Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand: Celebrating seventy years of teaching, research and scholarship
The teaching and researching of Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand represents a long history of innovation and excellence. From its origins as a sub-discipline of Philosophy, Psychology has grown significantly and is now one of the three largest departments at Wits University. Psychology remains one of the most popular course choices and students from Humanities, Health Sciences, Science, Engineering and Built Environment and Commerce, Law and Management faculties are all enrolled in various courses. Unlike many other universities nationally, the University of the Witwatersrand offers specialist training in all the registration categories recognised by the Professional Board of Psychology and the Health Professions Council of South Africa (viz. Research, Industrial, Educational, Clinical, Counselling) within a single department, namely, the Department of Psychology. This allows for a particular richness of exchange and appreciation of the diversity of fields in which psychologists have expertise. The Department has enjoyed a fruitful and complex history, producing and attracting many scholars of international note. Staff in the department have produced much scholarly work as well as excellent training programmes and teaching innovation and expertise. Our graduate programmes enjoy a very positive reputation within South Africa and on the continent and attract large numbers of applicants. Currently, the Department trains more than 50 professionals at Master’s level annually. Additionally, it registers approximately 200 new post-graduate students per annum.

Wits Psychology has not remained untouched by the political climate of South Africa over the past 70 years (and there is evidence of research and practice that sought to address many of the ills of Apartheid) and still remains sensitive to the current imperatives of transformation. The review of the history of the department as outlined in this brochure indicates that
there have been times of turmoil and times of harmony, times of rapid change and times of consolidation, periods of weakness and periods of strength, as is inevitable in a growing department responsive to changes in staffing and in the educational and political climate. The history of the department has also reflected some of the major paradigm shifts that have taken place in the fairly young discipline of Psychology internationally, as well as some of the contributions that working in the South African context have enabled local psychologists to make to the international arena. Based on these early foundations, the current department is flourishing and is home to a large and increasingly diverse group of staff and students. We hope to continue to build on the best of the past, to sustain areas of excellence and to develop in new areas shaped by our dual commitment to remain contextually sensitive and internationally competitive.

Professor Gillian Eagle
Head of Department

September 2007
Memories and Futures

The Department of Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand was formally established in 1937. From a handful of students during its formative years, the Department now houses a full-time staff complement of 38 academics which services more than 2000 students, making it by far the biggest department in the Faculty of Humanities. While this growth is partly attributable to the general expansion of the discipline worldwide, it is also testament to 70 years of departmental teaching, research and practitioner excellence. The anecdotes, commentaries and insights offered by this brief history attempt to highlight some of the key building-blocks of this excellence towards celebrating the proud memory of psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. Of course, as is the case in all history-making, the presentation of these memories invites readers to reflect on the present state of psychology at the University and indulge in a fleeting glimpse of its future priorities and possibilities.

Foundations (1937-1963)

A 1923 University syllabus lists psychology amongst the courses offered by the Department of Philosophy. Electing instruction in the first of the courses in the discipline provided the student with an Outline of Physiological Psychology and the General Principles of Individual Psychology. The second of the listed courses provided the student with substantially more subject matter in the form of The Psychology of Group Life, Modern Experimental Psychology, Abnormal Conditions of Consciousness and The Application of Psychology to Educational and Industrial Conditions. Prescribed textbooks for the course were William James’ Manual of Psychology and McDougall’s Social Psychology.

Just 13 years later, the 1936 syllabus lists an additional seven topics offered by Philosophy towards the B.A. (Social Sciences) and B.Sc. degrees. The inclusion of
the last of these topics, *The Psychology of Prejudice: Psychological Factors Affecting the Attitude of White to Black*, was due primarily to the pioneering psychological scholarship and efforts of a single lecturer, Professor I. D. MacCrone.

In 1937, MacCrone, a leading liberal social scientist of that time, formally established the Department of Psychology to house the psychological teaching and research formerly located within Philosophy. The Department offered two-year majors. Committed to challenging dominant hereditarian views on the validity of ‘race’ as a biological property, MacCrone pre-empted the progressive political ethos that was to characterise the Department for over half a century. Joining Professor MacCrone in developing and teaching the curriculum during the Department’s inaugural year was Dr. Simon Biesheuvel, a graduate from the University of Cape Town and Edinburgh University. After completing a three-year tenure as a lecturer in the Department, Biesheuvel left Wits to join the National Air Force in 1940 to develop psychometric testing instruments for pilots. He then went on to direct the controversial National Institute for Personnel Research (NIPR), returning to the University as the director of the Graduate School for Business Administration in 1973. Despite being described as an inspiring force within the Department of Psychology, and a key liberalist, Biesheuvel has also been accused of being blind to the ways in which Psychology itself profited from the apartheid system. Nonetheless, at the beginning of the first semester of 1940, MacCrone and Biesheuvel comprised the sum total of all senior lecturing staff in the Department, and the calendar of this year indicates another significant expansion of topic areas taught.

The exponential growth in student numbers and topic areas resulted in the inevitable expansion of staff members. By 1959, the Department had employed in the region of four additional lecturers to meet rapidly increasing enrolment demands. These were Yvonne
Lejeune, Alma Hannon, Stanley Jack Rachman and Anita Starfield. It had also upgraded its course offerings from two-year to three-year majors. University records show that in this year, Psychology was the second largest department in the Faculty of Arts, with 385 undergraduates. Research in the Department during this time continued to focus on race, with MacCrone, a social psychologist, spearheading staggered measurements of white students’ race-related attitudes. Yet, the emerging cohort of American-influenced behaviourists were gradually placing their collective interests in classical behaviourist theory on the Department’s research and teaching agenda.

**Middle years (1964-1989)**
The consolidation of the behaviourist orientation was perhaps best expressed in a set of learning experiments involving the study of laboratory rats. These experiments were popularly presented at the Wits exhibition week of 1964, the year in which Professor MacCrone was replaced by Professor Jack Mann as the Head of Department. Working well within the growing leanings of the Department, Mann’s early Wits-related work focused on ‘verbal behaviour’. Mann was to head the Department until 1991. In some ways, his political inclinations mirrored those of his predecessor, and he often rallied his department to use psychological evidence to challenge unjust apartheid legislation. In 1971, he led the Department in the submission of a petition to the *Rand Daily Mail*. The petition called for the establishment of a commission of inquiry to investigate the psychological impact of the draconian apartheid procedures of arrest and detention without trial.

The behavioural and comparative psychology research thrusts in the Department’s middle years gained impetus with the installation of the Animal Behaviour Research Unit in 1965. Housed within the new Social Sciences Building, the Unit was directed by Dr. Gerry Doyle. The primary objective of the Unit was to contribute to
an understanding of the human evolutionary process through investigating sexual and other social behaviours in a variety of animal species. Doyle’s early work involved collaboration with the internationally recognised Harry Harlow, whose work is still quoted in introductory psychology texts. Doyle was granted a full professorship for his continued research within the Unit, delivering his inaugural address titled, *Monkeys and Children: Theory and Research on the Early Environment and its Importance for Human Development*, on the 5th October 1971. The Unit formed the basis for the establishment of a Primate Research Group within the Department of Psychology in 1974.

The 1980s have been described as the Department’s most turbulent years. They were however ironically ushered in by a controversial visit from Dr. Carl Rogers, the leading humanist psychologist of the time. Professor Len Holdstock, a student of Rogers and senior lecturer in the Department was instrumental in securing his visit in October 1982.

While Professor Mann remained the nominal head of the then School of Psychology throughout the eighties, for all intents and purposes, the applied, industrial and general streams that had been developing through the 1960s and 1970s constituted self-contained divisions, each with their own chair. The chairs of each division were themselves former departmental students and subsequently leading scholars before assuming full professorship and taking up leadership roles in the highly divided Department. Professor Gill Straker took charge of the division of applied psychology, Professor Julian Barling chaired the industrial division and Professor Graham Tyson led the division of general psychology.

Formal instruction in the form of coursework was restricted to the undergraduate and honours degrees during these middle years. Formal coursework-led programmes at the Master’s level were only available in
the clinical stream. Under Professor Straker, the Master’s degree in clinical psychology gained increasing prestige, nationally and internationally. Additional leadership in the programme was later provided by Diana Schmuckler and Jeffry Cumes. During the late 1980s, the degree represented a mix of psychodynamic theory, training and praxis.

One focus of training was to respond to the widespread trauma outcomes of the political struggles of the time. To this end, the Department established a research and intervention group dedicated to *The Study of Violence* aimed at understanding and intervening in the psychosocial effects of politically-inspired violence and trauma. Led by Lloyd Vogelman and Graeme Simpson, the project was officially launched in January 1989. Initially purely research based, the unit expanded into service delivery work and staff in the Department developed an understanding of trauma and an intervention model that was to ground the formation of the Wits Trauma Clinic. This early work was to prove integral to the establishment of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) in the 1990s. Thus, the clinical division of the Department struck what seemed to be a delicate balance between the demands of international clinical excellence and the pressing local needs of its immediate context. An important shift in the Department’s historically white staffing profile was realised with the appointment of Fatima Moosa, its first full-time black lecturer, to the clinical division, with Saths Cooper following shortly thereafter.

Building on the robust foundations of its early protagonists, industrial psychology under Barling expanded its student numbers, research and staff complement. One such important addition to the staff was the recruitment of Professor James Fisher in 1982. In 1983, Barling edited a seminal textbook titled, *Behaviour in Organisations: A South African perspective*. The second edition, released in 1986, featured two
additional editors in the form of Stephen Bluen and Clive Fullagar. Bluen was later to head the Department from 1990 to 1991. Postgraduate studies in the industrial division took the form of an honours degree by coursework, and Masters and PhD by dissertation only, until 1992 when the first industrial psychology Master’s degree by coursework was offered by the Department.

Postgraduate students that sought a Master’s degree outside of the clinical and industrial streams could register for an M.A. in psychology by dissertation only. Under Professor Tyson, a social psychologist and author of one of the earliest South African introductory psychology textbooks, An Introduction to Psychology: A South African Perspective, the division was characterised by two broad areas of scholarship. The broad area of social psychology produced scholars the likes of John Duckitt, author of The Social Psychology of Prejudice. It was within this relatively generalist degree that neuropsychology as the second and growing focus of the division found maturation. The programme facilitated the development of many of the Department’s now world-renowned psychologists. Building on his Master’s training in this programme, Michael Saling, currently a leading neuropsychologist, went on to obtain a PhD in 1982 for his thesis titled, Determinants of lateral organisation in neonates. Saling was also instrumental in setting up the first neuropsychological consultations at the then Johannesburg General Hospital.

Trained under Saling, Oliver Turnbull completed his Masters degree with a thesis on neuropsychological changes associated with HIV in 1990. Mark Solms, whose PhD work focused on the neuropsychology of dreams found global critical acclaim, represented another key figure to emerge from the general Master’s programme. Other research scholars of note, in the cognitive and health psychology fields respectively, were Professor Estelle Doctor and Professor Beverly Chalmers.
Despite the various personal, scientific and political schisms that defined these middle years, the Department produced some of the most well-known scholars in modern neuropsychology, traumatology and other fields. By 1988, the departmental climate had calmed, resulting in a more cohesive set of relations that promised greater collective research, teaching and learning.

**Recent past (1990-1999)**
Following a Faculty review which noted an overlap in many of the course content areas taught across the three different streams, the divisions were reunited under one department in 1990. The newly amalgamated Department of Psychology was chaired by Professor Stephen Bluen until 1992. Under Bluen’s leadership the Department’s courses were restructured and integrated, although the legacy of the former divisions remained palpable. Bluen’s departure from the University led to the establishment of a departmental governing committee to oversee the Department. The first committee was chaired by Professor James Fisher, who was to lead the Department in various capacities until 2002. Under his stewardship and later governing committee chairs the Department increased the diversity of its staffing profile with the appointment of Hlengiwe Mkhize, Anil Kanjee, Dr Mambwe Kasese-Hara, Thabani Sibanda, Dr Daleen Alexander, Oscar Modipa, Dr Vinitha Jithoo, and Kgamadi Kometsi. Mkhize later served as a commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Kanjee is currently the executive director of the National Education Quality Initiative (NEQI) at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC).
Unquestionably, the committee, the chair of which rotated periodically, acknowledged the transformational imperatives of South African psychology during the 1990s. Chairs of the committee included Gillian Eagle and Gill Straker. Under these rotational chairs, the Department sought to increase both black staff and student numbers and, building on the critical democratisation agendas of its middle years, expanded research and teaching content to the service needs of post-apartheid South Africa. Programmatically, this involved further customisations of general undergraduate curricula and post-graduate course content to the sequelae of apartheid and its aftermath. Perhaps the most visible showing of the Department’s commitment to producing psychologists equipped to engage the dynamic demands of a democratic South Africa was the initiation of an MA in Community-based Counselling (MACC) programme in 1999. Pedagogically, the Department committed itself to addressing the learning inequities resulting from apartheid education legislation through systematic capacitation and enrichment activities driven by Dr Yvonne Broom, Professor Charles Potter, Moira de Groot, Dr Kate Cockcroft and Dr Kirston Greenop, a development still being taken forward by current staff such as Gillian Haiden-Mooney and Peace Kiguwa.

The Department today (2000–2007)
In line with the University’s calls to restructure its departments and cohere common teaching and research visions into Schools, the Department was again restructured between 1999 and 2000. Accordingly, the Department of Psychology, together with the Departments of Social Work and Speech Pathology and Audiology were clustered together to form the School for Human and Community Development (SHCD). Within the School, the Department of Psychology continued to invest its considerable intellectual capital in ensuring the equity and transformation required for ongoing human and community development in the early years of the new millenium. From 2000 to 2002, Professor Brynton
Lykes was recruited to co-chair the Department alongside Professor Fisher. Her presence further consolidated the MACC programme and precipitated an increase in general publication across all tiers of staff. The research and clinical programmes also gained impetus with the appointments of Professors Norman Duncan, Gavin Ivey and Gillian Finchilescu between 2002 and 2005. Another layer of content expertise was added to the Department with the incorporation of the discipline of Specialised Education in 2006. Professor Duncan was installed as the first black head of Department in 2005 and promoted to the Head of School in 2007. Professor Gillian Eagle is the current head of what is currently a department as diverse in staff as it is in research scope, practice experience and pedagogical expertise.

Open Day
Professor Gill Eagle (Head of Psychology) &
Gill Haiden (Chair of the Teaching & Learning Committee)

Inauguration of the Umthombo Building
Vice-Chancellor, Professor L. Nongxa
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Staff and student equity

Against the background of institutionalised racism that characterised pre-1994 South Africa, the University initially, and the Department eventually, responded to the framework that became part of the law in the mid 1990s, compelling ‘designated employers’ to increase representivity in their staff profiles. This legal obligation, which culminated in the enacting of the Employment Equity Act of 1998, requires that measures be taken to redress the inequalities endemic to South African society. In keeping with its opposition to the discriminatory practices of the past, and its commitment to active staff participation in efforts to bring about social change, the Department has played a pivotal role in the introduction of a Transformation Portfolio within the School of Human and Community Development in 2006. The objective of this formation was to enliven the transformative imperatives within the School and its constituent Departments, and to ensure that the management of change within the School is owned by those it impacted. To this end, the Transformation Committee is represented in all the key committees in the School, and has managed to make transformation an integral part of the daily operations of the Department. In broad terms, the Department of Psychology has managed to exceed the equity targets set by the University for 2006 (30.4% black; 45.5% female), and reflects a 42% black staff component. White female staff members constitute 40% of the staff complement (Note: the Faculty of Humanities, of which the Department is part, reflects an over-representation of white females, with plans aimed at reducing this). While there is cause to celebrate these achievements, the challenge remains that blacks are under-represented in more senior positions, and the Department continues to face the constant risk of staff members from designated groups leaving the University. The institutional culture as it plays out within the University is believed to be an important ingredient in the mix of factors that culminate in the University’s failure to retain these recruits.
In spite of the popularity of psychology and the diversity of students at undergraduate levels, the representivity of students at postgraduate levels remains a challenge. In particular, most of the Department’s postgraduate programmes face the challenge of drawing sufficient numbers of black students and trainees from selection pools that are increasingly shrinking. This, in turn, affects the desired levels of diversity amongst postgraduate students. However, concerted efforts have been mounted by all student selection teams and the School management to deal with this challenge, and these have started paying off.

*Psychology Staff (2006)*
*Hugo Canham, Tanya Swart & Dr Kirston Greenop (in the foreground)*
Envisaging the future

Given the Department’s extraordinarily rich history, there can be little doubt that it will continue to occupy a key and critical position within South African psychology research, training and teaching. In the short-term, the Department will focus on increasing publication output, strategic networking, and maintaining its reputation as a leading training provider as well as producer of research that is context sensitive and internationally recognised. This will be facilitated by the fact that at Wits all the substantive fields of psychology (educational, clinical, general, industrial and counselling) are incorporated into one department offering holistic training and integrated research opportunities attuned to a transforming South Africa and globalised world. Furthermore, it will continue to actively pursue equity in both its staff and student complements. Together, these short-term strategic objectives will unquestionably drive the Department towards honouring its foundations and remaining an asset to, and an innovative force in, psychology, both nationally and internationally. Arguably, the current supportive and strife-free ambience characterising the Department, its increasingly diverse staff complement, as well as its increasing levels of research and publications bode well for these ambitions.

Student community training centre
Key figures formerly associated with the Department of Psychology

**Professor Julian Barling**
Co-author of *The Union and its Members: A Psychological Perspective* (1992) and one of the world’s leading scholars in the field of organisational behaviour, Professor Barling currently holds the research chair at the Queens School of Business, Canada.

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**Steve Bluen**
Steve Bluen is co-editor of *Behaviour in Organisations: South African Perspectives* (1986) and currently the Human Resources manager of South African Breweries (SAB).

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**Professor M. Brinton Lykes**
Brinton Lykes is the Associate Director of the Center for Human Rights and International Justice, Boston College.

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**Dr. Saths Cooper**
Saths Copper is the co-editor of *Psychology and Apartheid* (1990), past president of the Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA), Deputy-President of the International Union of Psychology Science (IUPsyS) and former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Durban-Westville.
Professor Anil Kanjee
Widely published, Anil Kanjee is the Executive Director of the National Education Quality Initiative (NEQI) at the Human Sciences Research Council.

Professor Arnold Lazarus
Arnold Lazarus originated the term *Behaviour Therapy* and went on to develop Multimodal Therapy which has been recognised as one of the most effective forms of cognitive-behaviour therapy. He is the recipient of the Distinguished Service Award of the American Board of Professional Psychology in 1982 and the Distinguished Psychologist Award of the Division of Psychotherapy of the American Psychological Association (APA) in 1992.

Professor I. D. MacCrone
MacCrone is the author of *Race Attitudes in South Africa: Historical, Experimental and Psychological Studies* (1957). He was the first head of Wits Department of Psychology. He served as Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand from 1963 to 1968.

Professor Jack Mann
Mann is the author of *Race Attitudes Today* (1964) and a long-standing chair of the Department of Psychology at Wits. He authored several widely-cited articles and served on the editorial board of the South African Journal of Psychology (SAJP).
Hlengiwe Mkhize
Mkhize was the first Director of Mental Health in the Department of Health in post-apartheid South Africa and a TRC commissioner. She is currently South Africa’s Ambassador to the Netherlands.

Professor Michael Saling
Globally renowned neuropsychologist and co-author of *An introduction to Luria’s Aphasiology: Theory and Application* (1992), Professor Saling is currently the Convenor of Australia’s first Professional Program in Clinical Neuropsychology at the University of Melbourne.

Professor Mark Solms
Solms is the co-author of *Clinical Studies in Neuro-Psychoanalysis: Introduction to a Depth Neuropsychology* (2001) and is currently completing the long-awaited revision to James Strachey’s translation of the *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*.

Professor Gill Straker
Gill Straker is the author of several seminal works on trauma and coined the now widely-accepted term, *continuous stress syndrome* (CSS). She wrote a very well received book, *Faces of the Revolution*, focusing on youth and their engagement in political violence. This book was also translated into German. She continues to be involved as an associate of the
Department and gave an invited address at the APA conference in 2006 on continuous traumatic stress, a formulation based on her earlier work in the Department. Professor Straker currently works as a consultant to Encompass Australasia and is a clinical professor in the medical faculty at Sydney University.

Mthetho Tshemese
A Clinton fellow, Tshemese is currently working as a senior researcher at the Nelson Mandela’s Children Fund.

Dr Oliver Turnbull
Turnbull is the co-editor of *An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Rehabilitation of the Neurological Patient: A Cognitive Perspective* (1996) and is a leading neuropsychologist. Professor Turnbull is currently also the deputy head of psychology at the University of Wales.

Professor Joseph Wolpe
Wolpe is the author of *Psychotherapy by Reciprocal Inhibition* (1958) and *The Practice of Behavior Therapy* (1969) and pioneer of systematic desensitisation and assertiveness training.

The information and photographic material contained in this brochure were collected and collated by B. Bowman, G. Eagle, N. Israel, and K. Kometsi.