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Ava Thompson^a, Guillermo Bernal^b, Rita Dudley-Grant^c, Ishtar Govia^d, Guerda Nicolas^e, Merry Bullock^f & Janel Gauthier^g

^a College of the Bahamas, Chairperson, CRCP2011 Organizing Committee

^b University of Puerto Rico, CRCP2011 Organizing Committee

^c Virgin Islands Behavioral Services, CRCP2011 Organizing Committee,

^d UWI, Jamaica, CRCP2011 Organizing Committee

^e University of Miami, CRCP2011 Organizing Committee,

^f American Psychological Association, IUPsyS Liaison to CRCP2011,

^g Laval University, Secretary-General, International Association of Applied Psychology,

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Regional conferences—A capacity-building mandate: Report on CRCP2011—Building Bridges and Building a Regional Structure

Ava Thompson¹, Guillermo Bernal², Rita Dudley-Grant³, Ishtar Govia⁴,
Guelda Nicolas⁵, Merry Bullock⁶, and Janel Gauthier⁷

¹College of the Bahamas, Chairperson, CRCP2011 Organizing Committee

²University of Puerto Rico, CRCP2011 Organizing Committee

³Virgin Islands Behavioral Services, CRCP2011 Organizing Committee

⁴UWI, Jamaica, CRCP2011 Organizing Committee

⁵University of Miami, CRCP2011 Organizing Committee

⁶American Psychological Association, IUPsyS Liaison to CRCP2011

⁷Laval University, Secretary-General, International Association of Applied Psychology

The Caribbean Regional Conference of Psychology was held in Nassau, The Bahamas, from 15 to 18 November 2011, under the auspices of the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP), the International Union of Psychological Science (IUPsyS), and the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP). The conference was hosted by the Bahamas Psychological Association, and organized by a committee chaired by Dr Ava Thompson, College of the Bahamas. The CRCP2011 attracted over 400 participants from 37 countries, including 20 nations/territories in the Caribbean. A broad scientific program, organized around six conference themes, addressed strengths and challenges to psychology in the region; the current state of psychological research, assessment, and intervention; historical, cultural, and language influences; and links between Caribbean and global models. Conference outcomes included planning for a series of publications to expand on conference themes and presentations, as well as establishment of a steering group to launch a regional organization to support the science and practice of psychology in the Caribbean.

Le Congrès régional de psychologie des Caraïbes (CRCP) s'est tenu à Nassau, dans les Bahamas, du 15 au 18 novembre 2011 sous le patronage de l'Association internationale de psychologie appliquée (IAAP), de l'Union internationale de psychologie scientifique (IUPsyS) et de l'Association internationale pour la psychologie interculturelle (IACCP). Le congrès était accueilli par la Société de psychologie des Bahamas et organisé par un comité présidé par Dre. Ava Thompson, Collège des Bahamas. Le CRCP 2011 a attiré plus de 400 participants en provenance de 37 pays, incluant 20 états/territoires des Caraïbes. Un vaste programme scientifique, organisé autour de six thèmes du congrès, a abordé les forces et les défis de la psychologie dans la région; l'état actuel de la recherche en psychologie; l'évaluation et l'intervention; les influences historiques, culturelles et linguistiques; et les liens entre les Caraïbes et les modèles globaux. Les résultats du congrès comprenaient la planification d'une série de publications pour développer des thèmes et des présentations du congrès, ainsi que la création d'un groupe d'organisation pour lancer une organisation régionale pour soutenir la science et l'exercice professionnelle de la psychologie dans les Caraïbes.

La Conferencia Regional del Caribe de Psicología se celebró en Nassau, Bahamas, del 15 al 18 Noviembre de 2011, bajo los auspicios de la Asociación Internacional de Psicología Aplicada (IAAP), la Unión Internacional de Ciencia Psicológica (IUPsyS), y la Asociación Internacional para la Psicología Transcultural (IACCP). La Asociación Psicológica de las Bahamas fungió como anfitriona del evento y el mismo fue organizado por un comité presidido por la Dra Ava Thompson, del Colegio de las Bahamas. Más de 400 participantes de 37 países, incluyendo 20 países y territorios en el Caribe asistieron al CRCP2011. Un amplio programa científico giró en torno los seis temas de la

conferencia, a saber, atender las fortalezas y desafíos de la psicología en la región; el estado actual de la investigación psicológica; evaluación e intervención; las influencias históricas, culturales y influencias lingüísticas; y los vínculos entre el Caribe y los modelos globales. Resultados de la Conferencia incluyen la planificación de una serie de publicaciones para ampliar sobre los temas y las presentaciones de la conferencia, así como el establecimiento de un grupo timón para desarrollar una organización regional de apoyo a la ciencia y la práctica de la Psicología en el Caribe.

The Caribbean Regional Conference of Psychology (CRCP2011) was held in Nassau, Bahamas from 15 to 18 November 2011. Hosted by the Bahamas Psychological Association, the conference was organized and implemented by a broad group of psychologists representing the range of nations, states, and territories in the Caribbean. The Caribbean Region was defined as including the insular Caribbean islands/states of Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, Aruba, The Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, Bonaire, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Curacao, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, Montserrat, Puerto Rico, St Kitts & Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, St Eustatius, Saba, St Maarten, Trinidad & Tobago, Turks & Caicos Islands, US Virgin Islands, and the nations/territories of Belize, which lies on the Caribbean coast of Central America, and Guyana, French Guiana, and Suriname, which border the Caribbean in the northeast coast of South America.

REGIONAL CONFERENCES OF PSYCHOLOGY—A HISTORY

Although psychology has always been a global discipline, with psychology programs, departments, and laboratories on every continent, it has grown enormously in numbers and organizations over the past half century. Much of this growth has been in geographical regions where the higher education, science, and service infrastructures have themselves been developing and where there is a perceived need for scholarly and applied work to address immediate societal needs. For psychology, this has meant educating students to be ready to address issues in health and mental health, family and community interventions, human factors, disaster response, education, and development.

This development of psychology has been supported by international associations of psychology through sponsorship of regional conferences, held every two years, in between the large international congresses that occur in even-numbered years under the sponsorship of the International Union of Psychological Science (IUPsyS—the ICP Congress) and the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP—the ICAP Congress).

Regional conferences of psychology were inaugurated as a joint initiative between IUPsyS and IAAP, decided at the 23rd International Congress of Applied Psychology in Madrid, Spain in 1994. As Knowles (1996) noted, “it had become increasingly felt . . . there was a need to organize smaller conferences on a more geographically localized basis so that issues specific to a given region of the world could become the focus of international attention and concentration of effort.”

The first regional conference of psychology in this model was held in Guangzhou, China in 1995 (Knowles, 1996; Zhang, 1996), with IUPsyS, IAAP, and the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP) as cosponsors. Subsequent regional conferences were held in Mexico City, Mexico in 1997 (Knowles, 1998); Durban, South Africa in 1999; Mumbai, India (2001; Barnes & Knowles, 2003), Dubai, UAE (2003; Sabourin & Knowles, 2004), Bangkok, Thailand (2005; Knowles, 2006), Amman, Jordan (2007; Knowles & Sabourin, 2008), Sofia, Bulgaria (2009; Knowles, 2010) and Nassau, Bahamas (2011).

These nine conferences have been held in areas of the world where psychology was not (at the time) well developed. Most have served as a catalyst for regional development of psychologists, of national psychology associations, and of regional associations of psychology. They have also laid the groundwork for subsequent international congresses (in China and South Africa).

The goal of the regional conferences is capacity building, with a focus on fostering the development of individual and organizational capacity that is aligned to the needs of the region for knowledge and skills. The conferences provide a forum to review the current state of psychology in a particular region, and help provide a vehicle for increasing communication among scientific researchers, professionals and educators; disseminating psychological knowledge and expertise; developing specific capacity-building activities; and supporting the development and strengthening of organized psychology within the region. Local hosts, in consultation with the sponsoring organizations, develop the specific content and themes.

The lead sponsorship of the regional conferences alternates between IUPsyS and IAAP. In collaboration with each other, and with potential local hosts, a

location is selected, usually 2–3 years in advance of a conference. The lead sponsoring organization appoints a liaison, who serves as a conduit between all the sponsoring organizations and the local organizing committee, which may be national or regional in composition. The sponsoring organizations provide modest seed funding to allow the organization and planning of the conference to begin. Conferences are expected to be self-supporting beyond the initial seed funds, and any surplus is designated to be used for further regional development.

The regional conference planning and logistics are carried out by an organizing committee (generally formed under the auspices of a national psychology organization in the region). This committee is encouraged to undertake broad regional outreach in developing its own subcommittees and programs. In collaboration with local organizers, the sponsoring organizations develop capacity-building workshops directed toward strengthening the organization of psychology in the region. The goals of these capacity-building activities are to encourage each country to develop a national psychology association and engage with the community of associations as members of IUPsyS, to strengthen educational systems, and to develop regional engagement and structure.

Attendance at the recent regional conferences has ranged from 135 to over 2000, with broad regional and international representation, as shown in [Table 1](#).

The development of regional conferences is governed by formal agreements between IAAP, IUPsyS, and IACCP, and seed funds are provided by these organizations. By consensus, the name of each conference since 2003 follows a common format of the “[Region name] Conference of Psychology.” This name is usually followed by the specific theme of the conference, such as “Psychology and Modern Life Challenges,” “Southeastern Europe Looking Ahead: Paradigms, Schools, Needs and Achievements of Psychology in the Region,” or “Psychological Science and Well-Being: Building Bridges for Tomorrow.”

The regional conferences serve a powerful convening and development function. They gather psychologists from across a region, many of whom have not met previously, to work toward developing common regional resources and to share similarities and differences. They serve as a catalyst to identify regional needs and gaps and to begin to address them collectively. In addition, they showcase the content of psychological science and application through the scientific program.

DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL CONFERENCE IN THE CARIBBEAN

Brief overview: Status and history of psychology in the region

The Caribbean is a diverse region. Its countries comprise island nations, states, and territories, with small populations, mostly separated by water. Because of its unique geographical aspects, and because most of the Caribbean nation-states emerged from colonialism only recently, during the 20th century, there has not been a strong history of intercountry communication or collaboration within psychology.

Psychology has developed unevenly in the Caribbean (Ward & Hickling, 2008). In some of the Spanish- and French-speaking islands (Cuba, Puerto Rico, Haiti), there have been psychological services and psychology education programs for some time. In contrast, psychology is a relatively new discipline in the English-speaking Caribbean regions. Nonetheless, Caribbean psychologists have made noteworthy individual and organizational contributions in a range of settings. For example, psychologists in Martinique and Guadeloupe have actively intervened in the health sector on issues such as childhood obesity, antenatal care, and Alzheimer’s care; psychology in Cuba has developed in the service of public health care; psychologists in the Eastern Caribbean travel to

TABLE 1
Attendance and geographical representation at regional conferences

<i>Year and location</i>	<i>Attendance</i>
1995—Asia (Guangzhou, China)	257 attendees from 27 countries, including 58 from Mainland China
1997—Americas (Mexico)	2666 attendees from 55 countries
1998—Africa (Durban, South Africa)	600+ attendees
2001—Asia (Mumbai, India)	300+ attendees
2003—Middle East and North Africa (Dubai)	135 attendees from 35 countries (17 in the region)
2005—Asia (Thailand)	400 attendees from 26 countries (14 in the broader region)
2007—Middle East and North Africa (Amman, Jordan)	150 attendees from 28 countries (15 in the region)
2009—Central and Eastern Europe (Sofia, Bulgaria)	350 attendees from 25 countries (13 in the region)
2011—Caribbean (Nassau, Bahamas)	400+ attendees from 37 countries (20 in the region)

multiple islands to provide direct clinical services to communities without psychological service providers; still others in Puerto Rico, Jamaica, and Trinidad are building educational and research infrastructure. Others use their psychological training with regional and international organizations such as the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to advise on programs in the Caribbean, or work to create or strengthen regional organizations for social action, health care, or academic studies.

Despite many noteworthy achievements, however, psychologists in the region are acutely aware that psychology has been limited in its growth and participation in the world community of psychologists. There is limited research productivity (Sanchez-Sosa & Riveros, 2007), with few theoretical models that reflect the psychological realities of the Caribbean (Hickling, Matthies, Morgan, & Gibson, 2008), and there is insufficient training or infrastructure to ensure culturally appropriate application. Like other psychologists in the majority world,¹ Caribbean psychologists have attributed these limitations to many sources: to the lack of national and regional psychology infrastructure necessary to promote collaboration and collective effort to advance the discipline, to the lack of psychological educational resources that integrate unique aspects of Caribbean cultures, to the application and measuring of Caribbean psychology by standards developed outside the region, and to the considerable challenges of networking and sharing resources across a region with 34 countries and territories, multiple languages and linguistic diversity, and wide geographical spread.

Across the nation states and territories in the Caribbean, psychology is offered as a program of study in around 70 universities. Except for Barbados, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Tobago, and the US Virgin Islands, psychology is taught only at the undergraduate level. Thus, graduate training leading to professional activities must, for most students in the Caribbean, take place outside their country of residence. This has important implications for regional development. Psychologists who return to the Caribbean after training "abroad" are challenged to integrate their knowledge, skills, and perspectives, learned in a "mainstream" psychology that is largely focused on North American or European populations, with the sociocultural, historical, community, family and individual perspectives in the Caribbean. A means of

communication and exchange throughout the Caribbean is important in addressing this gap, and in fostering a psychology that values and reflects the diversity of histories and experiences throughout the Caribbean.

In addition, psychologists in the Caribbean must confront large gaps in available resources (materials, experts, funding, etc.) to meet the needs for local research and services. This means that it is crucial to develop networks, develop a sense of community, and develop broad communication throughout the Caribbean to enable sharing of available resources, taking account of varying national needs and priorities.

There are a number of Pan-Caribbean organizations that provide models for dialogue and collaboration, including the Haitian Studies Association, whose annual conferences have often focused on physical and mental health, and the Caribbean Studies Association. However, the main focus of these organizations is not psychology—historically, psychology-based presentations have constituted a fraction of their programs. For example, the Caribbean Studies Association (CSA), founded in 1974 by 300 Caribbeanists, serves as a vehicle for multidisciplinary collaboration within the Caribbean and the diaspora. While psychology has been a part of that organization, the focus has been on a broad analysis of social issues and contributions of Caribbean scholars within and outside of the region. The model of collaboration, inclusive of Caribbean psychologists in the diaspora of the Americas, Europe and around the world, can serve as a model to enrich the focus of Caribbean psychology. In addition, the goal of enhancing capacity in service, as well as research and academic capacity, builds on and enriches the CSA model to meet the needs of psychology in the Caribbean region.

Impetus for a regional congress

It had been clear in the Caribbean that there was strong potential for regional collaboration. There was also a conviction that there was a need to increase psychology's role in promoting wellbeing and affecting societal transformation at national and regional levels. This was reflected in efforts since the 1970s to organize regional conferences and organizations, the most recent of which was a "Psychology of the Caribbean" conference organized in 2002 by Dr Victor Lina in Martinique. It was within this context that regional psychologists responded

¹The term "majority world" refers to those countries often referred to as developing or low-income countries. It reflects the fact that these countries are in the majority in terms of population and numbers of countries. According to Adair (2005), it was first coined by Cigdem Kagitcibasi, a Turkish psychologist.

enthusiastically to canvassing efforts to assess interest in partnering with international colleagues to organize a regional conference, similar to those held earlier in China, Mexico, South Africa, India, the United Arab Emirates, Thailand, Jordan, and Bulgaria.

Leaders across many Caribbean nations/islands agreed that gathering the regional community of psychologists and outlining an agenda for capacity building in research, training, and practice was an important first step to developing a regional psychology that could address local needs and local realities. The idea of a regional conference offered a timely opportunity to do this and to set the foundation to build a regional organization.

Creating a community

The idea of a regional conference also offered the promise of taking steps to bridge the diversity of the Caribbean region in terms of history, language, and resources. Across the Caribbean there are different colonization histories, and different legacies from colonization. One such legacy is the variety of languages spoken in the Caribbean, including English, French, Haitian, Creole, Spanish, Papiamentu, and Dutch. There is also a legacy of different languages spoken in different contexts—an official language and the language of *lakay*, or the house. There is also wide ethnic/racial diversity throughout the region. [Table 2](#) illustrates the historical and current ethnic composition of the Caribbean islands/nations.

Creating an inclusive environment that welcomes such diversity, and that could help establish a sense of community among psychologists from these different ethnic and language backgrounds, was one central impetus to developing a regional conference grouping.

Goals of the conference

The overarching aims of the conference were several. They were to serve as an impetus and mechanism for capacity building in the region; to highlight Caribbean research, scholarship and vision; to explore specific challenges to psychology in the region; and to engage with psychologists across the region, in the Caribbean diaspora, and with the global psychology community.

Throughout the conference planning process, the organizers sought to ground their work in the unique historical, sociopolitical, cultural, and linguistic landscape of the Caribbean. They were particularly mindful of an enduring historical pattern of invasion, conquest, and domination in the Caribbean, including enslavement and colonial structures (Hickling et al., 2008). They also were mindful of the challenges in defining a “Caribbean” perspective amid competing trends of global cultural homogenization, and intra-

and inter-island/nation fragmentation and competition. In planning the conference themes, the organizers made a commitment to acknowledging, documenting, and valuing the psychological experiences of the Caribbean peoples, and recognizing their diverse historical and contemporary contexts. There was interest in promoting empowerment, self-determination and identity within the psychology community, and in capturing ways to understand psychological adaptations, forms of resistance, cultural resilience, and efforts to reclaim cultural heritages, dignity, and collective engagement at the individual and community levels (see Hickling et al., 2008).

This regional foundation was evident in the overall conference theme, “Psychological Science & Well-Being: Building Bridges for Tomorrow,” which reflected an appreciation of psychology as a critical instrument for building bridges *across* time, disciplines, regions, research areas, and communities; *through* policy, advocacy, education, publication, teaching, and intervention; and *for* change, development and empowerment of individuals and communities.

The stated goals of the conference, developed over the planning process, were the following:

- to strengthen the connections between the research, practice, and training components of ethical psychological science in the region
- to provide an opportunity for Caribbean psychologists to contribute to the development of a culturally appropriate, diverse, and global psychological science by sharing their research, teaching, and practice with regional colleagues (including the Caribbean diaspora) and from other parts of the world
- to increase the knowledge of academic and applied psychologists in the region about psychology in other parts of the world and to specifically involve scientists and practitioners from outside the region whose work is pertinent to psychologists in the region and who are able to transfer knowledge
- to organize a number of workshops that allow psychologists of the region to engage in continued education on contemporary techniques, methodologies, and theories that are appropriate to their own work
- to increase professional and public awareness of the role of psychological science in promoting individual, community, national, and regional wellbeing and development
- to promote the sustained collaboration of academic and applied psychologists (including trained but non-practicing psychologists) within the Caribbean region and the diaspora

TABLE 2
Original Amerindian inhabitants and current ethnic groups of Caribbean islands

<i>Island/Entity</i>	<i>Original Amerindian groups (Anbanet, 2004)</i>	<i>Current Ethnic Groups (Central Intelligence Agency, 2013)</i>
Anguilla	Taino Arawak	Black (predominant) 90.1%, mixed, mulatto 4.6%, white 3.7%, other 1.5% (2001 census)
Antigua (& Barbuda)	Cibony, Carib, Island Carib, Gafaruna	Black 91%, mixed 4.4%, white 1.7%, other 2.9% (2001 census)
Aruba	Carib	Mixed white/Caribbean Amerindian 80%, other 20%
Bahamas	Cibony, Guanahuatebey, Lucayans, Taino Arawak	Black 85%, white 12%, Asian and Hispanic 3%
Barbados	Carib, Lacono	Black 93%, white 3.2%, mixed 2.6%, East Indian 1%, other 0.2% (2000 census)
Belize	Not available	Mestizo 48.7%, Creole 24.9%, Maya 10.6%, Garifuna 6.1%, other 9.7% (2000 census)
Bermuda	Not available	Black 53.8%, white 31%, mixed 7.5%, other races 7.1%, unspecified 0.6% (2010 census)
British Virgin Islands	Taino Arawak	Black 82%, white 6.8%, other 11.2% (includes Indian and mixed) (2008)
Cayman Islands	Not available	Mixed 40%, white 20%, black 20%, expatriates of various ethnic groups 20%
Cuba	Taino, Cibony, contemporary "Guajiros" of Eastern Cuba	White 65.1%, mulatto and mestizo 24.8%, black 10.1% (2002 census)
Dominica	Island Carib, Carib	Black 86.8%, mixed 8.9%, Carib Amerindian 2.9%, white 0.8%, other 0.7% (2001 census)
Dominican Republic	Taino, contemporary "Jibarus" of Puerto Rico	Mixed 73%, white 16%, black 11%
French Guyana	Kalina Galabi, Mainland Carib	East Indian 43.5%, black (African) 30.2%, mixed 16.7%, Amerindian 9.1%, other 0.5% (2002 census)
Grenada	Carib	Black 82%, mixed black and European 13%, European and East Indian 5%, and trace of Arawak/Carib Amerindian
Guadeloupe	Carib, Island Carib	Not available
Haiti	Taino	Black 95%, mulatto and white 5%
Jamaica	Taino, Cibony, contemporary "Guajiros" of Eastern Cuba	Black 91.2%, mixed 6.2%, other or unknown 2.6% (2001 census)
Martinique	Carib	Not available
Montserrat	Carib	Not available
Puerto Rico	Taino, contemporary "Jibarus" of Puerto Rico	White (mostly Spanish origin) 76.2%, black 6.9%, Asian 0.3%, Amerindian 0.2%, mixed 4.4%, other 12% (2007)
St Kitts & Nevis	Taino, Island Carib	Predominantly black; some British, Portuguese, and Lebanese
St Lucia	Carib	Black 82.5%, mixed 11.9%, East Indian 2.4%, other or unspecified 3.1% (2001 census)
St Barthélemy	Ouanalao	White, Creole (mulatto), black, Guadeloupe Mestizo (French-East Asia)
St Maarten/St Martin	Taino, Island Carib	Creole (mulatto), black, Guadeloupe mestizo (French-East Asia), white, East Indian
St Vincent & The Grenadines	Black Carib, Island Carib, Gafaruna	Black 66%, mixed 19%, East Indian 6%, European 4%, Carib Amerindian 2%, other 3%
Trinidad & Tobago	Carina, Nepuyo, Island and Mainland Carib	Indian (South Asian) 40%, African 37.5%, mixed 20.5%, other 1.2%, unspecified 0.8% (2000 census)
Turks & Caicos	Not available	Black 87.6%, white 7.9%, mixed 2.5%, East Indian 1.3%, other 0.7%
US Virgin Islands	Taino	Black 76.2%, white 13.1%, Asian 1.1%, other 6.1%, mixed 3.5% (2000 census)

- to develop a regional network of psychologists to enhance capacity building and the development of psychology in the region, at individual, institutional, and national levels; and of students of the region.

The call for papers for the conference reflected the broad goals, and emphasized six subthemes of the overall "Building Bridges for the Future" theme. These were: Caribbean culture and psychology; Capacity building in the Caribbean region; Education and training;

Mental health and development; Research methodologies; and Psychology in the public interest.

The conference theme and subthemes also reflected a deeply held view that along with colleagues in other disciplines, psychologists have a critical role to play in transforming Caribbean societies, at both the national and regional levels. As a result, there was a strong commitment to illustrating how psychological knowledge is utilized in different sectors of the Caribbean, to capturing psychology's development in the various Caribbean contexts, and to describing the range of professional activities in which psychologists are engaged in the region and in the diaspora. As is the case in other parts of the world, psychologists must collaborate with other professionals and promote public awareness about the discipline. This important arena of engagement was reflected in a decision to include nonpsychologists as conference organizers, presenters, and participants. It was also reflected in the community outreach components of the conference, which included media appearances, a public lecture, a workshop for nonpsychologists (e.g., nurses, guidance counselors, and members of the armed forces) and sustained engagement with private industry, health, and mental health facilities, government ministries, and research institutes. These connections advanced the goals of building opportunities for collaboration, increasing awareness of psychology's role in promoting the public interest, and fostering the development of a professional identity as psychologists.

THE CRCP2011

Format and structure of the conference

The format of the conference was designed to encourage attention to the broad conference themes as well as interaction about specific research and applied contents in a strong capacity-building context.

The capacity-building goals were addressed in several ways. In addition to full student participation throughout all phases of the conference planning process and student conference presentations, there were multiple networking sessions for students, early career professionals and psychologists in the diaspora. Preconference workshops were designed to foster research and applied skills for individual psychologists. Capacity-building themed presentations, featuring Caribbean and global psychology leaders, also contributed to the effort to lay a strong foundation for the development of a Caribbean psychology within a world context.

Organizational capacity building was the focus of the IUPsyS-sponsored one-day workshop for over 40 leaders, educators, practitioners, researchers, and representatives of national associations. Caribbean

participants, along with international guests, identified critical issues, needs, and opportunities for psychological science in the region, and explored the vision for a Caribbean organization of psychology. The discussions and other outcomes from this workshop informed other activities throughout the subsequent days of the conference, including the town hall meeting.

Capacity-building goals were also addressed indirectly by the conference structure. Plenary sessions addressing each of the conference goals included two keynote speakers and discussion, scheduled with no overlapping sessions to foster a shared conversation.

The invited speaker program was also designed with the capacity-building goals in mind—invited addresses were limited to 30 minutes in length to encourage maximum opportunities for interaction and discussion with invited speakers from the region and from outside the region.

Topically organized parallel sessions included symposia, round tables, and posters. In each of these sessions, there was an explicit attempt to encourage the convening and capacity-building goals of the conference by bringing together participants from multiple places, and from different career stages (from students to elders in the discipline) in the same session.

There was also an attempt to engage the Caribbean diaspora in all aspects of the conference. Large numbers of Caribbean psychologists live and work outside the Caribbean, because of the unique history of the Caribbean and the limited graduate training and professional opportunities there. Psychologists in the diaspora served on critical conference committees, hosted events, presented their research on Caribbean diaspora realities, and participated in key capacity-building activities.

Events of the conference

The CRCP2011 conference attracted over 400 participants, from 37 countries. Twenty of the nations/territories in the Caribbean were represented. Participants included students (around 100), early career psychologists, researchers, educators, practitioners, and managers. In addition to conference presentations, the meeting included preconference workshops, a community workshop on youth and family interventions attended largely by community healthcare workers and law enforcement officers, and a community lecture. The conference proper included multiple sessions with close to 200 presentations, including plenary talks, symposia, papers, posters, and roundtable discussions. Immediate outcomes of the conference included drafting and signing of a declaration proclaiming the importance and intention of supporting a regional psychology organization, and

the formation of a steering committee to continue the organization of psychology in the region and to take the first steps in founding a regional psychology organization for the Caribbean. In addition, a number of national associations from various Caribbean countries took steps to join the IUPsyS. Each of these activities and outcomes are described below.

Preconference activities

National and regional capacity building. Prior to the conference there was a full-day workshop that included 43 participants—27 from 14 Caribbean nations/territories, six presenters from outside the region, and the 10 organizing committee members. Discussion covered broad themes with a focus on national and regional capacity-building needs for organizations of psychology and training programs in psychology.

The topics included:

- National Psychological Associations in the Caribbean Context, with discussants from Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and Grenada
- Psychology Education, Research, and Training for Regional Development: Undergraduate and Graduate Issues, with discussants from Suriname, Haiti, and Barbados
- Professionalizing the Discipline: Standards, Ethics and Quality Assurance, with discussants from Trinidad & Tobago, US Virgin Islands, and international perspectives from Europe and North America
- Regional Collaboration for Developing Psychology Capacity, with discussants from the Caribbean and international perspectives from Asia and Africa.

Small-group discussions focused on aspects of developing a Caribbean Psychology Organization and plans for activities during the conference to bring the vision of a Caribbean organization to conference attendees.

Preconference workshops. Four seminars/workshops were offered for Continuing Education credits, and were attended by about 60 people. The topics were:

- Regionalizing/Internationalizing the Psychology Curriculum
- Research Methodology
- Culturally Appropriate Treatment
- Disaster Mental Health.

Scientific program

The scientific program included 12 invited plenary speakers and 17 invited speakers, as well as a full program of submitted presentations. The invited program provided a unique opportunity to bring together senior Caribbean psychologists working throughout the Caribbean and the diaspora, such as Dr Brigitte Matthies who spoke about the creation of the first psychology masters' Program at the University of the West Indies, and Dr Ava Thompson who spoke on the current development of psychology program at College of the Bahamas. It also brought the opportunity to pair presenters from outside the region, such as Dr Rainer Silbereisen, then President of the IUPsyS, or Dr Melba Vasquez, immediate past President of the American Psychological Association, with Caribbean presenters on similar topics. For example, Dr Vasquez spoke about activities at the APA with Dr Marie-Annick Pierrot, who spoke on the French Federation of Psychologists, and Psychology in Guadeloupe, an organization and system functioning on a much smaller scale.

The submitted program, of over 200 presentations, was organized by Dr Ishtar Govia and Dr Rita Dudley-Grant as symposia/paper sessions, topically related poster presentations, or round tables to allow discussion and contact.

Across most presentations, there was a dominant theme of addressing Caribbean issues, identity and development by describing historical influences and contemporary research and intervention, and by identifying challenges and promoting a strengths-based model. Specific topics addressed are described under the rubric of the six Conference subthemes.

Caribbean culture and psychology. Presentations under this theme identified Caribbean strengths and challenges and tied Caribbean history, languages, and cultures to the development of psychology in the region. Topics included historical perspectives on Caribbean development, the impact of slavery, colonialization, race, and diversity on current mental health and population beliefs, and current practices, which included health and mental health, family, youth development, education, and local cultural practices. Other topics covered were descriptions of research, practice, and psychology organizations in countries throughout the Caribbean, as well as models for collaboration across the region. There was also an important theme stressing the importance of culturally adapted, appropriate and valid research, practice, and assessment. Current challenges such as limited human and infrastructure capacity, as well as societal challenges including HIV/AIDS, violence, and youth

education were also addressed. Another topic was disaster response and disaster mental health, with descriptions of best practices, and Caribbean responses to natural disasters and national emergencies in Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Montserrat, and St Lucia.

A last topical area was issues related to the Caribbean diaspora, including mental health, assessment, and models for collaboration.

Important directions included identification of similarities and differences across the Caribbean, development of a Caribbean identity and an identity for psychology within Caribbean society, development of locally relevant research and intervention tools, and a commitment to addressing local needs.

Capacity building in the Caribbean region. Capacity building was addressed at several levels: in workshops for psychology organizations and educational programs, in a public sector special workshop and lecture, and in descriptions of Caribbean educational and intervention programs.

Topics included challenges to capacity building, noting lack of resources and infrastructure. In addition to building psychology capacity, there were presentations on psychology's role in capacity building in civil service (e.g. police, nurses), business settings, and in athletics.

Education and training. Psychology education and training was addressed by identifying needs, strengths, and challenges. Topics included models and examples of undergraduate and graduate education relevant to the region's needs and realities, challenges in building a professional psychology training infrastructure, models for supervision, research and assessment training, use of telecommunications in graduate training, and development of collaborative scholarship models.

Important themes included current features of existing undergraduate and graduate education, gaps in psychology education and training, and the importance of training students in research.

Mental health and development. Presentations addressed mental health issues in the region in societal contexts (families, children, and youth; comorbidity with health issues; violence, including psychoeducational approaches to domestic violence, school-based bullying prevention programs, incidence information on sexual violence, and risk and resiliency factors), and models for caregiver well-being, and health-related issues, especially stress.

There were also papers about mental health research collaborations to identify local issues and develop culturally adapted assessment tools. There was attention to ethical issues in mental health research and to building service infrastructure. There were several papers on immigration, with a focus on integration into a new society, mental health issues, and diaspora mental health.

Important themes included strategies and examples for culturally relevant mental health research and intervention, and strategies for addressing stigma associated with mental health in the region, as well as stress in everyday life.

Research methodologies. This topic included presentations on developing assessment tools, applying qualitative research techniques in ethnocultural research, and funding for psychological research. Important themes included developing research programs for students, and developing local, culturally appropriate research programs in a variety of areas, including but not limited to personality, identity, mental health, stigma, and family functioning.

Psychology in the public interest. Presentations specifically categorized under this theme included psychology's role in promoting wellbeing, the promotion of social justice, and strategies for addressing vulnerabilities and focusing on population and disciplinary strengths. There were also papers on national/country influences on individual and societal development, including emotional climate and societal values; on work, stress, and health; and on occupational stress and wellbeing within the Caribbean. Presentations that provided a broad, global perspective on psychology's role and contributions to societal wellbeing, with examples from positive youth development, civic engagement, and leadership, were also featured.

Other issues addressed included psychology and religion, identity development, resilience, school issues, and links with global organizations.

Student and young professional networking

Networking and mentoring sessions for students and young professionals were an important part of the conference activities. Across the Caribbean, the number of persons who are studying psychology has grown exponentially over the past few decades. Most undergraduate students come to the study of psychology with a perception of the discipline that is based on the popular media's depiction of

psychologists in the legal and court systems, or as therapists. Students are often unfamiliar with psychology's broad scope. Those who recognize the opportunities for work as a psychologist beyond the parameters of clinical, counseling, or forensic psychology often feel unclear about higher education options available. As noted earlier, many students who are interested in further educational opportunities in diverse subfields of psychology leave the region for this education. When they leave the Caribbean, many students encounter contexts in which they must negotiate their desire to focus on Caribbean-relevant concerns and issues, and/or they must clarify whether and how the frameworks they are taught abroad mesh with the Caribbean realities they wish to address.

The CRCP2011 provided a unique opportunity for students and potential students across the region to be exposed to the scope of the discipline. In addition, in specific sessions, they received guidance and mentoring on practical concerns such as applying to graduate school, and information on the graduate programs throughout the region.

For early career professionals across the region, the conference offered a similarly unique opportunity for in-person engagement and dialogue with colleagues from other Caribbean countries and throughout the diaspora. This facilitated a sharing of resources and a connection to training opportunities that otherwise might not have been possible.

Other conference activities

In keeping with the objective of increasing public awareness about psychology, the CRCP2011 sponsored two publicly oriented events. The first, a community workshop, was entitled "Youth and Family Interventions: Issues of Sexuality and Violence." This day-long event attracted the larger community of The Bahamas, including teachers, guidance counselors, welfare officers, and members of the armed forces. The second was a public lecture on psychology and nation building, held at the College of the Bahamas, which brought conference speakers from Haiti, Trinidad & Tobago, The Bahamas, and Cuba, along with some participants from the conference site to share some of their psychological perspectives with the larger university campus, furthering conference engagement with the local community.

Conference outcomes

There were multiple outcomes of the CRCP2011. A more intangible outcome derived from the creation of a setting in which Caribbean psychologists from all parts of the region met, shared their research,

discussed key concerns about the profession, and began a dialogue on bridging language and geography. It was poignantly clear given that, despite the relative geographic proximity of the islands/states in the region, travel from one part of the Caribbean to another is not direct, generally requiring transit through a third country, increasing both distance and cost. In addition, the specific social, historical, cultural, and colonial histories of Caribbean islands/states, generally reflected in the languages spoken, have created many different lenses to view the issues and challenges for psychology. Yet at the CRCP2011, perspectives from Dutch-, English-, French-, and Spanish-speaking colleagues were each represented. This provided an opportunity to share and construct a broader vision of a Caribbean identity that retains its national and linguistic base within a larger regional perspective.

One tangible outcome was the "Nassau Declaration"—a pledge to form a Caribbean organization of psychology (the text of the Declaration is reprinted in full in the Appendix). The Nassau Declaration was signed following a town-hall meeting. At this seminal event, the participants recognized the need to create a community of Caribbean psychologists. Through the Nassau Declaration, the individuals at the conference acknowledged the need for Caribbean psychology to develop its own identity, and to be positioned to speak for the region by taking responsibility for defining, promoting, and developing psychology at the regional level. There was also recognition that a regional grouping could support and promote the voices of Caribbean psychologists in international discourse about psychology and mental health.

The final session of the conference was a discussion panel led by the organizing committee on the goals of the conference and ways they had been addressed. Following this session, a group of around 30 attendees, comprising broad regional representation, met to begin planning next steps in forming a Caribbean regional organization.

Next steps

Since the CRCP2011, an interim group, the Caribbean Organization of Psychology Steering Committee (COPSC), met regularly to build a new organization of psychology in the region. Its committees, focusing on organizational structures (and writing a draft constitution for the organization), education/training, communications, fundraising, publications, and organizing the next Caribbean regional conference, worked toward multiple goals of publishing conference proceedings and related papers, launching a regional organization in 2013, and hosting the next regional conference in the Caribbean in 2014.

Progress to mid-2013, less than 2 years after the conference, has included special journal issues on Psychology in the Caribbean, announcement of the 2014 Caribbean Regional Conference to be held in Suriname, and launch of the regional organization, CANPA or the Caribbean Alliance of National Psychological Associations with support from a majority of psychology organizations in the Caribbean. In addition the regional group has been active in responding to plans to develop psychology graduate programs in the region, and to participating in regional science- and development-based conferences.

CONCLUSIONS

The CRCP2011 set out with ambitious aims: to provide a forum where psychologists from across the Caribbean could meet; to build a sense of community; to engage students and young professionals; to showcase Caribbean psychological research and practice; and to lay the groundwork for a regional organization of psychology.

These goals were broadly discussed as Caribbean psychologists began to address common challenges and celebrate local and regional strengths. Evaluations of the conference were overwhelmingly positive, and encouraging to the newly formed Caribbean Psychology Organization of Psychology Steering Committee, and its vision of the development of psychology in the region.

This conference can serve as a model for catalyzing regional and national development by encouraging local leaders to come together and work toward a common, regionally meaningful goal. The success of the CRCP2011 illustrates the synergistic outcomes of international partnership/collaboration and local/regional leadership in promoting psychology, building capacity, and developing a sense of community. The next CRCP, planned for 2014, will be a confirmation and celebration of the outcomes of this 2011 regional conference.

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APPENDIX

THE NASSAU DECLARATION 2011 CARIBBEAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE OF PSYCHOLOGY

Recognizing the potential for psychology to serve as a critical instrument for building bridges across time, disciplines, regions, research areas, and communities.

Recognizing the critical role of psychology in policy development, advocacy, education, publication and teaching.

Recognizing the strength of psychology as an agent for change, development and empowerment of individuals and communities.

Recognizing the value of collaborative regional organizations to work toward these goals.

Therefore:

We the undersigned, having attended the Caribbean Regional Conference of Psychology 2011 in Nassau, Bahamas, November 15–18, 2011, agree in principle to establish a Caribbean Psychology Organization to promote the development of psychology as a science and practice.

Signed, attendees at the CRCP2011 Congress.