

Special points of interest:

- * Just transitions are crucial
- * Optentia researchers published 105.51 peer-reviewed publications in 2022
- * Five SLPs will be presented in 2023
- * Optentia's international profile was strengthened during 2022
- * Nine NWU staff members attended inaugural lecture
- * Use visual data in research

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Towards a Just World: Capabilities and Well-being

Science should provide solutions to various challenges faced by individuals and institutions. Challenges include poverty, unemployment, inequality and exclusion; climate problems in the world; the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning in decision-making; diversity, equity and inclusion; the changing nature of work (including precarious work), and attention to global health and well-being. These challenges are associated with extraordinary change and transformation, and might result in divisions between people and injustice. Social justice is a broad concept that can help rid us of such divisions and injustice. The [World Science Forum](#) (2022) made the following declaration after its conference: "Social injustice is a major cause of global insecurity, as evidenced by increased geopolitical conflict and tension, and strained international solidarity. Increasing scourges of our society, such as wide-spread violence, loss of social mobility, exploitation of various social groups, discrimination and exclusion, including mental health challenges for many, have their roots in social injustice. Science must assume a greater role in addressing and reversing these damaging dynamics and do so through an inter-



sectional lens." This includes correcting the failure of climate policies, unleashing the potential of African science in global cooperation, rebooting multilateralism and global solidarity, and justice in science. From a social justice perspective, just transitions and treatment of people are highly relevant to ensure their well-being and the success of interventions. Social justice requires that pathways to capabilities be investigated and promoted. Without justice and fairness, people do not feel valued and that they add value, which result in poor well-being.

According to [Max Roser](#), three things are necessary to make the world a better place: a) The belief that it is possible to make the world a better place. b) Knowledge about the biggest problems. c) Knowledge on how to tackle these problems.

What do recent Optentia studies suggest regarding capabilities of working people? First, three capability sets can be identified, namely the robust, inadequate and vulnerable sets. Second, a lack of three capabilities (from a set of seven) put the sustainable employability of individuals in developing countries at risk: developing new knowledge and skills, involvement in decision making and earning a good income). Also, job resources impact the capabilities of people. The nature of work (especially autonomy), relations at work, salary and career progression are vital. Moreover, individuals' needs for safety, connection, and self-esteem affect their security. If these needs are not fulfilled, people can become preoccupied with them and neglect opportunities for growth.

Performance of Optentia: 2022

A total of 37 permanent staff members, 36 Master's students, 48 PhD students, and one post-doctoral fellow participate in Optentia. From January to December 2022, 29 (6 PhD and 23 Master's) students completed their studies. A total of 8 master's 7 PhD students submitted their dissertations and theses for examination in November 2022. Optentia researchers have published 71.85 peer-reviewed articles, 23.83 peer-reviewed chapters in books, and 9.83 peer-reviewed conference papers during 2022.

An advisory committee has been implemented in Optentia. For more information, go to About Us on the Optentia website. Various extraordinary professors have been appointed and recommended for appointment during



2022. We are awaiting approval of three extraordinary professor appointments. The full list of Optentia's extraordinary appoint-

ments is available on the [Optentia website](#).

"We produced 105.51 peer-reviewed articles from January to December 2022."

The Optentia Scorecard *by* Prof. Ian Rothmann

Output	2020	2021	2022
Peer-reviewed article equivalents	68.37	78.69	105.51*
Papers: Conferences	1	26	9
Participating Master's students	96	22	34
Completed Master's students	11	22	23
Participating PhD students	35	46	52
Completed PhD students	3	2	6
Post-doctoral fellows	3	1	1
Number of workshops presented	9	13	10
Number of workshop participants	473	700	250

Note: Outputs as on 12 December 2022

* Not audited

Capability Development at Optentia

Optentia has presented various webinars and programmes to build the competencies of participants during 2023. The following events are scheduled for 2023:

- Prestige lecture - The sound of justice: Prof. J. van der Klink, Tilburg University (January 2023).
- Workshops and prestige lecture: Prof. D. van Greunen, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (February 2023).
- Workshop - Workplace diversity: Dr J. van Assche, Ghent University (March 2023).
- Workshop: Co-creating a research agenda on LTC in Southern Africa (March 2023).
- R training: Prof. Duco Veen, Utrecht University (date to be determined).
- Training in Atlas ti (date to be determined).



An Advisory Committee for Optentia

"In all affairs it's a healthy thing now and then to hang a question mark on the things you have long taken for granted." - Bertrand Russell

The celebrated mathematician, philosopher, and logician is known for having changed his position and focus on a number of topics over his illustrious career. He recognised that getting new insights and adjusting to a changing world is essential.

Likewise, a number of Optentia members gathered earlier this year to discuss setting up an advisory body and to define what type of function it would have and what backgrounds our members need to have to fulfil our ambition.

Optentia members have always been united in the belief that having diverse perspectives and scientific backgrounds together are essential ingredients

to develop and organise knowledge for the optimal expression of individual, social and institutional potential, with a specific interest in the African context.

In choosing the people we ask to annually "put a question mark" on the direction we may be taking for granted as the right one, we also sought diverse views and experience. This advisory committee will be meeting at least once a year to help us get perspective on where we are in the research world and what course corrections we might need to make. The committee members will be introduced to you as soon as we have confirmation of their acceptance of our invite. We look forward to their support to keep Optentia on the right track in a constantly shifting post-COVID world. The Advisory Committee consists of the following persons:

- Prof. Isabella Aboderin, Perivoli Professor of African partnerships, University of Bristol, UK.
- Prof. Rens van de Schoot, Department of Methodology and Statistics, Utrecht University, The Netherlands.
- Ms Barbara Ziyane, Director: Economic Policy and Planning, Gauteng Department of Economic Development, RSA.
- Prof. Darelle van Greunen, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth, RSA.
- Prof. Puleng Segalo, UNISA, Lethuli Chair: Research on Global South, Pretoria, RSA.
- Mr Nicho Ntema (Entrepreneur and Community Representative), Sharpeville, RSA.
- Ms Rhandu Ngubane, Vice President Human Resources, SASOL (Sasolburg operations), RSA.

"... it's a healthy thing now and then to hang a question mark on the things you have long taken for granted."

Optentia's Short Learning Programmes: Valuable Opportunities

Optentia has currently three registered Short Learning Programmes (SLPs), namely:

- SLP in Research Design.
- SLP in Career Enhancement.
- SLP in Harnessing Individual, Relational and Organisational Capabilities.

Optentia aims to present the SLP in Research Design twice during 2023 (January to June, and July to November). For more infor-

mation about the SLP in Research Design, watch [Video 1](#) and [Video 2](#). More information about the SLP is available [here](#).

In 2023, Optentia aims to present the SLP in Career Enhancement to unemployed people in communities. This SLP was adapted by Optentia researchers from the JOBS program. Information about the SLP in Career Enhancement is available [here](#).

Optentia is in the final phase of the development and registration of two new SLPs, namely:

- SLP for Mentors
- SLP for Mentees

Please contact Lynn Booysen for more information about the SLPs.

"It may sound cliché, but diversity is indeed a verb."

Collaboration with Dr Jasper van Assche

Jasper is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Developmental, Personality and Social Psychology at Ghent University (Belgium), and a lecturer at the Center for Social and Cultural Psychology (CESCUP) at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium). He completed his doctoral dissertation in 2018. He is the author of over 45 peer-reviewed publications, he is Associate Editor of Journal of Social and Political Psychology and has received the Belgian Association for Psychological Sciences Best PhD Award 2019 and the "Prix de Psychologie", awarded by the Belgian Royal Academy for best doctoral dissertation in psychological sciences between 2016 and 2018. His research deals with the role of diversity in society, political attitudes, inter-group relations, and prejudice.

Based on this research, Jasper will take us on a unique journey. We will see a nuanced sociological and psychological analysis of human attitudes and behaviour in diverse neighbourhoods and cities. His results

show that harmonious coexistence between social groups is not evident for everyone: In fact, a certain "type" of person reacts negatively to ethnocultural diversity. These individuals have more prejudice, less neighbourhood satisfaction, and less trust in

politics. Yet, a successful diverse society is possible, because the results of these studies can also inform policymakers about how such a poly-cultural society can work. It may sound cliché, but diversity is indeed a verb.



Dr Jasper van Assche

Visit to Optentia: Prof. Jac van der Klink

Prof. Jac van der Klink MD, PhD, Msc is emeritus professor of mental health at work and sustainable employability at Tilburg University, Tranzo and extraordinary professor at North West University of South Africa, Optentia. He graduated in clinical psychology and in social and organisational psychology and he received postgraduate qualifications in general practice and occupational health. He worked as a physician in Ghana and as General Practitioner in the Netherlands. Subsequently, he worked a.o. in occupational health practice and as scientific director at the Netherlands School of Public and Occupational Health (NSPOH). From 2006 till 2014 he was full professor of occupational health at the University Medical Center in Groningen.

His research focus is on mental health at work, on sustainable employability and on application of the capability model in these domains. He chaired the working group that applied the capability approach to work and developed the Capability Set for Work. On 27 January 2023 at 11:00, Prof. Jac van der Klink will present a prestige lecture at the NWU, Optentia in Vanderbijlpark.

The prestige lecture's title is "The Sound of Justice". According to Prof. van der Klink, the starting point is the normative view that science should improve the world and not just explain and analyse it. This is congruent to the field of occupational practice and the professionals working there, who want to create flourishing work and not just understand why work is often degrading. Science must provide practical tools to support professionals in this work. Such a



Prof. Jac van der Klink

pragmatic attitude must be based on a completely clear conceptual framework. Bad theories can dehumanize people. I advocate a deontological framework and a practice in which social justice is central, not financial-economic objectives. This corresponds to the capability approach, focusing on a valuable and valued life and normativity, diversity, and contextuality as core values. Contrary to the common view of distri-

butive justice, Prof. van der Klink advocates the concept of contributive justice, which provides more opportunities for an inclusive and diversified (work) environment and also adheres to (South) African lines of thinking in which contribution to a community and 'togetherness' are important concepts.

"Bad theories can dehumanize people."

"... in most of our economic and social theories, work is primarily seen as a production factor. I think we should see work as something that has personal and social value, other than just a production factor."

Van der Klink, J. (2019). Cutting stone or building a cathedral: Valedictory address. Tilburg: Tilburg University.



World Science Forum: Science for Social Justice

A delegation from Optentia attended the [World Science Forum](#) (WSF) in Cape Town from 6-9 December 2022. The Optentia delegation included Prof. Ian Rothmann, Prof. Jaco Hoffman, Prof. Marita Heyns, Prof. Blessed Ngwenya, Prof. Vera Roos, Anjonet Jordaan, and Lynn Booysen. The WSF a biennial event that has been successfully assembling scientists, policymakers, industry leaders, civil society and the media to discuss the role of science in meeting global challenges.

According to Prof. Jaco Hoffman, Optentia is well-positioned to collaborate in research themes that were mentioned at the WSF. Click [here](#) to read the declaration made after the WSF. More information about the WSF is available [here](#). In the past solutions produced by scientists were discipline-specific; now collaboration and co-creation is critical. The WSF declaration refers (2022) refers to the following overarching themes:

- Science for human dignity: What role for science in fighting poverty, unemployment, inequality and exclusion?
- Science for climate justice - How can science working with civil society lead the way in correcting the failure of climate policy?
- Science for Africa and the world - How to unleash the potential of African science in global cooperation?
- Science for diplomacy - How can science reboot multilateralism and global solidarity?
- Justice in science - How to ensure science reflects the society we want?



Dr Japie Greeff, Prof. Ian Rothmann, Anjonet Jordaan, Prof. Blessed Ngwenya, Prof. Vera Roos, Prof. Marita Heyns and Lynn Booysen.

In line with the importance of social justice, research and policy interventions are essential. The concept of just transitions links well with the mission of Optentia to study pathways from precarity to capability. [Nowella Anyango van Zwieten](#) who is researching the effect of power stations in South Africa shared interesting observations regarding just transitions. [Dhesigen Naidoo](#) mentioned three types of justice, namely procedural, distributive, and restorative justice. It will also be interesting to link the concept of contributive justice to just transitions. Interestingly, Prof. Blessed Ngwenya of Optentia mentioned that it is essential that transitions should not only be just, but that capabilities to flourish should be considered. Prof. Vera Roos pointed out that change management and intergenerational experiences are important research themes.

UNESCO provides guidelines for sound science. Click [here](#) to access the recommendation. Click [here](#) 10 key areas of the Recommendation.

Based on the insights obtained at the WSF, Optentia will continue to integrate the following aspects into its strategy:

- Make science count by optimising the interaction between education, research, and policy.
- Contribute to open science, inclusivity, values and just transitions.
- Contribute to the discussion on how to shape the digital transformation.
- Consider culture and the knowledge of communities in education and research.
- Develop scientists as listeners to people in communities.

Roula Inglesi-Lotz advised as follows during the WSF: "If we as scientists don't listen to people, we will waste time and money trying - and failing - to solve problems we don't really understand." Therefore, the best policies are the ones that are informed by the people, by the community.

"Optentia is well positioned to collaborate in research themes that were mentioned at the WSF."

Short Learning Programmes Prepare Mentors and Mentees

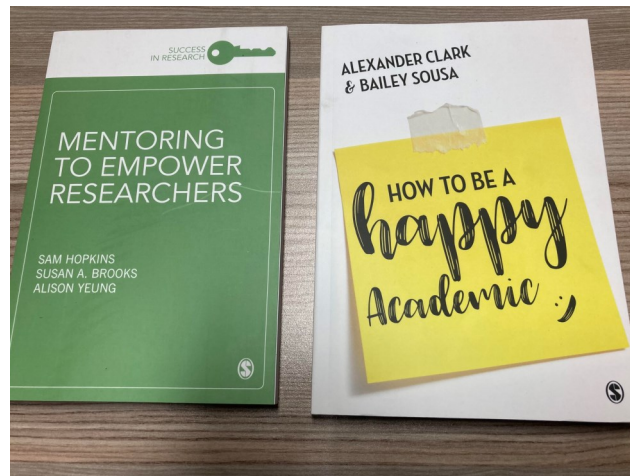
Optentia is currently developing two short learning programmes (SLPs), one for mentors (40 nodal hours) and one for mentees (40 nodal hours). These SLPs will prepare academic mentors and mentees for the implementation of a mentorship programme.

The SLPs will focus on the following topics:

- Orientation, checkpoints and endings.
- Policy framework and code of practice.
- Aims of the mentorship programme
- The matching process, mentoring agreement form, and end of the programme evaluation forms.
- Enhancing mentorship and coaching through peer conversations.
- Ethical dilemmas regarding mentorship and coaching.
- Strategies for matching mentors and mentees.
- The academic context for coaching and mentorship.
- Guidelines for mentees and mentors to set up a mentorship relationship.
- Pathways From precarity to capability and flourishing academics.
- Appreciative coaching and mentoringll.
- Conversations that inspire: Conversation competencies
- Inspiring sustained, desired change:

The following information will be included in a repository for mentors and mentees:

- Mentoring to support teaching and learning success.
- Mentoring to support publication.



- Mentoring to support grant success.
 - Mentoring to support net-working.
 - Mentoring to promote cultural awareness.
 - Mentoring to promote well-being and flourishing.
 - Mentoring to engage in communities
 - Earn a good income.
 - Contribute to creating something valuable at work.
- Various videos are being produced for the SLPs:
- Academic citizenship: Scanning the environment.
 - Mentoring and coaching: Concepts, roles, boundaries and ethics.
 - Capabilities of mentors and mentees.
 - Functionings of academics: From surviving to thriving.
 - Helping people change: Coaching with compassion.
 - Conversation competencies.
 - Mentoring in diverse contexts.
- The SLPs will be founded in the following capabilities:
- Use knowledge and skills.
 - Develop new knowledge and skills.
 - Involvement in important decisions.
 - Build and maintain meaningful work relationships.
 - Set your own goals at work.

“These SLPs will prepare academic mentors and mentees for the implementation of a mentorship programme ...”



Faculty of Humanities and Optentia: Internationalisation

Collaboration with international networks is necessary to partner in international databases and to advance science. The Faculty of Humanities and the Optentia Research Unit have invested time and resources in their internationalisation. During October 2022, Prof. Dumi Moyo (Executive Dean: Humanities), Prof. Mirna Nel (Deputy-Dean: Research and Innovation), Prof. Aaron Tshidzumba (Deputy-Dean: Community Engagement), Prof. Ian Rothmann (Director: Optentia), and five Programme Leaders of Optentia, Prof. Marita Heyns, Dr Japie Greeff, Prof. Jaco Hoffman, Mr Fred Goede visited the following universities in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Belgium: Oxford University, Westminster University, Utrecht University, Tilburg University, Twente University, Wageningen University, and KU Leuven. In addition, the delegation also visited the Flemish Interuniversity Board (VLIR-UQS) to investigate funding opportunities. Prior to the international visit, Prof. Mirna Nel, Prof. Ian Rothmann and Prof. Jaco Hoffman visited universities in South Africa. Collaboration among universities in a specific country is vital for funding applications to succeed. Therefore the visits aimed to promote national and international collaboration and to learn about the teaching and learning, research and community engagement at different institutions. We believe that grassroots collaboration should be in place before memorandums of understanding are signed. Coordination of funding applications within the Faculty of Humanities (and probably also the NWU) is essential. The Faculty of Humanities should be visible at

“A transition to Open Science is necessary to accelerate and improve the realisation of research results and their societal impact.”



Prof. Dumi Moyo, Prof. Ian Rothmann, Prof. Aaron Tshidzumba, Dr Japie Greeff, Prof. Marita Heyns, Prof. Mirna Nel, Prof. Leoni van der Vaart and Prof. Jaco Hoffman in Utrecht



Mr Fred Goede, Prof. Andries Baart, Prof. Dumi Moyo, Prof. Jac van der Klink, Prof. Jaco Hoffman, Prof. Laura Weiss, Prof. Mirna Nel and Prof. Ian Rothmann at Utrecht University

national and international institutions and events focusing on national and international research funding opportunities. To collaborate with the government and to facilitate research collaboration, Optentia was also strongly represented at the World Science Forum (6-9 December 2022) in Cape Town. Opportunities also exist for staff members of the NWU to study at universities in Europe. The NWU is well-positioned as an African university to utilise these opportunities.

A transition to Open Science is necessary to accelerate and improve the realisation of research results and their societal impact. This will alter the practice of education and research. Open Science include open access, fair data and software, public engagement, recognition and rewards, and open education. Concerning Open Science, the NWU could learn from the [strategies](#) implemented by Utrecht University.

Meeting with Experts in Methodology and Statistics

During October 2022 a delegation of the NWU Optentia attended a workshop organised by Prof. Rens van de Schoot at Utrecht University (UU) in the Netherlands. We were privileged to interact with experts. Cutting-edge open software for data analyses is freely available for Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program (JASP). The JASP software is constantly being improved, and the software is well-supported by training programmes (freely available on the internet). The following experts made presentations: Jeroen Sondervan - Project Lead Open Access Open Science Programme at Utrecht University (UU); Eric-Jan Wagenmakers Founder and CEO at JASP (open source software for statistical analyses); Gerko Vink (Maintainer of MICE (open-source software for imputing missing data) at UU;



Prof. Jaco Hoffman, Prof. Marita Heyns, Prof. Mirna Nel, Prof. Dumi Moyo, Dr Japie Greeff, Prof. Aaron Tshidzumba, Prof. Rens van de Schoot, Prof. Gerko Vink, Prof. Eric-Jan Wagenmakers, Prof. Leoni van der Vaart, Tijmen Altena, Jelle Teijema, Mr Fred Goede and Prof. Ian Rothmann

Jelle Teijema PhD student at UU and Maintainer of Makita (open source software for ASReview); Tijmen Altena Founder and CTO at GlobalCampus (search for re-

viewers); Jonathan de Bruin lead of the track FAIR Data and Software of the UU Open Science Programme.

"Cutting-edge open software for data analyses is freely available for Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program (JASP)."

NRF Y-rating for Prof. Leoni van der Vaart

Prof. Leoni van der Vaart has been awarded a Y-2 rating by the National Research Foundation. Leoni is one of the top young industrial/organisational psychology researchers in South Africa. She has played a major role in many of many Optentia initiatives. She completed her Master's degrees in Human Resource Management and Industrial/Organizational Psychology and a joint PhD in Industrial/Organizational Psychology with KU Leuven (Belgium) and the North-West University (NWU). She is an associate professor and researcher at the NWU and has a special interest in understanding employee/job seeker attitudes and behaviour (especially in a technologically transformed



Prof. Leoni van der Vaart

world) from a motivational perspective. Leoni has tertiary education experience as a lecturer and active researcher with publications in peer-reviewed journals and presentations at international conferences. She is a registered psychological counsellor (category: independent practi-

tioner), a registered psychologist (category: organizational psychology) with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), and human resource professional (category: learning and development) with the South African Board of People Practices (SABPP).

Prof. Blessed Ngwenya Joins Optentia

Prof. Blessed (Bee) Ngwenya has been appointed as an associate professor in Optentia from 1 November 2022. Upon graduating from the University of the Witwatersrand with a BA with honours and an MA, he went on to study at the famed University of Oxford in England, where he earned a DPhil in socio-legal studies and a master's degree in legal research.

Prof. Ngwenya's research interests are largely informed by decolonial theory which chimes very well with other theories that pursue the optimal functioning of the human such as the capability approach amongst others. After completing his DPhil in Socio-Legal Studies his research has focused on the pernicious energy on which dehumanisation thrives in institutions such as the media, hospitals, universities and modern states.

His research interests have thus shaped his latest book, 'Media, Power and Hegemony in South Africa: The Myth of Independence, Routledge, 2021'. This inquiry revolves around understanding social formations of the peripherised from the inside, the analysis of the genealogies of subordination and how lines and horizons of intellectual movements within the wider context global of imperial designs impact the local to the level of the individual.

In the future and within Optentia, a multidisciplinary department that is premised on intellectual projects that investigate possibilities that pursue the enhancement of the capability of people to work, the flourishing of individuals and positive organisational scholarship I seek to pursue projects that enable the



Prof. Blessed Ngwenya

theorization and interpretation of the world from where people are located, unfettered by imperial designs that exclude other human beings from common humanity which results in lost knowledges, diminished epistemic virtues, limited exclusion capability and optimal functioning.

Click [here](#) to read more about Prof. Blessed Ngwenya.

“... his research has focused on the pernicious energy on which dehumanisation thrives in institutions such as the media, hospitals, universities and modern states.”

Prof. Marius Stander Awarded an NRF C-rating

Marius Stander is a Professor (NWU & Optentia Research Unit, South Africa) and an Industrial Psychologist specialising in the assessment and optimisation of talented people and teams. He has taught Master's students in Industrial Psychology for the past 36 years. He was awarded an C2-rating from the National Research Foundation. Marius has supervised more than 70 Master's and PhD students and acted as a supervising psychologist for more than 65 psychology interns. He has presented 70+ scientific papers at various national and international conferences and published more than 45 peer-reviewed papers. He has been a Section Editor and a member of the Editorial Board with the SA

Journal for Industrial Psychology. He is actively involved as a reviewer for journals, conferences, and the NRF and an examiner for more than 150 masters and doctoral students at various universities. He is a registered Industrial Psychologist with the Health Professional Council of SA (HPCSA), a Mentor, and a Master Human Resource Practitioner at the SA Board for People Practices (SABPP). The Society for Industrial Organisational Psychology (SIOPSA) awarded him a "Life-Long Honorary membership" for his contribution to the field. Marius has been consulting for various companies (80+) in Africa, the Middle East, the USA, Europe, China and APAC over the past 36 years, specialising in leadership

development, executive coaching, and the assessment and optimisation of talented people as well as team development. He was an active management committee member of the IPM, SABPP, BMF, Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySA), Vaal HR Forum, NWU Convocation and District Education and Training Unit (Gauteng Department of Education).



Prof. Marius Stander

Promotion to Full Professor: Marita Heyns

Marita Heyns was recently promoted to full professor at the NWU, effective as from January 2023. "This promotion is an important milestone in my academic career, and I am deeply grateful for being acknowledged by the NWU in this way", she says. Admittedly, such an accomplishment did not materialize without dedication, hard work, and perseverance... but according to her, these "sacrifices" are made almost without questioning when one is passionate about one's work, and when being rewarded with the satisfying experience of continuous growth during the process. As is the case with all forms of recognition, to achieve success was also not possible without a support system behind the scenes - a loving family, friends and colleagues who provided ample encouragement. She acknowledges that without them, success would not have been possible.

When looking back, her career did not unfold as a planned journey which deliberately headed towards academia from the start. It was rather a case of life taking many twists and turns and making the best of circumstances at a particular time and place, yet always guided by a love of learning and dedication to the task at hand. She began her profession as a practicing clinical psychologist - a memorable phase which lasted for almost 20 years. During this period, she was nudged towards gaining more management- and business expertise not only on a practical level but also theoretically by completing a second master's degree, this time in business administration. The latter was also instrumental

in her decision to accept a position as senior lecturer at the internationally accredited Business School of the North-West University.

During her relatively short academic career which formally began in 2009, she taught various management-related modules on post graduate level, received an Institutional Teaching Excellence Award for outstanding teaching and innovative learning practices, and have supervised more than 40 post-graduate studies. After completing a PhD in psychology in 2016, she joined Optentia in 2017 as coordinator of the master's degree in Positive Psychology (MAPP) programme at the time. She is currently the program leader of the Strengths-based Studies and Interventions programme and a full-time researcher at Optentia.

She is also proud to be part of a multi-disciplinary research team at Optentia, all of them being experts in their respective fields of interest. Her research contribution focuses on positive psychology related topics, with a special interest in the role of trust as it manifests within workplace settings on individual,



Prof. Marita Heyns

interpersonal- and organisational levels. Through her research, she strives to promote pathways for individuals and organisations to flourish. Partly because of this interest, she developed a PhD in Social Science with Social Inclusion and Development offering which is currently presented at Optentia.

As many would agree, a promotion is not only the end of a specific phase of one's career, but also the beginning of a new one. Within Optentia, there is never a shortage of opportunities and shared dreams to pursue. One such objective for the immediate future is to expand existing national and international networks in view of securing funding opportunities to promote quality education and poverty alleviation.

"Through her research, she strives to promote pathways for individuals and organisations to flourish."



Dr Japie Greeff: Visit to Twente University

At the BMS-LAB at the University of Twente the team was exposed to a number of different technology solutions that support the work being done in a number of traditionally social fields. From being able to replicate experiments that were done on anxiety in virtual reality, to being able to explore conflict resolution in a safe space, the virtual world brings with it a number of opportunities to research things that would be difficult to do with real risks being posed to participants. In the photo below, Dr Japie Greeff is using the BMS-LAB driving simulator platform to play a racing game, but this same platform is used to study how people react to driving in a world where there are vehicles not driven by other humans and instead being driven by machines, a concept that has become a reality in a



Dr Japie Greeff at Twente University

“Virtual and Augmented reality bring with them a great number of opportunities for digital humanities research ...”

At the BMS-LAB at the University of Twente the team was exposed to a number of different technology other humans and instead being driven by machines, a concept that has become a reality in a great many places in the world. Virtual and Augmented reality

bring with them a great number of opportunities for digital humanities research and exploring what it means to be in a technology saturated world.

Recognition for Prof. Darelle van Greunen

Prof. Darelle van Greunen received the National Research Foundation engagement award: during 2022. Click [here](#) for more information. Prof. van Greunen and her team also received the Outsystems Innovation award for Cancer App. Click [here](#) for more information.

Individuals lacking literacy and health awareness in rural South Africa often have cancer diagnosed late or not at all. The Center for Community Technologies (CCT) at Nelson Mandela University saw the potential to raise community awareness, help citizens recognize symptoms, and seek earlier intervention. CCT's C-VIVE mobile application was born in a hackathon, which brought

together CCT, OutSystems partner NTT DATA, and the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA). C-VIVE, now available on

iOS and Android app stores, improves cancer awareness to save more lives. Click [here](#) for more information.



Prof. Darelle van Greunen

Strengths-based Studies and Interventions *by* Prof. Marita Heyns

As most visitors to our website are aware, the Strengths-based Studies and Interventions programme explores what strengths individuals, groups, communities, and institutions can tap into, to enable their capacity, skills, knowledge, connections and potential to learn, develop and grow.

Members of the programme have had a very busy year behind them. Besides the delivery of postgraduate students, publications and a variety of other tasks, important networks and support systems have been expanded. One of many highlights includes a meeting on 4 October this year with Prof. Marianne van Woerkom, an expert on strengths-based studies and intervention research. She is attached to the Department of Human Resource Studies, Tilburg University, in the Netherlands, and is also associated with the Center of Excellence for Positive Organizational Psychology at Erasmus University Rotterdam and a member of the editorial board of Human Resource Development Review, Human Resource Development International and the Dutch journal for Positive Psychology. An important new networking relationship was established which could be beneficial to NWU researchers in general and specifically for researchers within our Strengths-based Studies and Intervention programmes due to identified shared research interests, particularly regarding ways in which a strengths-based approach could be promoted within workplace contexts.

The Strengths-based Studies and Interventions programme of Optentia boasts several extraordinary research professors





whose insights and contributions are indispensable for the group. One of them is Laura Weiss, associated with the University of Utrecht, who has been part of the team for a long time, but whose appointment as extraordinary research professor was recently concluded.

The team was also privileged to welcome a new addition to the programme, namely Prof. Christine Wekerle, a clinical psychologist and member of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neurosciences, McMaster University, Canada. She specializes in the broad area of gender, relationship violence and health and her focus includes adolescent dating violence and prevention, youth resilience, child maltreatment and its related impairment in mental health and addictions. She is the Editor-in-Chief of Child Abuse & Neglect, an international and interdisciplinary journal which publishes articles on child welfare, health, humanitarian aid, justice, mental health, public health, and social service systems.

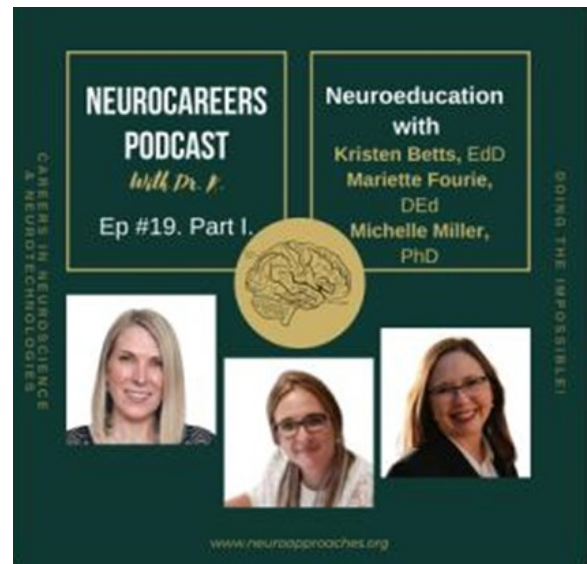
Following her appointment as extraordinary research professor in our programme, Professor Wekerle was virtually introduced to attending team members who, in turn, also had the opportunity

to introduce themselves and their research interests to her. We were made aware of several new research opportunities, such as considering the use of the "JoyPop" app which Chris and her team have designed to help young people build on their resilience daily. (For more information, please click [here](#) and [here](#). Recognising that child protection is a global concern, we also discussed the need to address major gaps in the existing literature base regarding the need for trauma-informed approaches to support mental health of children who have been sexually exploited as well as possible funding opportunities that could be explored. (Click [here](#) for more information and look out for a special edition that will be published in 2023 on the sexual exploitation of children focusing on child abuse/neglect). Finally, researchers were encouraged to submit relevant manuscripts to the open access International Journal of Child and Adolescent Resilience ([IJCAR](#)). We are indeed looking forward to a very productive new year!

"... researchers were encouraged to submit relevant manuscripts to the open access International Journal of Child and Adolescent Resilience."

Neuroeducation by Prof. Kristin Betts and Dr Mariette Fourie

The Institute of Neuroapproaches conducted a Podcast interview with one of our Optentia members during October 2022 focusing on what helps you learn. The Neurocareers Podcast Host and Founder, and Director at The Institute of Neuroapproaches, Milena Korostenskaja (PhD) is a Neuroscience Educator, Consultant and Coach. In her quest to find out the best practices in the science of learning, she contacted three exemplary professionals in the field - Dr Kristen Betts, Dr Mariette Fourie (DEd), and Dr Michelle Miller! An excerpt from the Podcast recording: "Learning becomes transformational when you understand how your brain processes the information," says Dr Mariette Fourie (DEd), one of the podcast guests. So, what are the best practices that help you learn? Should you take notes on the computer or by hand? You will find it out from our other



podcast guest, Dr Michelle Miller, discussing the misconception about note-taking. You will also discover what it means to be uncomfortable learning new information and the value of a productive struggle from Dr Kristen Betts. Click [here](#) to listen to Podcast 1. Click [here](#) to listen to Podcast 2.

Mariette stated "I am looking forward to continuing our conversations about the brain and how we apply neuroeducation. As Blakemore and Frith (2008, p. 118) explain "We know a little of what goes on in the brain when we learn, but hardly anything about what goes on in the brain when we teach."

"We know a little of what goes on in the brain when we learn, but hardly anything about what goes on in the brain when we teach."

Prof. Anne Margriet Pot's Inaugural Lecture at Erasmus University

On 7 October 2022, Prof. Anne Margriet Pot presented her inaugural lecture at Erasmus University. Nine staff members of the North-West University attended the lecture. In the first part of this address, she described what the World Health Organization's Healthy Ageing policy framework teaches us about person-centred long-term care. She concluded that long-term care is definition person-centred. The second part of this address argued that reflexive regulation of person-centred long-term care for these vulnerable people is a promising approach and needs to be further developed and implemented through research. Narrative



Prof. Mirna Nel, Prof. Dumi Moyo, Prof. Anne Margriet Pot and Marcel Barnard

approaches will be used in this context. In this form of regulation, it is no longer the regulator

that assesses: instead, the actors assess one another.

Research Collaboration with the Netherlands and Belgium

Optentia has built excellent research collaboration with the Netherlands over the past 10 years. The collaboration started with appointing Prof. Rens van de Schoot and Prof. Ruut Veenhoven as extraordinary professors. Prof. van de Schoot trained many researchers at Optentia in research methodology (especially statistics with Mplus), and created many opportunities for South African universities to be trained at Utrecht University. He was also part of the team who organised the first StatsCamp in South Africa and donated a large sum of money to create opportunities for students and staff members of the North-West University in Mplus, R and R studio. Recently, Prof. van de Schoot arranged for financial support for at least two Optentia participants to be trained in AS Review. Prof. Veenhoven has also been helping Optentia in various ways. Recently, he provided an opportunity to Neil Barnard (currently a PhD candidate) to become involved in research for the World Database of Happiness. Over the years, Optentia has appointed more extraordinary professors from the Netherlands, including Prof. Andries Baart, Prof. Roland Blom, Prof. Marise Born, Prof. Gert-Jan Hofstede, Prof. Saskia Kelders, Prof. Theo Kocken, Prof. Anne Margriet Pot, Prof. Jac van der Klink, Prof. Henk van der Vlier, Prof. Llewellyn van Zyl, Prof. Duco Veen and Prof. Laura Weiss. During October 2022, Prof. Ian Rothmann visited Petra Bergsma of the International Office at Tilburg University to discuss opportunities for funding for students and research projects. Following the visit to Tilburg Uni-



Petra Bergsma (Tilburg University) and Prof. Ian Rothmann

“Optentia has built excellent research collaboration with the Netherlands ...”



Peter de Lannoy presenting about funding opportunities provided by the Flemish Interuniversity Board

versity, a delegation of the Faculty of Humanities at the North-West University visited the Flemish Interuniversity Board in Brussels to learn more about funding for projects in South Africa and elsewhere in Africa. We learned

much about funding opportunities on which we will follow up during 2023.

The Future of Technology and Human Interaction *by Dr Japie Greeff*

Although it feels like we are moving faster into a world driven by AI and large intelligent systems I am forced to wonder whether it is something we should be afraid of or whether we should embrace the amazing opportunities that the new world is bringing us. During the Covid-19 pandemic there was a large amount of uncertainty as to how the world could continue functioning when so many of us were going to be confined to our houses, yet when push came to shove, we realised how much we were suddenly empowered to do through the use of technology. As the pandemic has started to wind down, many companies staff have realised that there is no need to return to the previous version of what we considered to be normal – it simply isn't needed anymore. Even before we reached this point it became clear that many organisations were no longer just comprised of physical assets and human resources anymore – they are now in many ways cybernetic organisms that function as the combination of artificial and human decision making processes and many people can simply no longer do their jobs without significant support from their machine partners.

While the creation of technology was predominantly the domain of scientists and engineers, the rise of the maker movement has started democratising this process to an incredible extent, and running parallel to this there has been a move to create technologies that allow non-technical people the ability to create complex systems without being able to write the huge amounts of code that would have been required maybe ten years ago. The rise of Software Robotic Process Automation, Home Automation, No-code and low-code systems for developing apps, templated website development and social media platforms that can be used for the dissemination of information has meant that the world we are moving into is nothing like the



world we had before Covid. This brings with it advantages but also potential pitfalls that need to be explored when training people to use technologies. There is the risk that letting people loose with too many capabilities and not enough experience to know what the consequences are of developing technology artefacts could lead to unforeseen consequences. A recent example from earlier this month was where KFC in Germany created a simple automation to publish a promotional message on its app every time there was an import date on the calendar, and inadvertently invited their customers to celebrate Kristallnacht with tender cheese and chicken. Allowing the use of uncontrolled AI is a recipe for disaster, but with the tools becoming more available this is no longer a door that can be closed and we need to consider how we ensure the safety of our existing structures while also enjoying the benefits of what digital capabilities bring us. We have not yet managed to harness the capabilities that are available free of charge to bring unemployed people into a position where they can supplement automated systems with physical and mental labour that needs the human in the loop. This is an untapped opportunity where there is now the ability to take a physical skill that someone can perform and market this on social media, through a mobile app, a website detailing the portfolio of work of that skill in action, a contact form

where people can get more information and even an online store that can link in through a sales platform like Takealot, all with access only to an internet cafe and a smartphone and without the need for complex coding skills. I believe this untapped capability is something that could truly make a difference in our communities and should be something that we explore more effectively.

The future of technology is now and it is up to us to see how we make it work for the betterment of all. The skills indicated here are no longer the domain of only engineers and developers. "I take the vision which comes from dreams and apply the magic of science and mathematics, adding the heritage of my profession and my knowledge of nature's materials to create a design. I organise the efforts and skills of my fellow workers employing the capital of the thrifty and the products of many industries, and together we work toward our goal undaunted by hazards and obstacles. When we have completed our task all can see that the dreams and plans have materialised for the comfort and welfare of all. I am an Engineer. I serve mankind, by making dreams come true."

-Anonymous

"... many people can simply no longer do their jobs without significant support from their machine partners."

A Long-Term Care Economy Strategy for Gauteng

A multiple disciplinary team from Optentia Research Unit's Ageing and Generational Dynamics in Africa (AGenDA) programme and TRADE at the NWU's School of Economic Sciences (Vanderbijlpark campus) co-created a Long-Term Care (LTC) Economy Strategy for Gauteng (hereafter referred to as the Strategy) with the Gauteng Department of Economic Development (GOED). Through intersectoral partnerships, the Strategy proposes to invest in unemployed youth in relation to the LTC needs of people requiring care, in particular older persons. It focuses on creating decent employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for unemployed youth in the Gauteng care sector, while improving and strengthening existing care infrastructure and policies to ensure the delivery of affordable, accessible, culturally appropriate, equitable and quality LTC to older persons. The team completed the first version of the Strategy at the end of September 2022.

The mere fact that GOED pioneered the co-development of the Strategy is a huge step forward – not only for care recipients but also for the care givers. This is pioneering work for the social care economy in South Africa as well as on the continent and beyond; to our knowledge this is the first time in South Africa that the care economy, specifically the plight of caregivers and unemployed youth, is firmly placed on the policy agenda as interlinked issues – not just as a social issue but also an economic one. Another exciting aspect of the project is the ongoing intersectoral co-creation and commitment from different stakeholders,

including the GOED, National and Provincial (Gauteng) Departments of Social Development (DSD), and the Gauteng Office of the Premier (OOP). The partnership between universities and government through translational research is crucial to address impactful community engagement.

However, it is important to note that the process of co-creation between researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders is time consuming and challenging. To merely determine the scope of the project among the stakeholders was a challenge in itself: because care is such a wide-ranging issue, limiting it to only the domain of older persons took some fine-tuned negotiation and obviously also constitutes a limitation of the strategy. Nonetheless, this decision was made for pragmatic reasons and determined by the unique nature of the domain of LTC for older persons. Other issues included: the lack of data (both in terms of availability, format, scope, and quality); the lack of responsiveness from certain provincial departments and local governments; the pro-

found impact of COVID-19; and aligning the GOED's and NWU's financial systems.

The way forward for this project looks promising. The GOED is currently completing their own stakeholder consultations before presenting the Strategy to the GOED Executive Committee for approval. This project created an opportunity for further research to be conducted to understand the attitudes and aspirations of unemployed youth regarding potential careers in paid caregiving (which forms the basis of Lowna Gie's PhD study). Lastly, this project has set the foundations for NWU to continue to develop relationships and joint-initiatives with the GOED, OOP, and DSD – for the benefit of older persons, specifically and care sectors, generally.

Lowna Gie and Jaco Hoffman



Prof. Jaco Hoffman

“... the process of co-creation between researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders is time consuming and challenging ...”

People Practices in a 'Post'-Pandemic World *by* Prof. L. van der Vaart

As we embark on a post-pandemic phase, organisations – and, more specifically, people practitioners – are presented with new opportunities to add value to society, organisations, and employees. Sound research should underpin these value-adding initiatives. As a point of departure, staff members from the School of Industrial Psychology and Human Resource Management recently reflected on the world of work. They identified several key areas that provide context for future research, summarised in the figure below.



Prof. Leoni van der Vaart

“... we must acknowledge that ‘employees’ have a dual meaning in parallel universes.”

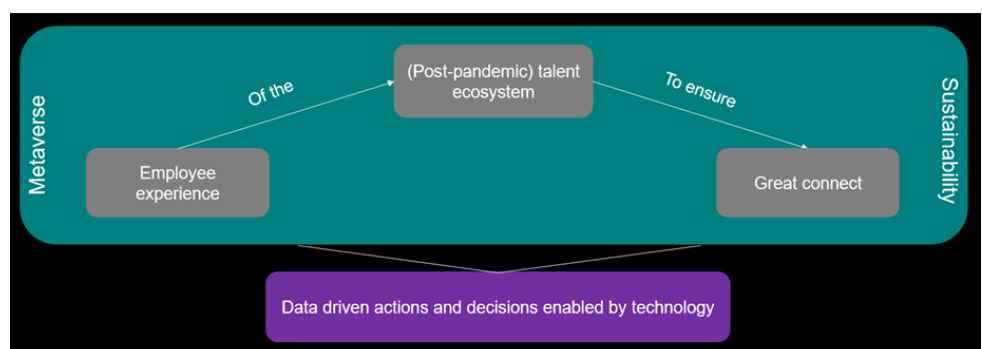
Organisations operate within a larger ecosystem. This ecosystem includes a rapidly emerging metaverse that functions in a (more) sustainable way (i.e., the green agenda). Consequently, practitioners operate in a digitally augmented world, reality, and business model (if one relies on Accenture’s definition of the metaverse). At the same time, there is a need to balance the needs of the metaverse (and humans) and the planet. At this point, human, computer, and environmental sciences intersect to facilitate sustainable human resource practices.

Sustainable human resource practices extend beyond the planet’s sustainability to that of employees (and organisations).

Employee experiences – starting with prospective employees becoming aware of an organisation (i.e., attraction era) and ending with separation from the organisation (i.e., resignation/retirement era) – provide practitioners with unique opportunities to optimise sustainability. If we can optimise experiences, we can optimise sustainability. These opportunities could include career pathways, agile leadership, coaching, organisational support, culture add, performance management, and tailored diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in a hybrid work environment.

But to seize these opportunities, we must acknowledge that ‘employees’ have a dual meaning in parallel universes. In the metaverse, we have avatars and bots. In contrast, in the humanverse we have a talent ecosystem that consists of talent that is

crowdsourced or “gigged” (gig workers/freelancers), re-deployed from the internal marketplace, and borrowed/rented from other organisations (i.e., external exchange and partnerships). Because of these parallel universes, we should create optimal (and sustainable) ‘employee’ experiences with human-technology, human-human, and human-technology-human interactions in mind. If we seize these opportunities and optimise these interactions, we pave the way to a ‘Great Connect’—a synergistic interaction between flourishing societies, organisations, employees, and technology. And, of course, in striving towards the ‘Great Connect’, our decisions should continuously be informed by people insights generated by technologically-aided analytics.



Methods Corner *by* Prof. Leoni van der Vaart

In this version of our methods corner for 2022, I would like to suggest the following readings for the holidays.

Meta-Analyses, Meet Open Science. Most (if not all) of us have experienced the relief and excitement of discovering a meta-analysis when searching for literature on a topic. A meta-analysis means less time searching for and working through the literature as someone else has already done this for us. Meta-analytic studies also reduce the biases typically associated with single studies, right? Unless a meta-analysis meets its equally useful cousin, Open Science, the minimisation of bias may remain debatable and double standards (for primary vs meta-analytic studies) remain. How do we merge meta-analyses and Open Science? In a recent article, Moreau and Gamble (2022) discuss how three components of open science (i.e., pre-registration, open materials, and open data) are integrated with meta-analytic practices to ensure impactful publications with robust and valid inferences. They also provide templates and video tutorials to guide researchers. For more information read the following article: Moreau, D., & Gamble, B. (2022). Conducting a meta-analysis in the age of open science: Tools, tips, and practical recommendations. *Psychological Methods*, 27(3), 426-432. Click [here](#) to access the article.

Connecting Research with Practice: Critical Reflections on Theory Production, Testing, and Use. As researchers (and journal reviewers), we often produce, test, or evaluate theories. As practitioners, we often use theories to guide our decision-making.

But do we know (a) why theory is so critical and for whom? (b) what a good theory looks like? (c) what it means to have too much or too many theories? (d) when we do not need a theory? (e) how falsification works in the context of theory? and (f) if good theory is compatible with current publication pressures? In their latest article, "It's the theory, stupid", Aguinis and Cronin (2022) offer answers to these essential questions. If we care about creating and using knowledge, we should care about these questions. For more information read the following article: Aguinis, H., & Cronin, M. A. It's the theory, stupid. *Organizational Psychology Review*. Click [here](#) to access the article.

Scientific Objectivity and Subjectivity: Meaning and Influence. Historically, psychological science has been dominated by 'objectivity' and positivism despite some movement towards subjectivity, postpositivism, social constructionism, and critical approaches. From positivism, objectivity is juxtaposed with subjectivity, creating a (false) dichotomy that influences method education. With this history and dichotomy in mind, Levitt and colleagues (2022) approached

leading methodologists to explore their understanding of 'objectivity' and subjectivity and their impact on education. They concluded that none of these methodologists share our historical understanding of objectivity. They also advocate for the problematisation of 'objectivity' – the researcher's perspective cannot be separated from the research. Research is by nature value-laden, and steps (e.g., multiple perspectives and methods) can and should be taken to manage a false sense of 'objectivity' and unchecked subjectivity. For more information read the following article: Levitt, H. M., Surace, F. I., Wu, M. B., Chapin, B., Hargrove, J. G., Herbitter, C., Lu, E. C., Maroney, M. R., & Hochman, A. L. (2022). The meaning of scientific objectivity and subjectivity: From the perspective of methodologists. *Psychological Methods*, 27(4), 589-605. Click [here](#) to access the article.



"A meta-analysis means less time searching for and working through the literature."

Dr Annelisa Murangi: A Capable Academic

Celebrating Four articles in 2022! The period March 2020- to March 2022 was a very busy period for me. A wife, a mother of two toddlers, a fulltime academic with a full workload and a PhD student. Even worth celebrating are the four articles that emanated from the PhD (and my master's study) few months after submitting for examination in March 2022.

One may wonder how this was possible, with the many demanding roles I occupy? I divided every year into three phases (with 3-4 months per phase). Each phase had a plan leading to the next phase and a reward for meeting the milestones of each phase. This strategy plus the very supportive promoters, worked like magic!

Every phase of the PhD challenged me. I loved every challenge because I looked forward to the end product (that being me first, then what I'm doing). I constantly asked myself: Did the challenge make me a better human than I was- and this is in all aspects (character, behaviour, psychological strengths, faith in God, lessons that I can apply as a mommy, a wife and as an academic). These things are embedded within the PhD phases, one just has to be very intentional to now and then pause and find them.

I can confidently say that this PhD actually revealed who I am, a proud young African woman who:

- Used my background to act as a huge motivation (who am I, where did I come from, where am I now and where am I heading to).
- Went into this PhD a little doubtful but emerged strong, dedicated, bold, confident,



Neil Barnard, Dr Annelisa Murangi and Prof. Ian Rothmann at the University of Namibia

resilient and a with a desire to learn more.

Here are more details about the four articles:

- Murangi, A., & Bailey, L. (2022). Employee engagement of special needs teachers in Windhoek, Namibia: The moderating role of job crafting. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology* 48(0), a1964. [doi](#)
- Murangi, A., Rothmann, S., & Nel, M. (2022). Capabilities and work functionings of special education teachers in Namibia. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology* 48(0), a2046. [doi](#)
- Murangi A, Rothmann S & Nel M (2022) Special education teachers' job demands-resources profiles and capa-

bilities: Effects on work engagement and intention to leave. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13:942923. [doi](#)

- Murangi, A.; Rothmann, S.; Nel, M. (2022). Sustainable employability: precariousness, capabilities, and functioning of special education teachers in Namibia. *Sustainability*, 14, 10264. [doi](#)

"... this PhD actually revealed who I am ..."

My PhD Journey at Optentia *by* Neil Barnard

The emergency department of hospitals are frequent with traumatic events and characterised by chaos and unpredictability. Within this unique environment, emergency nurses play a critical role. The emergency nursing profession aligned with my research interest – the optimal functioning of people working in unique work environments, especially those who made a conscious choice to pursue such a career path.

I was born in Pretoria and stayed there throughout my schooling years. After struggling for some time to decide on a potential career path in high school, I was advised by a close friend's mother (after some discussions) to look into Industrial Psychology, which immediately sparked an interest – what makes people perform optimally and live their best lives at work. I was fortunate enough to be a fulltime student at the North-West University up until master's level when I started working as an outsourced consultant in the corporate sector. Shortly thereafter I passed the board exam and secured a more permanent role as a registered Industrial Psychologist at another consulting firm. In 2016, I decided to open a private practice and somehow ended up in the medico-legal domain compiling loss of earning reports on behalf of individuals who suffered motor vehicle accidents. However, since completing my mini-dissertation and registering as an Industrial Psychologist, I felt something was missing, that I have not quite found the place where I could truly matter.

Since submitting my mini-dissertation as partial fulfilment of the requirements needed to obtain a master's degree in Industrial Psychology, an interest in pursuing a career in academia, fuelled by research, was sparked. However, at the time, I was under the impression that corporate or consulting is where I matter, not academia. But, over the years the interest kept growing up to the point where I no longer consulted Prof Leon on whether some of my ideas for a PhD topic was good enough. Rather, I insisted that I have a topic and I want him to guide me in conducting research towards a doctorate. Considering the topic I proposed, Prof Leon advised that I contact Prof Ian and the rest is history – I was conducting research on the sustainable employability of emergency nurses towards a PhD.

The PhD study conducted under the guidance of Prof. Ian Rothmann, Prof. Leon De Beer, and Prof. Welma Lubbe, produced valuable outcomes towards a better understanding the sustainable employability of emergency nurses. There is now empirical evidence that emergency nurses' strongest work capabilities (achieved work values) are using and developing their knowledge and skills and building and maintaining meaningful work relationships. Concernedly, earning a good income, being involved in important decisions, and contributing to something valuable are the lowest. Furthermore, it was confirmed that external constraints (such as job demands and precarious work) have a negative influence on their work capabilities and that job resources (especially relationship



Neil Barnard

with supervisor and autonomy at work) and personal resources (mental toughness) had a positive effect. Emergency nurses' work capabilities presented in three distinct sets (robust, inadequate, and vulnerable). A more comprehensive set of work capabilities (robust set) produced positive individual (lower burnout and higher mental health) and organisational (better performance and lower intention to leave) outcomes. It is evident that emergency nurses' sustainable employability is dependent on a wide range of opportunities to achieve valuable work outcomes, resulting in functionings at work valued by them and the hospital that employ them.

The guidance, wisdom, advice, and development I received from my promotor (and mentors) during my PhD research provided me with the opportunity to build a foundation from which I can pursue a career in academia. It has been a humbling, challenging, and rewarding journey. I will continue to pursue a career in academia, where I can make a difference and be a mentee, mentor, and researcher that my promotor, fellow researchers, community, and I can be proud of.

“Emergency nurses’ work capabilities presented in three distinct sets (robust, inadequate, and vulnerable).”

The Social and Solidarity Economy for Job Creation in the AU

Prof. Johan Strijdom, in collaboration with Prof. Oumar Diop (NWU) and Prof. Gilles Caire (Poitiers University, France), developed the Ten-Year Strategy for the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) for the African Union since September 2021. Two validation meetings were held with AU Member State representatives from cooperatives (24-25 August 2022 in Windhoek, Namibia) and on 4-5 November 2022 in Cape Town with Social Partners.

The SSE Strategy and its Implementation Plan will be incorporated into the Second Ten Year Implementation Plan for AU Agenda 2063 as one of the key social development strategies for the second decade. Two SSE legal forms (cooperatives and social enterprises) holds potential for creation of decent work in terms of the ILO definition, especially for young people and vulnerable groups, while voluntary organisations, mutual societies and self-help groups can be utilised for



Prof. Johan Strijdom

young people to gain work experience.

“Older persons is an important cohort in society to buttress socio-economic development and they are usually not fully utilized in this regard.”

Protection and Care of Older Persons in Namibia

Prof. Johan Strijdom, in collaboration with Prof. Isabella Aboderin, developed the National Policy on the Rights, Protection and Care of Older Persons in Namibia since March 2022. Namibia will be the first country to base its policy on older persons on the revised African Union (AU) Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing that was adopted by the relevant AU policy organ in April 2022. Prof. Jaco Hoffman spent much time and effort on the development of the AU Policy Framework.

The Namibian policy will be reviewed and validated at a national consultation with representatives from all 14 Regions of Namibia, in Swakopmund on 15-17 November. Once validated, the Policy will be forwarded to the Minister of Health and Social Services who will present it to the Cabinet for adoption.

Older Persons is an important cohort in society to buttress socio-economic development and they are usually not fully utilized in this regard. Taking



Prof. Johan Strijdom and Prof. Ian Rothmann in Namibia

good care of older persons has multiple spin-offs for the cultural, social and economic well-being of the population.

Using Visual Data in Research *by* Prof. Andries Baart

When collecting data, researchers are often biased towards obtaining numerical or narrative data, neglecting visual data. For example, when studying intergenerational relationships, you can collect family photos such as those taken of the whole family on occasions, such as weddings or anniversaries. These photos can be analyzed by asking questions, such as: What was the occasion for the family gathering? Who is included or not(!)? Who is in the centre or at the edge of the photo? Who is looking at whom? Who is portrayed full-length and who is cropped? What clothes are worn and what does it say about the people's standing? Against which background is the family positioned (their farm, or their pride?), and so on. Fascinating research opening a treasure trove of information.

You can do similar research by collecting internet images, for example, of how doctors are caring for patients. Believe me, they reveal a lot, and can even be used cross-culturally. Looking at these images, you can ask questions such as: What is their relationship? How is the doctor portrayed? Who is knowing? Who is waiting? Who is central? What is the body doing in those pictures? How often are doctors, men? And how often are the women, lamentable patients? What reality is being presented here?

When looking at (press) photos about the recent riots in South Africa, for example, those that took place in KwaZulu Natal in 2021, you can analyze them by asking: Who is depicted here, and in what way? Who is portrayed as the aggressors, who are defending, and in which order? Who is at the center of attention? In short: what image of reality is communicated in these press photos? But analysing visual data can also be less provocative. I know a study that collected and analysed postcards of motels along the highways in the United States of America. Fascinating and inexpensive research was reported on what were represented,

how the world was arranged on the axis -inside/outside, and with whom they interacted or not, while spending the night.

Prof. Vera Roos and I spend years on developing a tool for the analysis of visual data: a rigorous tool to stand the test of scientific scrutiny and which could be used by MA or PhD students with little experience of this kind of visual data research. The tool guides you step by step through the analysis and was recently published in the International Journal of Qualitative Methods. I built the tool, tested and improved it several times with the help of Prof. Roos, to make sense of photographs taken of the visual representations obtained from applying the Mmogo-method. Participants in the Mmogo-method use malleable clay, different sizes and colourful beads, and some dried grass stalks, to make something on a round piece of cloth, they associate with a particular theme (e.g. older persons, relationships, loneliness, respect). Mostly, these visual representations were analyzed by what the creators said about what they had made - about their 'image'. With our tool, we can analyze not only the text (narrative and content analysis) but also the presented image itself (usually depicted as a photograph). The results were impressive. In the article, we used the visual data analysis tool to show a step-by-step procedure how to use the tool and what kind of interpretations could be made. In the Netherlands, I also tested the tool as part of its development. MA students photographed the entrances of several hospitals and investigated the kind of message these entrances convey to those who enter and the impression they had on the hospital users. Revealing research! Of course, in psychology, this kind of research has long been known where children's drawings are analysed to interpret trauma, to reveal social relationships, or to detect unspeakable grief. Underlying such analyses are theories of health, illness, and develop-



mental processes. Visual data researchers also know these kind of analyses from the women's movement where feminist grids are used, for example, to uncover power structures. Similarly, there are typical art-analytic grids for looking at images. So, there are many approaches, each with its own way of analysis. In the published tool, we tried not to follow any of the distinct modes of analysis but rather to approach the images with a much lower threshold analysis, be more neutral, and less pre-sorted. I would never, for example, analyse Utermohlen's paintings, which move me greatly, solely by means of neurological-nosological grids.

Generally, when researchers do research regardless of their question, their strong preference for either numerical data or narrative data is noted. And that is quite understandable but can be done differently. So much more can be revealed by including visual data especially now that there is an easy-to-use tool to get started. analysed the work of painter William Utermohlen (1933-2007) who gradually slipped into deep dementia. He continued to paint for a long time and a diligent, careful analysis shows us what Alzheimer's did to him and to people suffering from Alzheimer's: a poignant and revealing little study. The attached images show some of his self-portraits, as I have juxtaposed them (as part of my analysis).

You can access the article [here](#).

Note: This article was written by Prof. Andries Baart.

"We used the visual data analysis tool to show a step-by-step procedure how to use the tool and what kind of interpretations could be made. ..."

Tebello Mabusela: PhD Candidate in Optentia

“The small achievements in between, have made a big difference to the person I am today...”

My decision to register for a Ph.D. in psychology was one of the best decisions I have made in my life. However, this decision was uninformed, at some point I wished someone could have told me what entailed, I know now that this journey is a unique one, no one can really tell you what it entails. I believe I was very young and naïve, for me registering for my Ph.D. was the best next step and a step to the right direction in my career, “I mean how difficult can it be!!!, after all I completed my master’s dissertation, independently while jumping from one supervisor to the next. I realised that this stage of independence had to kick in very early for me, compared to other students who had consistent supervision. This has shaped my decision-making processes from the uninformed decision to register for a PhD to my anxieties about being a new mom while I was pursuing this qualification.

Before the reality of working hard kicked in, it was easy for me to proudly talk about my research topic, and registration as a PhD candidate, a few years down the line that was a totally different story, simple questions such as “when are you finishing your PhD” freaked me out. I have learned that pursuing this qualification, means self-doubt, a decrease in self-confidence, an increase in anxiety and so on and so forth. I have learned to embrace the “negative experiences” that come with this journey simply because shortly after experiencing them, positive outcomes emerge. So far, I am writing my first article, this has proven to be difficult for me, but I learn as I write, with the help of my supervisor, who is consistently there to support me, I have had so many little achievements in between, approval from HREC, approval from RGKC, phase 1 data collection completed, phase 2



Tebello Mabusela

data collection half done, presenting a paper on the resilience and well-being of first-year students in Higher Education at the South African Association of Counselling and Development in Higher Education, mastering the art of multi-tasking between the different roles life threw at me, and supervising research students.

Lesson learned: The small achievements in between, have made a big difference to the person I am today, because of this I am glad I took a decision, informed or not, because it was worth it.

Writing a Book: Reflections by Kopano Monaisa

Kopano Monaisa is a social worker and PhD student at NWU. Her research focuses on the experience of childhood abuse and associated help seeking. She will be collecting data for her thesis in 2023. She is currently working as a project manager on the Banakakeli research project in Mpumalanga which is a longitudinal study on intergenerational violence.

Kopano recently contributed as an instructor (module 4) on a free online course for researchers planning to conduct research on violence against children. The course can be accessed through [here](#).

Kopano is knowledgeable about Knowledge in working with individuals, groups, families and communities. She is familiar with

the different policies that guide social work and other fields of practice.



Kopano Monaisa

Bianca Arendse: Research on Well-being of Young Academics

Bianca Arendse, a lecturer at the University of Cape Town (UCT) will be doing her PhD in Industrial/Organisational (I/O) Psychology at UCT with Prof. Ian Rothmann as promoter. Bianca works in Organisational Psychology in the School of Management Studies in the Faculty of Commerce at UCT. She completed her undergraduate and postgraduate studies at the University of the Western Cape. Bianca is a registered industrial psychologist. She worked at the Western Cape provincial government for four years before she joined UCT.

Bianca was appointed at the University of Cape Town in the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP), an opportunity



Prof. Ian Rothmann and Bianca Arendse meeting in Cape Town

provided by the Department of Higher Education (DHET) to build a new generation of black South African academics. In her PhD study she wants to investigate

the well-being of young academics. In preparation for her PhD, she is currently registered for the Short Learning Programme in Research Design at Optentia.

"In her PhD study she wants to study the well-being of young academics."

Constant van Graan at International Conference

Constant van Graan, Senior Lecturer in Forensic Accountancy and PhD candidate at Optentia, presented at the Policing and Society Conference at the University of Akureyri on 5-6 October 2022. His topic, Police interviewing techniques in South Africa: Application appraised against the Constitution is part of a study he has conducted with Prof Vera Roos, Dr Matthews Katjene and Mr Albert van Zyl about forensic interviewing in South Africa. Constant gained significant international exposure at the conference and networked with the global leaders in policing, while experiencing some breath-taking landscapes during his visit on the Island of Fire and Ice.



Constant van Graan

Meeting with Prof. Marianne van Woerkom at Tilburg University

Optentia participants recently met Prof. Marianne van Woerkom at Tilburg University. The visit was initiated by Prof. Marita Heyns who is interested in research collaboration in the field of strength-based studies and interventions. Prof. van Woerkom is an associate professor at the Department of Human Resource Studies, Tilburg University in the Netherlands and a professor at the Center of Excellence for Positive Organizational Psychology, at Erasmus University in Rotterdam. The well-being and development of workers are central themes in her research. Her research-focuses on what happens if one takes individual strengths instead of deficits or weaknesses as the starting point for developmental processes.

Recent publication: Gürbüz, S., van Woerkom, M., Kooij, D., Demerouti, E., van der Klink, J., & Brouwers, E. (2022). Employable until retirement: How inclusive leadership and HR practices can foster sustainable employability through strengths use. *Sustainability*, 14(19), [12195].

"Her research focuses on what happens if one takes individual strengths instead of deficits or weaknesses as the starting point for developmental processes."



Prof. Marianne van Woerkom, Prof. Ian Rothmann, Prof. Marita Heyns, Dr Japie Greeff and Prof. Leoni van der Vaart



Prof. Marita Heyns, Dr Japie Greeff, Prof. Saskia Kelders, Prof. Leoni van der Vaart and Prof. Ian Rothmann

Visit to Prof. Ype Poortinga by Prof. Ian Rothmann

Prof. Ype Poortinga is probably one of the most interesting academics I have met! He is emeritus professor at Tilburg University and at the University of Leuven in Belgium. I recently visited him in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. His interest has been in the conditions under which data obtained in different cultural populations can be meaningfully compared. If you want to learn more about psychology in South Africa during the 1960s and 1970s, he is the go-to person..



Prof. Ian Rothmann and Prof. Ype Poortinga

IAGG Africa Region Advisory Board in Tunisia

Isabella Aboderin (President of the IAGG Africa Region), Femada Shamam (President of the South African Gerontological Association – SAGA) and Jaco Hoffman (Former President of SAGA and on the IAGG Africa Region Advisory Board) attended the 3rd IAGG Africa Region Congress in Hammamet Tunisia, generously funded by the Optentia Research Unit at North-West University.

The 1st IAGG Africa Region Congress in 2012 took place in Cape Town, hosted by the South African Geriatrics Society (SAGS) and the South African Gerontological Association (SAGA); the 2nd Congress in Nairobi (Kenya), hosted by the Kenya Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (KAGG) and the African Population Health Research Center (APHRC). Now for the first time the network spread its wings to the Northern parts of Africa during which occasion dr Radhouane Goui-aar (Tunisia) was elected as the new IAGG Africa Region President. Femada Shamam (a NWU MA candidate) reflects on this historic meeting in five main points:

Inclusion: ATUGER (Tunisian Association of Gerontology) must be commended for the programme presented and for capitalizing on this opportunity to showcase the extensive work being undertaken in the North Africa Region. Very often colleagues from the French speaking countries are excluded (not deliberately) due to the language barrier. It was a humbling experience being present at a congress which was predominantly presented in French (but with slides graciously prepared in English). I am sensitized to the experiences of others but also appreciate that more inclusive practices should be adopted for future engagements, given the multitude of languages on our continent. The richness of the initiatives is lost when language continues to be an inhibitor to inclusion. I was also encouraged by the delegation from



Prof. Jaco Hoffman at the Tunisian Association of Gerontology (ATUGER)

West Africa and was impressed with the passion displayed for research, education, and training on ageing issues.

Networking. In-person events provides the platform for networking and this congress demonstrated this so well. After the isolation imposed by COVID, it was wonderful to meet colleagues again. I would be so bold as to say that personal relationships have certainly been strengthened during the time in Tunisia. There was also the added benefit of forging new relationships. I personally have met many wonderful people who I will be reaching out to take forward the development and research on the ageing agenda. While the formal programme is important, the opportunity to meet colleagues for a coffee or over lunch and dinner can never be underestimated. I have learnt that it is in the quality of the relationship that success of collaborative initiatives lies. The need for inclusion on African perspectives on ageing research, education and training was weaved through the content presented at the congress. We were sensitized to the need for this information to be captured on a platform that is truly African in nature. There are many initiatives on developing an ageing research consortium for Africa and I believe that this congress added motivation for such an initiative. We need to develop a repository for African ageing research to enable access for dissemi-

nation in support of evidence-based practice as well as to support the policy engagement process.

Strengthening the IAGG Africa structure The election of the new IAGG AFRICA chair is a turning point: from what was started by Prof. Monica Ferreira, Prof. Isabella Aboderin and Prof. Jaco Hoffman in a rather organic way towards more formalized structures and the formulation of Africa specific by-laws in Tunisia. There is no end to the potential of exponential growth in the region to be realized. The congress provided the opportunity for those interested in taking forward the ageing agenda to step forward and be counted. I anticipate that the West Africa region will gain traction quickly. I am excited to see Africa rising!! Pathways for action (low hanging fruit).

There have been many options which have been discussed to augment programmes already in the implementation phase. There are definite pathways for action in terms of education, policy engagement and research. I left Tunisia with renewed motivation and hope for a better future for next generations of older people on the continent. I loved meeting the different people and hearing about the work that they do. Their input was also very affirming for me. This experience has been good for my soul. I end with a note of gratitude for the blessing of this opportunity provided by Optentia!

“The need for inclusion on African perspectives on ageing research, education and training was weaved through the content.”

Digital Humanities in Precarious Times *by* Prof. Mirna Nel

“The aim of the conference was to bring together scholars from different fields of study in the humanities to report on research and practice related to digital humanities.”

The Faculty of Humanities organised its first hybrid international conference at the Riverside Sun hotel in Vanderbijlpark, from 2 to 4 November 2022. The theme of the conference centered around digital humanities (DH) in precarious times. DH is both an academic field and a community of practice which has been evolving over the past decades. It is characteristically concerned with the application of computational tools and methods to traditional humanities studies such as linguistics, literature, music, history, philosophy, etc. Advances in technology have led to more sophisticated computing power that have ushered in novel DH methodologies. DH involves inter and cross disciplinary collaboration between many scientists, that bring together plurality of methodologies, critical and reflexive approaches, and the disruption of traditional practices of doing scientific research that is driven by the use of novel and fast evolving digital technologies. The aim of the conference was to bring together scholars from different fields of study in the humanities to report on research and practice related to digital humanities. The development of

digital humanities is especially important in a precarious world where technology can enhance living or exclude the disadvantaged. Thus, human skills such as creativity, innovation, adaptability, empathy, integrity and imagination are quintessential to ensure that everyone reaps the advantages of a digital world.

The paper and the key note presentations elicited thought provoking discussions and debates and a general agreement was that the field of digital humanities is an exciting, but at the same time, an essential topic to address in a world where humans are challenged more and more by precarity.

A diverse range of topics were presented in the fields of public governance, media and communication studies, social and political humanities, philosophy, creative capital, linguistics, literature, language technology, music, population dynamics during changing times, and from precarity and precariousness to capability. Exciting key notes were also presented by experts on different topics. Professor Tapiwa Chagonda is the head of the Centre for Data Ethics (CDE) under the Institute of Intelligent

Systems at the University of Johannesburg. His keynote focused on the recolonisation of Africa through Artificial Intelligence Technology: The Dark Side of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Prof Natasja Holtzhausen is the Director of the Centre for the future of work at the University of Pretoria and talked about Meeting outside the “big tent” - keeping the human in the future of work. Mrs Doris Viljoen is the director of the Institute for Futures Research (IFR) at Stellenbosch Business School, where she endeavours to interpret global as well as local trends and assess their relevance for South Africa and Africa. She addressed the following topic: From Futures research: Pleased to meet you, Digital Humanities! Hugo Quené is a professor in quantitative methods of empirical research in the Humanities. His research focuses on quantitative research methods, variation in pronunciation, and self-monitoring during speaking. He is active in the Open Science Programme at Utrecht University. His presentation highlighted the three waves of digital humanities.



Prof. Mirna Nel and Participants at the Digital Humanities Conference

Profile of Fred Goede

Profiling Fred was easy in the past. For decades this tall surfer dude talked endlessly about climate change, air quality, water and waste, safety, health and environment to everybody, interested or not. He started work growing microbiological cultures in a laboratory, can you believe? Graphs, figures, tables were his language. But, he says: "I carried my his knowledge over to my smarter, more beautiful daughters who selectively listened and are now completing veterinary and medical studies. But their proud daddy changed since (they still love him though)."

After futile attempts to make leaders take sustainable decisions, he recently turned my focus to people behaviour. Asked many doctors like colleagues Hermien, Emmanuel, Neels, Sonja, and his partner Tracey. Helped his dozen master's students to ask how colleagues at work take decisions. The findings were disturbing: people "think fast, not slow" (Kahneman, 2011). Why?

Inspired with new ideas, he dropped into the office of his promoter, Prof. Gert-Jan Hofstede at Wageningen University, Netherlands. The result? He started his studies all over again in the social sciences, now growing close to organisational cultures with Prof. Gert Jan. Weekly he reports research progress into a Skype screen where his profile says, "No one imagined that the object of playing a symphony is to reach the finale (Alan Watts)". Fred plays the piano in this orchestra, and he enjoys every moment when he gets time.

His yoga teacher says, "Do not look at the one next to you, your only goal is your own im-



Fred Goede at Wageningen University

provement from yesterday." But he says that he is making progress, promise, see now I can do side-crow and wheel. And I can publish, too!

Fred's language changed because the world changed. I learned natural science cannot solve climate change without people change. He has been to climate COP meetings for decades; the world did not act on yet another pact. Studied coal burning and impacts for years, top down. Today, bottom-up, think

slow: why do mamas really decide to buy coal for their households? He says: "A new symphony unfolds when I listen carefully. Together we can."

Profiling Fred today has become complex, like systems decision-making. No simple answers, in line with the time. In his words: "My symphony continues at Optentia."

"After futile attempts to make leaders take sustainable decisions, I recently turned my focus to people behaviours ..."



Fred Goede and his family

How to Live with Life in the Storm *by* Prof. Werner Nell

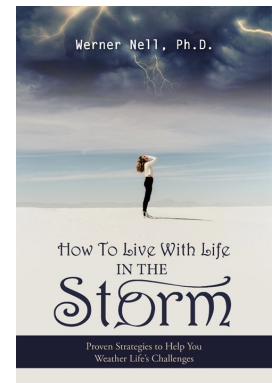
“... existing coping strategies no longer worked against the relentless storms coming their way.”

What inspired you to write this book? is usually the first question I'm asked when someone finds out about my book. My answer usually echoes the same words I used to open the first chapter. Sooner or later all of us will have to face one of life's storms. Some might be minor, and others will leave a mass of devastation in their wake. One way or another, we all try to cope with them as best as we can. Over the past few years, the intensity, frequency, and severity of these storms have been increasing at a rate that many of us struggle to adjust to and effectively deal with. Having been caught in some of these storms myself, and having seen far too many others flounder under the pressure of major life challenges, it became apparent that many people were searching for and in need of helpful and effective strategies to deal with these onslaughts. Often, their existing coping strategies no longer worked against the relentless storms coming their way, and defenses that held fast in the past were being eroded or even overwhelmed. Seeing this, I felt a need to translate some of the knowledge and skills I have accumulated over the past 35 years in my studies and research endeavours in psychology, sociology, counselling, life coaching, and a number of related fields into a book that would above all be practical and usable, rather than theoretical and academic (as the bulk of our work as researchers lamentably tend to be). Drawing on the most powerful insights from these fields, this book aims to provide the reader with a series of highly effective and pragmatic strategies that can be

implemented right away to deal with life's stormy challenges. Among the topics covered are:

- How to get out of an emotional tailspin as quickly as possible.
- A powerful process used by life coaches to create and implement effective plans and strategies for dealing with almost any problem.
- A 'magical' formula of human psychology that will enable us to take back control of our life, our emotions, and our behaviour.
- Tips and tools for identifying and safeguarding the parts of our life that are most at risk of being hit by incoming storms, and building up our resilience.
- Using mindfulness to tame stormy emotions and physical and emotional pain.
- How to transcend even the most serious of life's hurricanes by cultivating more hope, meaning, and purpose in our life.
- How to take a red pill that will enable us to wake up to and step out of the social matrix that might be the unseen cause of our storm.

The intention behind the book is to equip readers with perspectives, tools, techniques, and strategies that will become a permanent part of their general arsenal of coping skills, and which would thus not only be useful for any immediate problems that they might be facing, but also for future bad weather that might blow their way. As academics, we are privileged to be exposed to vast amounts of knowledge. Unfortunately, much of this information comes packaged in obscure academic jargon and is hidden away in scholarly journals that are as hard to find as they are to read for most people who are not in academia. In challenging times like these, it



seems that we are called upon to expand our circle of professional focus and find ways to extract the elements in our work that could be of value to others and translate them into formats that would be accessible and practically useful to others. Writing this book was a wonderful way to reconnect with the original sense of purpose that fuelled my decision to pursue my studies in the social and behavioural sciences. It is my hope that this book will indeed be useful to those who read it and thereby serve as a bridge through which this original purpose could find a meaningful expression.

Werner Nell is an Associate Professor of Sociology and member of the Optentia Research Focus Area at the North-West University in South Africa. He obtained his Ph.D. in Sociology in 2005, and in 2014 he was the first ever South African graduate of the Master's degree program in Applied Positive Psychology. As a social science researcher, Werner's main focus is the study of various aspects of psychosocial well-being, such as hope, meaning, mindfulness, and happiness, on which he has published a number of national and international peer reviewed articles and book chapters.

Optentia Having Fun in 2022 *by* Prof. Ian Rothmann

Looking back at 2022, Optentia has much to be proud of. The highlights include:

- The appointment of an advisory committee for Optentia. This will help the entity to maintain the relevance of our research.
- The Short Learning Program (SLP) in Research Design, The SLP was presented twice during 2022 and is regarded as valuable in preparing researchers for their roles.
- Optentia staff managed secure research funding for 2022. Importantly, the entity positioned itself for research funding applications in 2023 and 2024.
- Optentia maintained its peer-reviewed outputs and also delivered substantial numbers of master's and PhD students.
- Several Optentia community meetings took place during 2022. This helped to create a safe space and motivational climate in the entity.

- The research and administrative support of the entity was found to be very good.
- Optentia further developed excellent research networks and improved its international standing.

What are the greatest challenges for the entity?

- The retention of staff is one of the biggest challenges for Optentia.

- The complexity of the environment in which staff find themselves (e.g., competing demands).
- Insecure researchers.

What new skills do we need to move forward?

- Writing skills.
- Data analysis skills.
- Technological skills training (e.g. to develop applications).



Lynn Booysen, Dr Japie Greeff, and Prof. Blessed Ngwenya

“... the entity positioned itself for research funding applications in 2023 and 2024.”



Optentia participants at a strategic planning session in November 2022

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Books

Berg, M., & Seeber, B. K. (2016). The slow professor: Challenging the culture of speed in the academy. University of Toronto Press.

Cohen, G. L. (2022). Belonging: The science of creating connection and bridging divides. W.H. Norton and Company.

Hoyle, R. (2023). Handbook of structural equation modeling. Guilford Press.

McMullin, I. (2019). Existential flourishing: A phenomenology of the virtues. Cambridge University

Wolff, J., & De-Shalit, A. (2007). Disadvantage. Oxford University Press.

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

Useful Websites

- <https://goodorganisations.com>
- <https://youtube.com/c/GoodOrganisations> is an informative YouTube channel
- www.refseek.com is a search engine for academic resources.
- www.worldcat.org - search the content of 20,000 global libraries.
- <https://link.springer.com> - access to more than 10 million scientific documents: books, articles,
- <http://repec.org> - Volunteers from 102 countries collected nearly 4 million publications
- www.science.gov is a U.S. government search engine.
- www.pdfdrive.com is the largest website for free download of PDF books.
- www.base-search.net is one of the most powerful search engines for academic research texts.