PsySSA Conference  
International Convention Centre, Cape Town  
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Having had the privilege of attending the 15th PsySSA congress, which was hosted at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) this year, was quite an experience! The conference extended over four days from 11 to 14 August 2009. The venue was elegant, the geographical setting spectacular and the tone was one of excitement for our MA students who attended the 2009 PsySSA Congress.

The pre-conference programme comprised of workshops in forensic neuropsychology, ethics psychological testing, alcohol intervention programmes and setting up, managing and maintaining dynamic, lucrative private practices.

The conference officially started on Wednesday 12 August, with the opening address by the out-going 2008 PsySSA President, Norman Duncan, followed by an annual general meeting and then a small handing over ceremony of the chairmanship to the new PsySSA president, Prof Kopano Ratele. Keynote addresses were made by Prof de la Rey (C.E.O: Council on Higher Education) on ‘Psychology and the public good
in developing society’, by the exuberant Prof Isaac Prilleltensky, the Dean of the school of Education at the University of Miami who spoke on ‘Psychology, Justice and Well-Being’, and by Prof Oliver Turnbull of the University of Wales on ‘Cognition, emotion and brain science’.

After an abundant lunch, presentations commenced in four simultaneous streams. The topics for presentations ranged from education, HIV/Aids round table discussions and the symposium topics centered on child neuropsychology research and bringing the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community together in South Africa.

Our MA (Research Consultation) group also had the opportunity to present feedback about the 2009 Southern African Students’ Psychology Conference (of which we were co-organisers), which took place in Botswana in June earlier this year. Even though we had hoped for a larger turnout, the small group of students who attended the feedback sessions generated interesting dialogue and ideas about the role of students of psychology and around how the student community in South Africa can become more active in its role in psychology in Africa.

We also displayed a poster presentation about the students’ conference for the duration of the conference. Other interesting poster presentations included titles such as ‘Traditional healers’ view on fertility’, ‘Cyberbullying in a cross-section of secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal’ and ‘Breath based mental health promotion’.

On Thursday, presentations focused on applied cognitive science and experimental neuropsychology in South Africa and a symposium was presented on African social psychology.

The last day of the conference saw presentations on topics in sport psychology, stress, autism, ethics, African and Western psychology and adherence to antiretroviral therapy.

The conference presented great networking opportunities where we could meet with professionals who are already in the field both locally and internationally, as well as students from
other universities. All in all, the PsySSA 2009 Conference was an exciting experience and a learning opportunity, not only for students but also for professionals already in the industry. The research presented was interesting and points to innovative growth throughout many domains of Psychology in South Africa.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Sean Hagen is a junior lecturer and Masters student in the Department of Psychology at Unisa, Shanaaz Roopen, Alexa Brand, Kobie van Zyl, Johan Bosman, Zanie le Grange, Michelle de Klerk and Victoria Julie are part of the 2009 MA Research Consultation Group in the Department of Psychology at Unisa.