciplinary programs, the implementation of evidence-based practice, and the vital importance that psychology become a truly international discipline.

There was also attention to the need to recognize the importance of regional issues and to respect local culture, values, and practices. Three presentations dealt with issues in this area. One Keynote Address highlighted the importance of taking culture into consideration in clinical and consulting work where many cultural differences are subtle but have a profound impact upon results. The speaker noted that differences in values and attitudes require an ability to accept new perspectives in order for cross-cultural

communication to be effective in 'within-culture' therapy. Along similar lines, a Workshop was designed to help health and mental health professionals develop insight and skills in working with diverse populations differing in age, sex, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, disability, religion, education, profession, and immigration. Another paper raised methodological issues in this type of work. For example a study of attitudes toward counselling among Jordanian students found unacceptably low reliability estimates ($\alpha = .14$) in the sample. These results led to a call to researchers to create culturally-specific instruments in this line of research rather than translate and use Western measures.

Differences in culture and how to manage such differences were also addressed. One paper described the work of Questscope, a non-governmental organization for social development in the Middle East whose aim is to incorporate marginal communities and their children into mainstream Jordanian society. It involves: (a) an ongoing program development/evaluation model documenting the improvements of marginalized youth from participation in Questscope's youth mentoring and related programs; (b) the development of community-based programs throughout Jordan; (c) the development of an extensive cadre of socially aware and involved young professionals who have been trained as mentors, and; (d) adoption of this model through Questscope's agreements with Jordan's Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Education.

Another paper described peace-building efforts in the three southern provinces of Thailand where ongoing ethno-political conflict between Muslims and Buddhists has escalated to the point where violence has ruptured community relations. Using an action research methodology the author worked with community leaders to develop an approach that was grounded in the local culture and utilized indigenous wisdom and spirituality. Through the use of narratives, participants described their experiences of the conflict, the effects of the ongoing conflict on communities and families, and the healing that occurs in the process of collaboration.

A third issue examined the need to strike a balance between global and local demands. The issues raised in a Keynote Address were continued in the associated Roundtable Discussion which dealt with the challenge of formulating a Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists. A draft declaration was presented and comments and advice on the cultural appropriateness of the definitions, concepts, and

language used in the draft were solicited to move the project further towards developing a universal declaration that is sensitive to national and cultural differences and relevant to local communities and indigenous values.

The contrast of global and local values was addressed in a report of an action research study focusing on the effects of religious rites on children. Every year Muslims around the world celebrate a religious holiday with a festival called *Eid al-Adha* in Arabic, *Kurban Bayrami* in Turkish, and the *Festival of Sacrifice* in English. In this religious holiday, the central theme is the sacrificial killing of a lamb or another animal in the name of God. Because this practice is frequently witnessed by children, and because it is well-known that young children have difficulty understanding death, the negative psychological consequences of exposure to the killing of such animals were outlined in this action-research study conducted in Turkey in 2005 and 2006.

Theme 5: Psychological aspects of terrorism

A Keynote Address examined the characteristics of nations under stress and pain. They included: (a) people do not know who they are or have a false picture as who they are; (b) they do not sustain their relationships through deep friendliness; (c) defences are used repeatedly; and (d) contentment skills are minimal.

In addition, the implicit assumptions that underlie people's beliefs about themselves and their relationships with other people include the following examples: belonging is blind loyalty; joy is having a life preoccupied with activity; peace is the absence of emotion; it is the other person's fault; bringing up past failures will help the other person understand how wrong he or she is.

Under these conditions, there is a tendency for people in a nation under stress to become either emotional or cold and callous, to confront rather than negotiate, and to use addictions to alleviate pain. Such circumstances often give rise to terrorism. The Keynote Address was supplemented by a Workshop in which clinical, psychoanalytic, and social psychology frameworks were used to increase understanding of terrorism and terrorists. Different personality types of terrorists were identified and modes of attack, tactics, and strategies were discussed.

Another Keynote Address examined terrorism from a South-east Asian perspective (in contrast to most of the literature in the field of terrorism which is Western and is based upon the Middle

East). Although there are different types of terrorism in South-east Asia, much occurs in situations where the majority of the population is Islamic and where the terrorist operates in a supportive and conducive environment. Although this type of terrorism is similar to that found in some other parts of the world such as Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Chechnya, it is different from the sort of terrorism encountered in Ireland, England, France, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and the Philippines. The paper dealt with the way terrorism has developed in South-east Asia and the institutions that have grown to support it, drawing upon the Indonesian experience as an example. The paper then examined the process by which a person becomes a terrorist and the factors conducive to the making of a terrorist. Lastly, the paper discussed strategies for managing terrorism in general and the terrorist in particular with emphasis on rehabilitation rather than incarceration.

Theme 6: Fundamental experimental psychology

A number of papers addressed basic behavioural phenomena and principles in such areas as stress, sensory loss, and sensory modalities.

For example, a Keynote Address revisited our understanding of the causes of ulcers. For a long time, following the work of Selye, stress was evoked as the primary cause of gastric ulcers. This belief changed when Barry Marshall demonstrated that gastric ulcers were associated with a stomach bacterium called *Helicobacter pylori*, a discovery for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 2005. The Keynote Address challenged this single cause model by reporting on results with animals that suggest an interactive model in which stress-modulating factors predispose people to gastric ulcers by increasing their vulnerability to the bacterium. Thus, a more full explanation of the cause or causes of stomach ulcers should be based upon the integration of behavioural and psychosocial factors.

Another Keynote Address reported one experimental study and four field studies that examined the role of social support in enabling people to cope with stress arising from events such as cardiac surgery, stigmas and migration. Results revealed the importance of both actual and perceived partner support, self-efficacy and the patients' ability to cope with experienced stress. Similar results were reported in a study that examined the relevance of the self concept in patients suffering

from the chronic disease of cancer where it was found that a positive self image and perceptions favoured patients' acceptance of the disease and fostered the development of positive attitudes toward treatment.

One Keynote Address reported research investigating plasticity and reorganization of the brain following sensory loss. Using ERPs, fMRI and PET imaging methodologies with blind subjects, it was found that some of these stimuli evoke activity in the visual cortex, as well as in their designated cortical regions, and that such activity was correlated with performance. Also, it was shown that cochlear implants in deaf subjects that re-establish the function through prosthesis can either reactivate the auditory cortex and lead to improved auditory performance or else the cortex continues to respond to relevant visual stimulation and interferes with a number of auditory functions. In other words, in the absence of input from a sensory system, the brain reassigns cortical "territory" to other sensory systems.

Another Keynote Address reported on the sensory modalities of newborn babies. After a review of the newborn's wide range of sensory abilities, including hearing sounds, smelling aromas, tasting, seeing, and responding to tactile stimulation, the Keynote reported a series of studies of tactile stimulation and responses of pleasure and annoyance, suggesting that how babies respond differentially to pleasant and unpleasant stimulation may form the basis of later classical and operant conditioning.

Theme 7: The profession of psychology

In this theme, papers covered the training, accreditation and licensing of psychologists, the curricula of psychology in a changing world, and the regional and national organization of psychology as a profession. One Keynote Address dealt with issues specific to professional practitioners, particularly in the traditional fields in the health and mental health areas such as clinical, counselling, school, and health psychology. What was emphasized was the importance of striking a balance in training between coursework, practical training to develop therapeutic skills, and required experience, plus the subsequent evaluation of such University or College training programs by the professional society or association. The development of ethical standards and codes of conduct, the licensing of psychologists, the importance of legal and public recognition and protection of the title of psychologist were also

addressed, as were the conditions that foster the creation and growth of psychology as a profession, including funding through membership fees to establish an active professional society or association, and robust psychology departments.

These points were illustrated by examples from the American Psychological Association (founded in 1892) in one paper, and were contrasted with those of the Jordanian Psychological Association (founded in 1995) in another. The Jordanian Psychological Association has grown to the point where it holds a national conference in psychology, regulates the practice of psychology in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, issues and maintains a code of ethics for practicing psychological services, conducts training workshops, and participates in community awareness programs through media, lectures and symposia.

Another Keynote Address described the development of psychology in South Africa. Its history was chequered, ranging from repression during the nation's oppressive past to current prominence in the country's society which now enjoys universal education. Advances in the establishment of professional training programs in psychology, the growth of organized psychology, and the development of the private practice of psychology were described.

Another model for the national development of psychology was illustrated by a paper describing Germany's experience. The Society for Experimental Psychology, established in 1904, was renamed the German Psychological Society (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Psychologie, DGP) in 1929. In 1946, the Association of German Professional Psychologists (Bundesverband Deutscher Psychologinnen und Psychologen, BDP) was founded. Both organizations cooperate at the national level as the Federation of German Psychologists' Associations. The Association of German Professional Psychologists is also a member of the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA), whose range of activities was described in another Keynote Address that covered the historic development of EFPA, its Member Associations of 34 national associations or societies of psychology throughout Europe, its authorizing or accrediting procedures, and the development of EuroPsy, the European certificate of psychological competencies.

The EFPA experience has particular relevance for the MENA region. This issue was raised in a Keynote Address that discussed topics such as psychology university curricula, the qualification and training of psychologists, professional and ethical standards, and licensing systems. This

raised the possibility of developing a unified approach among Arab-speaking countries for the training and licensing of psychologists, and discussion included the value of developing collaborative professional networks among countries. Another Keynote Address described how a core group of psychologists from Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand came together in a Capacity-building Workshop to share ideas, programs, and plans in the wake of the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004 that has since led to the development of psychology at the regional level.

In contemporary society, psychologists work in collaboration with many other professions. One of the conference's Workshops dealt with the interface between psychology and law. It defined the multiple roles that psychologists play in the judiciary system and the results of these interventions. These roles include: being a trial preparation consultant; an expert in credibility assessment; an expert witness in criminal, civil cases and child custody cases; and a mediator. Psychologists also advise on eye witness testimony and jury selection.

The many Keynotes and papers addressing issues in organized psychology set a context for a Round Table Discussion entitled "Psychology in the Middle East: Present and Future Challenges". This Roundtable generated a vigorous and enthusiastic exchange of ideas between psychologists of the MENA countries.

AMMAN DECLARATION

As was the case in Dubai four years earlier (Sabourin & Knowles, 2004), the Conference concluded with the adoption of a statement urging cooperation and action. Called the "Amman Declaration for Action to Promote Mental Health Worldwide", the statement is presented in full in the Appendix.

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APPENDIX

Amman Declaration, May 2007

Preface

The Capital City of Jordan, Amman, hosted the Second Middle East and North Africa Regional Conference of Psychology (2nd MENARCP) from April 27th – May 1st 2007. The conference was held under the Royal Patronage of Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah, and organized by the Jordanian Psychological Association (JPA), under the auspices of the International Union of Psychological Science (IUPsyS), the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP), and the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP). The Conference explored ways and means to promote the role of psychology in meeting life challenges at regional and international levels, and witnessed the participation of 150 participants from 28 countries, namely, Algeria, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, England, France, Germany, Greece, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, USA, Yemen. The conference recorded the delivery of 20 keynote addresses, 6 workshops, 4 round table discussions, and 56 papers.

Preamble

Based on:

- The minutes and proceedings of the 2nd MENARCP
- The assertions of the organizing and sponsoring organizations (JPA, IUPsyS, IAAP, IACCP, and APA)
- The deliberations of the participating psychologists
- The ethical and professional commitment towards enhancing the mental health of individuals and communities

Therefore, the delegates, participants and the signatories to this Declaration call upon governments, academic and professional institutions and organizations, non-governmental organization and other civil society groups, at national, regional, and international levels, and the United Nations to work together and to make every possible effort individually and collectively to achieve the following:

- (1) Protecting mankind and humanity, with regard to individuals and communities, against injustice and oppression in all forms;
- (2) Dedicating themselves towards active work to sanctify, consolidate, maintain and strengthen human rights such as the right to life, liberty and dignity;
- (3) Refusing to accept passivity and lack of intervention with regard to every and all aspects which affect health, happiness and productivity of all individuals;
- (4) Adopting a rejecting attitude, and express refusal of conflicts and systematic abuse which are directed towards either individuals or communities, and to support all efforts which are aimed at establishing peace and dignity for all;
- (5) Opposing all hostile, aggressive and unjust behavior targeted towards victims;
- (6) Recognizing that there is a human soul behind aggressive and hostile behavior, and that it is the duty of psychologists to try in every possible and legitimate way, to help change attitudes and behaviors of aggressors;
- (7) Supporting in every possible and legitimate way any efforts towards reconciliation between aggressors and victims;
- (8) Maintaining determined efforts to establish professional partnership among professional

psychological organizations and promote full exchange among colleagues of knowledge, information, research and best practices;

- (9) Making determined efforts to resist commercialism which can dominate and negatively affect best research and clinical practices, as a by-product of globalization or the interests of various stakeholders, (e.g., corporations);
- (10) Affirming the commitment of every psychologist to serve as a role model in his/her professional performance, and therefore follow ethical principles, and seek continuous professional development;
- (11) Supporting organizations which adopt principles and stances which reflect a similar spirit of the contents of this declaration;
- (12) Assuming responsibility individually and collectively to mobilize all possible helping resources, to provide professional assistance to victims of war, disasters and crises regardless of the cause, whether natural or man-made.

The delegates and participating psychologists attending the 2nd MENARCP implore all psychologists worldwide to put this call into action, and to help achieving the aforementioned goals and commitments through plans and programs of any related organization, and through initiating mutual consultation and cooperation, and by establishing groups to stand for the well-being of human beings regardless of origin, ethnicity, race or religion.

Declared and approved by all participants, delegates and participating organizations at the closing ceremony in May 01, 2007.