

Special points of interest:

- * Online SLP in Research Design utilises a learning ecosystem which is learner-centred and allows self-directed learning.
- * The Online SLP addresses three components of learner capability, namely values, enablement and efficacy.
- * Optentia reached new heights in terms of the quality and quantity of research outputs.
- * Optentia will implement two new PhD programmes in 2021.
- * The CAVE supports child protection workers in SA.

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Reinventing Institutions: The Role of Capabilities

In a recent book, [Bhattacharya et al. \(2020\)](#) identified three forces transforming global business, namely a) social tension because of worsening of the strain on the natural ecosystem, a rising discontent with capitalism and the resulting inequality; b) rising economic nationalism, and c) technological growth of global data and digital technologies. Global processes of change have increasingly become the source of precarity for individuals and institutions: Vulnerable people are increasingly exposed to economic uncertainty and natural disasters. Moreover, we face an unprecedented international crisis in COVID-19. While needs and expectations of people are changing, institutions also have to deal with skills shortages, notably for people who can work in agile environments.

Today's institutions were designed for a stable environment which does not exist anymore. In a modern people-centric and knowledge-driven environment, formal control approaches lose their function as governance devices. Ease of communication permits a management style rooted in autonomy and capability. But, how do institutions obtain their desired results? [Yeung and Ulrich \(2019\)](#) suggest the

following: anticipate and observe challenges, join together with purpose, innovate thoughtfully, act quickly, inspire people, and deliver results. Three traditional models describe how institutions work: the hierarchy model (the model that most organisations implement), the systems model, and the capabilities model. These three organisation forms do not respond quickly to marketplace requirements or opportunities.

In contrast, the market-oriented ecosystem (MOE) starts with market-oriented opportunities, which create a compelling purpose that brings people together. Ecosystem refers to how resources and people are organised to win in the marketplace. The institution succeeds because its participation in a broader network of partners, allows faster responses to changing conditions. Six parts are critical to reinvent institutions as MOEs: a) Appreciate and anticipate the changes in the context. b) Anticipate and create market opportunities. c) Create capabilities in the overarching ecosystem. d) Create organisational forms that enable their talent to capture market changes. e) Make the ecosystem truly connected and collaborative by sharing culture, performance accountability, ideas, talent and



information. f) Set the context and rules for self-driven units to operate through market-oriented relationships.

Four capabilities are critical in today's dynamic and uncertain environment: a) external sensing (the ability to acquire, analyse and apply information about trends in the marketplace). b) customer obsession (the ability to relentlessly focus on fulfilling the unserved needs of current and future customers). c) innovation (the ability to foster creativity in products, services, and business models). d) agility (the ability to improve and experiment fast).

Using two dimensions, i.e. what institutions do (right/wrong things) and how they do it (well/poorly), they should identify the right things and do them well. The biggest danger is to do the wrong things well!

Performance of Optentia: 2020

During 2020, Optentia had 43 Members (27 with doctoral degrees), a project manager, a statistical consultant, and two support staff members. Furthermore, 40 extraordinary professors and 6 extraordinary researchers are appointed on a temporary basis. A total of 84 Master's students, 35 PhD students, and three postdoctoral research fellows. From 1 May to 30 November 2020, a total of 40 Master's and seven PhD students have completed their studies. Concerning peer-reviewed outputs for 2020 we have produced 52.22 peer-reviewed articles and 13.11 peer-reviewed chapters.



“We produced 69.90 peer-reviewed articles and 12.08 peer-reviewed chapters during 2020.”

The Optentia Scorecard *by* Prof. Ian Rothmann

Output	2017	2018	2019	2020
Peer-reviewed publications	103	94	154	160
Total peer-reviewed publications	49.81	48.05	67.25	81.98
Peer-reviewed articles*	44.81	41.22	49.06	69.90
Peer-reviewed chapters*	5	6.83	18.19	12.08
Papers: Conferences	38	17	35	0
Participating Master's students	37	46	64	84
Completed Master's students	18	26	40	12**
Participating PhD students	22	16	31	35
Completed PhD students	3	13	7	1**
Post-doctoral fellows	6	6	3	3
Number of workshops presented	28	25	10	17
Number of workshop participants	393	750	478	500

Note: Outputs as on 16 Dec 2020

* Expressed in terms of equivalents

** May 2020-April 2021

Capability Development at Optentia

Despite extraordinary circumstances associated with COVID19 and lockdowns during 2020, staff members and postgraduate students benefitted from various workshops. The following cutting edge workshops were presented:

- The Capability Approach (February 2020).
- Precarity (February 2020).
- Ethics of Care (February 2020).
- Positive Psychological Interventions (February 2020).
- The Mmogo-method®: A visual data-collection method (February 2020).
- Africa First: Igniting a Growth Revolution (May 2020).
- QuestionPro (June 2020).
- Academic Writing (June 2020).
- Educational Design - Online Learning (June 2020).
- Mediation, Moderation and Conditional Effects (June 2020).



- Introduction to RStudio and R (July 2020).
- Introducing AS Review (July 2020).
- New Goals for Managing what we Measure (August 2020).
- Linear/Logistic Regression with R/RStudio (August 2020).
- Qualitative evidence synthesis (August-September 2020)
- Phenomenon-based Learning (October 2020).
- Quality of Life in Africa (October 2020).
- Diary Studies in Research (December 2020).

The article, "Authentic leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour in the public health care sector: The role of workplace trust" received the annual Laureatus Award as the most cited article in the Economic and Management Sciences AOSIS Scholarly Domain. We congratulate the authors: Lynelle Coxen, Dr Leoni van der Vaart and Prof. Marius Stander.

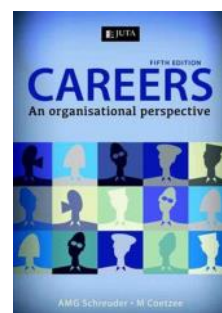
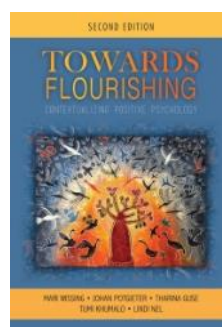
"... staff members and postgraduate students benefitted from various workshops."

Sharing Findings about Well-being: New Chapters in Books

Prof. Ian Rothmann contributed two chapters in books that has recently been published.

The title of a chapter in "Towards Flourishing" is "Positive Institutions". The chapter focuses on the definition of positive institutions, flourishing of individuals in terms of psychological capital, meaning and purpose, work engagement, self-determination, learning as well as emotional and social well-being, strengths and virtuousness, positive relations and positive institutional and human resource management practices contributing to positive institutions.

The title of a chapter in "Careers" is "Career Well-being" and focus on the differences between the disease model and the positive psychology model; review different approaches to well-being, explain psychological states associated with flourishing at work, evaluate the antecedents of flourishing at work, identify the role of personality traits in flourishing at work, review the outcomes of flourishing and languishing at work, and evaluate organisational and individual interventions to promote flourishing at work.



Development of an Online SLP in Research Design

In October 2014, a Short Learning Programme (SLP) in Research Design for master's and PhD students was approved by the Senate Committee for Academic Standards (SCAS) at the North-West University (NWU). Over the past six years the SLP was presented face-to-face during January and July. During this period, Optentia started to produce material that could be used as part of our strategy to implement technology to facilitate learning. The SLP was highly rated by participants and their feedback highlighted the vital role of the SLP to build their research capabilities.

In 2020, we faced a challenge to present the SLP because of student unrest at the Vanderbijlpark Campus of the NWU. We had to find a suitable venue away from the Campus to present the SLP. Little did we know that we will face a pandemic and a strict lockdown in South Africa from April 2020 which would make it impossible to present face-to-face training! So we had to find a way to continue with the development of the capabilities of master's and PhD students and emerging researchers.

Prof. Ian Rothmann and Dr Mariette Fourie from the Centre of Teaching and Learning (CTL) discussed the possibility of converting the SLP to online teaching and learning. Dr Fourie involved Dr Esmarie Strydom, who approved funding for the project. A core team consisting of Prof. Kristin Betts, Dr Mariette Fourie, Dr Byron Bunt, Lance Bunt, Prof. Ian Rothmann, Dr Leoni van der Vaart, Ms Nadia Jordaan, Mrs Marinda Malan and Ms Lynn Booysen was formed. Leading researchers representing many



Click [here](#) to watch a video about the development of the Online SLP in Research Design

disciplines from Humanities, Economic and Management Sciences, Health Sciences, and Education Sciences participated in the development of this innovative online SLP. Click [here](#) for more information about the expertise of the design team.

We used cutting edge software ([Interact23](#)) to plan the online SLP in terms of the 160 notional hours, and three types of interaction, namely student-content, instructor-student, and student-student to optimise the engagement of learners. Participants in the online SLP can access the programme through a computer or mobile devices (e.g. a phone, IPAD). The system can be accessed via Rise, eFundi and the Glide application which make material available once the code has been scanned.

The aim of the Online SLP in Research Design is to build the capabilities of researchers. Capabilities have three components, namely, values, enablement, and efficacy. Through the online SLP, we aim to develop postgraduate students and researchers who value the application of scientific

methods, enable them to develop their competencies and to build their efficacy.

The Online SLP in Research Design utilises a learning ecosystem which is learner-centred and allows self-directed learning. RISE, ignite the SPARK and unlock your research potential through interactive online support and expert guidance. We encourage participants in the SLP to develop and use metacognition when they study. Metacognition entails that students think about how they think and learn. Click [here](#) to see the brochure of the Online SLP in Research Design.

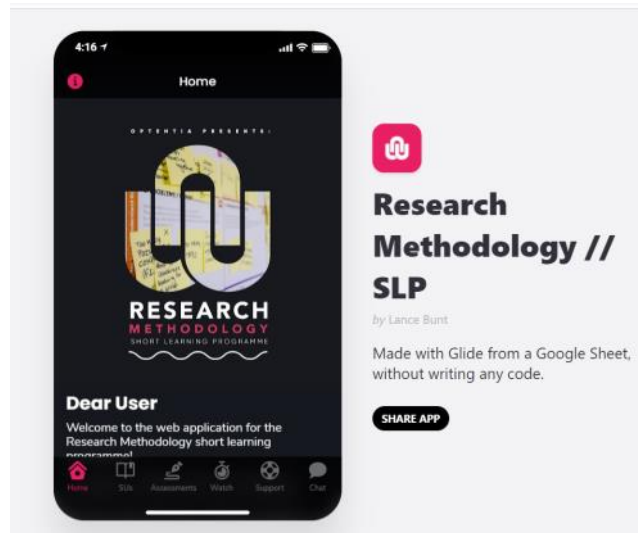
For more information about the Online SLP in Research Design, contact [Lynn Booysen](#).

“... we had to find a way to continue with the development of the capabilities of master's and PhD students and emerging researchers.”

Study Units in the Online SLP in Research Design

The Online Short Learning Programme (SLP) in Research Design consists of 10 study units. Learners have to spend 160 notional hours on the programme. The study units are as follows:

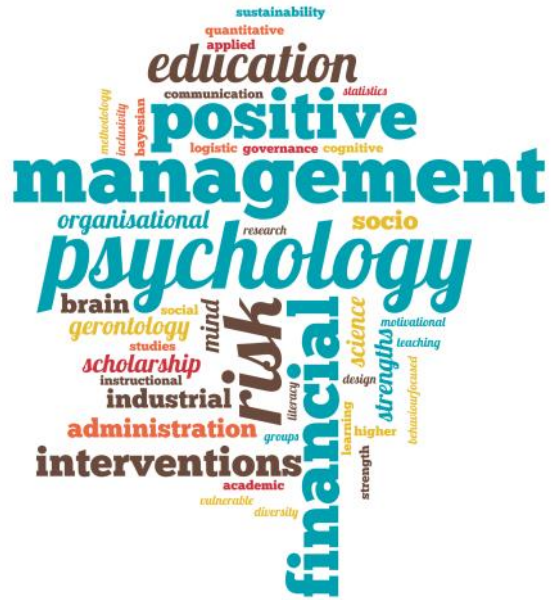
- Study unit 1: Introduction to research, epistemology, philosophy of science and scientific paradigms, research planning, design, and process, and clarifying basic concepts of research.
- Study unit 2: Research entities at universities, multiple disciplinary research and phenomenon-based learning, philosophy of a research entity, and research questions and developing research topics.
- Study unit 3: The research process at the NWU, from interested applicant student to graduate, the academic research process, psychological readiness to engage with master's and PhD studies.
- Study unit 4: Characteristics of good research, the cyclical nature of research, acquiring research language, the research proposal.
- Study unit 5: Literature review and overview, accessing information, processing information (including academic writing), producing information, and referencing.
- Study unit 6: Basic introduction to qualitative research, the qualitative researcher as research instrument, conceptual (methodological) coherence, sampling in qualitative research, data collection and analysis, and trustworthiness in qualitative research.
- Study unit 7: Introduction to quantitative designs, experimental designs, quantitative purpose statement and research question, cross-sectional and longitudinal designs, introduction to statistics, and questionnaire construction and validation.
- Study unit 8: Introduction to mixed methods research, understanding terminology, reasons for mixed methods research, theoretical framework: Socio-ecological model, characteristics of mixed methods research, world-views/paradigms relevant to mixed methods research, key decisions in selecting the appropriate mixed research method, how to formulate (a) research question(s) in mixed research method, types of mixed method research, and data analysis.
- Study unit 9: Quantitative data analysis with JASP, Mplus, R/Rstudio, Excel and Eviews.
- Study unit 10: Publish your research in a journal and communicate your research impactfully.



“Learners have to spend 160 notional hours on the programme.”

Multidisciplinary Team Develop and Online SLP in Research Design

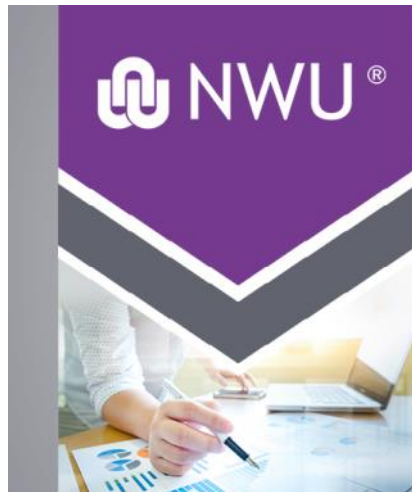
2020, North-West University (NWU) researchers embarked on a journey to create an online short learning programme in research methodology. This journey resulted in the Online Short Learning Programme (SLP) in Research Design. Three considerations played a role in our decision to develop an Online SLP in Research Design. First, we are increasingly recruiting master's and doctoral students from different regions in South Africa (and Africa). Second, COVID-19 and the restrictions on close contact between people made it impossible to present and facilitate contact sessions with post-graduate students. We acknowledged that the online version of the SLP in Research Design could play a vital role in building the capabilities of learners who cannot attend workshops at NWU campuses. But there was a third reason for the development of the Online SLP in Research Design. The COVID-19 pandemic allowed NWU researchers from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds to use and develop their capabilities to create an innovative learning ecosystem.



We reflected on various critical aspects of online learning during a webinar in June 2020. We unpacked online learning and the benefits and barriers that exist in an online environment. In broad, online learning is learning that happens in a virtual environment. It is important to remember that online learning is a mode of delivery, a manner of delivering education to participants, not a particular method of teaching. Online learning is further evidence of pedagogical strategies for in-

struction, student engagement, and assessment that are specific to learning in a virtual environment. The secret in a virtual environment is to be able to 'TEACH' online and to actively engage students to support the transfer of learning within a course and across real-world contexts. Subsequently, online learning is not a platform for only posting announcements, availing teaching and learning material and resources, and making assessments available.

“The Online SLP in Research Design utilises a learner-centred ecosystem that allows self-directed learning.”



Online Short Learning Programme (SLP) in

Research Design

Advances in research methods, data collection and statistical software have substantially increased our ability to conduct rigorous research. The SLP in Research Design at the North-West University utilises a learning ecosystem which is learner-centred and allows self-directed learning. RISE, ignite the SPARK and unlock your research potential through interactive online support and expert guidance.

Training: Longitudinal Structural Equation Modelling - Mplus

At Optentia we are excited about two workshops on longitudinal structural equation modelling with Mplus that will be presented from February 2021 by Prof. Christian Geiser.

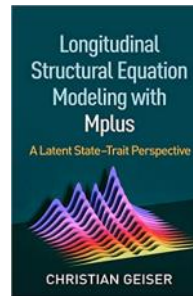
The first workshop is scheduled for 4-6 February 2021. Day 1 and 2 of the workshop (which will take place through Zoom) are divided into two 2-hour sessions per day and a one-hour question-and-answer session at the end of each day. The following topics will be addressed:

- Overview of latent state-trait theory, basic (multiple-indicator) longitudinal CFA models, and measurement invariance testing (2 hours).
- Autoregressive/Cross-lagged Models (2 hours).
- Latent state-trait models (2 hours).
- Latent change score and growth curve models (2 hours).

The second workshop includes the same lectures but is asynchronous, which means that participants could access the course lectures and materials at any time, as many times as they need, over the course of one year. Prof. Geiser will provide syntax, data files, and play-by-play demonstrations of each technique. At the end of the workshop, Prof. Geiser will meet with the participants for two hours. This workshop has the advantage that it is flexible. Also, eventually, he plans to have complete materials for both of his Mplus books available in case participants are interested in purchasing further courses beyond the topics later on.



Prof. Christian Geiser



The asynchronous longitudinal course above (as well as a basic introduction to Mplus course) will be available by end January 2021.

Dr. Christian Geiser is a Professor of Quantitative Psychology at Utah State University and author of two books on the Mplus software package. With his accessible books and sought-after workshops, he has helped thou-

sands of researchers and students around the world to achieve their analytic goals.

“The second workshop includes the same lectures but is asynchronous.”



A New Website for the World Database of Happiness

The World Database of Happiness is a 'finding archive'. It stores research findings on happiness in the sense of the 'enjoyment of one's life-as-a-whole'. Research findings are described on electronic 'pages' in a standard format and terminology. Currently, the archive contains some 35000 such pages, which can be selected on subject, people investigated and methodology. The new website is equipped with powerful search functions.



Prof. Ruut Veenhoven

“Currently, the archive contains some 35000 such pages, which can be selected on subject, people investigated and methodology.”

WORLD DATABASE OF HAPPINESS
 ARCHIVE OF RESEARCH FINDINGS ON SUBJECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF LIFE
 ▶ This database ▶ Collections ▶ Search ▶ Reports ▶ Related ▶ Research Field ▶ FAQs ▶ About us ▶ Join us

What is this World Database of Happiness

The World Database of Happiness (WDoH) is an archive of research findings on subjective enjoyment of one's life-as-a-whole. Next to a bibliography of scientific publications on this subject, the WDoH provides standardized abstracts of research findings. Two kinds of findings are involved: 1) 'distributional findings' on how happy people are in particular times and places and 2) 'correlational findings' on the things that go together with more or less happiness. The WDoH allows an overview of the otherwise nebulous research literature by a) limiting to a clearly defined concept of happiness (life satisfaction), b) presenting the available findings in a standard format and terminology and c) providing fine-grained classifications by means of which users can find their way in the growing mass of happiness facts. The WDoH is available free of charge for everybody, all over the world.

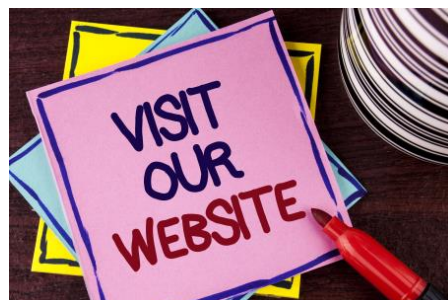
How to search in this source

RESEARCH LITERATURE ON SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING
 Selection on concept
 14879 PUBLICATIONS IN BIBLIOGRAPHY
 Selection on valid measurement
 Extraction of research findings

HOW HAPPY PEOPLE ARE
 17555 DISTRIBUTIONAL FINDINGS

WHAT GOES TOGETHER WITH HAPPINESS
 20031 CORRELATIONAL FINDINGS

EHEBO
 the Netherlands Director: Ruut Veenhoven
 in membership organization EHEBO of Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam
 The World Database of Happiness is based at research department



[World Database of Happiness](#)

PhD Studies during the Pandemic *by* Tessa de Wet

The year 2020 has been strange us. We had to think differently about how we do things. In my world, there were a few contrasting energies that vied for attention, of which two stand out for me – that of grinding to a halt (my emotional side), and that of embracing opportunity (my thinking side). Both these sides have been mobilising forces that influenced the way this year played out in my household.

For me, as a PhD student who was supposed to start collecting data in secondary schools, this meant putting my hopes of a 2021 finish on the back burner. Part of me wanted to sit back and ‘embrace’ the paralysis that may come with deferred plans. Still, another part realised that this was an opportunity to make contact in ways that would previously have been seen as “second best” and start building ‘remote’ relationships with the necessary stakeholders in the schools. The question for me was: how can I be present at schools without being able to be there physically? Prof. Ian supported me in making a video presentation to send to all the schools, and my telephone became my new best friend in making follow-up calls. I have

developed a renewed appreciation for technology (and those who can use it constructively). Also, being a researcher at heart, it afforded me a remote (informal ethnographic) glimpse into the dynamics happening at schools and how their management was dealing with the outflows of the Covid-19 pandemic. This provided insight into how schools function and also how respondents might perceive academics’ expectations. I had a whole range of responses to my request for research participation, ranging from being blown off in an instant, to being accommodated despite the challenges these schools had. It has been an insightful learning experience. 2020 turned out to be as much (if not more) of a learning year through my PhD studies than had I been able to proceed as initially planned.

However, this time of remote communication also made me realise that there is no replacement for personal presence in, attention to and understanding for the context of the organisations we research. The capability approach (the framework of my research) became real for me in understanding conversion factors and liberties.



Tessa de Wet

I take my hat off to any academic institution that kept going throughout this time – including the Optentia Research Focus Area. Thank you to Prof. Ian and all the staff who kept us motivated and progressing despite many reasons not to do so. Thank you to all my study peers who kept contact during this time. Let us look forward to 2021 as another year that may bring more challenges, but where we keep learning as we go.

“... this time of remote communication also made me realise that there is no replacement for personal presence in, attention to and understanding for the context of the organisations we research.”



No Longer a Could, but a Must *by* Anjonet Jordaan

This year will surely be remembered for how it thrust us all out of our comfort zones, both at home and at work (which was also at home). The year seemed to start normal enough and a number of us had barely completed a visit to Namibian universities, state departments and companies when the lockdown was announced by President Ramaphosa in March 2020.

We soon realised that the lockdown is less of a safari and more like Survivor Earth and that the usual way of doing things doesn't really apply. While this came with its share of frustrations, it also freed up many of us to put together project proposals that in the past we may have passed up on because we could not get all members of the project team around a table to discuss it in time.

This year we worked on a mobility grant application with colleagues from several universi-



Dr Zandri Dickason, Dr Rachele Paver, Prof. Ansie Fouche, Anjonet Jordaan, Prof. Mirna Nel and Sibusiso Mnxuma

ties in Africa and with the help of the university's research support office. We also ventured into newer territory by applying for an innovative opportunity provided by Data.org to use big data in a project. Both are projects we in the past may have opted to wait for the next opportunity due to time and logistics. We got both applications in, even if it was a bit of bumpy ride to get there.

The point is that the restrictions that came into place with the COVID-19 lockdown in

South Africa and elsewhere in the world created limited means and opportunity to get things done, but it also limited the reasons not to. We could either make no progress in our research during 2020, or we could get creative and move outside our usual modes of operation. So, while this year certainly delivered its stress and hardships, it also challenged us to advance forward no matter the circumstance, thereby proving to us that we could.

“This year we worked on a mobility grant application with colleagues from several universities in Africa.”

COVID19-response by Optentia Extraordinary Professors

Prof. Johnny Strijdom and Umar Diop finalised the African Union Comprehensive Socio-economic and Environmental Response to the COVID-19 pandemic that was shared with the UN Secretary General by the AU Commission Chairperson on 19 November 2020. They will also coordinate its implementation by Member States at the AU Commission in 2021. The social policy pillars of Social Agenda 2063 constituted the framework for the Comprehensive Response to mitigate the secondary social, economic and environmental impacts and vul-

nerabilities resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, investment in keeping the African family together, in gender equality, social protection and basic societal amenities will have a “domino effect” to achieve outcomes in the other five (5) social policy pillars of Social Agenda 2063, namely quality and inclusive education, good health and well-being, sufficient and nutritious food, formal labour markets and entrepreneurship, and in promoting informal and rural economies. Social Agenda 2063 was adopted by the AU Executive



Council at its 36th Session in February 2020 and it illuminates the social development investments required to achieve AU Agenda 2063, which is the strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of the continent over the next decades.

Promoting Social Interaction and Inclusivity

The FRIEND-SHIP project started in September 2019 with the aim to promote social participation and inclusive education through a fully researcher-supervised intervention programme. A comparative desk research on previously conducted programmes of social participation in schools has been already conducted. Read the report on the website to get detailed information on success factors for students' social participation!

Peer relationships play an important role in student's school well-being. However, it can be demanding for teachers to gain insight into classroom networks. Therefore, the FRIEND-SHIP Electronic Tool was developed to support teachers to learn more about their students' relationships. The tool is a technical innovation that presents students' social contacts in an easy, quick and applicable way using an electronic device. The students rate the relationships, their contacts and their feelings of closeness to peers in their class. These ratings are used to create a 'FRIEND-SHIP-network' in the respective class which allows the teacher to review these relationships at a glance. Subsequently, after using this tool, teachers can



Follow us on [ResearchGate](#), stay updated and share our project!

classify the degree of inclusion or exclusion in terms of relationships in class and can apply different activities. In this way, students' inclusion – also of those with low levels of social participation – is strengthened. The upcoming FRIEND-SHIP intervention programme (2021) will also work to achieve this goal.

The FRIEND-SHIP tool also serves as a contribution to the promotion of teachers' digital competences – a skill for which time often lacks in everyday teacher life. The tool is available

on the website and handled as an open access resource (OER - Open Educational Resource) together with instructions and a user guide. We aimed to programme and design a sustainable tool to fit the target group of primary and secondary school teachers.

“Peer relationships play an important role in student's school well-being.”



<https://friendship.univie.ac.at/>

2020: Success Despite Turbulence *by* Dr Leoni van der Vaart

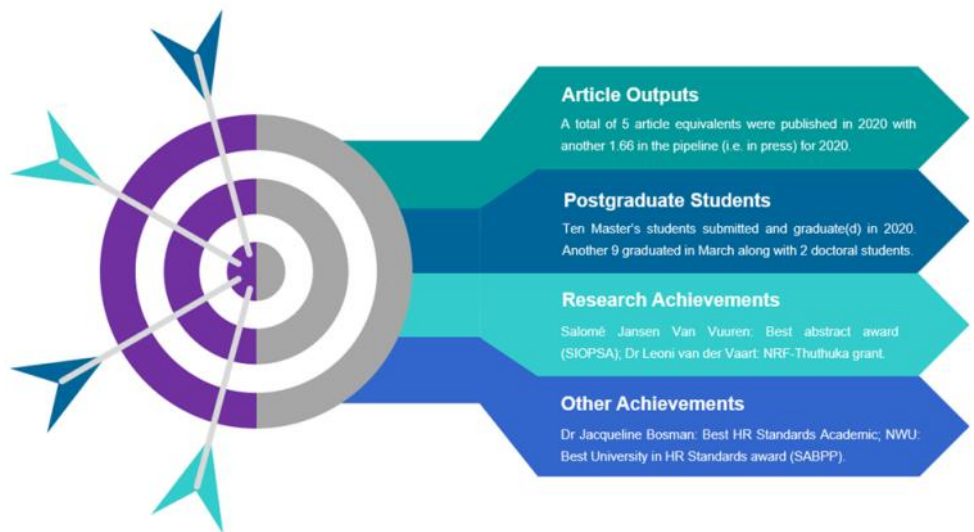
On 1 January 2020 none of us could have imagined the world as we know it now. Although some of our Northern counterparts were already battling COVID-19 and most of us knew we would probably not escape the wrath of the virus, none of us probably could have predicted the impact of the virus on our work (and personal) lives. From the time the first case was officially recorded in

South Africa in March until today, our ways of working have changed considerably. It is along the lines of Charles Darwin ('it is the species that is the most adaptable to change who survive') and Floyd Mayweather, Jr. ('a true champion can survive anything') that we are grateful to share in the successes of the staff and students of the School of Industrial Psychology and Human Re-

source Management (Vanderbijlpark Campus). The resilience and adaptability of these champions are commendable.

As research and Flourishing Institutions programme leader, I would like to congratulate the team and thank Optentia for the role that the research entity (continue to) play(s) in enabling us to achieve these 'functionings'.

“... a true champion can survive anything.”



Enabling Research: Views of Emerging Researchers *by* Dr L. van der Vaart

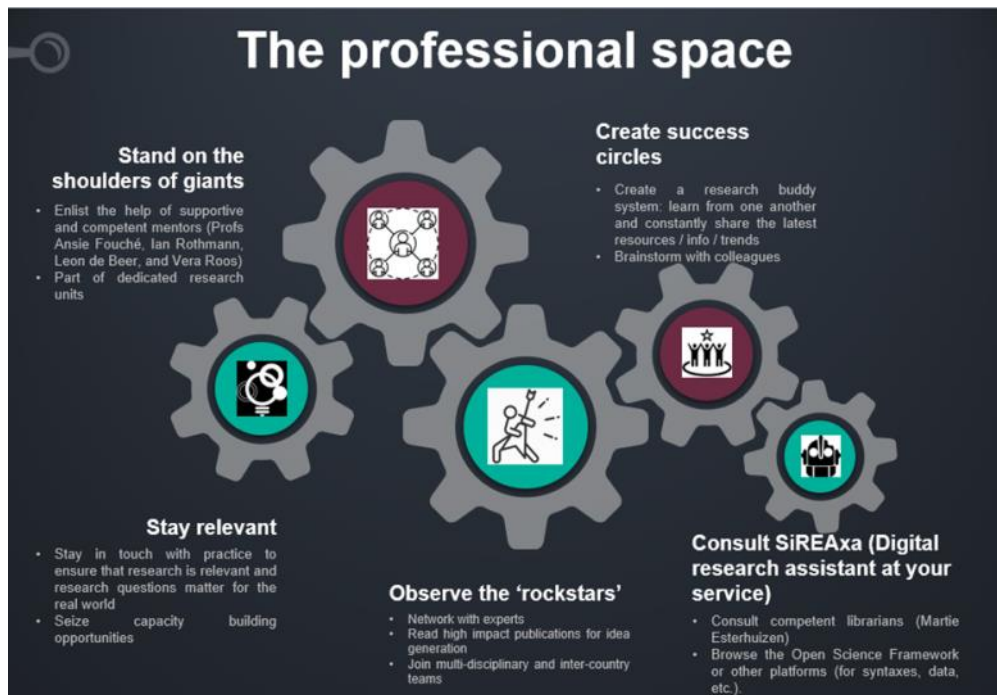
In the current edition of the newsletter, the characteristics of gritty researchers were shared. Adding to this article, a couple of emerging stars at Optentia and WorkWell shared their enablers with us in the hope that it will

inspire postgraduate students who are currently in academia or who aspire to join the academic sphere.

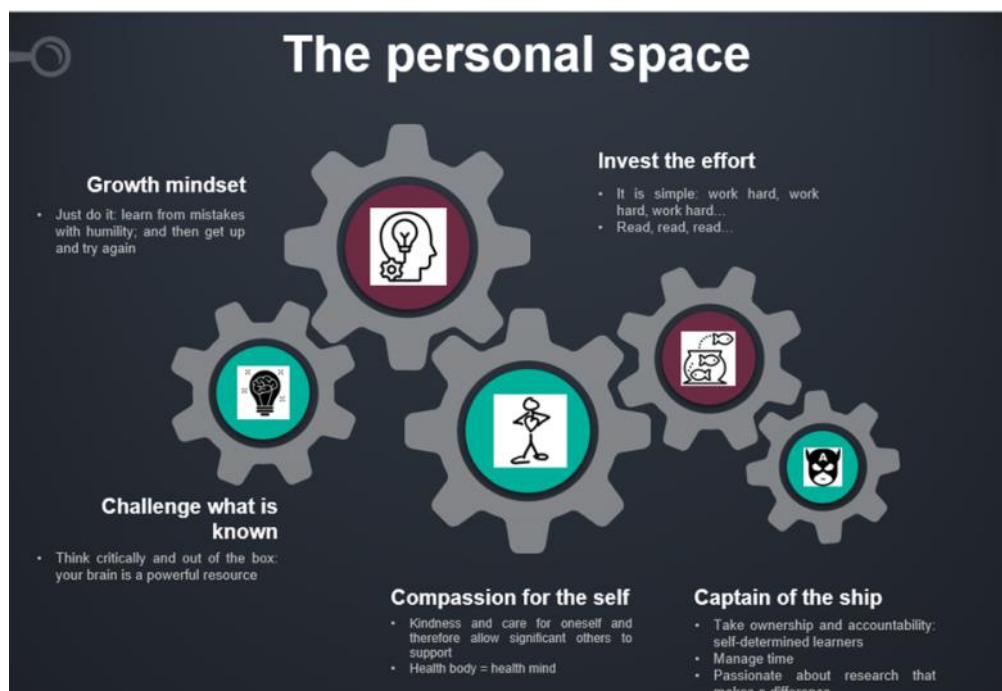
Below are the interconnected professional and personal enablers connecting emerging re-

search stars with long-term successes.

Thank you Elmien Truter, Leon de Beer, Llewellyn van Zyl, Tamlynn Jefferis, and Zandri Dickason for your input.



“... a couple of emerging stars at Optentia and WorkWell shared their enablers with us ...”



Quality of Life Research: Learning from Prof. Valeri Moller

Prof. Valeri Moller, Professor Emeritus of Quality of Life Studies at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa visited Optentia on 21 October 2020. Valerie, who studied at the University of Zurich, Switzerland has lived and worked in Southern Africa since 1972. Together with the late Prof. Lawrence Schlemmer she developed the first survey instruments to measure objective and subjective well-being among South Africans from all walks of life.

Prof. Moller shared her experiences about quality of life research in Africa. Quality of life refers to the general well-being of individuals and societies. It consists of the expectations of an individual or society for a good life. These expectations are guided by the values, goals context in which people live. Life satisfaction refers to an individual's evaluation of his or her life, varying from a good life to a bad life. She also shared prospects for future research during a roundtable discussion.

Good quality of life research is critical for the future success of societies. O'Neill et al. (2018) point out that the combined effects of a few social and institutional factors such as social support, generosity, freedom to make life choices, and



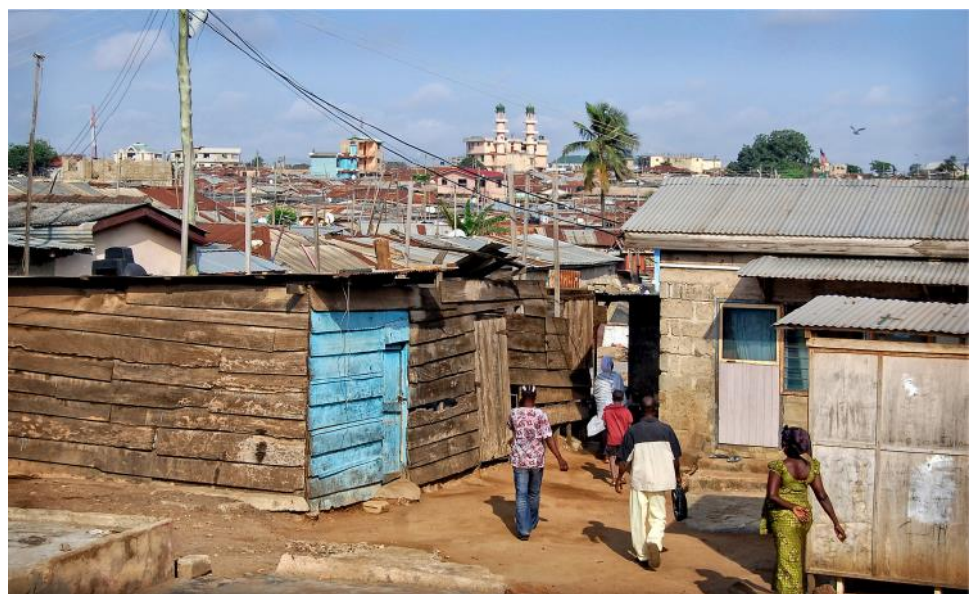
Christiaan Bekker, Prof. Jaco Hoffman, Fred Goede, Prof. Ian Rothmann, Prof. Chrizanne van Eeden, Prof. Valeri Moller and Prof. Vera Roos

absence of corruption explain a substantial amount of the variation in life satisfaction among countries. O'Neill et al. (2018) suggest that if all people are to lead a good life within planetary boundaries, then the level of resource use associated with meeting basic needs must be dramatically reduced. They suggest that sustainable development goals should shift the agenda away from growth towards an economic model where the goal is sustainable and equitable human well-being. They suggest that given the high resource use associated with goals such as life satisfaction, these goals may be better pursued using non-material means.

[Click here to watch an interview with Prof. Moller](#)



“Good quality of life research is critical for the future success of societies.”



Optentia Participants Appointed as Associate Professors

A total of three individuals who have been affiliated with Optentia in 2020 were promoted to Associate Professors from 1 January 2021. The three new Associate Professors are Dr Zandri Dickason (Risk Management), Dr Jacques Rothmann (Sociology) and Dr Leoni van der Vaart (Industrial Psychology). Congratulations Zandri, Jacques and Leoni!



Dr Leoni van der Vaart



Dr Zandri Dickason



Dr Jacques Rothmann

Prof. Jaco Hoffman Promoted to Full Professor

Prof. Jaco Hoffman is promoted to Full Professor of Socio Gerontology from 1 January 2021. Prof. Jaco holds a C1 rating from the National Research Foundation (NRF) and is recognised as a forerunner in the field of Socio Gerontology in South Africa. Prof. Hoffman enjoys national and considerable international recognition. Nationally, he is an Honorary Professor in the Department of Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Cape Town and co-director, with Prof. Se-

bastiana Kalula at UCT, of the International Longevity Centre (ILC) in South Africa which is a member of the ILC – Global Alliance, a network of 17 institutions internationally, directly benefiting the NWU. His work on ageing in Africa contributes to the mainstreaming of ageing as a new field of research in Africa due to his substantial international and pan-African (multidisciplinary) networks and involvement in issues of global ageing (Africa was only officially acknowledged



Prof. Jaco Hoffman

as a region of the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics, [IAGG] in 2012).

“Prof. Hoffman enjoys national and considerable international recognition.”

Dr Elmien Truter Obtained a National Research Foundation Rating

Dr Elmien Truter is a registered social worker and senior lecturer in Social work at the North-West University's (NWU) Vanderbijlpark campus. She recently attained NRF Y2 rating.

Dr Elmien's journey in academia started in 2011 when she was offered a bursary to study full time for a year towards a PhD at the NWU. After a year of full time studies, she continued on a part-time basis and returned to full time practice in 2012 in Kimberley, Northern Cape where she was an area manager for several offices that delivered child pro-

tection services. In 2013 she was appointed as a social work lecturer at the NWU Vanderbijlpark Campus and completed her PhD in 2013 and graduated in 2014). Since entering academia full time in 2013, she has continued to practice as a child protection social worker on a part time basis. Her research focuses on child abuse and the position of child protection social workers and specifically with regards to the risks and resilience of child protection social workers.



Dr Elmien Truter

Managing Article Rejection: A Guide for PhD Students

“Well-being and academic perseverance cannot coexist simultaneously”, this was one of the main arguments and findings presented by Schmidt and Hansson (2018, p. 11) in a recent literature review on Doctoral Students’ well-being. Although a harsh statement to accept, there is a magnitude of research showing the prevalence of mental health problems of PhD students. Research shows that they present with higher levels of mental health problems than those reported in any other highly educated population (Levecque et al., 2017), that 50% of all PhD students actively experience psychological distress, and at least 33.33% are at risk of the onset of serious (long term) psychopathological disorders (Levecque et al., 2017; Marais et al., 2018; Sverdlik et al., 2018). This is because PhD students’ place more emphasis on academic achievement/performance, than on managing their well-being (Lonka,

2013; Shavers & Moore, 2014).

These self-deprecating performance-mindsets are fuelled by many factors such as peer-pressure, social-comparison, frequent performance evaluations, a heavy workload, high pressure to publish, tight deadlines, financial difficulties, poor relations with supervisors, and constant changes to project plans to name a few (Lonka et al., 2019). But why do these factors affect PhD students “more” than the general working population (who are also faced with similar job-related demands, and lack of resources)? Well, system psychodynamics suggest that this is because PhD students’ identity are tied to their “work” and that there is little distinction between the “task” (i.e. the thesis or the function) and the person (Cilliers, 2017). Given this amalgamation of the task and the identity, it’s not surprising that when a PhD student submits an article for publication (i.e. submitting

a ‘part of themselves’ for evaluation) and it gets rejected, it negatively affects not only their perception of their performance but also their perception of self, their health and their wellbeing. Unfortunately, PhD students do not necessarily have all the “tools” available to assist in managing the psychological consequences of this ultimate... rejection.

Given that I am no expert in this domain, I approached 21 of my highly esteemed, trusted colleagues for their input. I posed one simple question: “What is the one most important strategy/tip you could suggest to help young researchers manage the impact of rejections from a journal on their mental health?” Click [here](#) to see the responses of the participants as well as the reference list.

“... there is a magnitude of research showing the prevalence of mental health problems of PhD students.”

New Book on Grit

Prof. Llewellyn van Zyl and Dr Leoni van der Vaart of the Optentia Research Focus Area (together with Prof. Chantal Olckers from the University of Pretoria) recently submitted the final manuscript of the above-mentioned publication to Springer. Originally conceptualised by Duckworth et al. (2007) as a non-cognitive trait associated with the perseverance and passion for long term goals, Grit has shown to be an important explanatory factor in achievement theory as a means to explain why some individuals with lower levels of externally perceived “talent” tend to perform better than their highly cognitively gifted counterparts. Research has shown that gritty individuals are more engaged,

motivated, happier, healthier, and more successful than those who report low levels of grit. Further, grit has also shown to result in various positive team, family, organisation and societal outcomes. As such, it is not surprising that popular media hailed Grit as “the new gold standard” for predicting life, school, career, and job-related success. However, despite its widespread popularity within mass-media and the popular psychology press, academic studies on Grit is still in its infancy. The purpose of this book is to address these challenges through providing a platform to curate contemporary theories of grit, to discuss ways in which it could be rigorously measured and developed, to investigate its

relationship with performance-related metrics and to collate the collective criticisms of grit. This book aimed to provide a comprehensive and balanced perspective on grit with the intent to effectively advance the science of achievement.

The title of the new book is “Perspectives on Grit: Contemporary theories, assessments, applications and critiques.” The authors hope that this book will stimulate further scientific debate on Grit and empower gritty researchers to not shy away from criticisms or critiques, but to actively embrace them”. They are looking forward to sharing this publication with academics and practitioners!

Article Rejection: A Guide for PhD Students

If you are still reading this, you may ask yourself “Why did Llewellyn ask these specific people for their input? And “What makes them qualified to talk about the mental health of young researchers?” Besides the fact that combined they have more than 1800 publications, 38 peer-reviewed books, and supervised too many students to even count, these researchers have embodied what I believe to be a growth mindset. Despite all their job demands, work pressure, challenges, and article rejections, these extraordinary individuals are highly productive and are flourishing in their work. So, what makes these individuals different? They embody the following characteristics:

- They are gritty. They have a deep connection to the content of their research, and specialisation area and see the proverbial bigger picture. This helps them push through even the most difficult of times.
- They love what they do. They are bursting with energy when they talk about their projects, their students and their latest ventures. The “live” their work!
- They are competent and curious. They engage in projects that are aligned to their current level of skills and capabilities. They ask questions and are always eager to learn.
- They invest in their development. They invest in enhancing both their personal and professional skills and abilities.
- They work in collaborative teams. They work in collaborative teams with complementary strengths, shared values and mutual interests.
- They have broad networks which span disciplines, institutions and continents. This broad network provides a basis to both source the skills needed to aid in completing a particular project or to help manage the emotional demands that go along with work. Broad networks also create new opportunities to learn and to view things from different perspectives.
- They show a willingness to ask for help. They show a willingness to ask for help when they are stuck, or if things become too much to manage. They can show vulnerability and know that its ok to do so.
- They are specialists. They are specialists in a given domain and have in-depth knowledge into their respective topics. Their names become synonymous with the topic.
- They create opportunities for and give unconditionally of themselves to others. They actively invest in the professional development of others. They actively share their skills and expertise with others and create opportunities for them to grow.
- They work on meaningful projects that matter. They dream big and aim high. They work on projects that have real-world impact, and that are personally meaningful to them.
- They have multiple mentors. They have mentors in different domains that aids them in their professional growth and development.
- They embody the principles of lifelong learning. They continuously strive to upskill and develop themselves.
- They are able to use and live out their strengths at work. Probably one of the most important characteristics is that they can use their strengths at work and in their projects.
- They accept that they aren’t perfect!



Prof. Llewellyn van Zyl

Being a young researcher is difficult. There is, unfortunately, no one-size-fits-all model for dealing with academic pressure nor for managing the impact that an article rejection has on one’s mental health. Individuals need to determine their own path and design their own strategies to deal with the strain that is inherent to our type of work. These strategies need to provide them with opportunities to live out their strengths in their work but also create a solid social support network comprise of peers and mentors.

Surrounding yourself with a group of supportive people who always support your crazy ideas/ventures, who mentors you in areas you are not quite competent in, who is willing to listen to and swear at the editor along with you, makes the burden so much easier to bare. But remember: your mental health is YOUR responsibility and that it should always take president over any and all other matters.

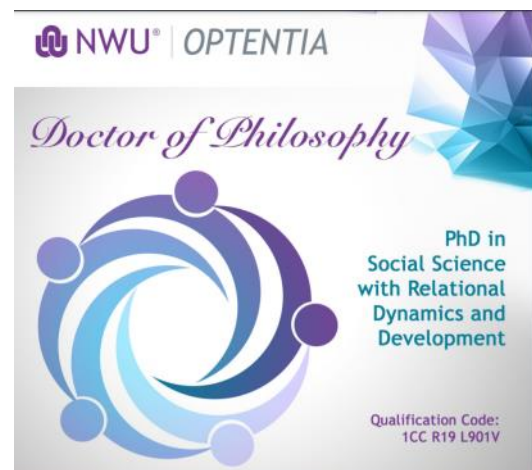
“... your mental health is YOUR responsibility and that it should always take president over any and all other matters.”

Two New Multidisciplinary PhDs in the Optentia

From 2021, the NWU Optentia will implement two multidisciplinary PhDs. Both PhD qualifications are in the social sciences.

- PhD (Social Science with Relational Dynamics and Development) - Coordinator: Prof. Vera Roos. Given the uncertain time in which humanity finds itself, people and communities are desperate to address the basic need of belonging and connectedness. However, we witness accounts of a lack of ethical and respectful relational interactions across the globe almost on a daily basis – high and shockingly severe incidents of gender-based aggression, xenophobic attacks, domestic violence, and inter-racial intolerance. This PhD aims to make a significant contribution to the advancement and contextual understanding of transferrable knowledge of relational dynamics and its developmental aspects across the spectrum of diversity (for example, different languages, ages, genders, and so on) and on multiple levels (for example, interpersonal, intergenerational, communal, work, and/or broader societal).
- PhD (Social Science with Ageing and Development) - Coordinator: Prof. Jaco Hoffman. The lack of evidence and knowledge on which to build a nuanced understanding of ageing in SSA and for policy and programmatic impact points to the vital need for enhanced research on ageing, poverty, and development in SSA (a) to act as a catalyst to promote and

“From 2021, the NWU Optentia will implement two multidisciplinary PhDs.”



inform policy development and (b) to enable Africa to gain a fuller understanding of the ageing-related social processes that shape the development of its individuals, families, and societies. This research-oriented PhD in Social Science (Ageing and Development) is a first in Africa and aims to explore issues of individual and population ageing in relation to development in (South) Africa from multidisciplinary perspectives. The purpose is to equip students from a variety of disciplines to develop a comprehensive understanding of the causes, dynamics, and implications of individual and societal ageing in order

for them to promote the well-being and quality of life of older people, meet older people’s present and projected needs, enable older people to remain in their own communities for as long as possible, and apply new knowledge to plan and implement appropriate interventions, activities, and proposals in complex contexts such as HIV/Aids, poverty, and changing family dynamics.

Practical Wisdom *by* Dr Marij Bontemps and Prof. Andries Baart

On October 26, 2020 Marij Bontemps successfully defended her PhD-thesis on practical wisdom in Utrecht (NL). Although her research was focused on Dutch hospital care, the relevance of her findings is much broader than the Global North or the domain of care. It pertains to the very essence of all professionalism in care, welfare, and social service: the competence to discern in the midst of mighty powers, systemic blindness and culturally taken for granted conventions what is morally right to do and to practically aim at it.

Medical craftsmanship, she stated, is based on scientific knowledge, evidence, and long experience, further on numerous rules and guidelines, and on sophisticated technology. Still, these achievements are not enough to give good medical care to each individual patient, especially not in current societal complexities. Why? Firstly, because these accomplishments are focused primarily on quantifiable efficacy; that is why they obscure what is (morally) good to do or not to do in specific cases. Secondly, because these general competences frequently conflict with prudently fine-tuning to individual patients in their specific contexts. Thirdly, medical care is no longer exclusively provided by individual caregivers nowadays, but predominantly by teams and in networks. Lastly, because health care and social organisations give priority to efficiency, smooth logistics and significant market share over 'good care'. Practical wisdom is the capability to discern and to do the good, notwithstanding the complexity of current health care.

In the theoretical part of the PhD-thesis one finds the cartography of the concept 'practical wisdom'. In the various empirical research of this thesis everyday medical practices in a general hospital are carefully observed and analysed. The study demonstrates that practical wisdom is indispensable to enact good medical care in networks. It shows the multiple faces of practical wisdom in daily medical practices and it reveals what influences are supporting or inhibiting the emergence of practical wisdom. It clearly demonstrates what happens to care when practical wisdom is absent or, by contrast, flourishes. It describes learning processes in which the practice of practical wisdom are encouraged.

Based on the results of the observations, the researcher ar-

gues for introducing, developing and fostering practical wisdom not only in medical practices, but also in other professional fields, such as nursing, social work, management, governance, law and politics.

The PhD-thesis: Marij Bontemps-Hommen (2020), Practical wisdom: The vital core of professionalism in medical practices. Free downloadable from <http://hdl.handle.net/11439/3746>. Supervisors: Prof. Frans Vosman † and Prof. Andries Baart. Marij Bontemps-Hommen is a retired pediatrician and the former CEO of St Jansdal Hospital, Harderwijk, the Netherlands.

E-mail address:
CML.Bontemps@stjansdal.nl

“Practical wisdom is the capability to discern and to do the good, notwithstanding the complexity of current health care.”

Practical wisdom: The vital core of professionalism in medical practices



Marij Bontemps-Hommen

Master's in Industrial/Organisational Psychology

We are yet again at the end of another academic year, and what a year it has been. In the blink of an eye we became online learning facilitators. Despite the challenges of emergency remote learning, we managed to complete the academic year and to add value to the lives of our students. Here is what some of our students had to say about their journeys as Master's students:



Hein Pretorius, Ivan Putter, Tinieke Kruger, Marelie Botha, Jennerdene Rubi Nunan, Nazira Jooma, Marilie Viljoen

"In the blink of an eye we became online learning facilitators."

Supportive

"I went through a lot of personal development and was impressed with the amount of support from the lecturers and Optentia. Excellent programme!"

Relevance

"The practical application and relevance of the course to the actual industry out there has really provided me with immeasurable value and experience."

Gratifying

"Completing my master's degree with NWU, especially during the tumultuous year of 2020, was truly an unforgettable, yet gratifying experience."

Stretching

"This has been one of the most fulfilling and stretching experiences of my life. I have learned a lot about myself and the IOP profession in the last 2 years and can certainly confirm that I have become a better version of myself."



Enriching

"My master's year pushed me to my personal and professional limits, and I have never been more grateful. I've learned a lot and emerged an enriched person from this experience."

Eye-opening

"The Master's programme is an eye-opening experience, personally and professionally. I think the year 2020 and the programme itself has crafted future IP's that will contribute uniquely to the field and training of other professionals."

Life changing

"Masters was a life changing experience, not only professionally but personally as well. The support from lecturers and colleagues has been incredible. It's a personal journey that is rewarding and brought out my best version."

Teaching and Learning in Postgraduate Research

Universities are producers of knowledge. For this reason, amongst others, postgraduate studies in higher education mainly focus on the research ability of students with an emphasis on research integrity. In literature, the importance of research in teaching and learning is widely acknowledged and researched, but not vice versa. There is a lack of studies emphasising the importance of teaching and learning in postgraduate studies and research. It is vital to regard the teaching and learning component in research where considerations of academic integrity versus research integrity are often undervalued. Research integrity commonly refers to research ethics in general, whereas academic integrity goes beyond ethics. Generally, there is a strong link between the notion of academic integrity and various forms of academic misconduct, such as plagiarism and cheating. However, academic integrity is instead concerned with building the foundation needed to succeed in the academic context (i.e. proactive over reactive practices). In this context, the proactive element of academic integrity would argue that teaching and learning (including pedagogical approaches and assessment) becomes the essential partner in promoting academic integrity; which, in turn, empowers student research.

Students have difficulties with academic writing on multiple levels. Research has proven that students face challenges with implementing higher-order thinking skills, these skills include negotiating, assimilating, understanding, embracing, interacting and engaging with academic dis-

course in all its diversity. It follows that a holistic approach needs to be developed to address a range of academic writing and learning skills deficit amongst students. These skills include, but are not limited to, time management, the ability to interpret and understand assignment instructions, processing and presenting information, intuitive source integration, paraphrasing, and formulating an argument. Addressing skills deficit implies that policymakers need to provide the necessary structures to promote a culture of academic integrity. Therefore, on the basis of consulting relevant literature, the researchers, as part of a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) research project at North-West University (NWU), are exploring to what extent these aspects of academic acculturation are present, how they are being taught, and how they are being applied in the teaching and learning context.

To this end, the researchers will conduct a study to measure the level of academic integrity maturity across our institution by administering a survey to measure aspects of academic integrity. These aspects are primarily informed by research done by the late Don McCabe, regarded as the father of academic integrity. He developed ten principles for academic integrity, which are widely used as the basis for academic integrity promotion. These principles speak of the three-phased approach of successful academic writing (i.e. completing an academic essay), specifically pre-writing, writing, and post-writing. The researchers intend first to investigate whether students are



Dr Mariette Fourie

taught how to conduct task analysis, planning, research, reading, and the writing process. Secondly, the researchers will survey the writing process. Lastly, the researchers investigate how/whether students receive feedback to improve future academic writing practices. Preliminary data suggest that various interventions have to be implemented across the spectrum. These interventions include training on assessment practices and the monitoring of academic misconduct. As a result, an NWU Academic Integrity Maturity (NWU AIM) model is under development which will provide "academic integrity indicators", which will inform practitioners and policymakers on how to promote a culture of academic integrity at the NWU.

The researchers hope to expand on the importance of the teaching and learning component in postgraduate education by aiming to conduct further research to highlight the aspirations of how this approach could enhance quality research outputs at the NWU.

Authors:

Dr Mariette Fourie and Mr Zander Janse van Rensburg

"Research has proven that students face challenges with implementing higher-order thinking skills ..."

Educational Leadership Award for Prof. Bruce Thyer

Distinguished Research Professor Bruce Thyer was recently awarded a 2020 Educational Leadership Award by the Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education in Social Work (GADE). The organization, comprised of social work doctoral program directors worldwide who represent member universities, promotes excellence in social work doctoral education. Click [here](#) to read more.

The research interest of Prof. Thyer, an extraordinary professor at Optentia, are as follows: Evidence-Based Practice, Mental Health, Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Program Evaluation, Research Methods, Social Work Practice, and Substance Use and Abuse.



Prof. Bruce Thyer

Inclusive Home-Learning by Prof. Susanne Schwab

“... 75% of university teachers think that they can combine learning content.”

Due to the closure of educational institutions because of COVID-19 in Austria, the project Inclusive Home-Learning (INCL-LEA) was started under the direction of Prof. Dr. Susanne Schwab in April 2020 at the University of Vienna. It was examined to what extent the conversion of classroom teaching to distance learning meets the requirements of inclusive education.

Central results of INCL-LEA-HE (Inclusive Home-Learning Higher Education) are that 75% of university teachers think that they can combine learning content, didactics and digital media appropriately. They see limitations of online tools as disadvantages, especially in interactive seminars. Results of the student survey show that social inequalities have tended to increase as a result of COVID-19 and that students have problems with motivating themselves for distance learning.

Results of INCL-LEA-T (Inclusive Home-Learning Teachers) are that on average about 9.6% of the teachers' students

have no and about 26.1% rather insufficient opportunities to follow instruction from home. The percentage of students with inadequate digital equipment was significantly higher in classes with students who had little knowledge of the instruction language and in special education classes. The lack of social contact is seen as a major challenge in the course of school closure. Furthermore, teachers stated that the development of students in distance learning also depended on the received support from their parents. 40.4% of teachers rather agreed that they personally feel strongly burdened during distance learning. As an advantage, teachers reported that they were increasingly considering the individual situation of their students. (246 words)

Members of the project team: Susanne Schwab, Katharina-Theresa Lindner, Katharina Resch, Julia Kast, Rupert Corazza, Marie Gitschthaler, Alexandra Gutschik, Flora Woltran, Hannah Zehentner, Christina Maria Eder, Martina Marleku.



Prof. Susanne Schwab

Optentia Highlights -2020

Despite the challenges that COVID 19 caused during 2020, Optentia there were various highlights during the year. The most significant highlight was the interaction and collaboration between 31 individuals to develop the Short Learning Programme in Research Design. Furthermore, the visit to Namibia during March 2020 and the significant workshops we had with excellent presenters stand out.



Prof. Ian Rothmann, Dr Mariette Fourie and Prof. Kristin Betts recording a video



Prof. Ian Rothmann participating in a virtual PhD defense



Prof. Kirsti Lonka presenting a workshop on Phenomenon-based Learning



Prof. Andries Baart presented a lecture on the Ethics of Care



Matchframe Media recording a video for use in an Online SLP



Prof. Resn van de Schoot presenting a workshop on AS Review



Learning about precarity from Prof. Andries Baart



Having fun in Namibia

“The most significant highlight was the interaction and collaboration between 31 individuals to develop the Short Learning Programme in Research Design.”



Some of the developers of the Online Short Learning Programme in Research Design

Risk Management Researchers Flourish!

Together Zandri and Sune have over 16 articles accepted for publication since joining Optentia in 2020. Zandri was able to join the networking trip to Namibia early in March. During 2020, these two young researchers published 13 articles and delivered 7 postgraduate students (6 masters and 1 PhD). During 2020 Zandri was promoted to Associate Professor and received the NWU award for the runner up for the most productive emerging researcher. Both researchers had the privilege to join the Optentia team in designing the SLP in research methodology.

Zandri and Sune would like to thank Prof Ian for his hard work and always providing the best support and guidance on every matter. Being part of the Optentia research entity has brought forth so many opportunities as researchers where both skill sets and research abilities have been expanded. Also, I note of appreci-



Dr Sune Ferreira and Dr Zandri Dickason

“Together Zandri and Sune have over 16 articles accepted for publication since joining Optentia in 2020 ...”

ation to the whole Optentia group in all of the great research endeavours. in welcoming us and including us in all of the great research endeavours.

Risk Management Researchers Flourish!

Johnny Jansen van Rensburg is a lecturer at North-West University (Vanderbijlpark Campus) focusing on investment management. He completed his Masters degree in 2018 in risk management during which time he was employed by NWK Limited as a senior risk officer.

As a newly appointed lecturer and researcher Johnny published his first article in Cogent Economics and Finance during 2020 entitled “Evaluating investment decisions based on the business cycle: A South African sector approach”.

Mr Danny “Daniel” Mokatsanyane is a lecturer in Risk Management in the faculty of economic sciences at Northwest university. Prior to that he was lecture at Rhode University in Financial Markets. Before his academic career Danny was in the Consulting Management Position at PwC under the Risk Competency.

Danny has been actively involved with the university and Optentia research entity since he joined the university in 2019.



Johnny Jansen van Rensburg



Dr Danny Mokatsanyane

PhD for Emmanuel Mulambya

Join us in congratulating our colleague, Emmanuel Mulambya, who received his PhD at the NWU Faculty of Economic Management's virtual graduation on 3 December! The online graduation ceremony is available at: <https://youtu.be/SDOWypnSGWs>

Emmanuel was born in Chingola, in Zambia's Copperbelt Province, to the late Japhet and Vickness Mulambya. He is married to Gloria Mulambya, and they have two children, Witu and Lulu. He completed his senior secondary school education at Mpelembe Secondary School in Kitwe, Zambia. He holds an honours degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Sheffield and an MBA from De Montfort University. His engineering work experience stretches over 25 years in the mining and metals, project management, and oil and gas indus-

tries, where he held multiple project- and programme-related positions. He joined the Centre for Applied Risk Management as a lecturer since June 2016.

In his thesis, Programme risk management: challenges and proposed solutions, Emmanuel investigated southern African programme risk management challenges. His work added novel insights to the currently limited research-based body of programme management knowledge – a field important to the African development agenda. Project programmes are used by organisations to deliver strategic change. Therefore, programme risk management is critical for the delivery of capital infrastructure initiatives in the public and private sectors. In this mixed-method study, Emmanuel created a programme risk management



Dr Emmanuel Mulambya

challenge model and specification framework to facilitate solving the principal challenge of inadequate programme risk management skills in southern Africa. His work provides tools that allow programme managers to improve programme risk management in practice, and academics to structure further programme risk research.

“... programme risk management is critical for the delivery of capital infrastructure initiatives in the public and private sectors.

A Journey of a Thousand Miles Begins with a Single Step *by Rachele Paver*

I am a firm believer that opportunities and challenges prepare us for what is coming. The PhD and postdoc at Optentia have provided me with plentiful skills and experiences. My involvement in the unemployment programme, the development of the JOBS programme, the network and support systems that has been built, the vast number and variety of learning opportunities – I believe that these opportunities have empowered me to adequately prepare for my next marathon. I am excited to share that we are in the starting blocks of a new race. In 2021 we will be working on a career guidance project. What I would like to think distinguishes our approach toward

career guidance from others, is that we:

- Use an Artificial Intelligence-driven approach to match skill sets to 21st century careers;
- Place strong focus on fostering employability,
- Empower students to creatively solve problems, find solutions for challenges, and take ownership of their situation;
- Integrate quantitative and qualitative career guidance methods;
- Provide job shadowing opportunities to gain exposure interested fields; and
- Broaden our scope to focus on in-demand skills and jobs.



While there is much room for learning and improvement, I trust that I we have trained and stretched sufficiently and that the lessons of discipline, perseverance, resilience, and dedication will enable us to tackle this race, one step and a time.

Two New PhDs at Optentia; Eight Dynamic Students!

Two new multi-disciplinary doctoral qualifications unique to Optentia, namely a PhD in Relational Dynamics and Development and a PhD in Ageing and Development will start in 2021. The first cohort of students is now selected within the AGenDA programme in Optentia.

In 2020, we shared a reality that shed light on the relational ills of a global village. The paradox of defying our natural inclination to find safety in relationships in the face of danger deregulated not only our default protective strategies, but also how we related to others, treated the marginalised and managed diversity. The smaller our physical worlds became, the greater social distancing we observed with increasing reports of neglect of (older) people, gender-based and domestic violence. These issues are relational and requires relationally-focused research, interventions and policy. It is through relationships that we hurt but also heal. It is therefore with great anticipation that we launch of the PhD in social science with relational dynamics and development. This programme aims to investigate what constitutes optimal and meaningful relationships across contexts of diversity and on different societal levels. We are exhilarated to welcome three students as the first enrolment of this PhD.



Thato Sultan

Thato Sultan is a Senior Human Capital Manager with extensive experience in working with all organisational levels creating, promoting, and delivering human capital solutions designed to support the organisation's strategic goals. She has 10+ years of diverse human capital management experience that spans across established organisations.

"I was born and raised in Soweto, Johannesburg and graduated from the NWU with a master's degree in Research Psychology and is a registered Research Psychologist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa; as well as a MBA from the Gordon Institute of Science (GIBS). My research interests focus primarily on intergenerational relationships and promoting belonging and connectedness within communities. In my free time, I enjoy spending time with family and friends, traveling and experiencing new culture."



Carol Dixon

Carol Dixon has MA in Counselling Psychology from the University of Johannesburg in South Africa. She is also BACP (British Association for Psychotherapists and Counsellors) accredited, a certified Imago Relationship Therapist, Workshop Presenter and Consultant. She a relationship and marriage counsellor with over 20 years' experience in therapeutic work with couples and families.

"Despite seeing successful results with my therapeutic work in relationships I have often wondered exactly what works and why. This curiosity has led to a dream of pursuing research and I am excited to now embark upon a PhD with the focus on relational dynamics. I feel privileged at the opportunity to work with Optentia and the NWU and hope to make a valuable contribution to the field of relational studies."



Jeanie Cave

Jeanie Cavé is a clinical psychologist in private practice in Broadacres, Fourways. She runs a therapy centre and is part of a team of psychologists and other allied healthcare professionals.

"I work from an Integrative Interactional Approach and use talk, brain based and experiential therapies to assist my clients. I work mostly with adults, and see a wide range of presenting complaints. My professional passions are hypnotherapy and training colleagues in Interactional Psychotherapy. My area of interest in my research is developing a framework for describing, formulating and intervening in intergenerational relational dynamics. I live with my 4-year old son and our assortment of pets in Broadacres. I have been besotted with horses since before I could talk and still love being around them as much as possible.

"It is through relationships that we hurt but also heal."

Two New PhDs at Optentia; Eight Dynamic Students!

The global rapid growth of the older-person population, particularly in the developing world, has created unprecedented demographic changes and subsequent challenges. Likewise, the ageing of individuals and populations in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and their emergent livelihood situations present key questions that African nations must begin to address. Societies need to understand the dynamics and implications of individual and population ageing, and governments have to develop policy responses to enhance the well-being and capacity of older people at present and in the future. To better understand these challenges, we welcome five amazing students from a wide range of disciplines.



Andrew Banda

Andrew Banda has a background in Demography and Monitoring and Evaluation. His current research interests span Demography, Population health, gerontology (healthy ageing, long-term care, ageing, and disability), HIV/AIDS, demographic dividend, maternal and child health, social protection, and public policy analysis. In his research, Andrew applies quantitative and qualitative approaches to understand social phenomena, evaluate programmes and policies, and use Geographical Information System (GIS) to analyse spatial data. He aims to influence policies relating to harnessing the demographic

dividend, promoting healthy ageing, long-term care, strengthening social security systems and social support in developing countries, and understanding the life course events (especially for people living with HIV/AIDS, older people and other marginalised groups). He holds a Master of Science in Population Studies from the University of Groningen (The Netherlands), a Postgraduate Diploma in Monitoring and Evaluation Methods from the University of Stellenbosch (South Africa), and a Bachelor of Arts in Demography from the University of Zambia. He has served as a Lecturer in Demography and Monitoring and Evaluation at the University of Zambia, Department of Population Studies, since 2013.

Lowna Gie has over 14 years of experience in working in the development sector. To date she has led and co-led a total of 14 NGO initiatives and 9 consultancy assignments in 9 countries in sub-Saharan Africa – all which contributed towards positive social change. Among others, these initiatives included: developing and managing 2 income-generation projects in East Africa that enabled vulnerable women to earn a sustainable income; influencing food and beverage companies to develop and/or improve policies and practices related to sustainability; and developing a standard operating procedure for comprehensive health and psychosocial screening in shelters during and after the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa.

During her tenure at HelpAge International (November 2015 – March 2018), Lowna became aware of just how vulnerable

older people are and became passionate about contributing towards addressing their needs. She managed and developed the Southern Africa Regional Age Network's (SARAN) – a sub-regional network of 6 country networks – promoting the rights of older people through advocacy, research, capacity development and knowledge-sharing. Together with SARAN's members and board, she transformed SARAN from an informal structure into a registered trust and successfully delivered activities that meaningfully improved the livelihoods of older people in Southern Africa. As a result of these experiences, Lowna is very excited about being accepted to do her PhD. Her long-term goal is to produce research that influences policy and practice in South Africa and, ultimately, impacts the lives of older people, their families and communities.



Lowna Gie

“The global rapid growth of the older person population, particularly in the developing world, has created unprecedented demographic changes and subsequent challenges.”

Two New PhDs at Optentia; Eight Dynamic Students!

Geraldine Gerhardi is currently working at the Information Technology department, at the Potchefstroom Campus of the NWU as an IT Communication Officer. Some of her duties include: creating content, maintaining stakeholder relations, selecting appropriate platforms for communication, and ensuring that content complies with copyright and data protection standards.



Geraldine Gerhardi

Geraldine completed her master's degree titled: A framework for strategic communication management in small-sized pharmacies in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District in 2017. This experience gained will be invaluable to her next educational step: to complete her PhD in Ageing and Development. She hopes to plough back to the community by helping those in need who might have the same "ICT challenges," which her dad faced. She proudly stated that he became quite an expert with searching movies and series! Geraldine is looking forward to this next chapter in her life and is thankful for her family for their unconditional love and support in all her ventures!

Carel Basson's academic career started in 1995 when he enrolled for the BA Geography degree at North West University

(NWU). In 1996 he switched to B Art ET Scientiae (Planning) and completed the degree in 1999. During the following year he was appointed at Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) where he was introduced to Geographic Information Systems (GIS). In 2005, he obtained a BSc Honours Geography (Specialising in GIS) at Pretoria University where after he transferred to the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform. During his tenure at the NSRF the Department of Education introduced GIS to the high school geography curriculum and he was selected as one of the team members who travelled the country and provided GIS training to the geography teachers with no GIS experience. During 2007 he transferred back to Stats SA and in 2009 was appointed as District Manager in the Westrand District. His function is to assist municipalities and all other stakeholders with data provision and analysis.



Carel Basson

In 2014 Carel completed the degree MPhil (Urban and Regional Science). He ventured into the "Older people realm" when HelpAge approached him to assist with data extraction and analysis to determine the living condition/standards of older people in South Africa. Prof. Jaco Hoffman piqued his curiosity on the subject of older people and he started attending semi-

nars and decided to be part of the discourse and influencing of policies regarding older people and younger persons by registering for a PhD at Optentia.

"She hopes to plough back to the community by helping those in need who might have the same ICT challenges ..."

Two New PhDs at Optentia; Eight Dynamic Students!

Estelle Louw started her academic journey in 2006 at the North-West University, Vanderbijlpark Campus where she enrolled for a BA degree with majors in psychology and sociology, after which she completed a Master's in Medical Sociology in 2019. During the MA research project, she focused on the unpaid care work of older adults in urban and rural areas of South Africa. This was done by data collected from Statistics South Africa during the 2010 Time Use Survey. As is the case in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), South Africa too is experiencing rapid growth and the prevalence of functional impairment among older people. Yet the provision of Long-Term Care (LTC) for older

adults in this region of Africa remains overwhelmingly the province of unpaid family carers in the absence of organized LTC services and support structures. Against this background attention is required to formulating a care economy that embraces care work among and by older carers in Africa widely and South Africa more specifically. Older adults are indeed important contributors to care management as they themselves are carrying the burden of providing care. Estelle therefore decided to continue her studies by enrolling for a PhD in Social Sciences with Ageing and Development, aimed at broadening the conceptualisation of unpaid care work by examining the

case of older adults in South Africa and their time spent on a broader range of unpaid work activities.



Estelle Louw

"... background attention is required to formulating a care economy that embraces care work among and by older carers."

Optentia welcomes all new postgraduate students!



Progress of Current PhD Students *by* Prof. Ian Rothmann

This year was challenging for PhD students in Optentia. Because of the lockdown in South Africa and Namibia, none of the candidates could do their empirical work in 2020. However, despite the challenges, most of the PhD candidates still made progress with their research during 2020.

Christiaan Bekker and Thera Lobi (PhD candidates in Psychology) got final ethics clearance for their projects and also obtained permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to continue with their data gathering early in 2021.

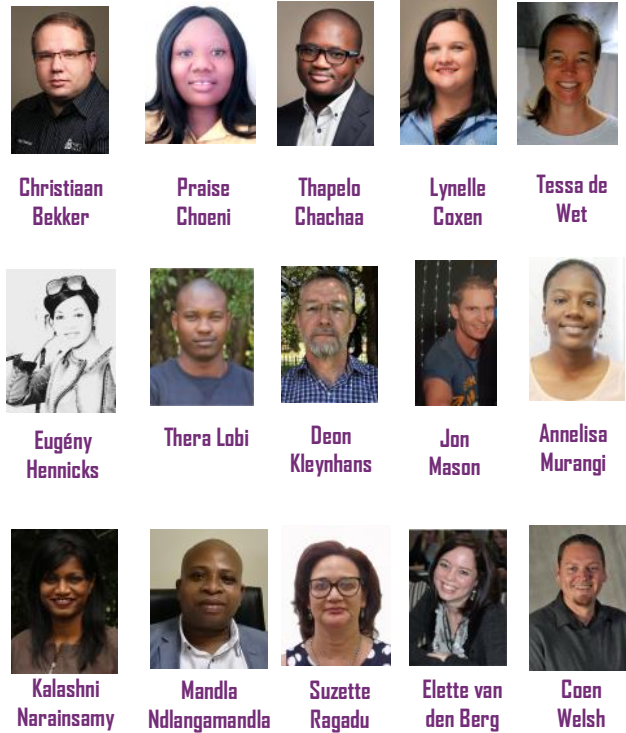
Lynelle Coxen, Eugeny Hennicks, as well as Kalashni Narainsamy made good progress with the writing of their articles. Tessa de Wet developed her skills in AS Review and is working actively on the first article of her PhD.

The proposals of Thapelo Chachaa, Deon Kleynhans, Deon Kleynhans, Annelisa Murangi, Elette van den Berg and Coen Welsh were accepted by the Optentia Research Committee and most of the ethics

applications received ethics clearance, Praise Choeni, Jon Mason, Mandla Ndlangamandla and Suzette Ragadu are all making progress with their research proposals.

We are proud of these PhD candidates and hope that 2021

will be productive and successful years for them!



“... despite the challenges, most of the PhD candidates still made progress with their studies during 2020.”



Two New PhD Students in Industrial Psychology

Two new PhD students in Industrial Psychology, Neil Barnard and Mari Ford will join the Optentia in 2021.

Neil describes his background as follows: "I commenced with my studies at the North-West University in 2008, majoring in Behavioural Sciences. I completed an honours degree in Human Resource Management and Industrial Psychology, as well as a master's degree in Industrial Psychology. In 2015, I registered as an Industrial Psychologist and founded BlueMotion IOP the following year, providing medico-legal services. In 2021, I will embark on a new venture, at a company headquartered in Potchefstroom, providing facilitation services on plants at gold mines, assisting employees in experiencing more meaningfulness and value." Neil's PhD study will focus on the capabilities, precarity and mental toughness

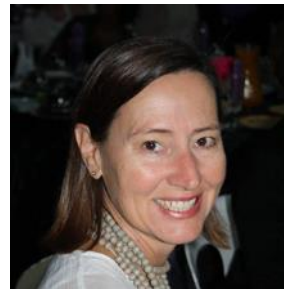
of trauma nurses and the effects thereof on their optimal functioning.



Neil Barnard

Mari Ford lives in East London and have been a full-time lecturer in the Business Management Department at the University of Fort Hare since 2013. Prior to that, she worked as an human resource/organisation development consultant HR/DD consultant in the corporate sector in London, UK (1997-2004) and in South Africa (2005-2012). Mari

says: "I am a qualified mindfulness instructor and conduct mindfulness-based interventions with students at the University of Fort Hare on a voluntary basis. I am married with two children (17 and 15 years old) and I have been waiting for them to be mature and independent enough before registering for my PhD, because of the time and commitment involved. My PhD topic is compassion in organisations – an issue which is very important to me and I am really excited about this journey."



Mari Ford

"My PhD topic is compassion in organisations – an issue which is very important to me."

Optentia's Website Visits and Social Media Use

From 1 January to 1 December 2020 a total of 8459 people visited the Optentia website. During the same period in 2019, a total of 7888 visits to the website were recorded. The figure shows the areas from where visitors accessed the Optentia website. In addition, a total of 409 people follow Optentia on Twitter, while 727 individuals follow Optentia on its Facebook page.



The CAVE: Supporting Child Protection Social Workers in South Africa

“Very important workers, professionals, doing very important work in a very rough space and they’re just not cared for. Period.” This is how Dr Elmien Truter describes the reality of Child Protection Social Workers in South Africa and what motivated her to rally others to help create The CAVE, a website dedicated to these professionals.

Dr Truter and fellow researcher, Prof. Ansie Fouché are both qualified social work professionals with years of experience who work from with Optentia’s Strengths-based Studies and Interventions program to research and develop solutions that improves practice. The CAVE is one such solution that is informed and aided by their research.

Their research shows that Child Protection Social Workers’ well-being are often at risk. They face excessive workloads, staff shortages, exposure to violence and aggression, high stress levels, and inadequate emotional and financial support. Despite the importance of the work child protection social workers do, they rarely receive the level of support they need to do their work and keep going.

Dr Truter receives daily calls and WhatsApp messages from Child Protection Social Workers for assistance on legislation, research and the best course of action for a particular case. Finally, in 2019, she started to design a website with her brother that answers these burning questions, provides support and relief to these professionals, and a platform to be in contact with fellow professionals who understand and care for them. This labour of love relies not only on the practice and research expertise of Dr Truter and Prof. Fouché, but also on the website and graphic design skills of Dr Truter’s brother, Johan Truter, and on Frans Fouché (Prof Fouché’s



Dr Elmien Truter and Prof. Ansie Fouché

husband), who added his legal expertise to help them stay true to the framework of the law. Over time fellow practitioners and researchers are helping to add more and more content to expand the themes and topics covered to enhance the resources available.

The site was launched in February of 2020 and has had more than a 1700 visitors since, most are from South Africa, but also from countries such as the USA, UK and Canada. This is not surprising, since a search for similar sites reveals that the level of support and assistance provided to social work professionals through the CAVE is unique and surpasses anything else available.

Feedback from visitors to the site reveal that they love and appreciate this resource and refer others to it as well:

I think it is an absolutely incredible idea and initiative that is going to reach a magnitude of Social Workers and Child Protection service providers. If I could perhaps make a small suggestion...? Would it not perhaps be a good idea to share this Amazing resource with SAPS CFS units across the country? I deal with police on a weekly basis and they too are really frustrated with the lack of knowledge, support and resources.

As child protection is my field of expertise, I trained/is training social workers regarding statutory work, Children’s Act and report writing. I am presently expanding my area of training, also looking to online training for CPD points on my website which is in process. The following: 1. I will promote this website during my training under ‘New developments’. 2. Question: may I use your memes on my PowerPoint?

The CAVE website is accessible on desktop/ laptop computer, cell phones and other mobile devices to make it user friendly to social workers, no matter the circumstances in which they need to access it for help and support. You can find the CAVE:

Web: [The Cave | Supporting child protection social workers in South Africa](http://TheCaveI.SupportingchildprotectionsocialworkersinSouthAfrica)
 Facebook
 Twitter: @thecave_africa

“Child Protection Social Workers’ well-being are often at risk.”

Passing a Master's: Not the End of Learning about Academic Writing

Emma Boonzaaier and Mahloma Molakeng both graduated during May 2020 and obtained their Masters in Social Work under the supervision of Dr Elmien Truter and Prof. Ansie Fouché. Shortly after the examination process was concluded they started to prepare their first manuscripts of dissertations for publication purposes. They have both submitted their manuscripts to International Journals and have recently receive feedback. Below are short reflections on their journey so far.



Mahloma Molokeng and Emma Boonzaaier

Emma's Reflections

During the process of writing up my article, I felt like it was an opportunity for some more reflection and learning. Unfortunately, when first starting with it, I was able to pick up on some tiny errors which I wasn't able to spot while writing up my manuscript due to the high stress and time constraints at the time. Therefore, writing up my article gave me an opportunity to fine tune my article and improve its quality. In order to pick a journal to submit to, I went back to my manuscript reference list to establish which journal was most common among all my included references. I then reviewed the journal submission guidelines and got to work re-shaping my manuscript. Once submitted, the wait felt like a lifetime to hear whether or not my article made the cut or met the standards of the journal I selected, which is The Children and Youth Services Review. Once I finally received feedback from the editor of the journal, I was pleasantly surprised to read that the feedback was better than I expected and

that the editor only requested minor changes to my article. Some of the feedback received was valuable but others required us to justify why things were done or said a certain way. My article is on its way to be re-submitted and hopefully good news will be received afterwards, that it will be published. There were learning curves throughout the process but the important thing was to learn from it and do better going forward.

Mahloma's Reflections

Knowing that I acquired a Master's degree, and that means I somehow fulfilled the expectations of the internal and external examiners brought me great satisfaction. Going forward to write for even greater audiences which required that we write to the journal, according to their guidelines. The process was challenging as we had to condense words yet have meaningful and factual details, however with challenges comes learning experience through asking experienced researchers who published before (study promoters, now co-authors) regarding how to handle

other matters. I well-regarded the notion of being in control of choosing which journal I want to publish with, instigating the process, communicating directly with the chief editor, which gave me a first-hand learning experience that I will be able to impart to someone else. Also, understanding that the article will be reviewed and returned with comments left me waiting with baited breathe. The first journal turned me down, instead, they asked me to entirely change the methodology I applied. However, the second journal reviewed our work and gave very constructive feedback, with almost all complimentary. For now, we are looking forward to a final decision by the editor in chief following re-submission.

“... writing up my article gave me an opportunity to fine-tune my article and improve its quality.”

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For a worthwhile existence



Books

- Bhattacharya, A., Lang, N., & Hemerling, J. (2020). Beyond great: Nine strategies for thriving in an era of social tension, economic nationalism, and technological revolution. Nicholas Brealey.
- Hamel, G., & Zanini, M. (2020). Humanocracy: Creating organizations as amazing as the people inside them. Harvard Business Review Press.
- Krznaric, R. (2020). The good ancestor: How to think long term in a short-term world. Penguin Books.
- Zakaria, F. (2020). Ten lessons for a post-pandemic world. Penguin Books.

Upcoming Events (Click [here](#) to go to the Optentia Research Calendar)

We're on the web!
www.optentia.co.za

