

Special points of interest:

- * Register for the Online SLP in Research Design
- * Optentia is developing a mentorship programme for academics
- * Read about the successes of Frontiers in Positive Psychology
- * Work and Organisational Psychology faces challenges
- * New PhD in Social Sciences is implemented in 2022
- * Think-methods-Again

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Towards Well-being in Universities: The Capability Approach

The sustainability and vitality of a university depend on its staff. They are the ones who remain in the workplace for many years. Work intensification, job insecurity, expectations of obtaining grants, rejection sensitivity, a constant focus on outcomes, toxic leadership, competition against the world's best to publish, and teaching and learning stressors challenge academic and research staff. Around 50% of academics in universities in the United Kingdom (UK) report that their well-being is undermined. Research in the UK showed that 90% of university staff members did not trust managers. Therefore, discussions about well-being remain difficult for employers and employees. [Research](#) outside academia shows that 40% of employers do not want to interfere with employees' well-being. A total of 34% were unsure how to start the conversation, 26% did not receive the appropriate training, and 23% could not start the conversation.

The well-being movement has been shaped by economic and organisational goals, with the dangers of rhetoric and concealing power relationships between management and employees ([Smith & Ulus, 2020](#)). From an organisational standpoint, 'fit' for

purpose does not imply that a person is 'well' ([Dale & Burrell, 2014](#)). Instead of discussing poor well-being, it is treated as an isolated, personal experience unrelated to contemporary universities' problematic structures and agendas. Well-being interventions focus on individuals (rather than contexts) and symptoms rather than the sources of difficulties. A focus on staff capabilities is vital for reasons of fairness and well-being.

Recently, the [capability approach](#) (CA) has been used to develop the sustainable employability model, which is important for understanding well-being. Rather than focusing on demands and resources that predict functionings, staff capabilities should be targeted. Capability exists when employees are enabled and achieve important values. Examples of values include: the use of knowledge and skills; the development of knowledge and skills; involvement in important decisions; building and maintaining meaningful contacts; setting own goals; having a good income; and contributing to something valuable. The individual's interaction with it and social justice (fairness) are essential elements in the CA context. Targeting the system in which people live and



work is vital to improving capabilities and well-being. The CA allows researchers and practitioners to focus on [mattering](#). Mattering consists of feeling valued (being appreciated, respected, and recognised) and adding value (e.g., making a difference in the world). So what should [managers](#) do? First, target staff capabilities through human resource management interventions by capable practitioners. Second, optimise sharing at work: This includes enthusiasm about the mission of the institution; shared values of people who work together; promoting support between people, and installing confidence in the institution's future. Third, optimise experiences at work: people's understanding of what is expected of them, their chances to use their capabilities at work every day; recognition of excellent work, and creating challenges for people to grow.

Performance of Optentia: 2021

On 30 June 2021, Optentia had 32 permanent staff members (23 with PhDs) and five support staff members. Furthermore, 40 extraordinary professors and eight extraordinary researchers are part of the entity. A total of 22 Master's students, 46 PhD students, and one postdoctoral fellow participate in Optentia. From 2 January to 30 November 2021, 21 (18 PhD and 3 Master's) students successfully defended their research proposals at our Scientific Committee. From 1 May to 10 December 2021, 16 Master's and six PhD students have completed their studies. Researchers who participate in Optentia have produced 102.63 peer-reviewed article equivalents in 2021.



"We produced 104.40 peer-reviewed articles from January to December 2021."

The Optentia Scorecard *by* Prof. Ian Rothmann

Output	2019	2020	2021
Peer-reviewed article equivalents	55.94	64.59	104.40
Papers: Conferences	35	1	26
Participating Master's students	56	96	22
Completed Master's students	40	15	6 (10*)
Participating PhD students	29	35	46
Completed PhD students	7	3	3 (3*)
Post-doctoral fellows	3	3	1
Number of workshops presented	10	9	13
Number of workshop participants	478	473	700

Note: Outputs as on 10 December 2021

* Submitted for examination

Capability Development at Optentia

Optentia has presented various webinars and programmes to build the competencies of participants. These webinars include the following:

- Online Short Learning Programme (SLP) in Research Design.
- Longitudinal Structural Equation Modelling in Mplus.
- Launch Online SLP in Research Design.
- COVID-19 Pandemic: From Global Crisis to a Better World.
- Book Launch: Does Community Development Work?
- Missing Value Analysis.
- Multilevel Analysis in Mplus.
- Atlas-TI.
- Book launch: Archive of kindness.
- Moderation, mediation and conditional process analysis (level 2).



In January 2022, Optentia will present a writing retreat for PhD students who have made significant progress with their PhD studies. Please contact Prof. Ian Rothmann or Lynn Booysen for more information.

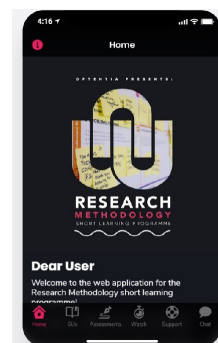
Registration: Online Short Learning Programme (SLP) in Research Design

From 2022, the Online SLP in Research Design will be presented twice per year:

- Cycle 1: January to June
- Cycle 2: July to November

To register for the Online SLP in Research Design, navigate to the [Optentia website](#) (Education) and

click on Short learning programmes. You will find a link to the registration on the webpage. Please make sure that you work through the information about the Online SLP in Research Design before your register. Contact [Lynn Booysen](#) for more information.



"The Online SLP in Research Design will be presented two times per year."

Towards a Mentorship Programme for Academics

Optentia and the Faculty of Humanities are currently considering a mentorship programme for academics. We propose a program that will be ongoing and consist of the following components: a) A short learning programme to prepare mentees for mentorship. b) A short learning programme to prepare mentors for mentorship. c) A mentorship programme that focuses on developing PhD candidates' capabilities. We are considering the following aspects:

- Target groups: emerging, establishing and established researchers.
- Focus on capabilities: a) importance of academic work (and research); b) enabling environment; c) achievement of/in: the use of knowledge and skills; the development of knowledge and skills; involvement in important decisions; building and maintaining meaningful contacts at work; setting own goals, rewards, and contributing to something valuable.
- Freedom of being and doing: Participation of individuals in planning of and decisions about their career development
- High-quality connections: Building/maintaining high-quality relationships

Frontiers in Positive Psychology: The Optentia Factor

In March 2021, a new section dedicated to Positive Psychology was launched in Frontiers in Psychology. Frontiers in Psychology is the largest multidisciplinary psychological Journal and holds an Impact Factor of 2.99 and a CiteScore of 3.5. This new section aimed to provide an interdisciplinary platform for disseminating cutting-edge scientific research on the science and practice of positive psychology. But how is the section going?

During the last eight months, the section has grown to be the 15th largest (out of 30) in the Journal and received 217 submissions from 6 continents and 55 countries. It also gained a significant amount of international exposure, with the editors being invited to represent the Journal at several international positive psychology societies. The editorial board comprises 2 Speciality Chief Editors, 25 Associate Editors, and 177 Review Editors. The average review time is 59 days. But what role did Optentia play in building the success of the section?

Of the 25 associate editors, six of whom are associated with Optentia: Prof. Ian Rothmann, Prof. Saskia Kelders, Prof. Sufen Chen, Prof. Hans Henrik Knoop, Prof. Mirna Nel and Prof. Llewellyn van Zyl. The section is currently hosting 18 special issues. Optentia members are involved with just under half of these in various capacities. Of these 217 submissions to the Journal, just over 60 of them were managed by Optentia members. Out of all the associate editors, four are in the top 10 who managed the most manuscripts. Optentia members (as a collective) also submitted



Prof. Llewellyn van Zyl

the most manuscripts to the Journal (11 in Total). According to the statistics, in all the categories (most hosted research topics, most editing assignments, most submitted manuscripts and top affiliations), an Optentia member holds the number 1 spot.

These contributions to the advancement of the discipline are not surprising. In a recent bibliometric analysis, Martín-del-Río et al. (2021) found that the North-West University (in particular Prof. Sebastiaan Rothmann and Prof. Marius Stander) made a significant contribution to the advancement of positive organisational psychology. Kim et al. (2018) also showed that outside of the United States, South Africa was ranked the fifth highest contributor to the positive psychological literature and that the North-West University was the only African institution with a master's programme dedicated to positive psych.

Although this dataset does not specifically indicate which institutions in South Africa contributed to such, it could be assumed that Optentia (and the

North-West University) played a major role as the only dedicated research unit on Positive Psychology in Africa. Taken together, Optentia seems to be playing a big role in advancing the science, practice and management of positive psychology on a global level.

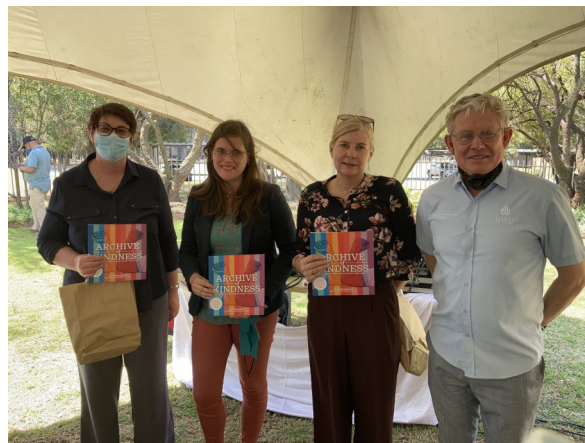
Prof. Llewellyn van Zyl is an Assistant Professor at Eindhoven University in the Netherlands. He is an extraordinary professor at the Optentia Research Unit.

"During the last eight months, the section has grown to be the 15th largest (out of 30) in the Journal."

Book Launch: Archive of Kindness

Even though the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the ugly side of the country, including some unpalatable acts of thievery, it has also revealed another side of South Africans – generosity and kindness. In her book, *Archive of Kindness*, North-West University's Dr Jess Auerbach chronicles some of these kind acts she observed from ordinary residents during the 2020 lockdown in South Africa. Produced to the highest standard, the book is becoming an important record of the pandemic, enabling further national reflection on the most positive aspects of South African society.

Archive of Kindness, by Dr Jess Auerbach is an uplifting and historically valuable collection of stories. In 2020 when lockdown was announced, Dr Jess Auerbach observed an outpouring of support between ordinary residents in South Africa. She began to document these 'micro-kindnesses' and created a website to record them, which received significant international and local attention. She later expanded this archive with her students at North-West University, ultimately recording approximately 2000 stories of remarkable kindness and care. A selection of stories from the *Archive of Kindness* website have now been chosen by ten prominent South Africans. These have been recorded in a beautiful book that has been illustrated by rising artist and recent graduate of the Ruth Prowse School of Fine Art, Jethro Longwe. The book is produced to the highest standard, becoming an important record of the pandemic and enabling further national reflection on the most



Prof. Mirna Nel, Dr Jess Auerbach, Prof. Linda du Plessis and Prof. Lucius Botes



Jeffrey Longwe, artist who did the artwork in *Archives of Kindness*

"Archive of Kindness, by Dr Jess Auerbach is an uplifting and historically valuable collection of stories."

positive aspects of South African society. The book is available from [BK Publishing](#). Click [here](#) to watch a video about the book launch.

Dr Jess Auerbach and Dr Japie Greeff

Optentia is proud of two very capable academics and researchers: Dr Jess Auerbach and Dr Japie Greeff.

Dr Jess Auerbach believes that students must learn how to intervene in knowledge systems driven by people in the Global North. Watch a YouTube video of an interview that we conducted with her. The topic is: [Futures of Knowledge in an Unequal World System](#).

Dr Japie Greeff states that students need specific capabilities to deal with the challenges presented by the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Watch the following YouTube video to learn more about his perspectives: [Humanity in the Fourth Industrial Revolution](#)



Dr Jess Auerbach and Dr Japie Greeff

“... students must learn how to intervene in knowledge systems driven by people in the Global North ...”

Optentia Postdoctoral Fellow Appointed as Associate Professor

Ume Laila recently ended her postdoctoral fellowship at Optentia. She was appointed as an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at GIFT University. Ume Laila describes some of her postdoctoral experiences: I associate 2020 with enjoyable moments and unforgettable memories. “When I finished my PhD in Pakistan, I wanted to obtain esteemed professional experience. Luckily, I got the opportunity to do my postdoctoral work at Optentia under the supervision of Prof. Ian Rothmann. I had a chance to participate in so many workshops and seminars during the lockdown. As I dreamed about exploring Optentia, my passion grew. In October 2020, January 2021, and

June 2021, I attempted to get a visa but failed. In September 2021, I finally arrived at Optentia, and was very excited. It was a different country with diverse people. However, many commonalities existed with people in my country: empathy, helping attitude, kindness, hospitality, and most importantly, acceptance for diversity. At Optentia I was touched by everyone's professionalism, dedication, and sincerity. My workplace at Optentia became my home. There was a unique blend of home comfort and professionalism that I had never experienced before. Even today, I can remember the smell of coffee in Optentia House. The research talks still echo in my ears, and I can still picture the



Prof. Ume Laila

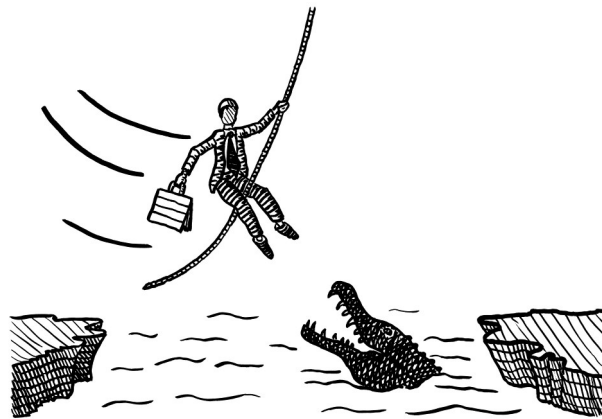
flowing fountains of the courtyard at Optentia House. I attended workshops on software development, research talks, and inspiration ideas for articles during my postdoctoral appointment. Also, I received excellent research guidance from Prof. Ian Rothmann.”

Conference Presentations: Behavioural Risk Management

The FEMS SSIRC 2021 Conference took place from 13 to 15 October 2021. The new 'Behavioural Risk Management' track defined by Prof Hermien Zaaiman attracted seven presentations with associated papers by UARM staff and MARM graduates, as per the list below. The papers can be found in the conference proceedings on the [SSIRC home page](#). Prof. Theo Kocken, extraordinary professor, presented the keynote address for this track entitled "Complexity Economics and how to be roughly right instead of exactly wrong", the recording of which can also be found at the same link. The BRM track proved to be very successful with engaging discussions between the presentations and positive feedback from the attendees.

The following papers were presented:

- Projects and programmes: similarities and differences, and implications for risk



- management in southern African infrastructure development (E. Mulambya).
- A risk culture comparison between risk practitioners and business managers in a TeleCom Company leads to action (A. Harding, S. Gilliland, and H. Pretorius).
- Exploring risk challenge practice in a South African life insurance organisation (G. Lamola and S. Gilliland).
- Cyber security risk culture: a telecommunications risk reporting study (G. Maritz and Mulambya).
- Measuring risk culture maturity in a SA Logistics Organisation (E. Lindeque and H. Pretorius).
- Staring down the lion: uncertainty avoidance and operational risk culture in a tourism organisation (M. Kevvy and F. Goede).

"The BRM track proved to be very successful with engaging discussions ..."

A Regional Advocate for the EAPP in Africa

Prof. Ian Rothmann has been invited to serve as the European Association for Personality Psychology's (EAPP) regional advocate for Africa. The advocate's main task is to ensure that EAPP is well represented in a specific region. More specifically, the advocate's will promote personality psychology, in its broadest definitional and disciplinary sense, by recruiting new members and promoting activities and resources such as conferences, journals, and awards. The advocate will engage with historically underrepresented people in personality science, such as eth-

nocultural minorities and junior personality researchers. Therefore, the advocate will ensure that personality researchers in the region have visibility in the field and in the organisation and have a voice and access to the resources (e.g., fellowships, small grants, awards, etc.) the EAPP can offer. Click [here](#) for more information about the EAPP..



Prof. Ian Rothmann

Work and Organizational Psychology: Some Challenges

"We need a notion of intelligence that makes the world a better place ..."

Individuals and organisations find themselves in a rapidly changing environment. Social tension has grown in modern societies due to the worsening strain on the natural ecosystem, rising discontent with capitalism, and resulting inequality. Furthermore, rising economic nationalism and technological advancements are transforming individuals and institutions. In addition, globalisation is impacting humanity in a hyper-connected world that is prone to global emergencies. Prof. Ian Rothmann (NWU, Optentia) and Prof. Cary Cooper (United Kingdom) recently updated the third edition of their book "Work and Organizational Psychology" to be published by Routledge (2022). The authors noted some tendencies and developments that have important implications for work and organisational research and practice. In the book, they identify various challenges for work and organisational psychology. Only four challenges are mentioned here.

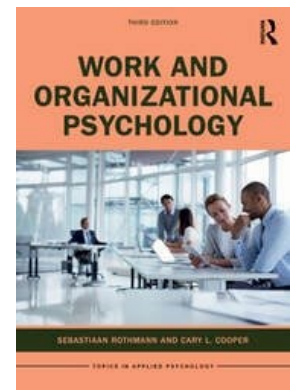
First, students, researchers, and practitioners need to understand the history of work and organisational psychology. Handbooks explain the history of theory and practice on the assumption that this will help place current theories and practices into perspective (see Cummings et al., 2017). Unfortunately, handbooks often present history in a way that prevents innovation.

Second, work and organisational psychologists should take a multidisciplinary perspective to individual and organisational functioning and outcomes. Contextual and normative approaches that allow multidisciplinary perspectives could be consid-

ered. Notably, a tilt in research regarding OHP emphasised enabling workers to see themselves as builders of flourishing societies and lives (Van der Klink et al., 2016). This shift recognises how social conditions and work contexts can enable individuals and institutions to build flourishing lives and societies, essential for sustainable work (Van der Klink, 2019). Abma et al. (2017) demonstrated how the capability approach could be used to study and promote sustainable employability.

Third, various developments in cross-cultural psychology have informed and challenged work and organisational psychology as a field of study (Gelfand et al., 2017). Western concerns may influence questions we ask and the theories we develop. The need to pose new questions that reflect other societal values and assumptions and socio-political realities necessitated research on dealing with precarity and insecurity in the labour market and unemployment. Millions of people outside developed countries face daily conflicts, terrorism, corruption, and poverty. It would then seem more pertinent to research questions related to insecurity in the labour market and unemployment. Furthermore, work and organisational psychologists should develop a deep, critical, and multidisciplinary understanding of culture and its best capture. A greater focus should be placed on the specific conditions and types of criteria under which cross-cultural differences matter most.

Fourth, work and organisational psychologists should develop methods to develop and use



adaptive behaviour of people as the ultimate criteria for success. For example, intelligence should not be about problem-solving on a standardised test; it should be about evaluating and retrieving information and problem-solving in the real world (Sternberg, 2021). Moreover, the Western cultural milieu is frequently highly individualistic. As a result, individualistic definitions of intelligence which have developed are a mistake for three reasons (Sternberg, 2021). First, there can be collective outcomes from individual actions. More intelligent people are likely to maximise their self-interest more effectively than those less intelligent, which may harm society. Second, much of the work people do takes place in collective settings. Since adaptive intelligence optimises individual interests and collective goods, it is more important than all other types of intelligence. In third place, we reinforced the importance of individual achievement through testing (because people solve problems for themselves rather than for others). "We need a notion of intelligence that makes the world a better place."

Optentia's Strategic Planning: 22-23 November 2021

Optentia recently held a strategic planning session at Klein-Kariba. Given that most of the participants did not have personal contact for 20 months, we decided that a contact session was needed. The planning team spent the first day on analysing the situation and sharing hardships they experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown in South Africa. On the second day, the team did a SOAR analysis (i.e. strengths, opportunities, aspirations and results).



The Optentia strategic planning team at Klein-Kariba

Optentia Implements a New PhD in Social Sciences

Inclusivity is a fundamental issue in modern democratic societies around the globe. When dealing with the challenges of a painful, imperfect reality, the vision of inclusivity serves as a persistent driver to organise for a better future where all individuals, regardless of their differences and backgrounds, are enabled to live meaningful lives that matter to them personally and to others.

Different understandings, originating from a variety of professional disciplines, of how a socially inclusive society should be organised not only focus on the barriers and processes that impede progress, but also encompass those societal elements that will enable volition, choice, active participation, equal opportunities, and basic levels of well-being that will ultimately enhance individuals' freedom to live the kinds of lives they have reason to value.

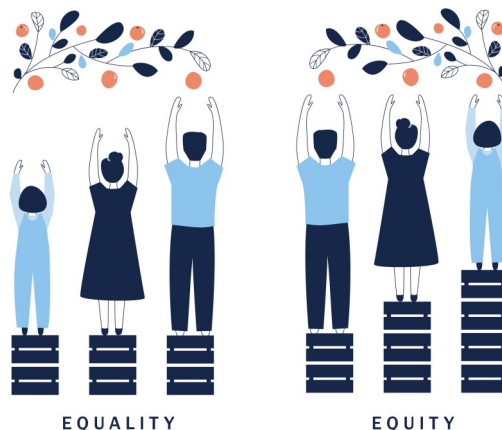
This degree provides the opportunity for the identification of those extraordinary constructive dynamics that promote inclu-

sivity as this is manifested in diverging, developmental, and coherent ways of functioning within societal spheres. The focus is on uncovering what is virtuous in a plural world and how the challenge to organise for an inclusive society can be dealt with constructively within social spheres.

The PhD aims to make a significant contribution to the contextual understanding of social inclusion and development by advancing a comprehensive un-

derstanding of how enabling practices derived from diverse disciplinary perspectives on optimal functioning can be harnessed to promote inclusivity within social spheres.

Click [here](#) to watch a video about the three PhD programmes presented by Optentia.



"The PhD aims to make a significant contribution to the contextual understanding of social inclusion and development."

Data Saturation: Goldilocks or the Evil Step-sibling, Heuristic

In a recent keynote address by Janice Morse, a number of factors (to bring about change) were shared. These factors level the playing field between qualitative and quantitative research. Several concerns were also raised. One aspect (or concern) – data saturation – in particular, stood out as researchers often use this as a golden criterion to determine if they have ‘enough data’ and is closely linked to the idea of sample size. This criterion is so deeply entrenched in qualitative research that the American Psychological Society lists it as one of their Journal Reporting Standards criteria. However, several leading qualitative researchers (e.g. Virginia Brown, Victoria Clarke, Sally Thorne) have questioned the usefulness of data saturation, especially for certain qualitative designs (or data analytic methods). An alternative – information power – has been proposed by Malterud et al.

Think — methods — Again

(2016). However, in line with the spirit of re-thinking how we do research, we would like to encourage researchers to refrain from mental shortcuts when proposing sample sizes. Instead, we recommend that researchers reflect on the criteria proposed by Morse (2020) when they make decisions: “The complexity of the questions/phenomenon being studied; the scope of inquiry; the flexibility of the data collection; the numbers of strategies to be used; variation of participants; the complexity of your research method, aims, and goals; your expertise with thinking qualitatively; and the nature of the participants” (p. 5). For more information and references to other valuable sources:

[Braun, V., & Clarke, V. \(2021\)](#). To saturate or not to saturate? Questioning data saturation as a useful concept for thematic analysis and sample-size rationales. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 13(2), 201–216.

[Malterud, K., & Guassora, A. D. \(2016\)](#). Sample size in qualitative interview studies: Guided by information power. *Qualitative Health Research*, 26(13), 1753–1760.

[Morse, J. \(2020\)](#). The changing face of qualitative inquiry. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, 1–7.

Prof. Leoni van der Vaart wrote this article.

“... several leading qualitative researchers have questioned the usefulness of data saturation.”



Qualitative research

Human-technology Synergies in Data-analysis

With the fifth industrial revolution (Industry 5.0) looming, researchers need to re-think how they collaborate with their smart technology counterparts. In this edition of our methods corner, we want to showcase how this collaboration is possible. But before we do so, a little theoretical overview of exploratory structural equation modelling (ESEM) and the dynamic fit index (DFI). Most concepts' items that we work with (at least in psychology) do not fit perfectly into one box (factor). Yet, we often expect them to when we conduct analyses, which can result in biased parameter estimates. Fortunately, new options – such as ESEM – exist that align our (overlapping) multidimensional thinking with our analytic techniques. In ESEM, items are allowed to cross-load onto non-target factors. In contrast, in independent cluster model confirmatory factor analysis (ICM-CFA), items are only allowed to load onto their a priori determined factors, assuming a zero cross-loading of items. Critique is leveraged against ICM-CFA as it does not accommodate the modelling of the 'theoretically overlapping' aspect of many of our concepts. However, ESEM analyses can be time consuming and tedious to implement in practice due to the many parameters that need to be specified. Luckily, De Beer and Van Zyl (2019) developed a helpful [tool](#) to assist in building your ESEM models in Mplus.

Building on this flexibility in thinking, McNeish and Wolf (2021) proposed a simulation-based method called 'dynamic fit index' that enables researchers to tailor cut-offs (for model fit) to the

data and model characteristics being evaluated. This method is proposed as an alternative to the rules-of-thumb cut-off values that are often used and challenges researchers to think more critically about modelling and model evaluation. [McNeish and Wolf](#) (2021) also developed a helpful tool for researchers to perform simulations. Disclaimer: this is a significantly simplified explanation of these two methods! What is more important for this information piece are the tools available to perform these analyses, which simplify your life and increase the accuracy of syntaxes. In my opinion, these two tools are the perfect collaboration partners: they automate repetitive tasks while enabling us to spend more time on creative tasks. For more information and references to other valuable sources:

- De Beer, L.T. & Van Zyl, L. E. (2019). ESEM code generator for Mplus.
- [McNeish, D. & Wolf, M.G.](#) (2021). Dynamic fit index cutoffs for confirmatory factor analysis models. *Psychological Methods*. Advance online publication.

- [Morin, A.J. S., Arens, A.K., & Marsh, H.W.](#) (2016). A bifactor exploratory structural equation modeling framework for the identification of distinct sources of construct-relevant psychometric multidimensionality. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 23(1), 116–139.
- [Morin, A. J. S., Bujacz, A., Gagné, M.](#) (2018). Person-centered methodologies in the organizational sciences: Introduction to the feature topic. *Organizational Research Methods*, 21(4), 803–813.
- Morin, A. J. S., Myers, N. D., & Lee, S. (2020). Modern factor analytic techniques: Bifactor models, exploratory structural equation modeling (ESEM) and bifactor-ESEM. In G. Tenenbaum, & R. C. Eklund (Eds.), *Handbook of Sport Psychology* (4th ed., pp. 1044–1073). Wiley.

This article was written by Prof. Leoni van der Vaart.



Prof. Leoni van der Vaart

“De Beer and Van Zyl (2019) developed a helpful tool to assist in building your ESEM models in Mplus.”

Development of a Care Economy Strategy in Gauteng, South Africa

“The LTC demand can potentially offer opportunities for inclusive economic development and growth but is under-explored...”

The number of older people and the burden of disease in Gauteng province is on the rise – increasing the demand for comprehensive long-term care (LTC) significantly. This places extreme stress on informal female caregivers. The exponential challenge of an older, disease-burdened, unemployed population could harvest a radical economic development opportunity. The LTC demand can potentially offer opportunities for inclusive economic development and growth but is under-explored. Gauteng experiences the unrelenting challenge of creating employment for its increasing unemployed population, especially youth. This symposium investigated how the growing LTC demand and an expansion of formal LTC services could contribute towards providing employment opportunities. Indications are that a well-developed care economy may improve the quality of formal LTC and care recipients' quality of

life, and be a key source of future job growth. However, a body of emerging evidence suggests that Gauteng's previous lack of focus on the care economy presents a major missed opportunity. As the economic powerhouse of South Africa and in keeping with its model status, Gauteng is ideally positioned to lead the setting of agendas on care economy related opportunities. This should start now, while there is still a window of opportunity to do so. This symposium chaired by Professor Hoffman was designed for those interested in understanding how (1) to develop a care economy that provides quality LTC for older persons and creates decent employment opportunities for youth and women and/or (2) how a care economy strategy can be developed using co-created, innovative, evidence-based interventions. It focused on the evolution of the Gauteng Care Economy Strategy from conceptualisation to the final

product. The participants were as follows:

- Chair of Session: Prof Jaco Hoffman (Optentia, NWU)
- Presenter 1: Mr Jongi Ganyile (Gauteng Department of Economic Development, South Africa; co-authored by Ms. Masinga)
- Presenter 2: Dr Lyn Ossome (Senior Research Specialist and Feminist Economics Lead, Institute for Economic Justice Senior Research, South Africa)
- Presenter 3: Ms Lowna Gie (Optentia, NWU)
- Presenter 4: Dr Sune Ferreira-Schenk (TRADE, NWU, ca; co-authored by Prof. Dunga, Dr. David, and Mr. de Jongh)
- Presenter 5: Ms Barbara Ziyane (Director, Gauteng Department of Economic Development, South Africa)

Well-being of Rural Communities in Latin America and SSA

Dr Nereide Curreri (Extraordinary Researcher at Optentia, NWU) represented the Rural Communities for Ageing-Well programme with co-authors Andrew Banda (Optentia, NWU), Prof. Norah Keating (University of Alberta, Canada), Prof. Jaco Hoffman (Optentia, NWU) and José Francisco Parodi (San Martín de Porres University, Peru) at the GSA.

In their recent volume, *Critical Rural Gerontology*, Skinner et al. (2021) challenge us to set aside unidimensional notions of rural communities as bypassed and under-resourced; and to identify both the elements of rurality that empower or exclude older people and how

these differ across cultures and settings. To address this challenge and to interrogate these notions in the Global South, we undertook a scoping review of features of rural communities that influence health and well-being of older people in countries across Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa. The review included literature in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese, using search engines MEDLINE, CINAHL Complete, PsycInfo, SocINDEX, Scielo, AJOL (Africa Journals Online), LILACS, Redalyc, LatinIndex and Clacso. Findings illustrate diversity in how community features including remoteness, infrastructure and belonging influence material, social

and subjective well-being of older residents



COVID-19 and Work: Optentia's Dr Jeniboy Kimpah Looks for Answers

The Coronavirus threatens the health and well-being of many people worldwide, but it is also a threat to the world of work. Overviews of the health status are found in national institutions and the World Health Organization statistics. Unfortunately, there are no tools to monitor work-related issues, though these are urgently required. With its online infrastructure, WageIndicator can provide such monitoring to a certain extent. As a result, it is impossible to conduct a representative global survey based on national samples. Still, the WageIndicator infrastructure allows a volunteer web survey. WageIndicator is a non-profit foundation aiming to share and compare wages and labour law globally through its national websites in 150 countries with millions of web visitors. Web visitors are primarily people of working age, contracted, self-employed and unemployed alike. For many years, WageIndicator conducted global web surveys and could launch a global web survey on Living and Working Conditions in Corona-virus times quickly. The survey was developed for 143 of these 150 countries. Unfortunately, seven countries were not included due to poor Internet penetration or a lack of translation capacities.

Thus, we use the results of a global web survey with questions such as a) Is your work affected by the Corona crisis? b) Are precautionary measures taken at your workplace? c) Do you have to work from home? d) Has your workload increased/decreased? e) Have you lost your job/work/assignments? f) How satisfied are you with your life. The researchers are analysing trends regarding living and working in Coronavirus times in countries including Africa and Asia. Along with demographic questions, the

individuals also reported on their experiences of the Coronavirus.

Using the WageIndicator data, Dr Jeniboy Kimpah is currently conducting research in Asia regarding the living and working conditions of employees are currently being studied and investigated in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic was an unexpected event that brought huge shocks to employees' lives and works due to the global restrictions, particularly in developing countries of the South-east Asian region. Hence, this project aimed to understand the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on workload, work from home (WFH), work duty restriction and job loss.

Dr Kimpah analysed data about the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 to the present. However, a further empirical study will analyse the dataset from March 2020 to September 2021 only. In the first part of the study, he analyses data from 1,990 participants from six Southeast Asia countries: Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Cambodia, and Myanmar. In addition, several participants were from China, Germany, India, and Japan.

The general results of the analysis indicated that 1,183 respondents (59.4%) had obtained higher education and 579 (29.1) worked as professionals with the highest skills level. A majority of the respondents (1,643, representing 82.6%) demonstrated that their work had been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Positively, 1,152 (57.9%) respondents indicated that their workload had not increased, 1,141 (57.3%) respondents had not been restricted from carrying out their work duties, and 1,404 (70.6%) respondents had not lost their jobs during lockdown due to the pandemic. However, 979



Dr Jeniboy Kimpah

(49.2%) respondents had to work at their workplace or office as compared to 915 (46.0%) respondents who had to work from home.

"A majority of the respondents (1,643, representing 82.6%) demonstrated that their work had been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic ..."

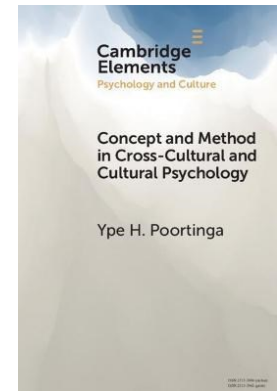
Developments in Cross-Cultural Psychology

Prof. Ype Poortinga, expert in cross-cultural psychology recently published a monograph. Its focus is on the theory and methodology of cross-cultural psychology and cultural psychology. He traced historical developments in research and found that at least initially extensive psychological differences tend to diminish when carefully designed experiments are conducted. He suggests that the notion of "culture" is too vague in psychological research; a more focused explanatory concept is needed.

Most research in cross-cultural psychology addresses differences in behaviour from a single perspective, seeking a causal relation between some behaviour outcomes and some contextual antecedent. He argues in favour of asking a broader range of questions. As Poortinga (2021) noted, cross-cultural psychology has historically emphasised psychological differences

among people rather than similarities among individuals. The concern raised was whether this orientation might encourage stereotyping. Culture, he argued, is not a clear enough concept to guide critical analysis and interpretation of data. Research in cross-cultural psychology may want to avoid this concept, similar to the disappearance of the concept "soul" or "psyche" from psychological inquiry.

In particular, he outlined methodology and psychometric tools that can be used to design carefully constructed studies, considering biases that may be present in the data and examining replicability of findings. The design of these studies requires large research teams that have equitable input from team members who represent the entire range of populations involved, and not only at the data collection phase. Furthermore, it is crucial to ask simultaneous ques-



tions about the causes, functions, deep and recent historical backgrounds, and ontogenetic development of behavioural patterns in order to advance basic research. Meanwhile, the global village struggles with poverty, inequality, and a rise in populism and extremism. There is an urgent need for psychologists to put their expertise to work in improving individual well-being and community building.

"There is an urgent need for psychologists put their expertise to work in improving individual well-being and community building."

Useful Cross-Cultural Psychology Literature

The a new edition of the book "Methods and Data-analysis for Cross-Cultural Research" originally authored by Fons van de Vijver and Kwok Leung was recently published. This book, which was the basic resource which systematised bias and equivalence analyses, has valuable contents. The book gives an up-to-date overview of methodological and data-analytical issues of cross-cultural studies. Topics include: equivalence and bias, methods and design (including sampling and validity enhancement), and analyses in Cross-cultural Psychology.

Research by [Beugelsdijk and Welzel](#) (2018) combined the approaches of Hofstede and Inglehart to develop a conceptual framework for understanding national cultures. In cross-cultural psychology and international management, Hofstede's three-dimensional concept of culture is dominant. By contrast, Inglehart's dynamic understanding of culture prevails in sociology and political science. Combining these two concepts leads to a better understanding of cultural differences, according to the authors.



Building Memories at Optentia House

Optentia House provides a stimulating environment for our researchers. Optentia is thankful to our support staff who are always available to assist our students and staff members. We were all thankful when our postdoctoral fellows, Ume Laila (Pakistan) and Jeniboy Kimpah arrived at the North-West University.



Optentia members in the garden of Optentia House in September 2021: Praise Choeni (PhD candidate), Dr Jeniboy Kimpah, Prof. Ian Rothmann, Anjonet Jordaan, Dr Laila Ume, Lynn Booysen, Soraya Harding and Elizabeth Bothma

Building Memories at Optentia House

Dr Jess Auerbach visited Optentia during September 2021 to discuss research experiences with young Optentia researchers and PhD candidates. The participants regard Jess as a role model given her excellent contributions as a researcher.



Praise Choeni, Zama Chachaa, Ume Laila, Kgomo Malinga, Dr Jess Auerbach, Christiaan Bekker, Thera Lobi, Jeffrey Longwe, and Jeniboy Kimpah

“Stan is freedom-respecting, open-source software for facilitating statistical inference at the frontiers of applied statistics.”

Introducing Prof. Duco Veen

In the last academic year, I've been involved in several initiatives. In response to the pandemic a consortium started the COVID-RED (Remote Early Detection) project. In this project we will evaluate the use and performance of a CE-marked device (wearable) for the purpose of early detection and monitoring of COVID-19 in a sample of 17.824 from general and high-risk populations. In the Trials@Home consortium I've been involved in discussions on which Key Performance Indicators can be used to evaluate a pilot comparison between traditional clinical trials and remote decentral-

ised clinical trials. Within the Netherlands four large academic institutions are combining forces in an alliance. Within that alliance, I'm part of the working group that aims to facilitate collaborations on Artificial Intelligence for Health. On a more global level, I'm involved in the Stan project. Stan is “freedom-respecting, open-source software for facilitating statistical inference at the frontiers of applied statistics”. Stan has many active developers, an active community, and many resources and help for anyone who would like to try it out. Currently I'm elected as a

member of the Stan Governing Body, helping with the governance of the project. With respect to teaching, I've been involved in the new MSc program Applied Data Science, coordinating two courses. A highlight was a collaboration, with in the lead Optentia Extraordinary professor. Rens van de Schoot, producing an overview paper on Bayesian Statistics and Modelling.



Prof. Duco Veen

ESEM: Tutorial and Guidelines *by* Prof. Llewellyn van Zyl

**“Researchers
tend to favour
either
exploratory
factor analysis
or confirmatory
factor analysis,
but is that best
practice?”**

Positive Psychological Assessment measures (PPAMs) have received significant criticism over the last two decades. Research has highlighted various issues facing PPAMs ranging from inconsistencies in factorial validity and internal consistency through to challenges associated with their predictive, concurrent and discriminant validity. Further, critics have also highlighted the cultural bias of popular PPAMs. At its core, these critics argue that positive psychological researchers take ‘short cuts’ or employ ‘quick and dirty’ tactics when designing, and validating PPAMs (c.f. Wong & Roy, 2018). Taken together, these challenges negatively affect the credibility of the discipline and the public perception as to its effectiveness.

In a recent article, Van Zyl and ten Klooster (2022) argued that most of these challenges relate to the statistical techniques we use to validate our measures. Researchers tend to favour either exploratory factor analysis (EFA: to explore the factorial structure of an instrument) or confirmatory factor analysis (CFA: to confirm the a priori factorial structure of a measure). EFAs are primarily data-driven techniques that allow for the cross-loadings of items between factors to develop an optimal factorial solution for our instruments. However, beyond determining the factorial solution of an instrument, there really isn't much we can do with the results. We can't use EFAs in more complex analyses (e.g. to predict other factors), nor can we control for method effects. The results of an EFA cannot directly be compared with scores of the same instrument in other

groups or contexts. Therefore, it would be quite difficult to determine the factorial equivalence of an EFA between groups. As such, its practical usefulness is somewhat limited.

This gave rise to CFAs as the most preferred approach to exploring and validating an instrument's factorial structure. Unlike EFAs, CFAs are primarily a set of theory-driven techniques that allow us to ‘confirm’ the theoretical factorial structure of an instrument given our data. CFAs forces cross-loadings of items between factors to be zero to create ‘pure’ latent factors, whereby target items are forced to only load onto a predefined factor. This allows us to create latent factors which we can easily understand. However, the problem here is that when we remove cross-loadings and force items to only load onto a given factor, we are artificially inflating the associations between factors, which in turn leads to biased relationships between factors.

Another problem is that when we force these factors to load onto a single factor, we tend to reduce our goodness-of-fit indicators (cf. McNeish, An & Hancock, 2018; Morin, 2020). In multi-dimensional instruments some form of cross-loadings between factors should -be expected. In other words, if we measure emotional, psychological and social well-being, we should assume that some items from these subscales could be grouped together (e.g. the item related to positive relationships on the psychological well-being scale could also load on social well-being for example!). In other words, we should expect some form of construct-relevant cross loadings

between measures. But we force these factors to be different and distinct from one another. So you may now ask, “So what?! We’ve been doing this for almost 60 years? What is the problem?”

Besides the statistical issues which occur, such as inflated parameter estimates, and poor data-model fit, there are also theoretical matters which we need to consider. When we ‘force’ items of multi-dimensional factors to only load onto a single subconstruct, we start to measure these constructs ‘differently’ from what they were originally theoretically intended to do. For example, Keyes (2005) indicated that positive mental health is the result of a dynamic interaction between emotional, psychological and social well-being. Through some statistical wizardry, we could then also plot a person's level of mental health on a ‘continuum’ ranging from languishing to flourishing. All good and well! But the problem is that we measure positive mental health as a function these three concepts, with no ‘dynamic interaction’ over and above a mere correlation or covariance between the first-order factors. Further, how can we have a ‘mental health continuum’ if we classify mental health as categorical: “languishing, moderate mental health or flourishing?” Do you see the problem here? So we conceptualised Mental Health as a Continuum, made up of a dynamic interaction between factors, yet we measure it as three distinct concepts (with very little interaction) and then we classify mental health as three categories which is not a continuum.

ESEM: Tutorial and Guidelines *by* Prof. Llewellyn van Zyl

Another issue is that we know from cross-cultural psychology that different cultures tend to interpret things differently. Cultural factors influence how individualistic and collectivistic cultures define and experience well-being. Individualistic cultures tend to value things inside of them as the main attributing factors to overall well-being, where collectivistic cultures tend to place more emphasis on external factors such as the relationship with their families and communities for example. This is really clear in studies such as that from Goodman et al. (2018, 2020) or Disabato et al. (2019) where it shows that different factorial structures of instruments don't manifest the same in different cultural cohorts and that items that's supposed to fall on one construct on one context, may load on another in another context. So then how can we compare different cultures on concepts such as mental health, grit and strengths if they are seen as different in different cultures? Well, one possibility is to change the way in which we think about and measure constructs.

Asparouhov and Muthén (2009) proposed "Exploratory Structural Equation Modelling" (ESEM). ESEM aims to incorporate the best elements of both EFAs and CFAs (allowing for theory driven factors to be estimated, control for measurement error, estimate more complex covariance structures). Through the structural equation modelling framework, ESEM provides us with a nice middle ground between the restrictive theory driven modelling approach used in CFAs and the tedious and mechanistic iterative approach towards finding the best factorial solution given our data in EFAs. ESEM therefore incorporates the best of both these worlds by allowing us to estimate a priori theoretical structures of an instrument yet allows for cross-loadings between factors. In ESEM, factors are estimated as you would normally do in a CFA model,

where target items are specified to load onto their a priori factorial model, and non-target items are permitted to cross-load onto other factors. These cross-loadings should, however, be as close to zero as possible.

What are the benefits of ESEM and why should I use them? Well, besides that ESEM is the future (along with Bayesian methods), we see that it has several advantages over and above EFAs and CFAs. In ESEM:

- both CFA and EFA models can simultaneously be estimated
- we can estimate less restrictive measurement models where we allow for cross-loadings
- we can produce a lot better goodness-of-fit indices than CFAs
- latent factor correlations are usually less biased and more aligned to true associations present in "the real world"
- how we estimate our models are a lot more closely aligned to the theoretical conceptualisation of constructs than in CFAs and
- we can compensate for wording effects or differences in how different cultures interpret items when we want to compare different cultural groups on a given construct

ESEM is a compelling technique that could help us estimate more realistic factorial models for our instruments. However, ESEM is still relatively new and its not so easy to estimate these models in statistical software packages. Also, its really difficult for novice researchers to know what to look at, how to estimate things, and how to report ESEM results. This makes its use and mass adoption rather difficult! So you may now think "Ok, so you just told me how wonderful this ESEM thing is, but now you tell me that I cant use it because its too difficult to run? So what's the use then?"

Over the last two years Prof. Llewellyn van Zyl, Prof. Leon de Beer and Peter ten Klooster invested a lot of time and energy into making ESEM estimation and reporting as easy as possible. We wanted to provide novice researchers with an opportunity to start exploring these more "advanced" statistical techniques, (a) by creating an easy-to-use tool to help you estimate these models in Mplus, (b) writing an easy to understand paper on what ESEM is with the MHC-SF as a relatable example and (c) to provide a step-by-step guide on how to estimate and report your first ESEM. In our paper, which you can access via Research Gate, we run you through each step of the ESEM estimation. For those like us, who hate learning new things from text only, we also made a tutorial video summarising the article and demonstrating the tool very practically.

The Tool:

De Beer, L.T. & Van Zyl, L.E. (2019). ESEM code generator for Mplus. Retrieved from <https://www.surveymhost.co.za/esem/> doi: 10.6084/m9.figshare.8320250

The Video Tutorial (the use of the Tool starts at 1:03:43):

Van Zyl, L.E. & de Beer, L.T. (2021). Exploratory Structural Equation Modelling: Practical guidelines and Video Tutorial for Mplus [YouTube Tutorial]. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/yK_myDYNi-o

The Paper:

Van Zyl, L.E., & Ten Klooster, P.M. (2022). Exploratory Structural Equation Modelling: Practical Guidelines and Tutorial with a Convenient Online Tool for Mplus. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 13. <https://bit.ly/318Fk36>

"Exploratory Structural Equation Modelling aims to incorporate the best elements of both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses ..."

New Book: Rural Transitions to Higher Education in SA

Prof. Emmanuel Mgwashu with local and international scholars launch a co-authored book. *Rural Transitions to Higher Education in South Africa: Decolonial Perspectives* is a unique and timely book. It focuses on research conducted into the experiences of students from rural backgrounds in South Africa: foregrounding decolonial perspectives on their negotiation of access and transitions to higher education.

This book highlights not only the challenges of coming from a rural background against the historical backdrop of apartheid and ongoing colonialism, but also shows the immense assets that students from rural areas bring into higher education. Through

detailed narratives created by student co-researchers, the book charts early experiences in rural communities, negotiations of transitions to university and, in many cases, to urban life and students' subsequent journeys through higher education spaces and curricula.

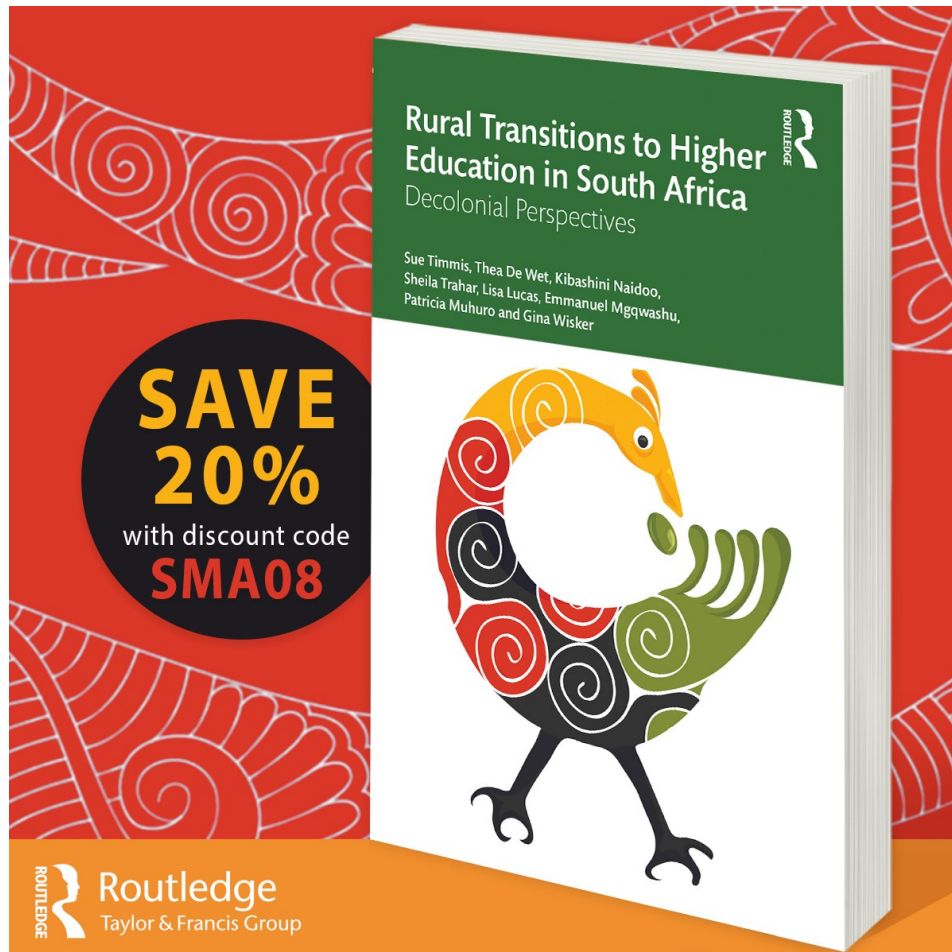
The book will be of significant interest and value to those engaged in rurality research across diverse settings, those interested in the South African higher education context and higher education more widely. Its innovative, participatory methodology will be invaluable to researchers seeking to conduct collaborative research that draws on decolonising approach-



Prof Emmanuel
Mgwashu

es. <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/education/events/2021/bce-dec7.html>

"The book will be of significant interest and value to those engaged in rurality research across diverse settings."



Using Life-Satisfaction as Outcome *by* Prof. R. Veenhoven

It is widely agreed that a stronger evidence base is required to support claims about effectiveness of Positive Psychological Interventions (PPIs). This was one of the promises at the eve of the movement and is needed to deal with current skepticism and the resulting underuse of the techniques. Fortunately, there is a growing stream of effect studies on the results of PPIs. However, this strand of effect research has met with several problems, which require us to shift our focus from positive mental health (eudaimonic happiness) to life-satisfaction (hedonic happiness) as an outcome variable. What are the problems with using measures of positive mental health to evaluate PPIs?

Limitation of self-report questionnaires on positive mental health. The effect of positive psychological interventions is mostly assessed using self-report measures of positive mental health, such as the 'Mental Health Continuum' and the 'Positive Mental Health Scale'. These measures have the following limitations:

- The content addressed in these questionnaires is not too clear. Positive mental health is a fuzzy concept and measures of that concept are therefore also ill-defined. Hence, it remains also vague what PPIs actually bring about.
- Differences in notions of positive mental health reflect in differences in questionnaires used. This impedes comparability of effect studies and hence meaningful research synthesis.
- The concept of positive mental health involves objective

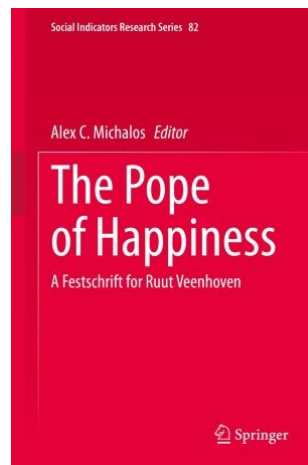
capabilities, such as an adequate perception of reality and ability to love. These objective characteristics are not well measurable using subjective self-estimates. The questionnaires focus on presumed chances for adaptation to life (strengths) rather than adaptation as such.

For the following reasons, studies on the effect of PPIs should also use life-satisfaction as an outcome measure.

- Life-satisfaction is a clear-cut concept: how much one likes the life one lives. As such this measure tells what the intervention brings about.
- Life-satisfaction is a subjective phenomenon by definition and is well measurable using self-reports.
- Life-satisfaction outcomes are well comparable across studies. This helps to chart what PPIs work best for what kind of people.
- Life-satisfaction indicates actual adaptation to life instead of strengthening of presumed chances for adaptation.

Click [here](#) to read an article about life satisfaction as an outcome variable in intervention studies.

You can also read a festschrift about the that honours Prof. Ruut Veenhoven, a pioneer in the field of happiness studies. Download the festschrift [here](#)



“Life-satisfaction is a clear-cut concept: how much one likes the life one lives.”

Prof. Sufen Chen at Stanford University

I have never seen a community so friendly, open-minded, respectful, and positive—they are my classmates and family-like staff at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (CASBS) at Stanford University. The 2021-22 class has 39 fellows and 5 visiting scholars from anthropology, economics, history, political science, psychology, sociology, education, philosophy, linguistics, communications, law, and computer sciences. We share our works in weekly seminars, have lunch together daily, and discuss in reading groups or informally. Yes, we are like a class learning from each other and joke on silly stuffs, such as who is the favourite of the dining program coordinator to get the biggest portion for lunch.

CASBS has been my dream center since I was a graduate student. My husband's advisor,

Anil Gupta, was a fellow in 1998-99, when we were pursuing our doctoral degrees. He seeded the dream. My landlord and mentor Arnold Thackray is a two-time fellow (1973-74, 1983-84). I am here three months so far. I can understand why they talk about the center in a tone of nostalgia. It is a privilege not only to hear different perspectives and critical societal concerns (a lot about climate change and social inequity this year), but also to be able to focus on research as well as read quietly in a study that overlooks the beautiful Stanford campus and the bay.

During my year at CASBS, I am looking into the influence of the trust and dependence of AI on adolescents' learning. AI is increasingly integrated into learning systems to guide and recommend materials for learners, and help to assess students' learning



Prof. Sufen Chen

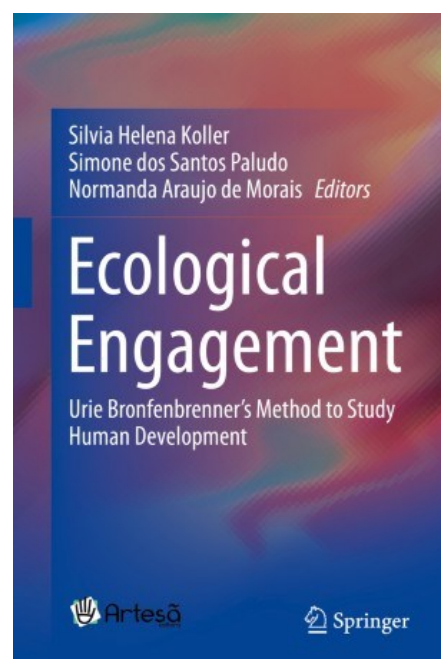
so as to provide precision learning. Will AI favour and reinforce certain perspectives and learning strategies, and thus make the learning more centralized and homogenized? I found myself influenced very much by my classmates, who sometimes challenge my assumptions and arguments and share with me different resources. It's good to be back to a student.

"I am looking into the influence of the trust and dependence of AI on adolescents' learning."

News from Extraordinary Professor Silvia Koller

Stanford University published a list of the most cited researchers in the world. In Latin America Prof. Silvia Koller got the first position. Click [here](#) for more information.

Prof. Koller also recently published a book on ecological engagement. The book includes methods to apply Urie Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory of Human Development to empirical research. The book shows how the method can be applied in practice by bringing together research reports of studies carried out in Brazil and Angola. It describes the mature version of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory, focusing on the Process-Person-Time Context model.



Award for Prof. Darelle van Greunen

Prof. Darelle van Greunen received the Engagement Excellence award (STEM) for "Harnessing ICT Innovation and Engagement in support of the fight against COVID-19" at the Vice-Chancellor's Excellence Awards ceremony 2021. The project, entitled Harnessing ICT Innovation and Engagement supportS the fight against COVID-19

While much of the world's focus had been on healthcare and data relating to the pandemic, ICTs had been enabling global efforts to diagnose and treat patients, track and control the spread of the disease, coordinate response, and keep communities reliably informed. ICTs that are deployed to combat Covid-19 and its impacts range from remote health monitoring, autonomous disinfection, contactless temperature guns, virtual doctor visits and chatbots, through to mobile apps, hospital robots, drones, streaming services and remote working tools.. The virus is not going to go away overnight, and we need to continue with active engagement activities that enhance the integration of ICT into the new normal. As we reimagine the skillset of the workforce, we will be empowered to rebuild to economies.



CCT director Prof. Darelle Van Greunen contributed to Africa Information and Communication Technologies Alliance's webinar on "Assistive Technologies: Towards African intercontinental Orchestrated efforts". The Alliance is a concerned private sector-led alliance of ICT Associations, Multi-national Corporations, Companies, Organisations and individuals in the ICT sector in Africa.

Prof. Van Greunen also shared insights on Debunking the 5G myth in a Scifest Africa webinar on the topic Health Care Implications of 5G Wireless Technologies: Debunking myths and fears. Scifest Africa has partnered with the Nelson Mandela Bay Science and Technology Centre in putting together an esteemed panel to



discuss the Health Care Implications of 5G wireless technologies. The webinar is available [here](#).

Click [here](#) for more news about the projects of the CCT.

"ICTs had been enabling global efforts to diagnose and treat patients, track and control the spread of the disease, coordinate response, and keep communities reliably informed."

Prof. Anne Margriet Pot Appointed as President-Elect of the IPA

In November 2021, Prof. Anne Margriet Pot, extraordinary professor in Optentia has been appointed as President-Elect of the International Psychogeriatric Association (IPA). For more than 30 years, the IPA has been a leader in the field of psychogeriatrics.

The diverse disciplines, interests, and geographic communities within IPA symbolize the full spec-

trum of geriatric mental health. Through educational activities, scientific meetings, and cutting-edge publications, IPA promotes better mental health for older people all around the world.

IPA has members from nearly 50 countries around the world including South-Africa. If you are not familiar with the work of IPA, but interested in ageing and older



Prof. Anne Margriet Pot

people, Click [here](#) for more information.

The New Funding Frontier *by* Anjonet Jordaan

The new 2021-2027 [Erasmus+ Programme](#) has been launched. Erasmus+ is the European Union's programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. It has an estimated budget of €26.2 billion. This is nearly double the funding compared to its predecessor programme (2014-2020).

The 2021-2027 programme places a strong focus on social inclusion, the green and digital transitions, and promoting young people's participation in democratic life. It supports priorities and activities set out in the European Education Area, Digital Education Action Plan and the European Skills Agenda.

There are several [calls](#) published under this iteration of the Erasmus+ Programme that seek to boost international cooperation with countries not associated to the European Union. Many



other calls will also be open to South African and African researchers and universities to pursue with partners from European countries.

To get a sense of the kind of research projects that have been successfully funded through the Erasmus+ Programme, the programme webpage has a project results [page](#). Another option to explore is the EU [Cordis](#) site that showcases research done in Europe which enables research-

ers to have a look at the research recently completed in the particular theme you're interested in.

As the various calls under this programme are announced, they will be published in the monthly Funding [document](#) published on Optentia website. You can also contact [Anjonet Jordaan](#) to assist with any particular funding needs.

"There are several calls published under this iteration of the Erasmus+ Programme that seek to boost international cooperation with countries not associated to the European Union."

Optentia in 2021: Looking Back

Optentia prides itself in the following aspects: a) Relevant, focused research about the pathways to get individuals, relationships and institutions from precarity to capability. b) A multiple disciplinary reach, a life-course approach, and international networks that allow participants in academia and society to conduct research and find ways to address the so-called "wicked problems" in the world. c) A culture of inclusivity that facilitates a constructive yet rigorous research focus. This culture creates a supportive space for researchers and students across disciplines, work roles (academic versus support staff), institutions

(i.e., organisations, communities, and societies) to collaborate to conduct research, implement teaching and learning programmes, and affect policies. d) The professionalism and high academic calibre of the staff of the research entity and the enablement of researchers to conduct research. e) Providing support and development opportuni-

ties for an individual to become a high quality, focused researcher. e) The translational impact of the entity's research on policy and practice levels (macro, meso and micro levels). f) The maze of national and international collaboration opportunities and the agility of participants in the research entity that leads to innovative strategies and products.



Developing a Care Community Strategy

The number of older people and the burden of disease in Gauteng province is on the rise – increasing the demand for comprehensive long-term care (LTC) significantly. This places extreme stress on informal female caregivers. The exponential challenge of an older, disease-burdened, unemployed population could harvest a radical economic development opportunity.

The LTC demand can potentially offer opportunities for inclusive economic development and growth but is under-explored. Gauteng experiences the unrelenting challenge of creating employment for its increasing unemployed population, especially youth. This symposium will investigate how the growing LTC demand and an expansion of formal LTC services could contribute towards providing employment opportunities. Indications are that a well-developed care economy may improve the quality of formal LTC and care recipients' quality of life, and be a key source of future job growth. However, a body of emerging evidence suggests that Gauteng's previous lack of focus on the care economy presents a major missed opportunity. As the economic powerhouse of South Africa and in keeping with its model status, Gauteng is ideally positioned to lead the setting of agendas on care economy related opportunities. This should start now, while there is still a window of opportunity to do so.

This symposium chaired by Prof. Hoffman was designed for those interested in understanding how (1) to develop a care economy that provides quality LTC for older persons and creates decent employment opportunities for

youth and women and/or (2) how a care economy strategy can be developed using co-created, innovative, evidence-based interventions. It focused on the evolution of the Gauteng Care Economy Strategy from conceptualisation to the final product. The participants were as follows:

- Chair of Session: Prof Jaco Hoffman (Optentia Research Unit, North-West University, South Africa).
- Presenter 1: Mr Jongi Ganyile (Gauteng Department of Economic Development, South Africa; co-authored by Ms. Masinga).
- Presenter 2: Dr Lyn Ossome (Senior Research Specialist and Feminist Economics Lead, Institute for Economic Justice Senior Research, South Africa).
- Presenter 3: Ms Lowna Gie (Optentia Research Unit, North-West University, South Africa).
- Presenter 4: Dr Sune Ferreira-Schenk (TRADE Research Focus Area, North-West University South Africa; co-authored by Prof. Dunga, Dr. David, and Mr de Jongh).
- Presenter 5: Ms Barbara Ziyane (Director, Gauteng Department of Economic Development, South Africa).

Other news from AGenDA is that Prof. Jaco Hoffman participated in the IAGG/United Nations' International Day of Older Persons on 1 October 2021 webinar on "Digital equity for all ages" hosted by Prof. Toni Antonucci, University of Michigan, USA. The title of his presentation was "Leapfrog Technology: Locating Older (South)



Africans at the ICT Interface towards digital inclusion for all."

"Gauteng is ideally positioned to lead the setting of agendas on care economy related opportunities."

The Capability Approach: Some Reflections *by* Tessa de Wet

Doing a PhD on capabilities and functionings tends to fill your mind with, well... stuff about capabilities and functionings. And as the saying goes, when you have a (new) hammer, then everything suddenly looks like a nail in need of being embedded in a(ny) platform. In my mind the Capability Approach (CA) provides an enormously powerful hammer...

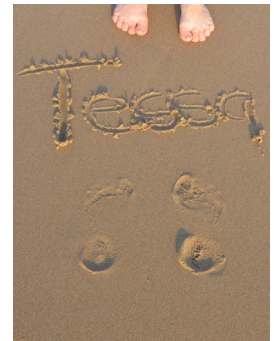
All jokes aside – the CA has provided me with a lens to view the world that is almost like going from seeing the world in black and white hues to gaining rainbow coloured sight – it's almost too much to process. It is comparative to those other 'a-ha!' moments in my life, such as when I learned to read the Roman alphabet in grade 1, or when I first engaged with my Clifton Strengths Finder profile – the world is opened to you and life after that is just never the same again (in a good way).

So I ask myself, what makes it so stimulating and inspiring that, even after having handed in a PhD that I am as enthusiastic (or more) about it than the day I engaged with it the first time? For the academic angle, you can go and read any of the masters that have conceptualised it and written about this way of thinking. From a more personal angle, the following points assist me to shed some light on my enthusiasm:

- There is a creative tension between the flexibility and the structuredness of the approach. It allows me to 'play' freely, but within certain parameters; and the playground is enormous.
- It demands inclusiveness of those under scrutiny – much less are the options to just talk about people and their needs; it is focused on the people themselves talking about their needs (and therefore much less are the preposterous assumptions

that the one scrutinising may be tempted to make on behalf of others).

- It demands ownership from the people talking, as it actually feeds into a type of cause-and-effect loop that provides those people with feedback to evaluate whether they actually properly see themselves or not, allowing for insight and self-growth. If I try and explain it to my 10-year old, it gives us the freedom to 'point fingers' (from a lived experience point of view), while necessitating us to realise and acknowledge that there are people on the other side doing exactly the same, bringing the 'blame game' into a space where it can actually be tackled by mutual consent (ideally).
- Linked to the above, it begs us to acknowledge both the precarities and capital in any situation from multiple points of view; which warms my justice belly like glühwein on an icy winter's day.
- It acknowledges that life is dynamic and living is being in interaction with one another (in a myriad of ways).
- It acknowledges the connectedness of everyone and everything, and how each atom of energy spent in life has an impact (directly and indirectly) on someone or something else.
- It brings the soul back into living in society by focusing on value; for how can anyone look at value without having to go into a mindset of having to engage with things like appreciation, worth, purpose and meaningfulness?
- It sets the scene for restorative relationships, working towards a greater good that requires 'together' thinking to work out,



while providing an understanding of individualised contributions.

- It can be applied (almost) anywhere (from world-changing global level to the small personal acts such as walking my dog). I have yet to find something that I could grasp better than from applying the CA thinking to it.
- It is so steeped in complexity that it will give you a lifetime of thinking and figuring it out in its different permutations and applications.

Of course it has its critics and even this creates opportunity for growth and development for those involved. (I refuse to give up my hammer, but am willing to learn how to use it better.) If it is still unclear, let it be said that I am an enthusiastic convert to the CA. I guess all that I need to do now is to keep sound perspective (and only hammer in real nails with the appropriate level of hammering), which should go a long way in assisting me and others in understanding the context in which we operate, and how to go about mitigating the corrosive disadvantages and leveraging on the fertile functionings that the context has to offer. And ultimately maybe it has as much to do with the phenomenal people who you get exposed to while traversing this sphere that makes it all worthwhile.

“... the CA has provided me with a lens to view the world.”

International Federation of Ageing (IFA)

Optentia funded two symposia at the IFA 15th Global Conference on Ageing, held on 9–12 November 2021 in Niagara Falls, Canada.

Rural Communities for supporting ageing-well-being in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa: Understanding capacities and barriers; Considering strategies (11 November 2021). The social justice agenda of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and recently announced UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021 – 2030) are bold and inclusive. UN Member States have endorsed this vision, pledging to ensure “no one will be left behind” and to “endeavour to reach the furthest behind first” (UNDP 2018, p. 3); with the Decade of Healthy Ageing aiming to improve the lives of older people, their families, and the communities in which they live. Older persons and those living in rural and remote areas are among the groups at acute risk of being left behind. Rural and remote communities comprise vast geographical areas/expanses where a significant population of older people still lives. These areas are also home to some of the most disadvantaged and marginalized people. Communities themselves may be poorly resourced. Poverty, low education, gender discrimination and less access to services tend to coexist in these communities. In this symposium we focused on the Global South (Latin America [LA] and Sub-Saharan Africa [SSA]), broadly exploring elements and mechanisms of communities that are supportive to older persons and those that are not. The argument is that we expect communities to be ‘age-friendly’ but we need to know what elements within communi-

ties are most important to their ability to do so. We are also aware that there surely are interventions that are making a difference, often described in other terms (intergenerational, inclusion, equity, etc.). Emphasis in the symposium was on the characteristics of rural communities and their ability to be supportive to older people. We explored effective elements and mechanisms in communities to support the well-being of older persons in the extant literature and accompanying concepts through a scoping review (Session 1) as well as the existing policies and practices in these regions (Sessions 2 and 3) that enhance or impede the well-being of older people in the communities in which they live. Together these sessions provided a detailed understanding of strengths and limitations in communities’ ability to support older residents and their families. The session aimed to inform the action items from The UN Decade of Healthy Ageing: to ensure that communities foster the abilities of older people (Session 4). The participants were as follows:

- Chair and discussant: Prof. Norah Keating (Director, Global Social Issues on Ageing, IAGG, University of Alberta, Canada and extraordinary professor at Optentia).



- Session 1: Dr Nereide Curreri (International Foundation for Integrated Care, UK; North-West University, South Africa).
- Session 2: Ms Roseline Kihumba (HelpAge International Africa, Kenya).
- Session 3: Ms Marcela Bustamante (HelpAge International Latin America, Colombia).
- Session 4: Prof José Francisco Parodi (San Martín de Porres University, Peru).
- Prof Jaco Hoffman (North-West University, South Africa/International Longevity Centre South Africa).
- Dr. Nereide Curreri (International Foundation for Integrated Care; UK/Researcher, NWU).
- Ms Roseline Kihumba (HelpAge International Africa).
- Ms Marcela Bustamante (HelpAge International Latin America).

“Older persons and those living in rural and remote areas are among the groups at acute risk of being left behind ...”

Ageing and Generational Dynamics in Africa (AGenDA)

The AGenDA programme ended 2021 on a productive note with an array of outputs at international conferences/webinars as reported by Prof. Vera Roos and Prof. Jaco Hoffman:

The NWU was an official partner in hosting the [Imago Africa Conference](#) from 30 September to 3 October 2021. Optentia Research Unit sponsored a symposium on the latest developments related to PhD research in relational dynamics and development. The aim of the symposium was

- to contextualise the relevance of a postgraduate qualification focusing specifically on relational dynamics and development;
- to position the PhD-qualification and its intergenerational research agenda in a multidisciplinary research unit at a tertiary educational level;
- to showcase three PhD studies informed by different relational theories and emphasising ethical considera-



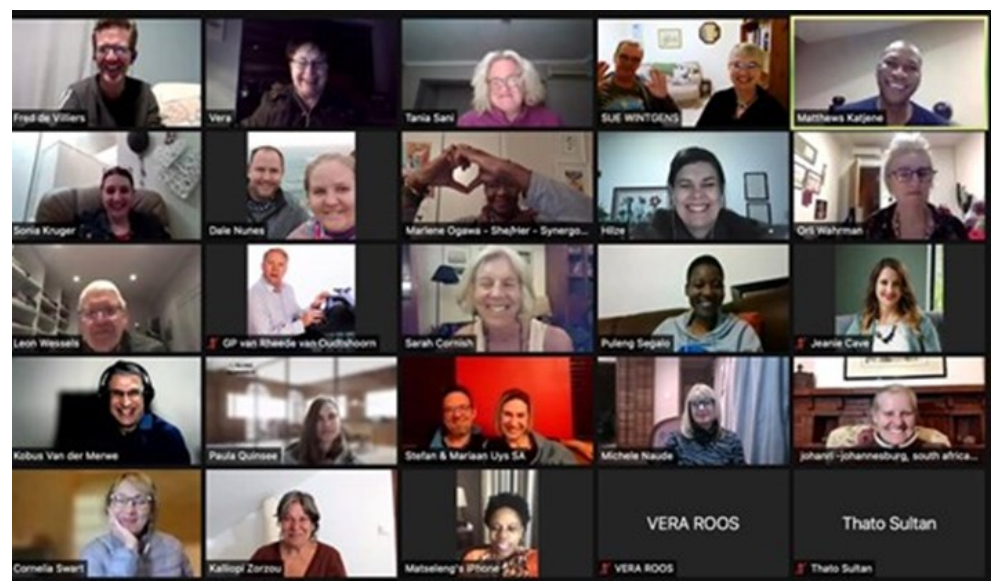
tions in conducting relationally-focused research topics; and

- to involve the community of practitioners in conversations about the interplay and importance of research to inform theory, practice and policy.

Research on relational dynamics is particularly relevant in times of uncertainty with the urgency to address the basic need of belonging and connectedness. However, day-to-day reports show evidence of lack of ethical and respectful relational interactions globally with high and shockingly severe incidents of gender-based aggression, xenophobic attacks, domestic violence and interracial intolerance. More subtle, but equally concerning, is

evidence of strained intergenerational relations with serious implications for the care needs of older population groups. Inter-relational and intergenerational issues are complex and require relationally-focused research. Locally and internationally, there are various initiatives aimed at promoting effective relationships. However, these initiatives are not theory rich or contextually embedded. It can't be assumed that interventions developed in the Global North or Middle East can be transferred as is to other contexts, such as South Africa. We urgently need research to develop theory to inform policy and context-specific relationally-focused interventions.

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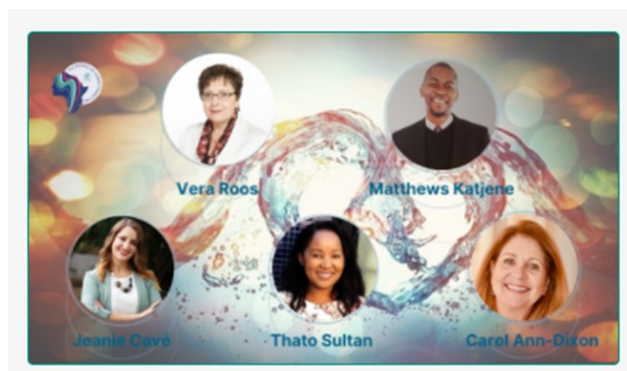


Screen shot of presenters attending a preparatory meeting of the conference organisers.

Ageing and Generational Dynamics in Africa (AGenDA)

The symposium consisted of the following presentations:

- Dr Matthews Katjene: Contextualised a postgraduate qualification on relational dynamics.
- Prof Vera Roos: Presented on the relevance of a PhD in Social Science with relational dynamics and development.



Three PhD students adopting an ethical, relational and theoretical stance presented their research topics and journeys:

- Ms Thato Sultan – Developing intergenerational contact zones to promote optimal intergenerational cohesion in contexts of diversity
- Ms Carol-Ann Dixon – Ethical and relational engagement in PhD supervision while developing a relational framework for effective formal intergenerational care relationships
- Ms Jeanie Cave – Developing a qualitative observational instrument to assess intergenerational relationships theoretically and ethically



Prof. Vera Roos and Dr Lizanlé van Biljon also presented a workshop on The Mmogo-method®: A relational visual data-collection method at the Imago Africa Conference. Mmogo refers to the co-construction and collaborative relational process of meaning making. The method is used to obtain the meaning participants associate with social phenomena and is applied to explore different social phenomena, informing the development of theory or interventions. In applying this method for the workshop purposes, pre-recorded presentations demonstrated how researchers can

create a semi-person centred group context (comprising participants and observers) by introducing norms of safety, empathy and unconditional acceptance. Participants in the recorded workshop demonstrated the application of the method. They were invited to use unstructured materials (malleable clay, beads of different sizes and colours, and dried grass stalks, or substitute materials serving the same purpose) to construct visual representations stimulated by an open-ended prompt which in this instance was to create anything that will show the conference audience how they experience hope at this stage of their lives and development. On completion, participants shared their associations in relation to their presentations. In the conference workshop, the recorded presen-

tations demonstrated the experiential participation in the method after which the method of application was rigorously discussed during the conference presentation.

“Mmogo refers to the co-construction and collaborative relational process of meaning making.”

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Books

Bevan, S. & Cooper, C.L. (2021). The healthy workforce: Enhancing wellbeing and productivity in the workers of the future. Emerald Publishing.

Case, A. & Deaton, A. (2021). Deaths of despair and the future of capitalism. Princeton University Press.

Fleming, P. (2021). Dark academia: How universities die. Pluto Press.

Goldberg, D.T. (2021). Dread: Facing futureless futures. Polity Press.

Mehmetoglu, M. & Mittner, M. (2021). Applied statistics using R: A guide for the social sciences. SAGE.

Prillentsky, I., & Prillentsky, D. (2021). How people matter: Why it affects health, happiness, love, work, and society. London: Cambridge University Press.

Van de Vijver, F.J.R. & Leung, K. (2021). Methods and data analysis for cross-cultural research (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

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