

UNIVERSITY OF THE  
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FREISTATA



**UFS**  
**THE HUMANITIES**  
PSYCHOLOGY

# **RESEARCH MENU**

## **DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

**2024**

The research interests of the staff members in the Department of Psychology (UFS) include a wide array of research topics. The use of qualitative or quantitative approaches (or a combination of these) in pure or applied research enables us to explore, describe, explain, and predict human phenomena, thus gaining insight into individuals and the shaping of society. In the pursuit of the discovery of new knowledge, we use systematic ways of finding answers to questions such as:

- What are the sociohistorical and psychological factors that shape the development and personality of individuals?
- How do cultural and WEIRD vs. non-WEIRD contextual living conditions impact personality development?
- How do individuals define themselves and find their place in the world?
- What are the antecedents and outcomes of optimal human functioning and well-being?
- What are the psychosocial risk and protective factors that influence the psychological well-being of individuals?
- How can cultural variables explain or account for well-being, and how can well-being be promoted across the life span?
- How is mental illness conceptualised in various population groups and what are the various socio-demographic variables linked to well-being and mental health?
- Which constructs best predict the psychological well-being within the student population?
- How do community engagement activities facilitate development in students and community partners?
- What is the journey of becoming a professional within the field of psychology?
- Why does criminal behaviour develop and how do offender populations cope and adjust?
- How can measuring instruments be developed and validated for cross-cultural settings?
- How can research facilitate the development and evaluation of programmes?

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# MS KAREN DE VILLIERS

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**Highest qualification:** MA (Counselling Psychology), 1996

**Post level/rank:** Lecturer

**Registration category:** Counselling Psychology



## Overarching research theme: Cyberpsychology concerning social comparisons on social networking sites

The majority of research on the mental-health effects of social networking has focused on Facebook, with only a few studies looking into the effects of Instagram on psychological well-being. Social media allows users to express their thoughts and feelings through writing, pictures, and videos. Instagram is the most popular platform among teenagers due to its extensive features. Little is known about the social and psychological factors that lead to consumers becoming fanatics of this app.

### The research questions I am interested in answering:

- What effect does Instagram have on users' mental health and behaviour during a pandemic?
- What is the psychology of Instagram likes, and how do they relate to self-esteem and social status?
- What effect does extensive and frequent use of social media (including Instagram) have on self-esteem and identity integration?
- What is the relationship between social comparison and self-esteem among late-adolescent Instagram users?

Research approach		
Quantitative ✓	Qualitative ✓	Mixed methods

Available to act as	
Supervisor	Co-supervisor ✓

Available to supervise	
Master's students ✓	PhD students

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# DR EDWIN DU PLESSIS

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ORCID: 0000-0002-5535-5939

Highest qualification: PhD (Psychology), 2012

Post level/rank: Senior Lecturer

Registration category: Clinical Psychology



## Overarching research themes:

- Trauma (both present and historical) and its aftermath on victims and mental health-care providers
- The interplay between trauma, meaning making and well-being from a developmental life-span perspective
- The utility of cognitive and behavioural processes in the treatment of trauma and its aftermath

South Africa has a marked and tragic history of violence and trauma resulting from its racial past. Violence and injuries are the second leading cause of death and lost disability-adjusted life years in South Africa. The overall injury death rate of 157.8 per 100 000 population is nearly twice the global average, and the rate of homicide of women by intimate partners is six times the global average. However, South African research in traumatology often provides a narrow perspective, with an emphasis on the negative (i.e., what is or has gone wrong). Then again, focusing only on the resultant pathology leads to a view of trauma that does not address issues such as strength and virtue. My research focuses primarily on trauma from a well-being perspective and its interplay with aspects such as self-regulation, meaning making, coping, resilience, and post-traumatic growth across the developmental life span. I use both qualitative and quantitative approaches in understanding these aspects.

## The research questions I am interested in answering:

- How do victims of historical trauma cope with its impact and its transgenerational repercussions?
- How do victims of trauma create meaning from their experiences?
- What is the psychological impact of victims of trauma on mental health-care providers? How do mental health-care providers navigate the negative impact of trauma work?
- Which behavioural and cognitive processes are most effective in the treatment of trauma?

Research approach		
Quantitative ✓	Qualitative ✓	Mixed methods

Available to act as	
Supervisor ✓	Co-supervisor ✓

Available to supervise	
Master's students ✓	PhD students ✓

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# PROF PAUL FOUCHÉ

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ORCID: 0000-0001-9559-876X

Highest qualification: DPhil, 1999

Post level/rank: Full Professor

Registration category: Counselling Psychology



## Overarching research theme: Psychobiographical and psycho-historical studies

My research involves the psychological study of deceased exemplary, iconic, and significant personalities within a socio-historical, cultural and political context. These personalities may be seen as outliers or persons of “historical significance” who have had a lasting impact on society. It entails the psycho-historical study of exemplary and sometimes controversial South Africans, as well as international figures in the fields of politics, warfare, arts, music, literature, academia, science, and leadership. Most projects are studies from a longitudinal-developmental trajectory perspective, as well as analysed from a cultural and WEIRD vs. non-WEIRD perspective.

**The research question I am interested in answering:** What significant socio-cultural, political, historical, as well as psychological factors shaped the development and personality of the psychobiographical subject (personality) under study, and what was the impact of WEIRD vs. non-WEIRD contextual factors on personality development?

Research approach		
Quantitative	Qualitative ✓	Mixed methods

Available to act as	
Supervisor ✓	Co-supervisor

Available to supervise	
Master's students ✓	PhD students ✓

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# DR JACQUES JORDAAN

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ORCID: 0000-0003-3931-7091

**Highest qualification:** PhD (Psychology), 2015

**Post level/rank:** Senior Lecturer

**Registration category:** Counselling Psychology



## Overarching research themes:

- Psychological criminology which explores the intersection of psychology and criminology, aiming to utilize psychological knowledge to understand, explain, describe, and prevent offending behaviour.
- Assessing the effectiveness of interventions and programmes within the correctional environment.
- Examining the psychometric properties of measurement scales commonly used in offender studies.

My research interest primarily lies in the field of psychocriminology and focuses on various aspects of incarcerated offenders, including their mental health, coping abilities, adjustment, aggression, psychopathy, criminal thinking, victimisation, perpetrator trauma, and risk behaviours. Furthermore, I have a keen interest in conducting studies related to the psychometric properties of measurement scales and questionnaires frequently used in offender studies. Additionally, I am also interested in studies focusing on the development, implementation, and evaluation of intervention programmes within the correctional environment.

## The research questions I am interested in answering:

- What are the psychometric properties of the Prison Adjustment Questionnaire (PAQ) among male and female incarcerated offenders?
- What are the psychometric properties of the Buss and Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ) among male and female incarcerated offenders?
- What predictors contribute significantly to the variance of recidivism in male incarcerated offenders?
- Which personality traits describes the most significant percentage of variance in the criminal thinking styles of incarcerated offenders?

Research approach		
Quantitative ✓	Qualitative	Mixed methods

Available to act as	
Supervisor ✓	Co-supervisor ✓

Available to supervise	
Master's students ✓	PhD students ✓

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# DR AYANDA KHANYE

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**Highest qualification:** PhD (Higher Education), 2016

**Post level/rank:** Lecturer

**Registration category:** Educational Psychology



## Overarching research themes:

- Career development
- Child psychology

I am primarily interested in research topics regarding career development across the life span, focusing on community-based empowerment and social change, exploring issues of inequality, class, and gender, and how these impact people's career development and career transitioning in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

I am also interested in how children learn, effective child development strategies, strategies to promote early childhood, and play interventions with traumatised children.

Research approach		
Quantitative	<b>Qualitative ✓</b>	Mixed methods

Available to act as	
Supervisor	<b>Co-supervisor ✓</b>

Available to supervise	
Master's students	PhD students

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# MISS MULALO MPIOLO

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**Highest qualification:** MA Research Psychology

**Post level/rank:** Lecturer

**Registration category:** Research Psychologist



## Overarching research themes

- Child poverty with a specific focus on material deprivation
- Child well-being
- Developing Human capabilities and social cohesion in families

My research is founded on the idea that childhood is a social construct, recognising children as social actors with agency, rights, and a set of capabilities. This stance acknowledges that children's lives should be understood within context. Considering South Africa's socio-political landscape, the area of child well-being research finds relevance. The overarching aim of my research covers areas such as child well-being, Child poverty and Material Deprivation, using a child-centred perspective.

Another area of interest is families' role in developing human capabilities and social cohesion.

Research approach		
Quantitative	<b>Qualitative ✓</b>	Mixed methods

Available to act as	
Supervisor	<b>Co-supervisor ✓</b>

Available to supervise	
Master's students	Ph.D. students

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# DR PRAVANI NAIDOO

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**ORCID:** 0000-0002-7049-3181

**Highest qualification:** PhD (Psychology), 2010

**Post level/rank:** Lecturer

**Registration category:** Not applicable



## Overarching research themes:

- Student well-being
- The positive psychology of disability

## Specific focus areas:

- Informed largely by 3<sup>rd</sup> wave positive psychology, I am interested in mechanisms and processes that promote student well-being, with a focus on mindfulness and mindfulness-based interventions, and self-compassion.
- Within the positive psychology of disability, I am interested in exploring well-being literacy and optimal human functioning amongst persons with disabilities.

Research approach		
Quantitative	Qualitative ✓	Mixed methods

Available to act as	
Supervisor ✓	Co-supervisor ✓

Available to supervise	
Master's students ✓	PhD students ✓

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# PROF LUZELLE NAUDÉ

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ORCID: 0000-0001-6660-8885

Highest qualification: PhD (Psychology), 2008

Post level/rank: Full Professor

Registration category: Counselling Psychology



## Overarching research theme: ‘Who am I?’: identity development during adolescence and emerging adulthood.

Individuals follow various pathways to answer the pressing question: Who am I? This process is filled with excitement and possibility, but also with challenges and contradictions. I am interested in the ways in which individuals define themselves and find their place in the world.

From a life span developmental perspective, the journey towards an established sense of self is present throughout life but is especially prominent during the ‘third decade of life’ when late adolescents and emerging adults have the opportunity to reflect on the past, present, and future. My research agenda includes status and narrative perspectives and is focused on the interface between identity dimensions and socio-cultural contexts (such as family, romantic relationships, social media, and education), with a strong appreciation for the dynamics of diversity in the multicultural milieu of South Africa. I follow mixed-methods, quantitative, and qualitative approaches when exploring topics such as intersectionality and the integration of multiple identities, transformational journeys regarding self and society, and the challenges of forming an integrated identity in contexts of change and transition.

## The research questions I am interested in answering:

- How do adolescents and emerging adults define themselves? Which identity domains (gender/sexual, ethnic, career/professional, spiritual) are salient in their lives?
- What processes do individuals follow to resolve what Erikson called the ‘identity crisis’? How do they explore their ‘possible selves’ and finally commit to an integrated, but multidimensional understanding of who they are?
- How is identity development informed by contextual aspects such as friends, families, romance, higher-education studies, the workplace, and social media?
- What are the challenges that individuals experience in the process of finding a sense of self?

Research approach		
Quantitative ✓	Qualitative ✓	Mixed methods ✓

Available to act as	
Supervisor ✓	Co-supervisor

Available to supervise	
Master’s students ✓	PhD students ✓

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# DR CARLA NEL

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ORCID: 0009-0007-0503-4268

Highest qualification: PhD (Psychology), 2013

Post level/rank: Full Professor

Registration category: Clinical Psychology



## Overarching research themes:

The life stories of eminent, exceptional or exemplary historical figures have often been subjected to psychological dissection, contributing to the discipline's theoretical development. My interest lies in such psychobiographical exploration of single and multiple cases, specifically with the aim of understanding adjustment and achievement within the context of adversity.

## Specific focus areas:

- The exploration and understanding of optimal development of exceptional individuals within specific socio-historical contexts;
- Utilising psychobiographical research within the context of professional training in psychology;
- Methodological developments within life history research.

Research approach		
Quantitative	Qualitative ✓	Mixed methods

Available to act as	
Supervisor ✓	Co-supervisor ✓

Available to supervise	
Master's students ✓	PhD students ✓

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# DR LINDI NEL

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ORCID: 0000-002-2440-6895

Highest qualification: PhD (Psychology), 2012

Post level/rank: Senior Lecturer

Registration category: Clinical Psychology



## Overarching research theme: Becoming a psychologist – the journey.

My research focus area is *attachment processes and practices* as it relates to various parenting contexts. In this regard, I ask and explore critical questions regarding different family structures, and (de)attachment beyond infancy. This focus area includes ways of relating, methods of attaching and implications for parenting I prefer to work from a psychofortigenic framework – suggesting that most of these topics are explored from a ‘what works well / meaning-making’ approach rather than a ‘what goes wrong’ stance.

## The research questions I am interested in answering:

- Attachment between caregivers and children – why and how?
- Which practices maintain healthy attachment in various types of relationships?
- Which dynamics, processes, and practices contribute to positive attachment and how is it experienced?
- In considering the development in the field of attachment theory and practice in the context of familial trends (including different family structures), where do we stand, what do we know, and more importantly, what do we *not know*?

Research approach		
Quantitative	Qualitative ✓	Mixed methods

Available to act as	
Supervisor ✓	Co-supervisor ✓

Available to supervise	
Master's students ✓	PhD students ✓

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# DR MPHO RAMARUMO

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**Highest qualification:** PhD (Psychology), 2014

**Post level/rank:** Lecturer

**Registration category:** Clinical Psychology



## Overarching research theme:

I am interested in the following research areas:

- Substance abuse and intervention amongst youth
- Mental health and wellbeing of people with chronic conditions like hypertension and diabetes
- Medical negligence and mental health
- Psycho-legal research

## The research questions I am interested in answering:

- Substance abuse among young people and the impact substances have on their mental health.
- People with chronic conditions have comorbid mental health issues and interventions tailored to address those needed.
- Professional medical negligence.

Research approach		
Quantitative	Qualitative ✓	Mixed methods

Available to act as	
Supervisor	Co-supervisor ✓

Available to supervise	
Master's students ✓	PhD students ✓

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# DR NTSOAKI FLORENCE TADI

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ORCID: 0000-0001-6591-7539

Highest qualification: PhD (Psychology), 2011

Post level/rank: Lecturer

Registration category: Clinical Psychology



## Overarching research theme: Cultural perspectives on parenting and mental Health

Studies with children enable us to learn more about their development and identify effective ways to help them develop as responsible citizens with the potential to contribute positively to society. My special interest and goal is to collaborate and engage with communities to gain insights and conduct culturally sensitive research.

### Specific focus areas:

- Parenting Styles and Mental Health Outcome
- Identifying culturally relevant risk factors for suicide among Sesotho youth in South Africa
- Cultural Perspective on Mental Health – Mental Health Literacy
- Parental Mental Health Literacy

Research approach		
Quantitative ✓	Qualitative	Mixed methods

Available to act as	
Supervisor ✓	Co-supervisor ✓

Available to supervise	
Master's students ✓	PhD students ✓

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# MR HENRY TAYLOR

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ORCID: 0009-0007-3207-7191

**Highest qualification:** MSc (Counselling Psychology), 2003

**Post level/rank:** Lecturer

**Registration category:** Counselling Psychology



## Overarching research theme:

The relationship between different variables and psychological well-being/satisfaction with life/happiness.

I am also interested in the benefits of creative art therapy/expressive art therapy interventions for health and well-being.

## The research questions I am interested in answering:

My particular interest is in the factors (variables) that increase (and/or decrease) people's psychological well-being/satisfaction with life/happiness, since every person strives towards well-being and/or happiness.

- Is there a relationship between variables such as coping, locus of control, spirituality, relatedness to nature, and humour and life satisfaction among students/emerging adults?
- Is there a relationship between personality traits (e.g., the big five) and satisfaction with life/happiness/success or conversely anxiety/depression?
- Different patient populations' (lived) experiences of the effectiveness of art therapy interventions.

Research approach		
Quantitative ✓	Qualitative ✓	Mixed methods

Available to act as	
Supervisor ✓	Co-supervisor ✓

Available to supervise	
Master's students ✓	PhD students

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# MRS ELOISE VENTER

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Highest qualification: MA (Counselling Psychology), 2017

Post level/rank: Lecturer

Registration category: Counselling Psychology



## Overarching research themes:

- Early childhood development (ages three to six)
- Middle childhood development (ages 6-12)
- Developmental psychology from early childhood up to and including adolescence
- Parent-child interactions/efficacy of particular parenting styles or techniques
- Gottman method of relationship counselling
- Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT)

## The research questions I am interested in answering:

- Which factors contribute to optimal developmental outcomes during early childhood?
- Do existing models of understanding early childhood development adequately explain the development of South African pre-schoolers?
- Which parenting styles result in the best outcomes for South African adolescents?
- What is the relationship between parenting style and mental-health outcomes in South African adolescents?
- How does the efficacy of the Gottman method of relationship counselling compare to that of other frequently used relationship counselling approaches?
- How can Acceptance and Commitment therapy processes be adapted for application with children in middle childhood?

Research approach		
Quantitative	Qualitative ✓	Mixed methods

Available to act as	
Supervisor	Co-supervisor ✓

Available to supervise	
Master's students ✓	PhD students

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# PROF STEPHEN WALKER

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ORCID: 0000-0002-2110-7881

**Highest qualification:** PhD (Psychology), 2003

**Post level/rank:** Full Professor

**Registration category:** Counselling Psychology



## Overarching research themes:

- Psychological processes facilitating adjustment, well-being, and performance

The third wave of behaviour therapies has grown into a mature field of therapeutic intervention and scientific enquiry over the past thirty years. A significant body of evidence attests to the efficacy of acceptance and behaviour therapy (ACT) in numerous populations and across a wide variety of diagnoses and difficulties. However, very little research has been conducted in developing countries, including South Africa. Similarly, while the role of mindfulness and self-compassion in explaining why people suffer and how this suffering may be addressed is more firmly established almost weekly, these processes remain underexplored locally. Consequently, I am interested in how psychological processes such as psychological flexibility, mindfulness, and self-compassion can be used to explain and modify human functioning within a broad range of contexts, including medicine and health, student well-being, performance enhancement, and masculine identity and men's health, specifically in South Africa.

## Current research projects:

- The development, implementation, and evaluation of ACT interventions in managing health conditions (e.g., infertility, disordered eating, and metabolic disorders), addressing socially destructive behaviours (e.g., intimate partner violence), and promoting health behaviours (e.g., exercise adherence and vaccine hesitancy).
- Exploration of the structure and correlates of self-compassion within the South African context.
- Determinants of athlete well-being, performance, and identity.

Research approach		
Quantitative ✓	Qualitative ✓	Mixed methods

Available to act as	
Supervisor ✓	Co-supervisor ✓

Available to supervise	
Master's students ✓	PhD students ✓

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