

21ST PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF
SOUTH AFRICA (PSYSSA) ANNUAL
CONGRESS, EMPERORS PALACE
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The Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA) is the national professional body of Psychology, committed to transforming and developing psychology in South Africa and make certain that it is relevant in the South African Context. Psyssa held its 21st Annual Psychology Congress at Emperors Palace (Johannesburg) from 15 to 18 September 2015. This annual congress is one of the main events in the Psychological circles in South Africa-

The theme this year was Strength in Unity. The theme was fitting considering the broad array of presentations offered at this conference. Although different, yet they were all aimed at improving and enhancing the lives of communities through Psychology.

Prof Mohamed Seedat presented the 1st Annual Sipiwe Ngcobo Memorial Lecture. A plenary debate was held on whether we are programmed for prejudice or not. Prof Basil Pillay facilitated a roundtable discussion on whether the scope of practice in Psychology is enabling or restrictive. There were also pre-congress workshops as well as a performance act titled "Alice does Nkandla". All these were held on the first and second day of the congress.





The congress was filled with various role players within the discipline of psychology who had gathered to share knowledge and their various work and to provide feedback to others. Representatives from academic institutions, practitioners in private practice, as well as public sector organisations which provide psychological services directly and indirectly were present. Oral presentations, Symposia and Poster presentations were the order of the day on Thursday and Friday. The different presentations were under the Education, Cognitive & Neuropsychology, Clinical, Counselling, Community and Social psychology Gender, Indigenous knowledge & healing systems, Sexuality & health and trauma Streams.



The conference provided an excellent platform to develop networks between and within individuals with interest in the field of psychology. I presented an oral paper entitled “Doing research with indigenous communities: Contextual influences on research ethics” under the indigenous knowledge system & healing stream. The presentation was underscored, among other things, by the rude awakening experience of contextual ethics when I collected my data in a rural and cultural setting. It was exciting yet daunting to present in front of, and alongside professionals who are leaders in the various sub-disciplines of psychology. As a developing scholar, it was an anxious moment for me as I looked around and saw well respected professionals attending my presentation. For a moment, I stood there contemplating whether it wasn’t too late for me to disappear; whether what I had come to share was worth listening to. That plan was not going to work, since my dissertation supervisor was the one actually chairing the session. Contrary to what I had felt, the presentation went well and at the end of my presentation, I received valuable feedback, which I’m grateful for, making the whole experience worthwhile.

I also relished the opportunity to attend the symposium entitled “Notions of community and community engagement in psychological work in low resource settings.” It was amazing to witness the impact NGO’s are having in some communities, a presentation entitled “A description of the work of Psychologists in the Red Cross Air Mercy Service, UKZN” explained how they transported their volunteers by helicopter to places that are not easily accessible to render psychological services. The Inside-out Outside in South African Corrections Interest group presented guidelines to approaching a community engagement project. An example was shared of how they mapped the corrections/prison related research studies in South Africa. They also shared guidelines of conducting research with offenders and ex-offenders, steps to follow when conducting research at corrections, including applying for ethical clearance from the Department of Correctional Services as well as the importance of the White Paper. To witness the level of engagement in this discussion was both thought-proving as well as fascinating.

Logistically, everything seemed to go smooth at the conference. The conference was well organised, despite the numerous number of congress attendants. Everything ranging from the presentation venues, food, dining halls and the stalls that were on display were well organised. A draw was held at the last day of the conference and a few individuals won prizes.

Looking ahead to next year, Psyssa will co-host the International Conference on Community Psychology on South African soil. This prestigious event, which is the 6th of its kind, will be held at The Durban Conventional Centre in May 2016. The pertinent conversations between the various individuals in psychology will continue as hegemonic discourses are interrogated to allow previously marginalised knowledges to come to the fore. This will go a long way in making sure that Psychology serves humanity globally and here at home. This marks an important event at the time when Africans are waking up to the realisation of their previously criticised knowledges,

and identities. These conversations will assist to move psychology to a point where it serves all humanity. I hope to be part of this esteemed conference and to be part of the conversation that will be held there.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE



Ms Gaagalalelwe Katide is currently completing a Masters in Psychology (Research Consultation) degree at Unisa. She is also a post-graduate assistant in the department of Psychology at Unisa. Her research interests are in Community Psychology, Postcolonial studies, as well as Indigenous knowledge systems.