

CPA 2011 Convention: My experience as a first-timer

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Like the Grammy's are to music or Cannes is to film, the annual CPA convention is the chance to showcase the year in Canadian psychology. It is also the chance for students to catch a glimpse or even speak with research idols, and experience what it feels like to be academically 'star struck'.

Having recently finished my undergrad, I was attending the convention for the first time to present on the beer industry's impact on women's health in Cambodia. Gearing up for the presentation, I had barely given a thought to the prospect of hearing others' presentations in health psychology, let alone other areas of my discipline. However my experience soon blossomed into an awesome opportunity to learn and network with the celebrities of Canadian psychology.

One thing that I liked about presenting is that we had the opportunity to share the work of Sirchesi, a Cambodian NGO borne of the collaboration between Dr. Lubek and Cambodian colleagues. After a decade it is inspiring to see the organization thrive from the grassroots in their approach to research and social justice initiatives. Likewise, at the convention I was able to find other grassroots cross-cultural research and was quickly engrossed in the presentations of my peers and professors. Luckily I nabbed a seat in the at-capacity presentation of Dr.

Lalonde on Toronto multiculturalism and his intriguing acronym for a certain "ethnic" group (the "Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic"). I also attended a politically charged study on Islamic veils in Quebec as part of the cross-cultural psychology symposium.

Most interesting of all was the Aboriginal symposium, an area of research unknown to me featuring Dr. Terry Mitchell as the headliner. The dynamism in their approach to research, using both First Nations Canadians and "white" Canadians, the gravity of the topics discussed, and the compassion of the speakers struck a chord with me. I wondered why an area in psychology that interested me so much had eluded me for so long.

Another surprise for my first CPA convention was the myriad of student research. I felt moments of empowerment and a craving to be immersed in undergraduate academia all over again. The breadth of Canadian research was also surprising, as the index of the catalogue attested, instilling in me a sense of academic patriotism.

Though another year remains until the next CPA convention, there is already a lot of Oscar- ahem, publication buzz.