The Haitian Mental Health Network

Proceedings of the 2nd Annual Conference on Haitian Mental Health & Art Exhibition

Weathering the Storm like Bamboo: Rethinking the Concept of “Resilience” in the Haitian Community

Friday & Saturday, May 3-4, 2013

Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology
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CONFERENCE ON HAITIAN MENTAL HEALTH

Weathering the Storm like Bamboo:  
Rethinking the Concept of “Resilience” in the Haitian Community

May 3-4, 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Conference Sponsors ........................................................................................................................................... 2
Background & Conference Objectives .................................................................................................................. 4
Overview of MSPP and the HMH Network .......................................................................................................... 5
Conference Highlights .......................................................................................................................................... 6
Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................................................. 7
Keynote & Invited Addresses ............................................................................................................................ 8
Panel Presentations & Concurrent Sessions ....................................................................................................... 11
Closing Ceremony: “A Celebration of Haitian Art and Culture” ................................................................. 18
Appendix: Biographies of Presenters.................................................................................................................... 22

“The winds may fell the massive oak, but bamboo, bent even to the ground, will spring upright after the passage of the storm.”  
— Japanese Proverb
BACKGROUND

The Conference on Haitian Mental Health, which is organized by the Haitian Mental Health (HMH) Network and the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology (MSPP), was borne out of a shared mission to raise awareness about mental illness and its impact on Haitian immigrants. The theme of the 2nd Annual Conference was on resilience—a term that is defined as “patterns of positive adaptation in the context of significant risk or adversity” (Masten & Powell, 2003). As a nation, Haitians have often been compared to the bamboo tree, which has the distinct characteristic of weathering strong storms and winds seemingly unscathed.

Since the disaster of January 12, 2010, the term “resilience” has frequently been associated with Haitians. Indeed, in the aftermath of the earthquake, there were countless media images of Haitians persevering and going about their daily lives and activities appearing unphased by the massive devastation and despair that surrounded them. Those reactions and behaviors were frequently cited to depict Haitians as a resilient nation; a people that seemed to be unaffected by the magnitude of the tragedy and able to “bounce back”—like the proverbial bamboo tree. Yet, many questions remain as to the applicability of the westernized construct of resilience to the Haitian experience. As robust as the research on resilience has been, further empirical investigations are needed to fully understand the contextual and cultural aspects of resilience vis-à-vis the Haitian community. For instance, how is resilience defined, conceptualized and measured among Haitians? What attributes of resilience are relevant to Haitians living in the homeland and the Diaspora? Is there a different, and perhaps more culturally-appropriate, construct that can better capture the complexities of the lives of Haitians, and their coping strengths and reactions to traumatic experiences both as individuals and as a cultural group?

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

One of the main goals of the Annual Conference on Haitian Mental Health is to provide an intellectually stimulating forum where practitioners, researchers, policymakers, educators, community leaders and others can come together to engage in a meaningful discourse on ways to promote the mental health and overall well-being of the Haitian community. The objectives of the 2013 Conference were to (1) facilitate a discussion on theoretical, research and practice-based inquiries on resilience among Haitians; (2) share knowledge that would lead to a better understanding and conceptualization of resilience and its relevance to the Haitian context; and (3) discuss clinical interventions that can respond to the complex mental health needs of Haitians. Presenters from Haiti, the United States, and Canada addressed a number of key topics, including how “resilience” is conceptualized in the Haitian community, the strengths and resources that Haitians typically use to cope with adversity, and culturally-oriented strategies and clinical interventions that can help Haitians to effectively manage traumatic or stressful life events. In addition, during the conference, several local, national, and Haiti-based organizations discussed programs that are responding to the mental health needs of Haitian individuals and families as well as assisting them in coping with life’s numerous challenges.
The Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology (MSPP) educates students for careers that meet the growing demand for access to quality, culturally competent psychological services for individuals, groups, communities and organizations both locally and around the globe. MSPP offers 15 degree programs, with a focus on serving vulnerable populations, including children of adversity, Latinos and veterans, as well as organizations and leaders on the forefront of creating long-lasting social change. MSPP's commitment to meeting the needs of underserved populations, providing psychological services, and training culturally sensitive clinicians can be seen in its Dr. Cynthia Lucero Latino Mental Health Training Program, Masters in Global Mental Health Program, doctoral clinical concentration in Children and Families of Adversity and Resilience, and community partnerships with the Haitian Mental Health Network, the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and over 350 field placement sites. The Freedman Center for Child and Family Development, MSPP Interface Referral Service, and the Brenner Center for Psychological Testing also support the institution’s training and service mission. These programs, partnerships, field placement sites and areas of training focus on meaningful classroom discussion on diversity, individual differences and our common humanity as it relates to mental health. By promoting open dialogue about these crucial issues, MSPP strives to attract a student body that reflects and/or engages with the communities we serve. The core of MSPP's approach is to provide students with hands-on experience and the clinical skills they need to be effective, pragmatic and compassionate professionals providing high quality services to their clients and solving complex problems in an increasingly diverse world.

The Haitian Mental Health Network
www.HMHnetwork.org

The Haitian Mental Health (HMH) Network is a Boston-based organization comprised of a group of mental health providers, including psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists, mental health counselors, psychiatric nurses, and pastoral counselors. Members of the HMH Network work collaboratively with community-based agencies as well as local, national and international institutions to improve access for Haitians to mental health services that are comprehensive, integrated, culturally sensitive, and developmentally appropriate. The HMH Network’s vision is to reduce stigmas and raise awareness about mental illness; and promote access to quality, culturally-oriented, and evidence-informed mental health services for members of the Haitian community locally, nationally and internationally.
CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

The 2nd Annual Conference on Haitian Mental Health began with Welcoming Remarks delivered by Dr. Gemima St. Louis, President of the Haitian Mental Health (HMH) Network; Dr. Nicolas Covino, President of the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology (MSPP); Dr. Jill Bloom, Core Faculty at MSPP; Dr. Castagna Lacet, Vice-President of the HMH Network; and Dr. Fran Mervyn, Dean of Students at MSPP. Dignitaries from the City of Boston Mayor’s Office, Departments of Mental Health and Public Health, and the Consulate General of Haiti also offered welcoming remarks during the two-day event. City and state representatives included Ms. Weslyne Nicolas, Former State Representative Marie St. Fleur, Dr. Ed Wang, and Mr. Charlot Lucien who presented the HMH Network with an award from the Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health for the Network’s on-going advocacy efforts and psychosocial services provided to survivors of the January 12, 2010 earthquake.

The Conference included keynote addresses that focused on the topic of “resilience” and its relevance to the Haitian context. Dr. Suze Prudent delivered a thought-provoking Opening Address and offered an alternate framework for conceptualizing the notion of resilience as it applies to the Haitian context. Dr. Prudent argued that the behaviors exhibited by Haitians in coping with life’s adversities need to be viewed as “habits of survival”. She stated, “Adversity and suffering have been an on-going part of life for major segments of the population for a long time. Any lens for studying Haitian resilience must take into account its people’s long history of suffering.” Professors Marjory Clermont Mathieu and Ronald Jean Jacques, Faculty Members in the Department of Psychology at the State University of Haiti, presented the findings from a research project that they conducted on Resilience and Creative Process in Child and Adolescent Haitian Victims of Natural Disasters. Their presentation highlighted the different layers of the environment that serve as “guardians” of potential resilience—namely, factors that shore up and provide the necessary supports that children and adolescents use to cope with life’s adversities. In her powerful and memorable Closing Remarks entitled, Does One Size Fit All? The Applicability of the Term “Resilience” to Haitians, Dr. Guerda Nicolas, Chairperson of the Educational and Psychological Studies Department at the University of Miami, deconstructed the concept of “resilience” and argued that it is erroneous to apply it to a specific ethnic group such as Haitians. She remarked that, if being resilient is to overcome poverty, misfortune and negative life experiences, it is inconceivable to apply this term to the Haitian context, given the current circumstances under which many Haitians continue to live.

Throughout the two-day event, there were several panel presentations, group workshops, and concurrent sessions that focused on a range of topics, including faith and spirituality, healing and recovery, mindfulness, and social expectations of resilience as well as programs that are addressing the psychosocial needs of women and youths in Haiti.

Other highlights from the Conference include an Art Exhibition, “The Colors of Resilience,” organized by the Haitian Artists Assembly of Massachusetts. There was also a book signing event with Professors Clermont-Mathieu and Jean Jacques who recently published “La Santé Mentale en Haiti après le 12 Janvier 2010: Traumatismes, Approches et Traitements”.

In recognition of Haitian Heritage Month, the Conference concluded with a magnificent celebration of Haitian art and culture, with performances by the youth group OAMEC (Open Access to Music Education for Children), and renowned artists Pierre Gardy Fontaine, Mirlande Butler, and Gifrants. To obtain copies of the presentations and keynote addresses delivered at the 2nd Annual Conference on Haitian Mental Health, please visit www.HMHnetwork.org or email HMHnetwork@gmail.com.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 2nd Annual Conference on Haitian Mental Health was organized by the Haitian Mental Health (HMH) Network, in collaboration with the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology (MSPP). We would like to thank the Keynote and Invited Speakers: Dr. Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, Professor Marjory Clermont-Mathieu, Professor Ronald Jean Jacques, Dr. Guerda Nicolas, and Dr. Jean B. Tropnas.

We would like to acknowledge the following faculty and staff members at MSPP: Dr. Nicholas Covino, President; Dr. Frances V. Mervyn, Dean of Students; Dr. Jill Bloom, Core Faculty; Dr. Robert Kinscherff, Director of the Department of Community Engagement; and Gretchen Nash, Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs/Community Service.

We are also grateful to Dr. Martha Vibbert, Executive Director of the SPARK Center; Ms. Marie St. Fleur, Chief of Advocacy and Strategic Investments in the City of Boston Mayor’s Office; Mr. Charlot Lucien, Co-Founder of the Haitian Artists Assembly of Massachusetts; and Ms. Weslyne Nicolas of the Office of the Consulate General of Haiti in Boston.

Additionally, we would like to thank the students and colleagues who volunteered throughout the conference, including Marline Amedee, Dominique Bastien, Dominique Dupont-Dubois, Smith Guillaume, Fabiola Jean-Felix, Elizabeth Louis, Fallon Mercedat, Jessica Pierre, and Sherly Winkler. Our deepest gratitude goes to our generous sponsors and the numerous local and national organizations that continue to support the work of the Haitian Mental Health Network.

Conference Planning Committee

The members of the conference planning committee were as follows:

**Haitian Mental Health Network**
- Gemima St. Louis, Ph.D., President
- Castagna Lacet, Ph.D., MSW, Vice-President
- Myrtise Kretsedemas, LCSW, MPH, Treasurer
- Jessica Pierre, MEd, Secretary
- Vanessa Prosper, Ph.D., Chair, Public Relations & Media Committee
- Suze Prudent, Ph.D., Chair, Clinical Services Committee
- Joel Piton, MD, M.Ed., Chair, Education & Training Committee

**Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology**
- Jill Bloom, Ph.D., Core Faculty
- Gretchen Nash, Director, Office of Multicultural Affairs/Community Service
- Dean R. Abby, Director, Department of Continuing and Community Education
Keynote & Invited Addresses

Children and Adolescent Resilience after the Earthquake in Haiti
Marjory Clermont-Mathieu, Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist & Professor, Faculty of Human Sciences, State University of Haiti; & Ronald Jean Jacques, DESS, DEA, President, Haitian Association of Psychology

According to Anaut (2003), resilience is best understood as the art of adapting to adverse situations (biological and socio-psychological) and the ability to develop capacity in connection with internal (intrapsychic) and external (social) resources. More precisely, we envision resilience as “the ability of a person or group to thrive, to continue to plan for the future in spite of destabilizing events, difficult living conditions, and sometimes severe trauma” (Manciaux, Vanistendael, and Cyrulnik, 2001). In theoretical articulations of resilience, several approaches are recommended as a basis for building resilience. The ecological model of resilience based on the work of Bronfenbrenner (1996) advocates for the interactions between individuals and environment in building resilience (Toussignant, 1998). The psychodynamic approach posits that it is the psychological trauma and the threat of psychic disorganization that are at the origin of the entry into resilience. The assumption at the crossroads of several current states of development is that resilience is formed on the basis of a tripod consisting of three areas: the feeling of having a secure base, internal self-esteem, and a sense of self-efficacy. The process of building resilience is a result of a multifactorial complex mesh between individual abilities and skills (intrapsychic, cognitive, and behavioral) and resources from the social environment and community. Basically, resilience can be born, grow and develop in “relation to others.”

During this panel, Drs. Clermont-Mathieu and Jean Jacques presented the findings from a joint research project (between ANR-UEH-Ulyon-Editec-UParis 13 and the State University of Haiti) entitled, “Resilience and Creative Process in Child and Adolescent Haitian Victims of Natural Disasters” in which resilience is analyzed both as a trait and as a process. Their presentation highlighted the different layers of the environment that serve as “guardians” of potential resilience; namely, factors that shore up and provide the necessary supports that children and adolescents use to cope with life’s adversities. The panelists discussed the research study that they conducted, and an assessment tool that was developed and used on a sample of 1,475 children and adolescents aged 6 to 20 years who lived in camps following the January 12, 2010 earthquake in Haiti. Qualitative analyses of in-depth individual interviews and focus group data were presented to provide explanatory factors of the mechanisms and dynamics created by study participants to cope and move forward. Dr. Clermont-Mathieu described the different phases of the development of the tool and its usefulness as a support element for understanding the process of resilience among displaced youths. Dr. Jean Jacques then presented the main results of the study. The panelists’ approach to understanding resilience in the Haitian context is that of a process, which gives it a dynamic and evolving characteristic, registered in the temporality and thus not fixed. In this study, it is assumed that resilience may develop at different stages of the life of an individual and is thus subject to fluctuations. As such the presenters focused on children and adolescents’ ability to transform potentially traumatic events and their mental resources to continue to grow in a balanced way.
Disaster Response, Recovery, and Resilience in Haitians: Contributing Factors
Jean B. Tropnas, MD, Clinical Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, State University of New York, Downstate Medical Center

Traumatic disasters tend to bring overwhelming human, material, and environmental losses as well as serious devastation of the very resources that could have helped the stricken individuals and communities to cope, leaving them in desperate need of outside help. It has been suggested by researchers and practitioners in the field of trauma and disaster recovery that major steps to generate effective and sustainable interventions that would help in post-disaster extreme stress can be achieved by promoting 1) a sense of safety, 2) calming, 3) a sense of self and community efficacy, 4) connectedness, and 5) hope (Stevan E. Hobfoll, et al., 2007). Dr. Tropnas argued that Haitians appear to have incorporated these five healing principles into their daily lives, thanks to the following three cultural factors: a) throughout their history, they have been repeatedly exposed to multiple natural and man-made disasters that almost leave them with an innate level of self-reliance and problem-solving capacity; b) Haitians’ religious beliefs have always been for them a source of strength, hope and faith, and have given them a sense of community; and c) seeking relatives, friends, and neighbors to create a social support system has allowed Haitians to experience a sense of belonging, safety, an empathic connection to their community, and an increased ability to adapt. As a result of the aforementioned factors, Haitians have developed a certain level of resilience. Resilience encompasses different aspects of stress resistance. It can be modified and improved with therapeutic interventions, leading to better functioning and adaptation to life circumstances.

Does One Size Fit All? The Applicability of the Term “Resilience” to Haitians
Guerda Nicolas, Ph.D., Chair, Department of Educational & Psychological Studies, School of Education, University of Miami

According to the dictionary, the term resiliency is defined as “the capability of a strained body to recover its size and shape after deformation caused especially by compressive stress” or “an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change”. In fact, within the field of mental health, the latter definition is most widely used when referring to individuals who have overcome some significant negative change or life event. Dr. Nicolas remarked that these definitions make several assumptions. First, they imply that the misfortune or change is a new experience for the individual. Such an assumption leads to the question of what must it mean for Black individuals who, due to experiences with slavery and colonization, have been enduring misfortunes for a lifetime? By definition, one could argue that all Black people are resilient and thus the idea of applying the term to certain ethnic groups (i.e., Haitians) and not to others is misguided. Second, these definitions imply that the
individual has recovered from the misfortune or change. Although it is unclear what the word “recover” means or how it is manifested among different groups, the underlying assumption is that recovery has indeed taken place. Accepting the second assumption negates the first because, to the extent that Black people have not adjusted or recovered from their misfortunes or negative experiences with slavery and colonization, the label resiliency cannot be applicable to them. Lastly, the definitions also use the word “ability,” which often means “natural aptitude” or “acquired proficiency”—all of which supposes that the individual must have access to some skills that can be used subsequent to the “misfortune” or “change”. Although the term resilience, resilient, or resiliency, is commonly used within the field of mental health, an opportunity to unpack its origin, its meaning, and its applicability across different cultural groups is rare. Through the forum provided by the Haitian Mental Health Network’s 2nd Annual Conference, there is an opportunity to begin such an exploration for at least one ethnic group—namely, Haitians. This presentation focused on the use of the term and its application to Haitians in the U.S. and in Haiti. The link between resiliency, coping, and thriving was also explored.

**Resilience is More than Skin-Deep, Cultural Foundations are Lasting: “Enstitisyon Se Fè, Vodou Se Banbou” (The Role of Vodou in Understanding Haitian Resilience)**

Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of Africology, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

In this Invited Address, Dr. Bellegarde-Smith addressed the role of Vodou, from an historical perspective, in understanding the notion of “Haitian resilience”. He discussed how Haitian culture provides us with clues for the well-being of Haitian society while informing us of the secret for its survival and stamina rooted in an ancestral vision. He drew from his personal experiences as an oungan asogwe (the highest ranking in the priesthood in Haiti) as well as four decades of scholarly work to address such questions as: (1) What does Haitian history teach that remains vital for our future? (2) How do we remain faithful to our nature as transmitted to us by our God, the *Lwa*, and our Ancestors? (3) What is the science, what are the divine principles, and what have the moral values taught us in Haiti’s national religious ethos, in Vodou? (4) How does one reconcile the requirements of a modern world with an ancestral culture? Dr. Bellegarde-Smith noted that Vodou informs us that an illness has both physical and spiritual anchors and consequences, and social ramifications, yet that there is no malady without its remedy. In the realm of the mind, there are mental predispositions and “issues” that derive from societal conditions over which we, as individuals, would seem to have little control. Societal pathologies evolve out of constructs elaborated over centuries, yet affect each one of us today.
Panel Presentations & Concurrent Sessions

“Bon Dye Bon” (God is Good): How Faith in the Haitian People Promotes Resiliency
Marie Andrée Pierre-Victor, LICSW, Clinical Manager, Behavioral Health Department, Codman Square Health Center; & Olivia M. Apollon, LICSW, Behavioral Health Clinician, Codman Square Health Center

On January 12, 2010 life in Haiti came to a standstill. Haiti and the rest of the world witnessed in horror the devastation of Port-au-Prince and its surrounding towns. But the world also witnessed strength and the resiliency of a people nearly brought to their knees. The Haitian people, however, have suffered for centuries from political upheavals, mudslides, hurricanes, poverty, and injustice and, each and every time, Haitians continue to profess their beliefs in God. Through it all faith has been a common source of strength, a driven force, a reason to get up and see themselves as actors and participants and not only as victims. Haitians profess in hard times: “Nou bite, men nou pa tonbe; Bon Dye pa lage nou.” (We stumbled but we did not fall; God did not abandon us). In this workshop, Ms. Pierre-Victor and Ms. Apollon explored the role of faith and God in giving Haitian people the courage to struggle for a better life, in spite of natural disasters, poor living conditions, discrimination, injustice, and challenges in adjusting to life as immigrants in the U.S.

The Concept of “Woman Power” and the Social Expectation of Resilience in Haitian Women
Castagna Lacet, Ph.D., MSW, Assistant Professor, Master of Social Work Program, Wheelock College

Within Haitian society, women are considered the pillar of the family or even the pillar of the community (N’Zengou-Tayo, 1998). They are known for the sacrifices made for their families and their community. During this presentation, Dr. Lacet discussed the research findings of a study conducted on resilience among Haitian women earthquake survivors who had relocated to Boston, Massachusetts. The concept of woman power was a theme identified as part of the Haitian culture. Woman power is operationalized as the cultural value of Haitian women as strong devotees of the family and community. Woman power connotes the notion of the “superwoman” or “fighter”—roles that many women in the community are often called upon to play. The cultural factor of woman power appeared to have helped study participants adapt to the relocation experience. Woman power manifests as a resilient characteristic or coping mechanism for these women. The cultural expectation of the Haitian woman is to be flexible to change, and to leverage every available resource in order to persevere. This ability to leverage protective factors is what Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker (2000) and others have defined as resilience.
Life Essentials: A Cultural Context for Understanding Resilience, Healing, and Recovery
Ed K.S. Wang, PsyD, Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs, Massachusetts Department of Mental Health

Dr. Ed Wang facilitated a structured group discussion, which examined the concept of resilience and recovery in the context of culture through ethnographic narratives, group sharing and discussions. This workshop explored how life essentials like altruism, optimism, spirituality and support network can fortify hope and the journey to recovery for those who have experienced trauma and adversity. Dr. Wang drew upon his clinical experience with culturally-diverse populations and background in global mental health to facilitate a group discussion that was intended to generate new ideas, which might be applicable to the Haitian context. In this workshop, participants (1) actively engaged in a structured discussion on the concept of resilience and recovery in the cultural context, (2) became familiar with life essentials for healing and recovery, and (3) discussed assessment and treatment strategies that are culturally syntonic. This workshop also provided an intervention framework for providers to work effectively as agents of healing in cross-cultural settings.

Mindfulness and Resilience: Examination of a Trauma Informed Integrative Mindfulness Program as Implemented in Haiti
Danielle Rousseau, PhD, LMHC, Assistant Professor, Applied Social Sciences, Boston University; Elizabeth Jackson, MPH, Program Manager, Harvard School of Public Health; & Sue Jones, Founder/Program Director, yogaHOPE

Dr. Rousseau and Ms. Jackson presented a case study of a gender responsive, trauma informed integrative mindfulness program (TIMBo) as implemented for survivors of gender-based violence in post-earthquake Haiti. The development and implementation of this program were examined, demonstrating implications for quality service provision with under-served populations. The program targeted the mitigation of traumatic symptomology as well as preventative strategies ameliorating the inter-generational cycle of trauma and violence. Theoretical and methodological approaches were also explored. This presentation provided attendees an understanding of how integrated mindfulness techniques are utilized to address traumatic stress and promote resilience among Haitian community members. The presenters addressed the significance of the following objectives: (1) TIMBo’s ability to give women simple, effective and accessible tools to utilize as active coping strategies for self-regulation; (2) TIMBo’s ability to help women in Haiti (and elsewhere) to gain awareness of their bodies and their body sensation; and (3) TIMBo’s ability to help women renegotiate their self-belief through awareness of their inner experience, and begin the process of transformation.
Recovery Efforts and Psychological Resilience in Haiti as Experienced across Three Relief Providing Entities

Shamaila Khan, Ph.D., Clinical Faculty, Boston Medical Center; Crystal Taylor, M.S, Pre-doctoral Intern, Center for Multicultural Training in Psychology, Boston Medical Center; & Cidna Valentin, M.A., MPhil, Doctoral Candidate, Clinical Psychology Program, Graduate Center of the City University of New York

Following the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the humanitarian crisis that ensued was addressed by a multitude of relief efforts from countries and organizations all around the world. Risk reduction and strengthening resilience methods that are culturally attuned and sensitive are critical elements in promoting sustainable development. This presentation focused on three organizations (ESF, SERG & CHAO) and their experiences working with multidisciplinary teams to serve Haitians living in the homeland and in the Diaspora as well as their interventions regarding strengthening psychological resilience and supporting equity. Specifically, panelists discussed the integral role of supporting and utilizing the close Haitian community as a central factor in strengthening and maintaining resiliency, and the challenge this poses for those in the Diaspora and their service providers. In addition, panelists discussed religion, spiritual faith and traditional healing as key aspects of Haitian culture, and the importance of utilizing interventions that integrate those methods with contemporary healthcare. The presenters also highlighted the lessons learned from their experience, which called for a continued focus on community and faith-based organizations/leaders and a critical lens for evaluating the need to further explore traditional healing methods as a cornerstone for supporting resilience when providing services to Haitian communities within a multidisciplinary framework.

Religion, Spirituality and Resilience in the Context of the Haitian Experience

J. Abede Alexandre, ThM, DMin, PsyD, School Psychologist, Boston Public Schools; Founder and Senior Pastor, Tabernacle Baptist Congregation, Roslindale, MA

Research literature for the last decade has adequately supported the positive role that religion and spirituality have played in coping with personal tragedies, natural disasters and terrorist attacks. In the aftermath of the Haiti earthquake in 2010 as well as terrorist acts on September 11, 2001, people have turned to religion to cope. Evidence has suggested that the multiple and varied resources provided by religion and spirituality have largely contributed to the resilience of people who were deeply affected by terrible life events. As such, mental health professionals have been repeatedly challenged to become more and more aware of and sensitive to the needs to incorporate their clients’ beliefs and religious practices into their treatment. However, awareness and sensitivity do not necessarily lead to competence in integrating religion and spirituality into actual clinical practices. There are two primary factors that may account for that: 1) limited training opportunities to
effectively integrate religion and spirituality in clinical interventions without violating ethical and professional standards, and 2) a lack of quantitative and/or qualitative research on specific populations and sub-categories within a given population. This is particularly true when it comes to understanding the issue of religion, spirituality and resilience in the context of the Haitian experience. Dr. Alexander remarked that to understand resilience in the Haitian context, professionals have had to rely primarily on personal narratives, general observations and speculations. It has been difficult to discern the specific cultural, religious and spiritual factors that contribute to the resilience of Haitians after being exposed to repeated, terrible life events whether caused by political unrest or natural disasters. In addition, while Haitians are known to be “resilient”, there has been limited effort in trying to understand the negative impact of those tragedies on other dimensions of life such as personality, relationships, physical illnesses, self-esteem and overall perspectives on life. The purpose of this presentation was to facilitate discussions on the needs for developing greater competence in integrating religion and faith in our clinical interventions without violating ethical standards of practices. It was intended to help professionals to appreciate the complexity of the religious, spiritual and cultural factors that contribute to resilience in order to better equip themselves in the assessment and treatment of individual clients. This, in turn, will contribute to more effective, predictable and multi-dimensional approaches to understanding the concept of resilience among Haitians.

**Resilience and Re-building a Relational Home for Haiti’s Teens**

*Nancy R. Sobel, PsyD, Psychologist & Founder, Global Adolescent Project*

Dr. Sobel provided an overview of the Global Adolescent Program (G.A.P.), which serves displaced Haitian youth in Haiti. She described how the activities of G.A.P. promote resilience through the creation of a mobile relational home. Resilience was discussed as a concept that occurs in both a context of relational attunement and in the development of alternative responses to old patterns of negative emotional experience. Both have to be present for resilience to develop. The concept of a relational home was created by trauma expert Dr. Robert Stolorow who describes it as a sense of sharing the burden of overwhelming affect with someone else in a “holding context,” which gives these feelings a place to “live and become integrated.” The mobility of this concept is demonstrated in the ways that program participants interact with the staff and their Haitian houseparents. G.A.P. fosters resilience in three areas of its mission statement—education, encouragement, and empowerment. The “education” part of the program is achieved by enrolling all participants in school. The program offers tuition, transportation, uniforms and supplies. The “encouragement” component of the program is met through the provision of a stable family environment where the youth live in a house with local houseparents. This component also includes peer support, mentoring, and training in trauma resolution and resilience skills. The “empowerment” aspect of the program includes financial literacy, job skills development, and
community-based activities. Mentoring from individuals and Haitian agencies are key tools in the program. As the youth learn to support themselves and each other, one of the long-term objectives of the G.A.P. is that they, in turn, will become mentors and resources to other youth globally, with whom they can connect electronically for ongoing leadership skills and development. Such an approach is reflective of Haitian culture and its spirit of independence and connection to global consciousness.

**Resilience and Strength Based Treatment Working with Haitians and Haitian Americans in a Clinical Setting**

Mel Schmid, MSW, LICSW, Cambridge Health Alliance; Carline Jean-Baptiste, Ph.D., Staff Psychologist, Cambridge Health Alliance; and Michele Klan, RNCS, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Cambridge Health Alliance

Studies such as Diehl and Hay (2010) illustrated in their work looking at various stages of adulthood that individuals who experience ongoing daily stress and less external control tended to report increased levels of negative affect and other emotional malfunctions. Haitian immigrants currently and historically face many challenges upon leaving their homeland to travel to various host countries. Despite the many odds against them and the numerous challenges faced in integrating themselves into American culture and climate, Haitians and Haitian Americans continue to demonstrate a level of fortitude, persistence and perseverance that exemplify resilience as an ethnic group. The panelists addressed the work of meeting the mental health needs of Haitians and Haitian Americans within an urban setting. The approach of the multidisciplinary team at the Haitian Mental Health Center at the Cambridge Health Alliance was presented through brief vignettes exploring the risk factors, protective factors and strength assessment/treatment of clients who seek services at the clinic. The panelists used vignettes to illustrate the challenges and protective factors that have been instrumental in addressing the mental health, psychosocial and emotional concerns in the lives of Haitian clients. The objective of the presentation was to identify the risk factors that necessitate the referral and usage of clinical services for individuals of Haitian descent at the clinic. Risk factors such as poverty, lack of formal education in the technological world of the U.S., low SES, financial needs, underemployment, immigration concerns, family concerns, medical concerns and housing issues have been identified as barriers to individuals creating stability in their emotional and economic lives. The presenters illustrated that, despite the risk factors observed among clients who seek mental health care, there remain observable resilient factors, both individual and community, that serve as protective mechanisms in the ongoing functioning of vulnerable individuals. The model of helping to strengthen and shore up the protective factors in our clients’ lives was used to facilitate the group discussion with conference attendees. The role of clinicians to both witness and support individuals as they adjust and adapt to life in the United States was discussed.
Resilience or Habits of Surviving? Contextualizing Haitians’ Response to Tragedy and Suffering
Suze Prudent, Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist

During the Opening Remarks, Dr. Prudent argued that, as applied to Haitians in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that hit the island in 2010, the term resilience is best understood as a figure of speech and is not to be confused with a psychological construct. As poetic language “resilience” is flattering and encouraging to people who are typically associated with the moniker “poorest nation in the Western hemisphere”. It appeals to our sense of pride and to our history as a people who rose from the basest form of human existence to create a language, a nation and a culture of our very own. But since our illustrious beginning, Haiti and its people seem to be perpetually climbing the endless chain of mountains of its proverb: “Déyè mòn gen mòn” (“Behind mountains more mountains”).

She further noted that the country has been and continues to be steeped in tragedy and different forms of mass trauma. For the majority of people, abject poverty and its corollaries, chronic unemployment, hunger, illiteracy, diseases, high infant mortality, quasi-homelessness abound. Thus, it is difficult to see how this term applies to Haitians as a psychological construct, which presumes a capacity to recover quickly after tragedy. On the other hand, there is a need for understanding the psychology and the lived experience of people who, like Haitians, seem to show a collective determination to cling to life at all costs, despite its punches. Dr. Prudent proposed an alternative to the construct of resilience as an explanatory model for the behavior of Haitians in the face of tragedy. The basic premise of this alternative is that, as a group, Haitians have developed “habits of surviving” to adapt to their long history with tragedy, trauma, poverty, etc.; that these habits have become a part of culture; are passed on through child-rearing practices; and are reified through social institutions reflected in language, proverbs, and games. During her presentation, Dr. Prudent (1) discussed how the ways in which Haitians respond to tragedy are not exceptional, but are common to peoples with a history of being disenfranchised; (2) identified the day-to-day practice of survival skills that both prepares individuals and the collective to cope psychologically with the next assault, and shields them from emotional deterioration; and (3) considered the implications of the “habits of survival” for clinical work with Haitian-American immigrants.
Transitioning from Emergency to Sustainable Programming in Post-Earthquake Haiti: The Benefits of Empowering Mental Health Professionals

Betsy Sherwood, LMSW, Program Coordinator, St. Boniface Spinal Cord Injury Program, Saint Boniface Haiti Foundation; Myzraelle Casimir Zidor, Psychosocial Program Coordinator, Saint Boniface Haiti Foundation; Carine Lascam, RN, MSN, ANP-BC, Adult Nurse Practitioner, Commonwealth Community Care (formerly Boston’s Community Medical Group); & Lauren Easton, LICSW, Social Worker, Commonwealth Community Care

As a result of the January 12, 2010 earthquake, there were approximately 150 Haitians who suffered spinal cord injuries (SCI). In low-resourced countries and in post-disaster or conflict settings, persons with SCI are given a 12-24 month life expectancy. Despite the daunting statistics, Saint Boniface, a small rural hospital, with no previous experience in rehabilitation care, admitted SCI patients. Located four hours south of Port-au-Prince, with over 25 years experience in Haiti, Saint Boniface offered a locally driven response to the recovery effort. Upon admitting the initial cohort of SCI patients for care, local staff quickly acknowledged the need to build a formal, multidisciplinary, sustainable program to meet the lifelong needs of these patients, placing a particular emphasis on strengthening mental health and case management services for this highly vulnerable group. The panelists reported that the Boston Community Medical Group, whose mission is to provide comprehensive healthcare and promote independence for persons with disabilities, joined together with Saint Boniface Haiti Foundation (SBHF) to create a capacity building training program for professionals, focusing on the unique mental health needs for people with disabilities and their family members. Over the course of the past three years, this training series has provided training on the following topics: CBT, intake and assessment, support groups, art and recreational therapy, grief processes, pain management, burn out prevention, family support models, PTSD and complex trauma, peer support programs, and addressing sexual, domestic and child abuse. Social workers, psychologists, case managers, peer educators, community health workers, doctors, nurses, and physical therapist from a variety of groups from around the country have participated in these ongoing training activities aimed at improving services for persons with spinal cord injury and disabilities in general. The presenters from St. Boniface’s Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Program and Boston Community Medical Group discussed how they have teamed up to create a capacity building program aimed at improving mental health services for persons with disabilities in Haiti. Panelists shared challenges and successes from the program along with examples of incredible resilience they have observed throughout their work over the past three years.
CLOSING CEREMONY:
A Celebration of Haitian Art & Culture
“The Colors of Resilience”
An Art Exhibition by the Haitian Artists Assembly of Massachusetts
Memorable Moments at the 2013 Conference on Haitian Mental Health

[Images of group photos from the conference]
APPENDIX:
Biographies of Presenters

J. Abede Alexandre, ThM, DMin, PsyD., holds a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology from George Fox University (PsyD, 1989), and a Masters and Doctorate in the field of Theology and Pastoral Ministry from Dallas Theological Seminary (ThM, DMin). He currently works as a School Psychologist for the Boston Public Schools. He is also the Founder and Senior Pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Congregation in Roslindale, MA. He and his wife Edith are the proud parents of two sons: Jean Abede II (26) and Jonathan (24).

Olivia M. Apollon, LICSW, holds a Master’s degree in the field of Social Work from Boston University. She is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW) and a Behavioral Health Clinician at Codman Square Health Center. Ms. Apollon started her career working with children and adolescents, doing individual and sand play therapy. Her post-graduate training includes Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Levels I and II, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). Prior to moving to the U.S., Ms. Apollon, a trained physician from Haiti, worked with children and in the field of anesthesiology.

Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, Ph.D., has retired recently as a Professor Emeritus of Africology from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He attended the University of the Virgin Islands in St. Thomas, but received his first degree in political science from Syracuse University. His MA in Latin American Studies and his PhD in International Politics, with major fields in history, diplomatic history, and comparative politics were both from The American University in Washington, D.C. He has published landmark books on Haitian philosophy, culture and religion, notably, In the Shadow of Powers: Danités Bellegarde in Haitian Social Thought. Dr. Bellegarde-Smith is most proud of his status as an ongan asogwe, the highest ranking in the priesthood in Haiti, achieved 24 years ago. After 46 years of exile, he remains as Haitian as ever, establishing a clear distinction between “nationality” and “citizenship.”

Marjory Clermont-Mathieu, Ph.D., obtained her doctorate in Clinical Psychology in Research/Intervention at the University of Montreal. She is a Professor in the Department of Psychology at the Faculty of Human Sciences, State University of Haiti where she teaches courses in adult psychopathology, and child and adolescent psychotherapy. She is also a thesis supervisor for candidates who are applying for licensing in psychology. She has built a strong reputation as a consultant to national and international organizations, including UNICEF, PAHO, Oxfams Québec, GB, Intermon, SOFA, Caritas, and Save the Children Canada. Professor Clermont-Mathieu has developed an expertise in counseling and social development of children in vulnerable communities who have suffered from trauma and have developed resiliency.

Lauren Easton, LICSW, works with the Commonwealth Community Care Program (formerly Boston Community Medical Group) as a Social Worker. She has expertise in general mood disorders, managing cases with medical complexity and providing trauma support. Over the past three years, Ms. Easton has volunteered her time with St. Boniface Haiti Foundation, developing and implementing a comprehensive training program for local mental and behavioral health workers. She has traveled to Haiti four times and offers remote supervision and support to those on the St. Boniface staff. Ms. Easton has a BA in Psychology and Education from UMass Boston and a Masters in Social Work from Simmons College.
Elizabeth Jackson, MPH, has worked in the global health field for over ten years. She currently works for the Harvard School of Public Health in the Department of Global Health and Population and at the Harvard Global Health Institute, managing a number of maternal and child health, nutrition, and other training-related initiatives. Mrs. Jackson received her Masters in Public Health from Yale University where she focused on social and behavioral sciences and health system strengthening. She also has established rehabilitation programs for homeless and low-income women and conducted work in Haiti with earthquake and other trauma survivors.

Carline Jean-Baptiste, Ph.D., is a Clinical/Community Psychologist who has been working in the Haitian Community for many years. She is currently a Clinical Instructor at Harvard Medical School, working within the Outpatient Psychiatry Clinic at Cambridge Health Alliance. Dr. Jean-Baptiste has worked with children, adolescents and adults for many years both within the Haitian community and the general psychiatry clinical population. Her roles currently include direct clinical work of assessment and treatment of mental health issues, and psychosocial and emotional functioning concerns. Moreover, Dr. Jean-Baptiste has been involved in training and consultation around psychological, cultural values and beliefs of the Haitian population served at the Cambridge Health Alliance.

Ronald Jean Jacques, DESS, DEA, holds a BA in Psychology from the State University of Haiti, a Diploma of Advanced Studies (DEA) in Psychology and a Diploma of Specialized Higher Studies (DESS) in Psychology from Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium. As a Psychologist and Professor at the State University of Haiti (UEH) since 1994, he teaches courses and leads research on education, violence, resilience, and psychological trauma. He was the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at the UEH from 1996 to 2000. He was a Member of the Reform Commission at the State University of Haiti from March 2008 to June 2012 and a Consultant for the Education Commission of the Senate of the Republic from 2007 to 2010. He is the current President of the Haitian Association of Psychology (AHPsy).

Shamaila Khan, Ph.D., is a Clinical Faculty at Boston Medical Center. She has a psychodynamic background and an interest in postcolonial theory. Her specialty training is in trauma: Individual trauma, group/community based trauma, disaster related trauma, immigration and postcolonial trauma. Dr. Khan received her clinical psychology doctorate from Adelphi University in New York. She is the current Clinical Director of the Resilience Training Program, and is an active member of the Multicultural Committee and Early Career Psychologists Committee of the APA Division of Psychoanalysis (39). She is also a board member for the Pakistani Psychological Association, and on the advisory committee for the American Muslim Health Professionals. She additionally serves on the Disaster Behavioral Health Advisory Committee of the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health.

Michele Klau, RNCS, has been employed as a psychiatric nurse for over 35 years, the last 25 as an advanced practice nurse. She has worked as an inpatient administrator, psychotherapist and psychopharmacologist. For the past 10 years, Ms. Klau has specialized in the psychopharmacology of PTSD and is affiliated with the Victim of Violence Program at Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA). Since 2008, Ms. Klau has provided psychopharmacology to Haitians clients. Ms. Klau is currently a Teaching Associate at Harvard Medical School.

Castagna Lacet Ph.D., MSW, is an Assistant Professor in the Master’s of Social Work Program at Wheelock College and the Vice-President of the Haitian Mental Health Network. Dr. Lacet received her bachelor’s degree from Wellesley College, where she was mentored by researchers at the Jean Baker Miller Institute’s Center for Research on Women. Dr. Lacet received her Master’s degree and Doctorate from Boston College, Graduate School of Social Work. Her social work practice and consultation has focused on at-risk youth, families affected by family violence, and the mental health needs of the Haitian community. Dr. Lacet’s teaching includes courses in the research and practice sequences. She also teaches electives on family violence, and a service learning and travel course about mental health in the Haitian community.
Carine Luxama, RN, MSN, ANP-BC, is an Adult Nurse Practitioner with Commonwealth Community Care, formerly Boston’s Community Medical Group, a not-for-profit group practice, which provides comprehensive primary care to individuals with disabilities. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Women’s Studies from Brandeis University and her Nursing and Master of Science degrees in Adult and Women’s Health Nursing from the Massachusetts General Hospital Institute of Health Professions. Seeing the continued disparities in health care, and hoping to address the need for psychiatric and mental health services in underserved communities, she continues her training and education and is currently pursuing certification as a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner at Northeastern University.

Guerda Nicolas, Ph.D., is the Chairperson of the Educational and Psychological Studies Department and Associate Professor in the School of Education at the University of Miami. As a multicultural (Haitian American) and multilingual (Spanish, French, and Haitian Creole) psychologist, her research is reflective of her background and interests. Her current research focus is the integration of race and culture and well-being for ethnically diverse and immigrant communities. Some of the projects on which she is currently working include: spirituality across the life span among ethnic minorities, and culturally effective mental health interventions for ethnic minority youth, in particular immigrant children, adolescents, and families. She also conducts research on social support networks of Caribbean groups with a specific focus on Haitians.

Marie Andrée Pierre-Victor, LICSW, is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker who holds a BA and MSW degrees from Boston College. She is the Clinical Manager of Behavioral Health at Codman Square Health Center. Her training includes certification in Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing levels I and II (EMDR), Tapas Acupressure Technique, Advanced Certification in the Treatment of Psychological Trauma, and a certificate in Cognitive Behavior Therapy. She works mostly with individuals diagnosed with complex PTSD, anxiety disorders, dissociative disorders, and mood disorders. Ms. Pierre-Victor is an active member of the Haitian Mental Health Network of Boston and a past President of the Association of Haitian Women in Boston.

Suze Prudent, Ph.D., is a psychologist with over 25 years of clinical experience doing individual, couple and group psychotherapy, primarily with adults. She has private clinics in Cambridge and in Newton, MA, where she works with a diverse clientele. Her professional interests include psychological trauma and recovery, the process of change, female development, and cultural transition. She is an Instructor at Harvard Medical School where she has been teaching for more than 20 years. Since the 2010 earthquake she has been contributing her skills to various efforts to improve access to mental health for Haitians in Boston and in Haiti.

Danielle Rousseau, Ph.D., LMHC, received her MA in Clinical Forensic Psychology from the University of Denver and her PhD from Northeastern University in Criminology and Justice Policy and Women’s Studies. Most recently, Dr. Rousseau worked in the mental health department of Massachusetts’ only correctional facility for women, winning multiple awards from the Massachusetts Department of Correction for her efforts. Dr. Rousseau’s professional focus has been in trauma services, helping survivors of sexual assault and intimate partner violence. She also has established therapeutic programs for veterans and has traveled to Haiti to work with earthquake survivors. Her research focuses on sentencing, race and gender disparities in justice, the treatment of women within the criminal justice system, the use of integrative mindfulness programming to address trauma, crime, and popular media and hate crime.

Mel Schmid, LICSW, is the team leader for the Haitian Mental Health Team at the Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA). Born in Haiti, he has worked more than 25 years at CHA providing services to Haitian adolescents and adults as well as the general psychiatry clinical population. Mr. Schmid has also been involved in training and consultation around the psychological, cultural values and beliefs of the Haitian population through the Cambridge Health Alliance.
Betsy Sherwood, LMSW, serves as the Program Coordinator for the St. Boniface Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation and Community Reintegration Program, based in Fond des Blancs, Haiti. Since the earthquake, she has worked to transform a program aimed at immediate disaster response into a long-term, sustainable program that focuses on the reintegration and realization or rights for persons with disabilities (PWDs). Currently, she is responsible for developing, implementing and coordinating disability programming funded through USAID, MSPP and CBM. For the past three years, Ms. Sherwood has served on the Inclusion, Disability and Rehabilitation Working Group and works closely with staff members from the Haitian Ministry of Health and the Haitian Secretary of State for the Inclusion of Disabled Persons in their effort to build social inclusions for PWDs. Ms. Sherwood has a Bachelor’s degree in Communications and Political Science from Syracuse University and a Master’s degree in International Social Work from Fordham University.

Nancy R. Sobel, PsyD, is a licensed psychologist in private practice in West Los Angeles, CA. She works with individuals, couples, families, groups and rock bands. She also regularly conducts workshops on healthy relationships and balanced living at the Miraval resort in Tucson, Arizona. Dr. Sobel is widely known for her work in the entertainment industry and has designed a unique style of therapy for musicians and artists who spend large amounts of time on the road. Dr. Sobel specializes in the treatment of trauma, addictions and compulsive disorders including sexual, financial and relationship. Dr. Sobel co-founded Global Adolescent Project, whose mission is to educate, encourage and empower at-risk youth in impoverished communities starting in Haiti and around the world.

Marie St. Fleur, Esq., is the first Haitian-American elected to state office in the United States, State Representative Marie St. Fleur became the City of Boston’s first ever Chief of Advocacy and Strategic Investments in 2010. St. Fleur also guides the City’s Haiti-related efforts and works with the Human Services Department to lead a new re-entry initiative focused on jobs and opportunity for youth and adults who have been part of the criminal justice system. A graduate of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Representative St. Fleur earned a Law Degree from Boston College Law School in 1987. She was the recipient of the Massachusetts School of Law Thurgood Marshall Leadership Award. Representative St. Fleur became the first member of the Up & Coming Lawyers Hall of Fame. She was also honored with the Massachusetts Women’s Bar Association’s Legislator of the Year Award and the Boston Bar Association’s Distinguished Legislator Award.

Gemima St. Louis, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics at Boston University School of Medicine and the Director of Mental Health Training and Research at the SPARK Center at Boston Medical Center. Dr. St. Louis has over 12 years of experience in developing and implementing educational, psychosocial and mental health programs for the Haitian community. Dr. St. Louis is the current President of the Boston-based Haitian Mental Health Network, and the co-founder of H.E.A.R.T. (Haiti Earthquake Aid and Relief Team). Dr. St. Louis is currently overseeing the implementation of a school-based initiative funded by the City of Boston Mayor’s Office to provide mental health services to immigrant Haitian students who are enrolled in the Boston Public Schools.

Crystal Taylor, M.S., is a Doctoral Student in Clinical Psychology at Chestnut Hill College. She is currently completing her pre-doctoral internship at the Center for Multicultural Training in Psychology at Boston Medical Center and Boston University School of Medicine. Ms. Taylor’s passion for mental health advocacy, multicultural diversity, social justice and promotion of wellness is evident in her work with local, state, and international organizations. She is also the Vice-President on the Board of Directors for a not-for-profit organization, College-Bound Home for Girls, which provides socio-emotional support and mentoring to adolescent girls in Philadelphia who wish to enter college but are lacking the appropriate resources to do so. In addition, Ms. Taylor is the Director of Mental Health and Wellness at Explorer Sans Frontières (ESF), an organization that provides multi-disciplinary medical and wellness support in Haiti.
Jean B. Tropnas, MD, is a Board Certified Psychiatrist who received his training at Kings County Hospital-Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn NY (1975-1978). He was also trained in Child Psychiatry at Long Island Jewish-Hillside Medical Center. For the past 35 years, Dr. Tropnas has worked as clinician and administrator with children, adolescent, adult, and geriatric patients at different institutions in and around Brooklyn. In 1986, Dr. Tropnas cofounded and was the first President of the Haitian-American Psychiatric Association. He is also a member of the American Psychiatric Association (APA). Since 2003, Dr. Tropnas has worked in the Psychiatric Outpatient Department of SUNY Downstate Medical Center. For his contributions to the recovery efforts in Haiti after the earthquake, Dr. Tropnas received the 2010 Profile of Courage Award from the American Psychiatric Association.

Cidna Valentin, M.A., Mphil, is a Doctoral Candidate in the Clinical Psychology PhD Subprogram at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. She is currently completing a pre-doctoral internship at the Jewish Board for Family and Child Services, Adolescent track, in New York. Ms. Valentin’s research and clinical training experiences include assisting with multiple projects on families infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, conducting individual psychotherapy with ethnically and socio-economically diverse patients, performing integrated psychological testing and facilitating psychotherapy groups with men living with HIV and abusing substances. Her current dissertation research is focused on relationships between Haitian and non-Haitian healthcare providers and Haitian patients in Haiti. Ms. Valentin is a Haitian American, born and raised in Philadelphia, PA. She graduated with a Master’s degree in Clinical Psychology from Teachers’ College, Columbia University in 2006 after completing her undergraduate degree in Psychology at Hampton University in 2005.

Ed K.S. Wang, PsyD, is the Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs at the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health (DMH). His interest is to reduce health disparities by improving mental health conditions and overall wellness of underserved communities. Dr. Wang is an Assistant Clinical Professor and a member of the Cross Cultural Care Committee of the Program in Medical Education at Harvard Medical School. His teaching focuses on the development of clinical excellence in serving culturally and linguistically diverse population, global mental health policy and program development. He is currently the President of the National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association.

Myzraelle Casimir Zidor has worked for the past three years as the lead social worker in charge of the St. Boniface Rehabilitation and Community Reintegration Program. In her role, she oversees the mental health services, including running support groups, peer education program, community advocacy activities, discharge planning, family counseling, and vocational activities for those in the program. She actively participates in local and national level coordination activities and is constantly working to advocate for further social inclusion for persons with disabilities. Ms. Zidor studied Social Work at the Faculty of Human Sciences at the State University in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.
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For all inquiries pertaining to the Haitian Mental Health (HMH) Network or to obtain copies of the Conference Proceedings, please contact the HMH Network at HMHnetwork@gmail.com or visit www.HMHnetwork.org.