

For IAAP newsletter
From: Dr. Judy Kuriansky
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Re: Jordan conference



The dream outcome of any conference is not just the impact of the academic excellence, but lasting friendships and newly formed collaborations. By all these standards, the 2nd Middle East and North Africa Regional Conference of Psychology in Amman Jordan, April 27-May 1, 2007, was a huge success. These are some of my experiences in that regard.

Given that participants came from all over the region and the world, the conference offered a unique opportunity for me to interview eminent and interesting colleagues for a video I am producing on International Psychology. A project of the International Division of the American Psychological Association, the DVD will be distributed to students around the world to introduce them to professionals and opportunities in cross-cultural work and to encourage them in careers in this field.

As IAAP president Mike Knowles stood at the top of the Citadel in Amman, he told me about the importance of understanding various cultures. IAAP board member Janel Gauthier described the importance of universal ethics, demonstrated in his impressive draft of the Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists in Meeting Modern Challenges. Local Jordanian psychologist Hamdi Nazih discussed dissertation topics with his students that compared approaches of different countries and Dr. Zuhair Zacharia and Professor Adnan Farah talked about the region's resolution about mental health guidelines just drafted, and announced at the conference.

Another example of follow-up connections from the Jordan meeting for me is that several conference attendees subsequently came to New York. President of the Turkish Psychological Association Gonca Soygut, arrived in the Big Apple soon after the conference, to further pursue her research interests at the New School. Here for several months with time for deepened friendship, she came with me to events like a major celebration of Rumi's 800th birthday. Further, she referred me to a colleague whom I interviewed in Turkey for the APA DVD, demonstrating the value of crossing boundaries, as we stood in a magical setting under the bridge in Istanbul which spans the two continents of Europe and Asia.

Another visitor to New York resulted in significant professional collaboration and friendship. Jordanian psychologist Shafaq Khan and I met during the Capacity Building Workshop led by IAAP's Elizabeth Nair and Hassan Qassim, called "Peace in the Middle East: What can Psychologists do?" During her subsequent time in New York, Khan served as my teaching assistant at Columbia University Teachers College, further developed a project about U.S. Doctors for Africa, and met with IAAP immediate past-President Michael Frese about projects at the United Nations.

The value of connections among conference participants is further evident in the development of a book proposal about the changing roles of Arab women in the Middle East. This project evolved from the bonding of a group of female attendees at the Jordan conference who met over lunch during the conference to plan their collaboration. The women are psychologist Juliet Dinkha and Conerly Casey from American University in Kuwait, Ikram alQader from Care International in Jordan, Nahida Al-Arja, social worker at Caritas Baby Hospital in Bethlehem, and student wellness counselor Mahnaz Mousavi from the Georgetown University School of Foreign Services in Qatar.

Projects such as these keep the glow of the Jordan conference enriching our professional and personal lives.

Look for an extensive article about the MENARCHP2 meeting from IAAP President Mike Knowles in an upcoming issue.

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