

5th International Conference on

Psychiatrist, Geriatric Psychiatry and Counseling Psychology

December 08-09, 2016 San Antonio, USA

Counselling in a diverse, South African, multicultural context: Challenges and considerations

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In a multicultural society like South Africa, classified along racial and ethnic lines, one finds four main racial groups (Whites, Blacks, Coloureds and Indians) with 11 official languages post-apartheid to accommodate this diversity. Due to its apartheid legacy, race continues to be a dominant discourse which cuts across every sphere of the South African society. It thus becomes essential to note that while the majority of the population of South Africa is made up of blacks, these remain the least educated and the least economically empowered. It is therefore not surprising to find that most psychologists are white, speak either English or Afrikaans with the majority of clients, who require psychological services being black and speaking local African languages. This makes sensitivity to cultural differences an imperative and differs somewhat from the Eurocentric and American notion of multicultural counseling, which arose in an attempt to accommodate minority groups. In this instance, it is meant to acknowledge and validate the majority of South Africans who have been alienated. This presentation focusses on some of the challenges experienced in conducting counseling within diverse cultures. The presentation argues for a move beyond cultural awareness and sensitivity in counselling to grounding of psychological theory in culture.

Biography

Matshepo Matoane completed her D Litt et Phil degree in 2008 at the University of South Africa. She is a registered Clinical Psychologist and an Associate Professor, and currently the Director of Instructional Support and Services, at the University of South Africa. Her main publications are in the field of Indigenous Psychology, a field, she hopes to advance within the South African environment.

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