

Liaison's Report: Caribbean Regional Conference of Psychology (CRCP 2011)

Submitted by: Merry Bullock, Liaison to the CRCP2011 for the April 2012 Officers Meeting

Introduction

The 2011 Caribbean Regional Conference of Psychology: Building Bridges for Tomorrow (CRCP2011) took place November 14-18, 2011, in Nassau Bahamas.

CRCP 2011 was hosted by the Bahamas Psychological Association under the auspices of the International Union of Psychological Sciences (IUPsyS), International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP), and the International Association for Cross Cultural Psychology (IACCP).

Participation reached close to 400 registrants, including 100 students. Participants represented 37 countries, including 20 Caribbean nations and territories. Spread over 5 days, the preconference workshops, symposia, paper sessions, round table discussions and posters addressed broad psychological science themes, with a focus on psychological application, education, training and policy initiatives amongst psychologists within the Caribbean region, in the Diaspora, and between the Caribbean region and other parts of the world.

IUPsyS representation included Rainer Silbereisen, President; Pamela Maras, Executive Committee and Chair of the National Capacity Building Workgroup, and Merry Bullock, liaison to CRCP2011. Representation from IAAP included Jose Maria Peiro, President, Janel Gauthier, Secretary General, and Elizabeth Nair, Treasurer. IACCP was represented by John Berry.

Dr. Ava Thompson, Chair of the CRCP 2011 Conference Organizing Committee (COC) highlighted the significance of the historic conference when she stated: "...The response to the conference lays a strong foundation for psychologists –practitioners, researchers, educators and psychologists-in-training – to collaborate and contribute to the development of Caribbean societies."

Conference Organization

The Conference included 5 full days of activities, including a preconference day for national association capacity building, and a preconference day for workshops. A summary of highlights includes:

1. **National Capacity Building Workshop** (Welcome reception November 13; full-day workshop, November 14) – Organizers Ava Thompson, CRCP2011; Pam Maras, IUPsyS

The full-day workshop included 43 participants – 27 from 14 Caribbean nations/territories, 6 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 & Barbados); Professionalizing the Discipline: Standards, Ethics and Quality Assurance (with discussants from Trinidad & Tobago, U.S. 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 a vision for a Caribbean Psychology Organization and activities during the conference to bring this vision to conference attendees.

2. **Pre-Conference Workshops** (November 15, offered for CE credit)

There were 4 workshops, offered for CE credit. These were attended by about 60 people. Topics were Regionalizing / Internationalizing the Psychology Curriculum; Research Methodology; Culturally Appropriate Treatment; and Disaster Mental Health.

3. **Community Outreach**

In keeping with the objective of increasing public awareness about psychology, the CRCP2011 sponsored two publically oriented events. The first, a community workshop, was entitled *Youth and Family Interventions: Issues of Sexuality and Violence*. This day-long event on November 14 attracted the larger community of The Bahamas, including teachers, guidance counsellors, 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.

4. **Conference November 15-18**

Following an opening reception on November 14, the Conference opened on November 15 in an opening plenary session. The overall conference schedule was organized as a series of plenaries (attendance of all conference participants) followed by smaller, parallel paper sessions. The plenaries followed the subthemes of the conference: **Caribbean Culture and Psychology; Education and Training; Capacity Building; Mental Health and Development; Psychology in the Public Interest**. Each Plenary was designed to offer two presentations on the conference subtheme, with time for discussion afterwards.

Attendance at the plenaries was strong – the large assembly hall was well-filled, and discussion at each session was also lively across the audience and speakers.

The final session of the conference was a discussion by the organizing committee, followed by a town hall meeting in which participants agreed to, and signed the “Nassau declaration” – a pledge to form a Caribbean organization of psychology.

5. **Post Conference Activities**

The CRCP2011 Organizing Committee met regularly after the conference to initiate a range of follow-up activities, including evaluations, summaries, and the development of publications on the conference and on issues developed from the conference, for local, regional and international venues.

A steering committee, initiated at the CRCP2011 to develop a regional Caribbean organization, began work to develop terms of reference and a plan of action, and is in the process of identifying committees and subcommittees to develop an organizational structure and next regional CRCP (time frame 2012-2014).

6. Report on the CRPC2011 for IJP

The IUPsyS Liaison invited the members of the organizing committee to contribute to a report on CRPC2011 for IJP and developed an outline of the article for discussion. The current plan is to submit an article in two parts – an introductory section by the IUPsyS and IAAP liaisons, and a detailed report covering the goals, activities and follow-up activities authored by the CRCP organizing committee. The intention is to submit this article in the summer, 2012.

7. Finances

The CRCP was successful in registration revenue and in obtaining sufficient sponsorship to be able to support a scholarship grant for students, and to create a small surplus. The surplus funds are being used by the CRCP Steering Committee to support the development of the Caribbean regional psychology organization.

8. Conference Evaluations

Conference evaluation forms were disseminated at the conference and via a survey monkey questionnaire post-conference. Each preconference workshop and plenary session was evaluated separately (as these were offered for CE credit). The plenaries were evaluated by 43-91 persons (per session) and were uniformly rated as good to excellent for content, relevance and quality. The workshops also received high ratings for content and relevance. The general conference evaluations are being analyzed.

9. CRCP2011 Organizing Committee:

Ava Thompson, Chair, College of The Bahamas
Richard Adderley, Cable Bahamas
Rochelle Basden, Ministry of Health, Bahamas
Guillermo Bernal, University of Puerto Rico
Darlene Cargill, College of The Bahamas
G. Rita Dudley-Grant, Virgin Islands Behavioral Services
Claudette Francis, Consultant Psychologist, Trinidad & Tobago
Ishtar O. Govia, University of the West Indies, Mona
Guerda Nicolas, University of Miami
Liaison from IUPsyS: Merry Bullock, American Psychological Association