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# Cross-Cultural Psychology in the Rainbow Nation of Africa – Nurturing Diversity for Sustainable Development

## Report of the XXI International Congress of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology

Deon Meiring, Leon Jackson, Erhabor Idemudia & Fons van de Vijver

This report was written just a few days after Hurricane Sandy swept through the East Coast of the United States of America, leaving behind a trail of devastation and unimaginable misery. The following day, CNN reported scenes of destruction and havoc, as well as heroic actions of New Yorkers—people trying to pick up their lives and return to work again. On the southern point of Africa, where we were gearing up for the ANC national conference in Mangaung, there was a different storm brewing that would help determine the fate of South Africans for the next five years.



The 21st International Congress of the International Association of Cross-cultural Psychology (IACCP) took place from 17 to 21 July 2012 on the Stellenbosch University campus. Stellenbosch, situated in a magnificent mountain valley 50 km from Cape Town, has charming scenery, some of the world's most famous vineyards and a rich cultural history.

The IACCP Congress was conceived in 2006 when South Africa was chosen to host the International Union of Psychological Science's 2012 International Congress of Psychology (ICP) in Cape Town. At that time, we were attending the IACCP Congress in Xi'an, China. Knowing that the ICP would come to South Africa, we proposed at the 2008 Bremen Congress EC meeting to host the IACCP 2012 Congress. Our proposal was accepted.

The planning and execution of the IACCP 2012 Congress in Stellenbosch was a labour-intensive four-year project. Five South African universities (Stellenbosch University, North-West University, University of Limpopo, University of Pretoria and University of the Western Cape) were involved, along with Paragon Conventions, an events company. The organisers put together a local organising committee (LOC) in August 2008, applied for funding from the South African National Research Foundation (NRF) and commenced with the journey to host the first-ever IACCP Congress on African soil, adopting the theme *Cross-Cultural Psychology in the Rainbow Nation of Africa – Nurturing Diversity for Sustainable Development*.

## Attendance

Despite the economic recession, the Congress was well-attended with 517 delegates from 52 countries around the world (see Table 1). For obvious reasons, South Africa topped the delegate list, followed by the USA (47)—amazing considering the distance that Americans had to travel to South Africa. Popular rivalry between the Osnabrück group from Germany and the Tilburg group from the Netherlands filled the third and fourth “most well attended” countries.

## Pre-Conference Activities

### *PhD Winter School*

The four-day PhD Winter School kicked off on 13 July 2012 at the Stellenbosch University. It was the second IACCP school, following the PhD Summer School that took place at regional conference in Istanbul in 2011. The Winter School was sponsored by the IACCP with the Jacobs Foundation sponsoring the culture and development stream. The programme was designed to facilitate cross-cultural contact and understanding among future academic leaders and broaden their academic vision in the field of cross-cultural psychology.

**Table 1.** Attendance from 52 countries

1.	South Africa	110	14.	Hong Kong	9	27.	Taiwan	3	40.	Namibia	2
2.	USA	47	15.	Poland	9	28.	Brazil	3	41.	Portugal	2
3.	Germany	39	16.	Norway	8	29.	Bulgaria	3	42.	Romania	2
4.	Netherlands	33	17.	Switzerland	8	30.	Denmark	3	43.	Zambia	1
5.	U Kingdom	27	18.	Turkey	8	31.	Finland	3	44.	Austria	1
6.	Australia	20	19.	China	8	32.	Hungary	3	45.	Egypt	1
7.	Canada	17	20.	India	8	33.	Italy	3	46.	Lebanon	1
8.	Israel	16	21.	Singapore	5	34.	Kazakhstan	3	47.	Oman	1
9.	Indonesia	12	22.	Czech Republic	4	35.	Mexico	3	48.	Slovakia	1
10.	Russia	12	23.	Ghana	4	36.	Spain	3	49.	Slovenia	1
11.	Belgium	10	24.	Japan	4	37.	Botswana	2	50.	Sweden	1
12.	France	10	25.	Philippines	4	38.	Iran	2	51.	Zimbabwe	1
13.	Nigeria	10	26.	Saudi Arabia	4	39.	Malaysia	2	52.	Luxembourg	1

There was much excitement as 38 students met at the Metanoia Dormitory for a team-building session, followed by a memorable dinner at the Stellenbosch Hotel in the evening—good traditional Western Cape food, the best red wine in South Africa and good company till past midnight! Over the next few days, three cross-cultural research streams (Cultural, well-being & societal development, Culture & Development and Acculturation & Intercultural Relations) were presented by Ronald Ficher (organizer of the Winter School), Hiltrud Otto, David Sam and Colleen Ward. The PhD Winter School was a huge success and was a good investment in our future generation of cross-cultural psychologists.

## Workshops

On 17 July, workshops were well-attended by both the delegates and PhD Summer School students, who attended for free. The workshops were presented by some well-known and up-and-coming researchers in the field of cross-cultural psychology: Fons van de Vijver (An Introduction into Cross-Cultural Psychology), David Matsumoto (Emotion Assessment in Diverse Context—Culture, Emotion, and Expression), Amina Abubakar (Development and Adaptation of Psychological Tests and Scales for Use in Health and Education Related Fields in Resource-Constrained Settings), and Barbara Byrne (Beginner's Guide to Structural Equation Modelling: Basic Concepts and Applications). These workshops were inspirational, and delegates complimented both the content and the quality of the presenters, some saying that it had been a real learning experience.



**Winter School** Students Eva Sekwena and Leila Wardani work together on a Winter School project.

## Opening

The opening of the IACCP 2012 Congress took place during the late afternoon on 17 July in the Endler Hall of the conservatorium of Stellenbosch University. It was a perfect winter day in Stellenbosch with a maximum temperature of 20<sup>c</sup> degrees and no rain in sight. Situated in the Cape of Storms region, Stellenbosch is famous for being called the city of all seasons. To our relief, we only had one rain shower on the Thursday evening for the entire Congress—what a blessing.

The opening programme kicked off with a spectacular big bang: delegates arrived and were welcomed with an Amarula drink (African marula liqueur) and a typical African marimba band in the foyer of the Endler. The entire opening programme was designed and conducted by a master's student from the Music and Drama Department of Stellenbosch University. It included typical South African performing artists, traditional dance, praise poetry and singing, the Stellenbosch University Jazz Band, and single piano and a vocal artist. The highlight of the evening was the Young Caballeros choir that captivated the audience.

During the opening ceremony, Deon Meiring, one of the local conference organisers, announced the establishment of the Fons van de Vijver Cross-Cultural Scholarship in South Africa. Fons van de Vijver received the scholarship trophy during the opening session for his continuous and dedicated cross-cultural work over the years in South Africa.

## Scientific Programme

Our Congress theme was *Cross-Cultural Psychology in the Rainbow Nation of Africa—Nurturing Diversity for Sustain-*



**Amina Abubakar** teaches her workshop, *Development and adaptation of psychological tests and scales for use in health and education related fields in resource-constrained settings.*



*able Development.* We chose this theme, after much deliberation among the LOC members, in order to emphasize that it is imperative that we nurture our young democracy in South Africa, and that if we don't, we will not have sustainable development in the future. The Congress aimed to produce scientific collaboration and exchange of ideas among psychologists around the world. Cross-cultural psychology is not a well-established branch of science in South Africa despite the country being a multicultural society with huge diversity. The Congress also wanted to attract more attention to cross-cultural research in South Africa and stimulate psychological theories in all branches of psychology and related disciplines.

Lastly, the IACCP Congress could be an important catalyst to unlocking awareness of and sensitivity for cross-cultural differences and similarities in our country and other African states in the region.

A packed scientific programme of more than 389 presentations was squeezed into ten to fourteen parallel sessions per day. Ten invited keynotes were given by distinguished scholars: Charles Newton, Colleen Ward, Colin Tredoux, Johnny Fontaine, Sheena Iyenga, Klaus Boehnke, Sig Hung Ng, Michael Ungar and Yoshihisa Kashima. Shaun Johnston from the Mandela Rhodes Foundation gave a keynote talk on "Finding the future Mandelas," explaining the kind of work that is being done to keep the Mandela legacy alive in areas that were of special interest or concern to the past president during his active political career.

Delegates had the privilege of celebrating Nelson Mandela's 94th birthday on 18 July, International Nelson Mandela Day, with the South African nation. Blowing out the candles on 94 cupcakes and singing "Happy birthday" to Madiba was one of the highlights of the day.

A large number of symposia—42 in total of 90 minutes each—were presented. Eleven special invited symposium speakers were asked to present some of their best work to their colleagues: Amina Abubakar, Anna Doring, Deborah Best, Hiltrud Otto, Ian Roth-



**Opening Ceremony** The Young Caballeros perform an exciting program.



**Welcoming** At the cocktail party.

mann, Joopie van Rooyen, Lind Theron, Nicola Taylor, Silvia Xiaohua Chen, Wiliam Gabrenya and Ype Poortinga. The presidential speech was delivered on Thursday, 19 July 2012 by Kwok Leung on “The role of indigenous research in constructing universal theories.” The Walt J. Lonner Distinguished Lecture Series address by Scott Atran on “Religious and sacred imperatives in human conflict” followed. Shalom Schwartz delivered a state-of-the-art lecture on Thursday afternoon, titled “Does religion affect people’s basic values? Comparing Roman Catholics, Protestants, Eastern Orthodox, Muslims, Jews and non-religious across 33 countries.”

For the first time in IACCP history, the scientific programme also included a rapid papers session. Such a session consists of five to ten presenters using slides and poster boards. Each rapid paper presenter prepares a few slides, up to three minutes in total duration, describing the rationale, aim, method and findings of his/her study. Presentations were followed by a conventional poster session. The format seemed to work well, although the programme was challenged by a large number of no-shows.

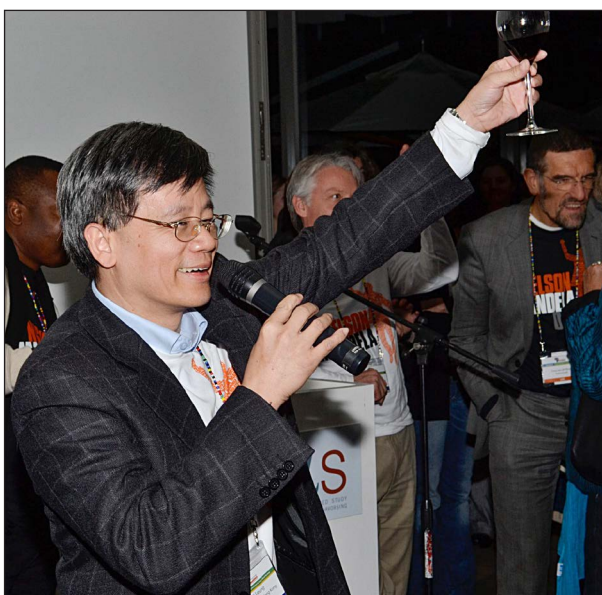
The closing session of the Congress was held on Saturday afternoon, 21 July. In comparison with other IACCP congresses, it was well attended with more than 250 delegates present. Deon Meiring delivered a final word by giving an overview of the conference—starting with Xi’an, China, up to the end of journey and the IACCP 2012 proceedings. During the short ceremony, the IACCP, student congress helpers, and Paragon Conventions were thanked for their support.

### Social Programme

The social programme lived up to the usual high expectations of IACCP delegates when they were treated to a cheese and wine evening at the Wallenberg Centre, Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS), on 18 July 2012. A number of the prestigious Stellenbosch wine farms served some of the best wines in the region that evening. Kwok Leung, president of the IACCP, hosted a party at the STIAS manor house welcoming new IACCP members with a glass of JC le



**Mandela cupcakes** Enjoying cupcakes at a party celebrating International Nelson Mandela Day. From left: Leila Wardani, Lidia Lae, Miki Tanaka.



**Welcoming newcomers** President Kwok Leung welcomes new IACCP members at the wine tasting party.



Roux champagne. New friendships were established and old relationships reinforced.

As always, the Congress dinner, held on 20 July 2012, was a highlight. Busses transported delegates to the prestigious Spier wine estate on the outskirts of Stellenbosch. In a magical setting amidst the ancient oaks and colonial splendor of the historical Spier Manor House, Moyo, a true African restaurant, offered a unique dining experience. Delegates were treated to an Umdliva buffet dinner consisting of a selection of cuisine flavours from the continent of Africa, prepared at an outdoor kitchen using only the finest ingredients. A further highlight of the evening was the traditional IACCP disco that lasted long into the African night.



**Dinner dance** Dance party at the Congress banquet (a crucial IACCP tradition).

### Special Projects Performed in Conjunction with the Congress

Two community-based projects were initiated in local Stellenbosch townships in 2011 and launched during the Congress as one part of the legacy of the IACCP 2012 Congress: Project Flower and Project Child.

#### *Project Flower*

IACCP 2012 joined with the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) to implement the Outreach Greening or School Indigenous Greening Programme at the Sustainability Institute. This project was initiated by Prof. Michael Bond, who visited the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden and showed a keen interest in taking pictures of flowers. When asked about the link between flower diversity and a congress on culture, Prof Bond replied, "What comes to mind is the use of the metaphor of the diverse flower garden in the Baha'i writings to symbolise the beauty of unity across cultural groups." The aim of the project was to introduce botanical gardens to communities by providing the resources and specialised



**Hunting and gathering** Judith Gibbons, Henrik Dobewall and Kahaema Byer forage at the banquet buffet line.

knowledge to train and empower the schools and communities to plan, plant and maintain indigenous, water-wise gardens. During the Congress attendees visited the garden at the Sustainability Institute.

### Project Child

Project Child was initiated by Prof. Heidi Keller and her PhD student, Hiltrud Otto. It focused on exploring social experiences of infants in a multi-cultural setting of Kayamandi township in Stellenbosch and Khayelitsha in Cape Town. The project was a collaboration among IACCP 2012, the Department of Psychology at Stellenbosch University and Prof Keller's research team. The data gathered over the course of the project contributed to the development of a culturally-appropriate suite of early intervention programmes that will serve the interests of infants and children living in conditions of social adversity in Stellenbosch. Findings of this project were presented by a master's student of Stellenbosch University at an invited symposium titled "The cultural shaping of social experiences of infants: A collaborative enterprise—early social experiences of infants growing up in Stellenbosch and Khayelitsha."



**Why project flower?**  
 SANBI's country wide network of nine botanical gardens is a public window on the nation's rich indigenous plant life. For many South Africans, however, the battle against poverty and historical disadvantage is so great that they may never find the opportunity to visit these inspirational venues.

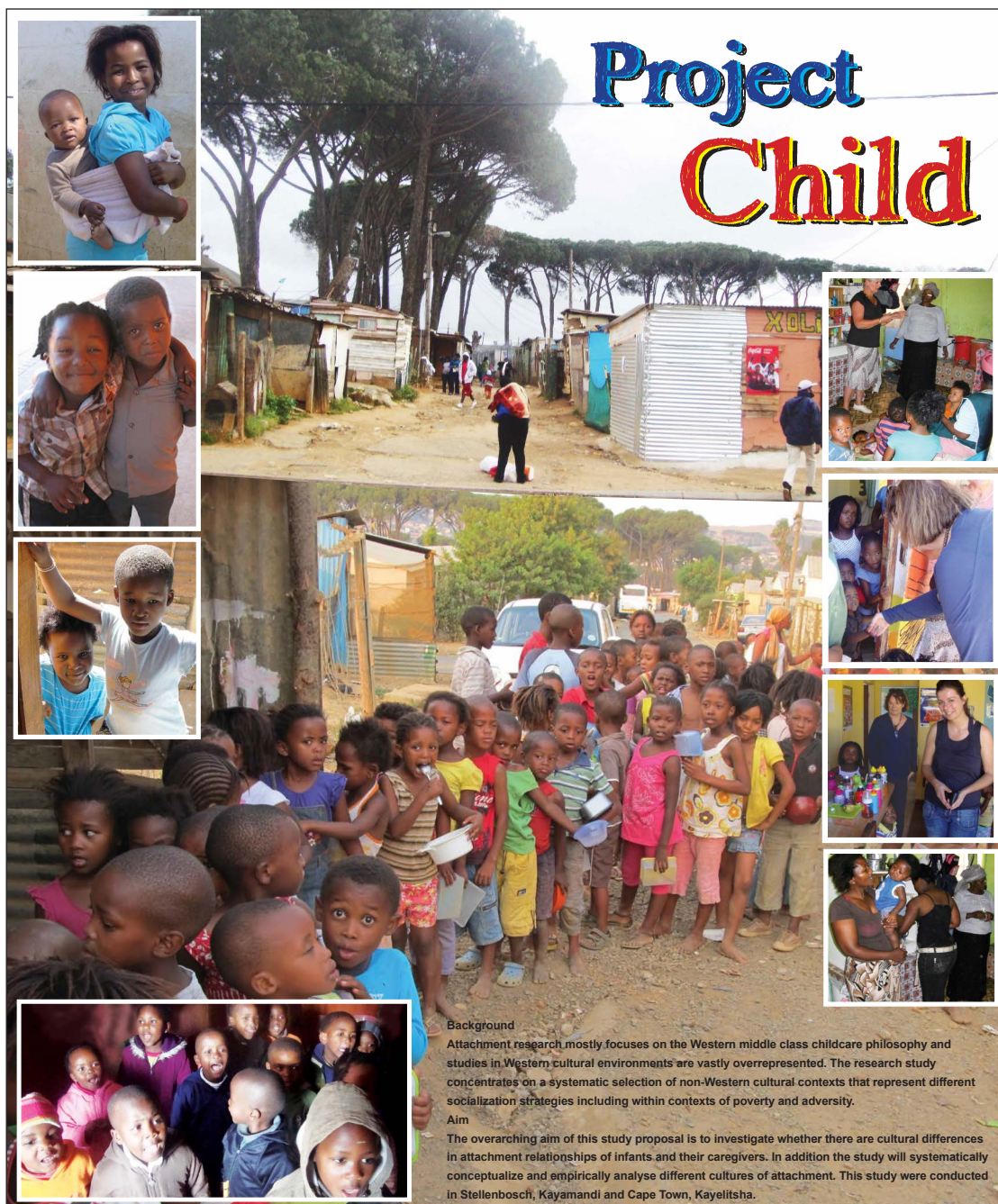
Project Flower is a programme that makes indigenous gardens accessible for enjoyment and education, and develops horticultural skills and environmental knowledge for community enterprise.

The program places emphasis on training and capacity building. Schools are encouraged to involve all stakeholders in the process; unemployed parents/community members in the greening process to empower them to start vegetable gardens at schools which they take full ownership of and create entrepreneurial opportunities for themselves or the school.

**Objectives**

- Establish indigenous water-wise school and community gardens.
- Encourage ecological awareness and environmental responsibility.
- Develop gardening skills to enable economic empowerment and local environmental action.
- Promote the educational value of indigenous plants and gardens.
- Develop partnerships between communities and organisations





# Project Child

**Background**  
Attachment research mostly focuses on the Western middle class childcare philosophy and studies in Western cultural environments are vastly overrepresented. The research study concentrates on a systematic selection of non-Western cultural contexts that represent different socialization strategies including within contexts of poverty and adversity.

**Aim**  
The overarching aim of this study proposal is to investigate whether there are cultural differences in attachment relationships of infants and their caregivers. In addition the study will systematically conceptualize and empirically analyse different cultures of attachment. This study were conducted in Stellenbosch, Kayamandi and Cape Town, Kayelitsha.

## Special Features of the IACCP Congress

For the first time, a daily newsletter was included in the Congress. The newsletter was written by a group of science and health journalists from across Africa who attend the meeting as part of an international programme to improve their reporting and writing skills. These intern journalists attended sessions at the Congress, conducted interviews with participants, and wrote news stories. The stories were published in three newsletters that were printed overnight and handed out at the Congress to delegates. The IACCP 2012 also entered into a special contract with the American Psycho-

logical Association's (APA) PsycEXTRA®, a unique database that combines bibliographic records of congress information in the behavioural and social sciences. All the IACCP 2012 Congress information was uploaded on PsycEXTRA database. Participation in the database will enhance visibility and broaden the dissemination of the IACCP 2012 Congress information.

Lastly, the IACCP 2012 Congress

recruited over 100 new IACCP members for the Association. From a financial perspective, the IACCP Congress was a success with surplus revenue being paid into the Fons van de Vijver Cross-Cultural Scholarship for disadvantaged students to expand cross-cultural studies in South Africa.



**Congress staff** Student helpers from the University of Pretoria and Stellenbosch University. From left: Lelani Borman, Suzaane Gericke, Samantha Adams, Louise Moolman.