

Department of Psychology

ISSUE 3

AUGUST 2014

Inside this issue:

Welgevallen Community Psychology Clinic	4
Staff Member spends 8 weeks at Stias	6
PNES around the world	7
Focus: Dr. Ncebe Somhlaba	9
How caregivers administer antiretroviral medicine to children	10
Lisa's Yale experience	12
Psychology twenty years after democracy	14



Electronic newsletter of the Department of Psychology

Stellenbosch University

Private Bag X1
Matieland
7602
South Africa
Tel: +27 21 8083461
E-mail: cej@sun.ac.za

Editor:

Dr. Chrisma Pretorius
chrismapretorius@sun.ac.za

Layout:

Julie McFarlane
julie.mcfarlane@gmail.com

Note from the Chair...



Psychology twenty years after democracy

It has been twenty years since the beginning of democratic rule in South Africa, and psychology as a discipline and a profession is doing extremely well. The 20th Annual South African Psychology Congress, to be hosted in Durban in September 2014, celebrates not only two decades of democracy but also twenty years since the launching of the Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA). PsySSA is the nationally representative professional body for psychology. It has been twenty years since South Africa has had a united, non-racial organisation for psychologists.

All the major universities in the country have Departments of Psychology that are bustling with students, lecturers, researchers and visiting scholars. Our Department at Stellenbosch University currently has 1194 first year students, 597 second

years, 402 third years, and 36 honours students. These are large numbers of students, which is a testament to the popularity that psychology as a university subject enjoys.

But quantity is nothing without quality. In order to ensure excellence we have also put in place a series of academic writing workshops for our third year students. Writing proficiency forms part of the core skill set of university graduates, and is of critical importance in the academy and beyond. The Department is making a considerable effort to ensure that students who graduate with a degree in psychology are proficient academic writers and thinkers.

We also have 10 students enrolled in the clinical psychology masters programme, 50 students in the masters by thesis, 5 M.Phil students, and 37 doctoral students. By any account, our lecturers are as busy as ever. I can proudly say that our department is one of the most productive psychology departments on our continent. In fact, we attract students and visiting scholars from all over South Africa, the African continent, and the world, to study or work with us.

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

Also, we prepare our students to be critical thinkers in our field so that our graduates are on par with the best in the world.

In 2013 the Welgevallen Community Psychology Clinic (WCPC), where the Department's masters programme in clinical psychology is located, was named as a Community Interaction Flagship Project of the university.

The achievement of flagship status, which was renewed in 2014, is recognition of the importance of the community interaction activities of our department. The WCPC provides a range of psychological services to individuals from poor communities in Stellenbosch, who would not otherwise have access to psychological care. It plans and implements community-based psychological interventions to address key psycho-social problems faced by economically deprived and historically disadvantaged communities in Stellenbosch.

The achievement of flagship status, which was renewed in 2014, is recognition of the importance of the community interaction activities of our department.

The Clinic provides training to students enrolled in the masters programme in clinical psychology. Graduates of this programme have excellent skills and experience so that they may help meet the mental health care needs of the country. Funding associated with flagship status is used to further the community interaction work of the centre.

Our research output continues to grow. In 2013 the Department produced 63 subsidized journal articles, compared to 53 in 2012 and 44 in 2011. We also had a good year for doctoral degrees completed in 2013: 6 in 2013 compared to 2 in 2012 and 1 in 2011. And our masters thesis degree remains strong; we graduate between 10 and 15 students each year. Our graduates have sought after research skills.

In the research arena we seem to be growing from strength to strength. Professor Mark Tomlinson has recently been awarded a grant from the National Institutes of Health to create a centre with expertise in behavioural research related to alcohol and HIV, the **Partnership for Alcohol and AIDS Intervention Research (PAAIR)**. This is a wonderful achievement for Prof. Tomlinson. The Department stands to benefit considerably from the Partnership in terms of research outputs, development of staff and students, and community interaction initiatives.

Also, the Department, in partnership with the Department of Psychiatry at UCT, continues its involvement with the Alan J Flisher Centre for Public Mental Health (CPMH). The CPMH, the first of its kind on the African continent, conducts high quality research on public mental health, and uses evidence for teaching, consultancy and advocacy to promote mental health in Africa. Through the CPMH, we have had students from several countries on our continent enrol in the MPhil degree programme.

On a personal note, I am enjoying my role as Department Chair. I have interesting and stimulating meetings with my colleagues in the department and in the university more broadly to solve problems, brainstorm new ideas, and plan for the future. I remain very grateful for the support of all my colleagues in the department, the Dean, Professor Johan Hattingh, and my colleagues elsewhere in the university.

Ashraf Kagee

Masters student presents at the 4th Apartheid Archive Conference

Gemma Spickernell, a Masters student from our department, recently presented her honours research project titled, "The Token Black Identity: Exploring Social Identities Amongst a Group of Young Black South Africans in the Advertising Industry", at the 4th Apartheid Archive Conference at the University of Pretoria (21st – 23rd May 2014).



This year, the conference theme was "Race, Space, Location and Dislocation". The conference attracted multi-disciplinary presenters from departments including History, Anthropology, Geography, English, Dramatic Arts and Psychology. Presentations by development consultants, architects and the Gauteng provincial planning commission also featured in the programme.

The Apartheid Archives Conference is based on the related Apartheid Archives Project, an international research initiative that aims to examine the nature of South Africans everyday experiences of racism under the old apartheid order. The project is fundamentally premised on the understanding that traumatic experiences from the past will constantly attempt to re-inscribe themselves in the present, if they are not acknowledged, interrogated and addressed.

The project was conceptualized and initiated in August 2008 by 22 core researchers located at universities spanning South Africa, Australia, the United States and United Kingdom.



Dr Jason Bantjes

Research on deliberate self-harm with the Department of Psychiatry at UCT.

Dr Jason Bantjes received Thuthuka funding from the NRF for a joint research project with colleagues from the Department of Psychiatry at UCT and international collaborators (Prof Knizek from Sør-Trøndelag University College and Prof Hjelmeland from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology). This is a three year project to investigate the prevalence and correlates of deliberate self-harm and the socio-cultural context in which this behavior

occurs. The project will provide opportunities for honours, masters and PhD students to develop their skills in suicide research.

Workshop by Prof Robert Schweitzer

During the latter half of 2013, Prof Robert Schweitzer from the School of Psychology and Counselling at Queensland University of Technology in Australia visited our department. During his visit he offered specialised training to our clinical master students and provided valuable input on the structure and content of our clinical training.

Welgevallen Community Psychology Clinic

At the start of 2014 the Psychology Department were able to retain the Flagship Status for their community interaction work, following an external review of our work at the end of 2013. This resulted in the Division for Community Interaction making funds available for us to develop the Welgevallen Community Psychology Clinic (WCPC) and appoint Dr Carla Dukas as the clinic manager. It is the vision of the clinic to provide accessible and effective psychological services to members of the community who would not otherwise have access to psychological care. The clinic is also the training site for our masters degree in Clinical Psychology and Community Counselling.

During the course of 2013 the WCPC was able to provide psychological care to approximately 440 individuals (70 people received individual psychotherapy; 23 people underwent comprehensive psychometric assessments; 17 individuals participated in family therapy; and 330 people were involved in various therapy groups). A further 200 people were directly reached through our 15 community interventions in Kayamandi, Cloetesville, Jamestown, Klapmuts and Kylemore. We were also able to

respond to a need for psychosocial support for a Victim-Offender Dialogue project that was held in Worcester towards the end of the year.

In 2013 the WCPC team established and enhanced its working relationship with a number of local schools, clinics, hospitals, churches, Community Initiatives and NGOs (including the Pebbles Project, KickstArt, Youth Outreach Street Children's Project,

Straatlig, the Women on Farms Project and Community Keepers). Firm referral channels were set up between these organisations and WCPC. SO far this year we have been able to



establish new relationships with a number of other organisations, including the Khula Development Group, Kibwe Kids and Home from Home. This commitment to continuous growth and improvement is similarly reflected in the way we work, as we are adopting new effectiveness measures and clinic procedures, as well as our improved focus on enhancing our diverse skill sets. For example, we can now offer psychological services in six different languages. For more information on the activities of the WCPC, please see www.sun.ac.za/wcpc or contact wcpc@sun.ac.za

The staff and students of the Psychology Department mourn the sudden passing of our rector, Prof Russel Botman. He has left a testimony of reconciliation, building hope and transformation. Below is a letter of condolence received from a community partner.

Prof Russel Botman's passion for rural development was a huge inspiration to structures engaged in simple, but urgently needed community service to impoverished members of country towns. In 2010 the Railton Community Assessment Project (Railton CAP) was undertaken in Swellendam as a joint venture of the Stellenbosch University and the Railton Foundation. The aim was to research needs and resources that influence community development in Railton/Swellendam. The contribution of the university was of inestimable value. It gave the community hope



because the involvement of this institution rendered credibility to the process, especially because of the full support it enjoyed from the rector.

He also travelled to the town with his wife to address the community to show his support for the Swellendam Bursary Fund. Compared to so many other structures in which he played a role, this organisation is insignificant. Nevertheless, he realised that his presence could help to motivate the organisers and supporters to continue their efforts to support youth who are furthering their studies under extremely challenging conditions.

Many Swellendammers will remember him with the hope that his ideals for Stellenbosch University as an academic and social home for students from diverse backgrounds, will not be buried with him, but will experience a period of blossoming and healthy growth.

Basil May
Chairman: Railton Foundation

Post graduate students from the department presented an innovative workshop to learners at the Makapula High School in Kayamandi. The workshop took the form of a talk show hosted by Oprah and Mabusa chatting to "experts" on career exploration and planning and to actual role models from the community.

The audience was directly involved by posing questions to the guests.



Psychology students pose with Noku Batam of Single Parents in Action after presenting a creative workshop on Career Planning to learners at the Makapula High School in Kayamandi.



**Professor
Tony
Naidoo**

Psychology staff member spends 8 weeks at Stias



One of our staff members, Professor Desmond Painter, spent eight weeks at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies (Stias) during July and August 2013, participating in an interdisciplinary research project led by Stias fellow Professor Philippe van Haute, a Belgian psychoanalyst and philosopher.

The project they are working on, which will lead to the publication of an edited volume co-edited by Van Haute and Painter, is called 'The Pathoanalysis of Existence'. It explores whether it is still possible and meaningful, as traditional psychoanalytic theory implies, to understand the relation between psychopathology and (philosophical) anthropology in a positive and structural way (i.e. a pathoanalysis of existence). If so, psychopathology can be said to reveal, in a magnified way, the fundamental structures of human existence. This raises a number of questions. How does this psychoanalytic project relate to more recent developments in philosophy, evolutionary psychiatry, neuropsychanalysis and anthropology? What is its critical potential with regard to the problematic role of psychology and psychiatry in contemporary society? And how does it relate to traditional philosophy that seems to take 'normality' for granted as a starting point for its reflections?



The research team's stay at Stias culminated in a workshop of which the main goal was to re-articulate the Freudian project of a 'pathoanalysis of existence' in such a way such that it can be made useful for contemporary philosophy, social theory, (neuro)psychoanalysis and critical postcolonial psychology. The next phase of the project will be a workshop that will take place in Nijmegen (The Netherlands) from 3-6 September 2014. In this workshop they will discuss the different contributions of the members of the research team (which includes alongside Van Haute and Painter also Vladimir Safatle, Herman Westerink and Ariane Bazan) for the forthcoming book they are planning.



“PNES around the world”

Dr. Chrisma Pretorius

Based on an article that was published in *Epilepsy and Behavior: The coping styles and health-related quality of life of South African patients with psychogenic nonepileptic seizures*, *Epilepsy & Behavior*; 29 (3), 581-584, the ILAE Executive Committee invited Dr. Pretorius to join the Psychogenic Non-Epileptic Seizures (PNES) Task Force of the Neuropsychiatry Commission for the 2013- 2017 term.



Nine members of the PNES Task force of the ILAE met up for an 8-hour meeting at the 11th European Congress on Epilepsy in Stockholm, Sweden, on 30 June 2014. The attendees came from Brazil, Chile, United Kingdom, United States of America, Georgia, Japan, Iran and South Africa. The aim of the research visit was to discuss and compile a detailed research plan and

hammer out practical plans for how to proceed with this worldwide collaboration. Over the next two years the PNES task force wants to collate information on PNES, their understanding and management, from around the world. The aim of the Task Force is to enhance awareness of PNES in a wide range of populations around the world. A cross-cultural PNES study to compare diagnosis and treatment approaches is also planned. This work should lead to a report on the global picture of PNES and PNES services which will hopefully help clinicians and patients around the world develop better services in their countries.

According to Professor Markus Reuber, the Chair of the ILAE PNES Task Force: “I anticipate that this collaboration will result in several publications and presentations by the Task Force as a whole but perhaps also publications of aspects of this work by individual contributors.”



Pets as Therapy se Lees - Ukufunda - Read-program

Dr Marieanna Le Roux

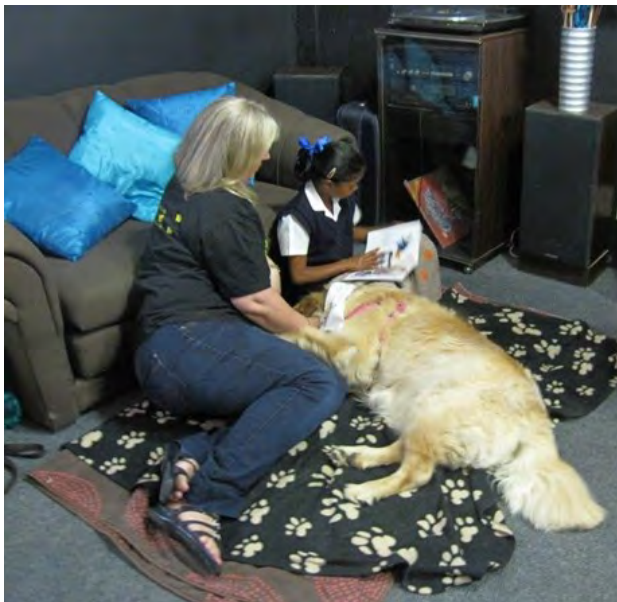


Dr Marieanna le Roux, voorsitter van Pets as Therapy, het onlangs haar navorsing op nasionale televisie bekend gestel. Kyknet se Woef en Kie het die opname by die plaaslike laerskool waar die navorsing gedoen is gemaak. Hieronder verskyn Pets as Therapy -vrywilliger Nici Reed en haar hond, Juno, wat die die skool gereeld besoek, Anita Erasmus die vervaardiger en juffrou Rhode, onderwyser saam met Marieanna.



Marieanna het ook op SABC 3 se Espresso verskyn. Hieronder is sy saam met Pets as Therapy-vrywilliger Mariette du Toit en haar hond, Lilly, en Espresso aanbieder, Katlego Maboe, tydens die onderhoud. Die volledige onderhoud is beskikbaar by

http://youtu.be/G_Et0a0OhCM



Die opname van wat tipies tydens 'n leessesie gebeur



Focus

Dr Nceba Z. Somhlaba

With research interests being on, inter alia, Grief, bereavement and loss; Stress, appraisal and coping; Child and adolescent mental health (and supervising graduate students on research that covers these broad domains, particularly the psychological adjustment following minor-to-acute emotional upheavals and following significant loss); Research ethics.



Dr. Somhlaba also currently teaches:

- * Introductory chapters on cognitive psychology in first-year level – this being a prelude for a more streamlined and -advanced cognitive psychology at graduate level.
- * Research design at 2nd-year: In this module, the core theoretical elements of research methodology in the field of psychology are covered.
- * Other areas of teaching include psychopathology (understanding abnormal behavior from the different classification systems of mental illness), which will be introduced at 3rd- year from 2015 onwards

Multifaceted research foci engaged via graduate supervision include:

- * Exploration of aspects of mental illness in school-going adolescents, which doctoral candidate Angelina Wilson investigates in Ghana; coping with daily hassles for school-going children, with Samantha Smith investigating this in South Africa.
- * The psychological functioning of orphans placed in orphanages, with doctoral candidate Joana Salifu Yendork having investigated this in Ghana.
- * The psychological functioning (stress and coping) of patients admitted to Worcester hospital following attempted suicide, with Carla de Clerk investigating this.

As at April 2014, Dr. Somhlaba has served on the research ethics committee (REC) (Humanities), with a tenure spanning well over three years and nearly 50 monthly meetings.

Video in rural households: How caregivers administer antiretroviral medication to children

Bronwyne Coetzee

“2.5 mls of Kaletra then 4 mls Abacavir and 4mls lamuvidine”. Gogo (grandmother in isiZulu) recalls the doses and the medication names of the ARVs that she administers every day to her grandson, Siya. Siya sits on his grandmother’s lap. She gives him a soft hug and tells us that she is very proud of him. Siya was very ill when his mother left him with his grandmother in Kwamsane, a peri-urban area in Northern*

KwaZulu-Natal, in 2012. Gogo tells us that she could not understand why he was so ill, until she was told at the clinic that her grandson has HIV and needs to take antiretroviral

medication so that he can remain healthy. Her daughter had not told her about this before she left. Gogo tells us that some days are harder than others, as there is no food to give Siya before he takes his medicines. However, she makes sure he takes his treatment every day. “Five-thirty in the morning and then at night, five-thirty”, she says.

In September 2011, Professor Kagee (my doctoral supervisor) and I travelled to the Africa Centre for Health and Population Studies in Mtubatuba (KZN) to meet with a clinical researcher, Dr Ruth Bland, to develop ideas for a PhD that combined the needs of the community and my own research interests.



Dr Bland indicated that a growing number of children were failing at first line ART which was largely related to poor medication adherence. For young children, especially those 5 years and under, adherence to ART is entirely dependent on having a primary caregiver who is able to attend monthly clinic visits and administer medication as prescribed. Barriers and facilitators to adherence to ART amongst this age group and their caregivers are poorly understood. The study received ethical clearance from the health research ethics committee in July 2012. In August 2012 I had moved to Mtubatuba in order to undertake the data collection phase of my PhD.

In phase 1 I interviewed doctors and nurses, and held focus groups with counsellors, traditional healers and caregivers. Poor adherence counselling in the clinics, and HIV-related stigma were amongst the barriers to adherence identified.

Factors associated with good adherence were praising the child for successfully taking medication, and frequently monitoring the caregiver’s knowledge about

treatment administration.

In phase 2 I used ethnographic methods (participant observation and video recording) to determine the manner in which adherence to ARVs was managed in a rural household. I observed children receiving their medication in the morning and in the evening and video recorded the interactions between the children and their caregivers. Preliminary findings indicate that children in this age group are highly adherent to their medication regimens, especially if caregivers are consistent, organised and maintain a routine in medication administration.

I also accompanied each of the caregiver-child dyads to their monthly adherence counselling

appointments. The appointment involves a visit to the adherence counsellor, the ART nurse and the pharmacist. The adherence counsellors are usually patients' first stop during their visit to the clinic. Adherence counsellors, previously funded through PEPFAR, are lay persons appointed and trained by the Department of Health to provide behaviour change counselling to ART users. The counsellors lack professional qualifications and are trained for a short period on basic health services. I found that adherence counselling is insufficient, that counsellors are not well-trained, and that counselling conversations are often very superficial.

Counsellors usually do not probe the caregivers about the difficulties they have in administering the treatments, even in instances where the child has an unsuppressed viral load.

Participants welcomed me into their homes, and I



spent adequate time developing rapport with each of the families. Remaining as unobtrusive as possible so as to allow participants to continue their mornings and evenings as though there were no external presence was an ideal rather than a reality, as many participants' homes were confined in terms of space and video recording would take

place fairly close to the action. Repeated interaction with my participants meant that I had become close to each of them and the struggles that they had to overcome. In the end it was difficult to say goodbye, and I thank each of them wholeheartedly for the extent to which they were able to share their lives with me.

The data from this PhD will ultimately inform clinical practice and contribute to the theoretical understanding of barriers and facilitators to paediatric adherence to ART in a rural context.

Doctoral thesis attracts wide interest



high-risk schools as a result of primarily lack of learner discipline in the classroom. Sharon implemented three interventions based on the body's response to threat, and found all three approaches, physical, emotional and cognitive, to be effective.

Much interest has been shown by the print and broadcasting media in the PhD dissertation of Sharon Johnson, which was completed in December 2013 under the supervision of Prof Tony Naidoo. Sharon's research showed high levels of educator stress and burnout in

Newspapers which featured her findings include the Cape Times and Cape Argus, as well as SU's latest New Voices in Science magazine. She has also been interviewed on several community radio stations and given talks and workshops for the Western Cape Department of Education and at NGOs and at the South African College of Applied Psychology.

Sharon has accepted a post-doctoral fellowship funded by the National Research Foundation to continue her work with educators. She plans to study the effects of trauma sensitive classrooms designed by educators in a youth care centre and inclusive secondary school on the Cape Flats.

Lisa Visagie is currently working on her PhD under supervision of professors Helene Loxton and Leslie Swartz. When asked to tell us about her experience as a Fulbright research student during the last semester of 2013 at Yale University, she wrote the following:

I was granted a Fulbright scholarship for a 4 month's research visit to the *Child Study Centre* at Yale University. I left for the United States on the 29th of August 2013 and returned home on the 16th of December 2013 - 1 semester. I spent time working with Prof Wendy Silverman (an expert on studies of childhood anxiety and the Director of the Programme for Child Anxiety) at Yale's *Child Study Centre*. My PhD research is focussed on the development, implementation and evaluation of a CBT-based anxiety prevention programme for children who have visual impairments. I have a visual impairment myself - I am legally blind.

South African literature relating to my PhD research topic (i.e. anxiety in children with visual impairments) is almost non-existent, and I hoped to gain more experience/insight relating to the treatment of childhood anxiety and cognitive behavioural therapy intervention in the United States. I believed that an opportunity to spend time and work with an academic with expertise in these focus areas would benefit both me and my research tremendously. Since my return to South Africa I have started with the implementation phase of my research, and I have found that the information and experience that I gathered in the USA has indeed been invaluable!

Besides the academic benefits that a visit to the USA presented, I believed that the opportunity will give me great personal benefit as well. I was granted the opportunity to visit a foreign country (something I have always wanted to do) and expanded my mind-set and add to my experience. I also learnt that I could live independently and cope! The sense of mastery/confidence that this gave me is indescribable. I was also lucky that my best four-legged friend, my beautiful pitch-black guide-dog Bagheera, was able to accompany me to Yale. Bagheera's smarts and sense of responsibility shone through strongly, and he made a once in a life-time



LISA'S YALE EXPERIENCE

Lisa and Bagheera with Lady Liberty..... 2013

opportunity a reality for me. After what seemed like mountains of paper-work, various tests and numerous visits to the vet, we were able to board our 15 hour flight to John F Kennedy International Airport in New York. Yes, you read correctly, 15 hours, and Baggy was a star true to form all the way! On our arrival in our new home, the town of New Haven Connecticut, we quickly got into a routine and Bagheera navigated his new environment with ease. In between the lectures, meetings, and hours doing research in the library, we also made time for some site-seeing, and Baggy took full advantage of the new opportunities that came his way! He took a few trips in a "real" New York yellow taxi, he boarded a ferry to visit lady liberty herself, he took a fast-paced New York subway train to downtown Manhattan, where he strut his stuff down fifth avenue and did some shopping, and he even enjoyed a horse and carriage ride through Central Park.

Everything was new and exciting to us both - we learnt a lot (academically and personally), met wonderful new friends and made memories that will last a lifetime!



Professor Mark Tomlinson

The Partnership for Alcohol and AIDS Intervention Research (PAAIR) is a new five-year initiative in the Department of Psychology.

PAAIR's aim is to facilitate research into interventions for alcohol use and HIV within the Department, and other partner institutions and community agencies, in selected areas of the Western Cape and the Oliver Tambo District in rural Eastern Cape. The focus of PAAIR is to develop capacity for research, and provide infrastructure to support research activities. One of the primary activities of the Partnership

will be the awarding of pilot study funding to emerging and established investigators and community partners. Each year, the Partnership will release a call for proposals for pilot projects in identified priority research areas. In long-term it is hoped that the Partnership will contribute towards increasing the research output and maximising the impact of the research taking place in the Department. PAAIR is funded by a grant from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), awarded to Prof Mark Tomlinson and Prof Mary Jane Rotherham-Borus at UCLA. Sarah Skeen has been appointed as the programme director and Zena Jacobs is providing administrative support and coordinating ethics-related issues for the Partnership.



Psychology twenty years after democracy

Ashraf Kagee



Twenty years since the end of apartheid, the country's problems, concerns, and successes have much in common with those of other low and middle income countries the world over. Political corruption, economic disparity, and a low skill base brought on by an educational system in crisis, have delivered a society that faces challenges not unlike those of other states with similar sized economies. To this extent, South Africa is not an exceptional case. A key question is how psychology, especially a psychology critically aware of the epistemological tensions inherent in itself as a discipline, but also a field that is tasked with the responsibility to facilitate social development, is able to contribute to address the ongoing needs of South African society.

Psychology's role has been central to the developmental state. As a discipline and a field of practice, it has unique contributions to make in researching and intervening in various social and community

problems, such as community violence, substance abuse, racism, various risk behaviours, and in helping individuals and communities achieve optimal health. Yet, despite significant scientific output in various disciplines including psychology, for example in the form of a substantial increase of research

This is an extract of an article which will appear in the forthcoming special issue of the South African Journal of Psychology commemorating twenty years of democracy in South Africa

articles in scholarly journals over the last twenty years, these social and community problems persist, and in fact by some accounts have become worse. The assumption is that research conducted by psychologists and other social scientists to inform social policy should capture the attention of policy makers which, in turn, will positively influence the social and psychological status of citizens.

However, it is difficult to

identify research conducted under the rubric of South African psychology that has influenced government policy. Some possible exceptions might be in the form of HIV risk behaviour, which has shown reductions, especially among adolescents, but these interventions have been the result of public health rather

than psychological interventions. Other social and psychological problems continue unabated, even two decades after the end of apartheid.

Empirical psychology has a contribution to make in helping to achieve optimal population health and well-being. Yet, to some extent South African psychology has strayed from its origins as a scientific discipline. Psychology's critique of science, as evidenced in the critical turn that has characterized the field in the last thirty years has distracted it from the actual scientific contributions it has the potential to make. Following the necessary and important challenge that the critical turn posed to the

conservative ideology that characterised much of the discipline during the apartheid era, there is to some extent an implicit assumption that ideological fault lines coincide with paradigmatic ones. Thus, criticality for some has come to be seen as synonymous with progressiveness, radicalism and social change, while empirical-mindedness has come to be regarded by some as conservative, traditional, and invested in the status quo.

On one hand, this characterisation is true. Empirical science rests on traditional inferential statistical methods and regards the null as correct unless shown to be otherwise, resulting in rejection of the null hypothesis. Convincing data are required to successfully dislodge the null from its status of supremacy in the epistemic pyramid. Moreover, any data suggesting rejection of the null hypothesis have to be shown to be more likely to occur than chance alone would permit. In addition, replication is usually required for findings to gain acceptance in the psychological canon. The very stringent Bradford-Hill criteria to establish causal relationships, for example, require data to be amassed in a very specific manner so as to

demonstrate that an etiological link indeed exists between two variables, so that the null hypothesis that no such relationship exists may be rejected. Moreover, recent criticism concerning significance-testing as a way of supporting evidentiary claims has brought into focus the need for effect size calculations and meta-analytic reviews as a way of garnering evidence for the effectiveness of various social, psychological, and medical interventions.

On the other hand, empirical science is progressive, as it continually provides new insights into phenomena that would not have occurred in the absence of scientific investigation. Such a dynamic epistemology, afforded by the scientific method, offers a paradigmatic platform from which to address the numerous social problems that continue to characterise post-apartheid South Africa. Empirical psychology may therefore be considered to be epistemologically conservative in the sense that evidence is required to support any claim, but also progressive to the extent that in its demand for evidence, the advances it makes offer potential answers to perplexing questions of how best to effect social

change. This progressiveness is what gives South African psychology and related disciplines the important responsibility of creating the knowledge base for social development twenty years after democracy.

Critical psychology has played an admittedly important role in shaping South African psychology over the last few decades. The salience of the conservative-progressive distinction was pronounced during the apartheid era when human rights were wilfully violated. However, in the present historical moment, the continuum between conservative and progressive ideologies is perhaps much narrower, and the distinction between the two more blurred. It is argued therefore that the uncoupling of political ideology (conservative-progressive) from epistemological paradigm (empirical-constructivist) and from methodological approaches (quantitative-qualitative/hermeneutic) is therefore a necessary imperative for critical psychology. Indeed, in the existing canon of critical

(Continued on page 16)

(Continued from page 15)

psychology thus far, insufficient attention has been directed at ensuring the separation of ideological affiliation with paradigmatic approach.

As I have argued elsewhere, the question of evidence-based practice for social and psychological services is highly relevant to theory and practice. Indeed, the imperative for South Africa at the moment is on delivery of services to large segments of the South African population who by all accounts have not benefited materially from the transition to democracy. Yet, for services to be effective and relevant, they require careful design and constant assessment and re-assessment. In this sense the requirement is for social policy to be evidence-based so that financial, material, and human resources can be deployed in such a way so as to maximise the likelihood of success. In fact, the application of evidence-free policies and interventions to consumers of such services may inhibit

progress in service delivery and permit officials charged with effective implementation to evade evaluation. The South African mental health care system, for example, cannot afford to continue supporting costly and time-consuming interventions if their effectiveness is unknown. With scarce financial resources, insufficient posts for mental health professionals, social stigma regarding mental illness, and the high cost of training for psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and counsellors, there is a need to ensure that the interventions rendered by clinicians have the highest chances of success, whether in terms of gains in psychological health, social change, or policy development. There exists a risk of squandering valuable resources if proper attention is not paid to the effectiveness of psychological and social services and if appropriate methods are not applied to carefully evaluate and refine interventions.