PSYCHOLOGY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: PEOPLE-CENTRED DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

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Abstract. *In developing countries, psychology is faced with the challenge of providing knowledge and services that contribute to national development. However, opinions on how psychology can play a role in processes of rapid social change vary between psychologists of different persuasions. A short overview is presented of the various possible roles of psychology, congruent with different development paradigms. Adoption of a people centred development paradigm, which is based on people's participation and empowerment and which relies on people's local knowledge is proposed. Subsequently the Participatory Action Research approach is introduced as a social science paradigm congruent with a people centred approach. The main characteristics of the approach are discussed and examples are provided of Participatory Action Research in practice.*

INTRODUCTION.

Despite a general recognition that developing countries have been, and still are, grappling with a morass of socio-psychological problems related to rapid social change, psychology has largely remained outside the orbit of national development in the developing world (Moghaddam, 1990; Sloan, 1990; Nsamenang, 1993). However, during the last thirty-five years, some debate has been generated around the role and relevance of psychology in developing countries (Triandis, 1972; Jahoda, 1973; Korten, 1980; Blackler, 1983; Sinha, 1984; Ardilla, 1992; Van Vlaenderen, 1993). In these debates it is acknowledged that in developing countries, where resources are scarce, psychologists are faced with the challenge of providing knowledge and services that contribute to national development. However, opinions on how psychology can play a role in processes of rapid social change vary between psychologists of different persuasions.

This article does not aim to provide a detailed discussion of different psychological approaches towards national development. It attempts, however, to introduce the different approaches and to discuss one form of psychological practice, located within a particular development paradigm.

THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: A MATTER OF DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM.
The modernisation approach.
Traditionally, modernisation theories have provided the main development paradigm for psychological practice in developing countries. According to modernisation theories the lack of development of Third World countries is caused by the absence of certain conditions which are present in technologically advanced Western societies (Kindervatter, 1979). Development is regarded as a process of rapid economic growth through industrialisation, and the adoption of modern scientific approaches to agriculture (Sinha, 1983). As Oakly & Marsden (1985:5) write "Development strategies based on this traditional modernisation approach emphasise centralised planning and control over the distribution of resources. The focus is on providing infrastructure and institutions to facilitate the progression towards a Western model and to tackle obstacles on the way".

The earlier writings of Durganand Sinha (1973, 1984) and Harry Triandis (1972, 1984) are examples of psychological practice contextualised in a modernisation approach. In these texts, the change towards a Western model is valued and it is argued that people in the developing countries are impatient to catch up with the developed world during the span of a generation (Sinha, 1984:19). It is further argued that this involves telescoping change processes in traditional social institutions such as the existing patterns of social stratification and power mechanisms. It is acknowledged that this rapid social change can have both desirable and undesirable consequences. Sinha (1984) argues that the temporal compression and, often chaotic, nature of changes have caused conditions of instability that led to many socio-psychological problems. Changing levels of aspiration and increasing discrepancy between aspiration and achievement lead to job dissatisfaction, higher incidence of psychosomatic ailments, marginality and identity diffusion. Triandis (1972) lists commonly observed ill effects of rapid socio-economic development, such as increasing incidence of suicide, violence, riots, alcoholism, crime rate and delinquency, as well as a greater incidence of psycho-somatic ailments and problems of mental health.

Sinha (1983) argues that the psychologist's task in national development is three-fold: To analyse the factors conducive to desirable changes (facilitators); to analyse the factors that act as impediments to change (inhibitors); and to determine ways of avoiding or cushioning the psychological costs of rapid development.

A large body of psychological research in the context of national development focuses particularly on attitudes as impediments to change. Modernisation psychologists tend to look at how local attitudes and values differ from those required in "modern" society. Surveys on the presence or absence of "modern" attitudes amongst people in developing countries still are a major aspect of the role of psychology in national development. The result of such studies then are used as a basis for educational programmes intended to prepare people for the "take off" stage towards modernisation (Kagitcibasi, 1973; Williamson, 1982; Sinha, 1986).

Psychological practice within a modernisation approach has shortcomings. It provides little space for the expression, and constructive application of indigenous values,

knowledge and skills of developing communities, which deviate from the fixed goal of modernisation. It does not allow for creative dialogue between the psychologist and the local people and as a result the psychological intervention may lead to further alienation and the development of a negative self-perception among local people.

Dependency theories.

During the past four decades, development programmes world-wide have been evaluated. It was shown that they have failed to reduce poverty and lack of development. Large numbers of people in developing countries are still living in absolute poverty, deprived of the most basic resources (Oakley & Marsden, 1985; Korten, 1990; World Bank, 1992).

Recognition of the failure of development programmes, based on the modernisation approach, inspired the emergence of alternative development paradigms such as dependency theory. Dependency theorists criticise the top-down process of the modernisation approach and its accompanying presumption that people in developing countries are unable to meet their own needs. An historical analysis of the Third World situation, which emerged from the school of dependency theorists during the 1970s, asserts a causal relationship between the development of some countries and the parallel "underdevelopment" of others. According to dependency theorists, the underdevelopment problem can be attributed to the unequal power relationship between technologically advanced and Third World countries, rather than to Third World countries themselves (Frank, 1975; Hoogvelt, 1976; Harrison, 1982). Underdevelopment should be seen as a direct function of the development of the Western World, which relies heavily on large-scale exploitation of the Third World. The unequal relationships of international trade and investment are beneficial to the technologically advanced countries and detrimental to the Third World, and this creates a weak bargaining position for Third World countries, leading to dependency (Frank, 1975; Hoogvelt, 1976).

Goulet (quoted in Kindervatter, 1979:29) eloquently describes what he calls the "total trauma" that results from dependency. He says: "The trauma is total because the desire mechanisms of an entire population are altered before it possesses control over the social institutions which would enable it to gain effective use of resources needed to meet these new desires. Those who do not possess the resources or enjoy access to them understandably assist the development efforts of others only to the degree that such an activity enhances their own objectives. Since they are technologically and economically more powerful, transfers of resources, information and personnel consolidate the dominant position of the strong and further accentuate the dependency of the weak".

Concurrent with this alternative analysis of development in developing countries, the concept of development obtained a different meaning. Dependency theorists argue that different countries may pursue different goals, depending on their own values (Hoogvelt, 1976). According to Goulet (quoted in Kindervatter 1979) development is not a cluster of benefits given to people in need, but rather a process by which a nation acquires a greater mastery over its own destiny. Development involves overcoming internal and external dependency, caused by relationships with technologically advanced countries.

Relatively little psychological work has been inspired by the dependency theory. Its main concern of political empowerment of the grassroots people did not appeal to psychologists, whose training prepared them to focus on the "individual", rather than on large groups and on healing rather than on struggle. However, psychologists who worked within the dependency theory paradigm, were using their skills to assist people in political activism towards gaining more political and economical power. This involved activities ranging from therapeutic practices encompassing political analyses of the clients' position in society to assistance with group mobilisation as part of political struggle.

The people centred development approach.
During the eighties, the "people/human-centred" development approach, which takes cognisance of the dependency theories, gained popularity. It acknowledged the notion of power differentials between the First and Third world, introduced by the dependency approach. However, it criticised the dependency theory for its overemphasis on economic and political factors and its lack of consideration of global and local ecological constraints. It argued for a definition of "quality of life", which is not solely defined in terms of economic wealth and it emphasised the importance of voluntary grassroots movements for local development.

Two sets of authors, who come from different parts of the world, provide insights into this approach. David Korten (1990), who worked extensively in the Philippines, employs the word "people-centred development" to capture his view on equity-led sustainable development. He argues that "growth-centred" development, which is characteristic of the modernisation and, to a certain extent, also of the dependency approach, puts economic growth ahead of people and the ecology on which their well-being depends. He proposes an alternative development vision in which the wellbeing of people and the living systems of the planet, that is their home, come first. He defines development as "a process by which the members of society increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilise and manage resources to produce sustainable and justly distributed improvements in their quality of life, consistent with their own aspirations" (Korten, 1990:67). The above definition emphasises the process of development and its essential focus on personal and institutional capacity. It encompasses the principles of sustainability, justice and inclusiveness. It acknowledges that only the people themselves can define what they consider to be improvements in the quality of their lives.

Max-Neef, Elizalde & Hopenhayn (1989) who have a collaborative endeavour, linking researchers across Latin America, use the term "human scale development". Human scale development is based on the satisfaction of fundamental human needs and on the generation of growing levels of self-reliance. Adherents of the human scale development emphasise the construction of an organic articulation of people with nature and technology. They argue for a symbiosis of global processes with local activity and for combining personal with social needs. They further promote a balance between central planning and autonomy and between powers of civil society with the state.

In putting the people centred approach into practice several problems have been identified. Its heavy reliance on grassroots voluntary associations for change is one of them. Experience has shown that such associations are fairly easily mobilised for protests around issues of common concern. However sustained effort towards development targets are more difficult to sustain in voluntary organisations, where no immediate monetary or other rewards are provided. Second, the people centred approach is based on the assumption that people in developing countries value sustainability over rapid economic advancement. Up to date little evidence of this has been recorded.

Psychologists working within the people-centred paradigm see their task as facilitators and capacity builders in a process that is informed and managed by the communities they work with and which is geared at their empowerment. Their work includes: Teaching local people basic research and problem solving skills to enhance their capacity to deal with the development process in their everyday situations; facilitating the formation and functioning of organisations; and enhancing gender sensitivity in society.

Psychological practice within the people centred approach has revealed, however, that communities are not homogenous and that power differentials do not only exist between national and local levels, but also within local communities between gender groups, class groups etc. Facilitating local communities as if they have a common goal and vision has proven to be a fallacy.

The role of psychology.
The above overview of the main development paradigms provides a framework against which the different possible roles for psychology in service of national development can be cast.

The modernisation approach presumes an acceptance of the superiority of Western values and an undertaking to assist people in obtaining a Western lifestyle and worldview. As such, it requires an alliance of the psychologist with the state organs of the developing country and with the foreign developer. People are considered as passive receptors of an imposed development process. In striving to adjust people to a foreign imposed change, the psychologist's task is remedial rather than pro-active and, is focussed on the individual rather than on communities and groups.

Psychologists adhering to a dependency approach, or a people-centred approach, do not accept Western values as a necessary model for developing countries and they recognise the pivotal significance of political and economic power differentials in the development process. They see their role as facilitator and capacity builder of local communities in their endeavour to take charge of their own development according to their own values. They embrace a conflict model and consider working with power struggles at national level and at local levels (within communities) as central to their work. They reject the notion of the "value free scientist" and acknowledge their political bias in their work.

A shortcoming of psychological practice within the dependency and people centred approach is the lack of an appropriate research paradigm, and research techniques that

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prepare psychologists for the kind of group and activist work required. Psychologists, attempting to work within a people centred approach, have often been torn between abandoning psychological practice to become activists and abandoning the activist approach to return to a more traditional psychological practice.

KEY CONCEPTS IN A PEOPLE CENTRED DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM.
In this article an argument is made for the need of more psychological work within a people-centred development approach. For such approach to succeed, local people need to be empowered to participate in their development process. This requires a capacity building process based on their local knowledge and resources. What follows is an elaboration on the concepts participation, empowerment, capacity building and local knowledge, and how these impact on psychological practice and research.

Participation.
There is an abundance of literature on the notion of participation in development (Kelly & Van Vlaenderen, 1996). A full treatise of the different interpretations of participation and their importance for development lies beyond the scope of this paper. However, analysis of several authoritative definitions of participation reveals that the core component of participation is decision making (Cohen and Uphoff, 1977; Oakley and Marsden, 1985; Mathur, 1986; Rajakutty, 1991). People participate to the extent that they choose cognitively, affectively and physically to engage in identifying, planning, establishing, implementing and evaluating national and local development programmes. As such, participation can be regarded as a decision making process, occurring at the individual and social level. According to Shaeffer (1994) participation involves the assumption of responsibility in considering the rationale, implications and potential outcomes of development endeavours.

In order for people to make the necessary decisions with regards to their own development they need to be empowered to do so.

Capacity building for empowerment.
Swift and Levin (1987:cf p72) believe that empowerment refers simultaneously to the phenomenological development of a certain state of mind (feeling powerful, competent, worthy of esteem) and to the modification of structural conditions in order to re-allocate power (e.g. modifying the society's opportunity structure). In other words, empowerment refers to a subjective experience and the objective reality and is both a process and a goal (Yeich & Levine, 1992).

At the macro-level and the meso-level, empowerment can be defined in terms of group possession of actual social influence, political power and legal rights (Swift and Levin, 1987:72). It relates to people's power with respect to access and control of the national resources necessary to protect their livelihood (Mathur, 1986; Yeich & Levine, 1992). According to Shaeffer(1994), empowerment means that communities become more explicit in asserting rights and responsibilities in determining the direction of their own development. This power is real, formal and legitimate.

At the individual level empowerment conveys a psychological sense of personal control or influence (Zimmerman, 1990). For empowerment to take place, two interrelated changes are required. First, people, individually or in groups, must develop a greater

sense of self worth, self confidence, self reliance and a recognition of the value of their own skills and resources. This implies less dependence on external inputs and wisdom and greater pride in the significance and validity of personal and collective knowledge and experience. Second, there must be a change in people's perceptions of their relations with other people and with the institutions that define their social world. This change involves both an understanding of how the broad social world has defined their lives and the potential they have for more actively influencing their own environment. Together these changes make people feel they can determine their own needs and have the right and ability to change their world so that it is more responsive to these needs (Vanderslice, 1984:2).

There is a dialectical relationship between empowerment and participation. People need to have the capacity and the power to participate in decision making, at the same time they need opportunities to participate in decision making in order to build capacity and to empower themselves (Prestby, Wandersman, Florin, Rich & Chavis, 1990). Van Vlaenderen & Gilbert (1993) argue that through involvement in a variety of development activities, people can gain more knowledge, learn better practice and end with a greater awareness of the problems that exist, the causes behind these problems and in some cases their possible solutions.

It is clear from the above discussion, that empowerment is not a condition which can be bestowed by one group on another, but is, rather, an ongoing process by which the dis-empowered seek to fulfil their own needs and preserve their own rights (Swift & Levin, 1987). True empowerment needs to be facilitated rather than imposed on people. This involves building individual and group capacity in local people, so that they can empower themselves to fully participate in decision-making processes that influence their lives. Van Vlaenderen & Gilbert (1993) argue that the task of the psychologist in a capacity building process for empowerment is multifaceted. It requires facilitation of an analytical process with local people, in which they can articulate their needs, knowledge, skills and resources. It also involves assistance with the establishment of local community networks and the strengthening of local leadership, who can take responsibility for development issues. In building capacity the psychologist needs to impart local people with human resource and problem solving skills and needs to create an enabling environment to practice the newly acquired skills. Enabling environment is defined here as an environment, which allows for errors to be made without disastrous effects and which enables continued evaluation. Lastly, it requires mediation of a process in which the different role players in the development process (the local people and the different development agencies) bring their views together.

Local knowledge as the basis of empowerment.
An important aspect of empowerment is the acknowledgement of people's local knowledge. In the context of development, people's knowledge has at times been referred to as indigenous knowledge (Brokenshaw, Warren & Werner, 1980), rural people's knowledge and local knowledge (Chambers, 1985). In the cognitive psychology literature the term everyday cognition or situated cognition has been most popular. Vygotsky (1978) pioneered the situated cognition approach by contending that in order to understand people one has to look at cognition within actual everyday life. Authors such as Rogoff (1984), Lave(1988) and Cole(1995) have worked extensively within the field of everyday cognition.

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In this article, local knowledge is used as a general term for the situated knowledge of ordinary people, including the concepts indigenous knowledge, rural people's knowledge and everyday knowledge.

Local knowledge is the common sense wisdom that comes from everyday life rather than formal learning. It arises from practical activity with others in a particular socio-historical -cultural context and is constantly changing. It contains knowledge on what is, or exists, as well as on how things are done (Gilbert & Van Vlaenderen, 1995). It refers to the whole system of knowledge, including concepts, beliefs and perceptions, the stock of knowledge and the process whereby it is acquired, augmented, stored and transmitted (Gengaje & Setty, 1991).).

Local knowledge is essential for empowerment in a people-centred development approach because it represents successful ways in which people have dealt with their environment in the past and provides a basis to build on. Korten (1980) argues that local people have well established systems and carefully developed methods, which over many years allowed them to survive in very harsh conditions. Local knowledge thus can serve as a guiding force for the local community's behaviour and help in shaping their mental maps. Building on local knowledge and resources reduces the likelihood that a development intervention will "de-skill" the local people and increase their dependency on external experts (Korten, 1980). On the contrary it empowers local people by increasing their self-reliance.

Using people's local knowledge as an inspiration for the development process does, however, not imply an uncritical acceptance of all local knowledge as "good knowledge" and a rejection of all external knowledge (i.e the knowledge that is brought to the development process by the development agency) as inferior knowledge. There are many examples of the shortcomings of local knowledge as well as of external knowledge with respect to their usefulness in development (Chambers, 1985). What is argued for here, is the need to start valuing local knowledge as an important knowledge source for the development process. A balanced development process should involve an assessment of the relative strengths and weaknesses of outsiders' and local people's knowledge, and should attempt to combine the strengths and neutralise the weaknesses (Chambers, 1985).

Psychologists can play an important part in this process They can facilitate a process in which local people explicate their local knowledge as a group, thereby re-building their confidence in the value of their own knowledge and cognitive abilities. Simultaneously, they may expose the prejudices of development professionals about the cognitive and other capacities (or rather their perceptions of the lack of capacities) of local people. They can also mediate between local knowledge, which is highly contextualised and specific and expert knowledge, which is formalised, abstracted and refers to general laws, in order to bridge the gap that exists between these two cognitive frameworks. This involves the creation of an environment in which both types of knowledge can merge. It requires the facilitation of initial communication channels between expert and local groups, based on equality and mutual respect. Gilbert (1995) argues that it also involves the facilitation of joint activities for developer and local community which allows

for the emergence of shared goals, the construction of a shared knowledge base and which will lead to further joint practice.

THE NEED FOR PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH.
The task of the psychologist within the above sketched framework is one of facilitator and capacity builder rather than of traditional researcher and trainer. This requires a re-orientation of values and the application of strategies, which differ from those, used by the traditional professional psychologists. This re-orientation has been operationalised by a group of social scientists in, what has come to be known as, Participatory Action Research (PAR). This term may mislead the novice into believing that it simply refers to a new research methodology or paradigm. However it is argued that PAR refers to a holistic approach to social science practice..

Participatory Action Research has arisen mainly out of the experience of developing countries (Maguire, 1987); and has been influenced by three movements. The people-centred approach towards development assistance, which has been elaborated above, is one of them.

A second movement is based on Paolo Freire's (1972) conscientisation approach to adult education. According to Freire, conscientisation is the basic aim of adult education. He sees conscientisation as a process of dialogue, which enables the individual to transform him or herself in relation to his fellows and to act critically towards him or herself and society. It is a process of learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality. The process of conscientisation, therefore, involves the active participation of the people in transforming themselves by engaging in a dialogue through which they identify their problems, reflect on why the problem exists and then take action to solve the problem. He advances a formula of dialogue in which teachers and students collaborate in exploring together new questions and new alternatives, rather than a situation in which the teacher as a narrator encourages dependency of the student upon the teacher.

A third influence came from a debate within social science practice in developing countries which challenged the compatibility of the dominant social science paradigm, the traditional social research methods, and the role of the researcher, with the development needs and problems of Third World societies (Walters, 1983). Orlando Fals-Borda (1981), one of the early forces within the Participatory Action Research approach, contended that the basic premise of PAR, is a conception of science which departs from the usual academic presumptions. From this departing vision, action researchers start their work and establish their social and political commitment. He criticises the community of western specialised scientists, which have attempted to monopolise the idea of what is science and what is scientific methodology and what is not. He argues that, as a rule, this community defends the interests of the dominant classes of the societies to which it belongs. The emergent paradigm (subversive science or popular science) may, by combining theory and practice (participation) in one permanent bundle into praxis, produce radical changes in society for the benefit of social classes which are victims of exploitation and oppression (1981:57)

According to Walters (1983), what binds people involved in PAR together, is their shared dissatisfaction with the existing social order, a commitment to improving the social

conditions of the poor, and a commitment to a research and education process which involves the active participation of local people.

Within this framework, PAR can be defined as a three-pronged process involving social investigation with the full and active participation of the local community in the entire process, an educational process of mobilisation for development and a means of taking action for development (Greenwood, Whyte & Harkory, 1993; Van Vlaenderen, 1993). As such, it aims at three types of change, namely, the development of a critical consciousness of the people involved in development, an improvement in their life conditions and a transformation of the social structure in which they operate (Maguire, 1987). The following features characterise PAR process (Van Vlaenderen & Nkwinti, 1993):

- PAR is a method of social investigation of problems, involving participation of ordinary people in problem posing and solving. Throughout the PAR process, including the identification phase, the data gathering and analysis process, the use and dissemination of the results, full participation by all those involved is required. Investigation is demystified by involving people in deciding what to investigate, which questions to ask, how to gather information and how to organise and use information.
- PAR is a collective process. It is argued that collective inquiry builds group ownership of information as people move from being mere objects to acting as subjects of their own investigation process.
- An analysis of the local community history forms the basis for any PAR-intervention. The researcher plays a catalyst role in the process of tapping local knowledge, indigenous technologies, survival skills and resources, which serve as a foundation for the development of an appropriate action plan.
- PAR relies and builds on the capacity and legitimacy of local community organisations.
- PAR combines investigation with education. The researcher assists people to further develop skills in collecting, analysing and utilising information. However, in her role of educator, the researcher is regarded as only one of the contributors in the investigation and problem solving process. She is continually informed and educated by the people she works with and by the process.
- In PAR the combination of data gathering, education, action and evaluation provides a direct link between research activity and problem solving (development). The direct link between research and action is perhaps the most unique aspect of PAR. Combining the creation of knowledge about social reality with concrete action on reality removes the traditional research dichotomy between knowing and doing. The important point is that those involved in the production of knowledge are involved in the decision making regarding its use and application to their daily lives.

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH IN PRACTICE.

It can be gleaned from the above section that Participatory Action Research requires a strong commitment from the researcher to certain socio-political ideals and to participatory methods and principles. In practice, these methods and principles are operationalised in a variety of ways and depending on the real life circumstances are more or less successful in achieving the ideals of participation and empowerment. In order to illustrate this and to highlight the constraints and problems related to the practice of PAR, two examples are provided from the author's involvement in development work. It

is important to note that the cases discussed below have been abbreviated due to the scope of the paper.

Village profiles: The use of self-surveys for development planning.

This example refers to my involvement in a two year project that aimed at conducting a participatory needs analysis of development needs in the Alpha District (the identity of the District has been concealed to ensure confidentiality) in the Eastern Cape region of South Africa (see Van Vlaenderen & Gilbert, 1993). The Project formed part of a larger Educational Research Project, which was based at the Psychology Department at Rhodes University and which was run by a team of three researchers, including myself.

To enable the reader to understand the dynamics of the process that took place in this Project, it is important to provide some background information and to describe the chronology of the process.

The case.

The Alpha District consists of fourteen villages. The villagers make a distinction between the East and the West part of the District. This is partially due to the topography and natural transport routes of the area, which limits communication between the two. It is also accentuated because the East historically acted as a link to the outside world. As a result of these and other factors, different dynamics exist across the villages.

In July 1990 we were invited to a meeting in the Alpha District, at which we were requested by a donor organisation and the local Alpha District Trust to conduct a needs analysis in all the villages of the District. It was explained to us that, a needs analysis was required to identify and prioritise the development needs of the area, in order to access funds, which had been set aside for the District. We were also informed that the communities in the District were interested in a needs analysis.

On 4 August 1990, we were invited to address a meeting of the Umbrella Body of the Alpha District Residents' Association (which included all the villages), to discuss the needs analysis. The meeting decided that individual villages should take the initiative to invite us to conduct the research in their community, if they deemed it necessary. We were approached by the village of Umzekelo. The Umzekelo community argued that their needs were greater than those of the other villages, since they were the only resettlement village and their facilities were the most basic. Extensive discussions between ourselves, and the local Residents' Association Committee of Umzekelo led to the design of a basic socio-economic survey. The Committee brainstormed the different areas of village life in which needs and problems were encountered and with our assistance devised a questionnaire which addressed those issues. The local youth league administered the questionnaires to every household and we analysed the questionnaires, and prepared a preliminary report, which was taken back to the committee for discussion and amendments. A final draft was eventually returned to the community in English and Xhosa. The Residents' Association Committee organised a community meeting at which they presented the report.

In September 1990, we contacted the Chairperson of the Umbrella Body of the Alpha District to enquire about progress in the other villages, as there was no word from any of

them. He informed us that we should start work in all villages, since approval for collaboration had been obtained at the general meeting earlier in the year.

During our visits to the different villages, it became clear that the District did not consist of a coherent community and that the perceptions towards our role and involvement in the area were different amongst the villages. Eventually we worked in eleven of the fourteen villages. Three villages indicated a lack of interest in the Project. Eight of the eleven villages, which constituted Alpha West, indicated that they wanted to work as a group under the umbrella of an Alpha West Forum. The chairpersons and secretaries of the Residents' Committees of those eight villages formed the Alpha West Forum and received a mandate from their villages to represent them in the Project.

A process of collaboration between ourselves, and the Forum ensued. During a first workshop with the Forum, the needs, resources and skills of the communities were brainstormed. It was identified that additional information was needed from the communities to establish what the specific and general needs were for each of the villages. The use of a survey was suggested by one of the Forum members. He mentioned that a questionnaire had been used in one of the other villages in the District earlier in the year (the Umzekelo village). After discussion, the Forum accepted the need for a survey. It was also established that, based on the survey data, a development plan for the Alpha West District should be devised. We argued that the Forum would need to possess the capacity to deal with this process of doing research and developing development strategies. The Forum members responded that they would find two people in each of their communities, who would be willing and had the time to take part in the Forum to replace them, since as Resident's Association Committee members they did not have the necessary time to carry the process. New members were mandated by the communities to take part in the Forum. Subsequently, several workshops were held which dealt with the content and the format of the questionnaire. Our role was to facilitate this process by eliciting ideas, critically evaluating suggestions and providing advice when requested. There was lively debate on the kind of information required, the type of questions that needed to be asked and how these needed to be formulated. Eventually a final draft of the questionnaire was compiled in the group and we (the Project team) subsequently typed and duplicated it (since we had access to the required technical facilities). The questionnaire forms were then returned to the Forum members of each of the villages, who called community meetings in their villages to explain the aim of the questionnaire and the procedure for completing the forms. The youth organisation of each of the villages conducted the survey and the Forum members brought the questionnaires back to a workshop for analysis. In the workshop we explained how questionnaires are analysed and subsequently we jointly (Forum members and ourselves) analysed all the questionnaires in a series of workshops. We discussed the format of the reports and decided on how the village profiles should be presented. The reports were finalised and printed by ourselves and returned to the Forum members for scrutiny and amendments before a final copy was produced.

During the same period, surveys were conducted in the three villages, which did not form part of the Alpha West Forum. Due to a lack of interest, a less participatory process enfolded and the questionnaires developed by the Alpha West Forum were administered by the youth leagues of the three villages, after which we analysed the data, wrote the reports and presented those to the villages.

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In a round of village meetings, to which we were invited as guests, in all eight villages of Alpha West, the Forum reported back on the research. During those gatherings the idea arose to organise a conference at which all the villages would present their village profile to invited guests from local and international NGO and donor organisations.

From September onwards the Alpha West Forum, and ourselves, started to prepare for the conference. Several subcommittees were formed to deal with different aspects of the Conference, such as administration, catering, programme and funding. These subcommittees met on their own or with us, when they required assistance. Whenever our input was requested, we organised a meeting in which we could workshop the issues that posed problems to the committees and come to solutions.

On 9 November, the Alpha West Forum ran the Conference in one of their villages. Several national and international development agencies attended. After presentations by the villages of their profiles and development needs and introductions by the development agencies, discussion took place on how the development agencies could get involved in the area. The Conference marked the end of our formal involvement with Alpha District. However, further informal contact revealed that as a result of the conference a water development scheme was introduced and several other NGOs had plans for further involvement.

Successes and shortcomings.
The Alpha District Project managed to approach the ideals of a Participatory Action Research approach in several ways.

It combined *data gathering* on development needs with informal *training* and *action.* In order to collect data, the Forum was trained in conducting a survey and in order to use the data for action (through the conference) the forum was trained in skills necessary to organise the conference.

The process relied on *the local knowledge* of the people. The areas focused on in the questionnaires, and the wording of the questions were largely determined by the Forum members as a result of discussions and workshops, facilitated by us.

The process relied on *local leadership and local organisations*. The Alpha West Forum devised the questionnaires and prepared for the conference and the local youth leagues administered the questionnaires.

The workshops, which led to the development of the questionnaire, enabled *communal analysis* of the development issues in the Alpha West District.

The conference enabled the District to make contact with important role players in the development field and gave the villagers a feeling of *empowerment* and prospects for the improvement in their living conditions.

The local people participated in the *management* of the Project. They made the majority of decisions about the research process, including the survey, the conference and the need for workshops.

However, several shortcomings can be identified the PAR process.

The process in which we engaged was *ended* because we had no further funds to extend our work with them. This may have resulted in a lack of sustainability of the process they had embarked on and eventually led to feelings of disempowerment

Although we aimed to work with the communities in all the villages, we mainly interacted with the Alpha West Forum, and relied on them to report back to their entire communities. This implies that we worked with a very *specific subgroup*, namely those who had most power and most education and who were predominantly men. As a result concerns of other, less powerful subgroups may not have been captured in the process.

Although we worked together with the Forum to develop and analyse the reports, we took the rough data analysis of the questionnaires with us to refine them and to prepare the reports. When we brought the reports back, there was a feeling of *"disownership"* of the reports by the Forum members. They had difficulty making the connection between the analytical data they compiled and the reports we prepared on the basis of that data. We had failed to build their capacity in all the aspects of the research process. A lot of effort was needed to bring the reports "back" to the community.

A picture of the village: The use of video for development.
This example refers to the same Project in the Alpha District in the Eastern Cape region of South Africa, and focuses on the Project team's work with the Umzekelo village (see Van Vlaenderen & Nkwinti, 1993; Van Vlaenderen, 1999). What follows is a chronology of the process that enfolded at Umzekelo.

The case.
During our involvement in Umzekelo, discontent arose concerning our research. At one of our meetings in the village, the chairperson of the local Residents' Association indicated that the villagers had doubts about the effectiveness of the survey for their development. He argued that for us, and for the outside world in general, to really grasp the problems and strengths of the community, they would have to "take a look" at how the people in the village lived. After further discussion, a suggestion came from a member of the Residents' Association to produce a video to "show" the community's problems and strengths. He said that he had seen such a video recording of village life before and that it looked really good. It was decided at the meeting that the Residents' Association would write a scenario for the video and that we would provide the technical assistance (providing the equipment and doing the filming). Subsequently a large community meeting was held at which the "Umzekelo Video Project" was presented to the whole village for approval. The project met with general enthusiasm and a date was set for the actual filming.

The filming was regarded as an important event in the village and throughout the process a large group of villagers were present. The majority of the filming was done by a professional camera man engaged by us. Under his guidance, several villagers made a go at filming. We subsequently took the video film with us for minor editing, mainly involving the grouping together of similar issues.

A "45 minute" video was produced, which took the shape of a series of interviews. The chairperson of the Residents' Association assumed the role of reporter, who interviewed key people from the various sectors of the community. The video followed the structure of a guided tour of the village, which put the interviews into context. The tour included visits to the following:

- the defunct primary health care clinic;
- the communal gardens;
- The village water tap;
- a villager's zinc house;
- the village communal land;
- small business projects (pig-, chicken- and sewing and knitting project);
- the youth choir and soccer association.

In the interviews, information about and problems and successes related to the above issues were presented. The video concludes with a speech by the chairperson, on various aspects of village life in Umzekelo and community members added input in order to reinforce or expand on the chairperson's words.

Four weeks after the filming, the team returned with the edited version and the necessary equipment to screen the video film (the village did not possess electricity, nor a television and video recorder).

A large section of the community gathered in the church hall to view the video film and the first viewing met with emotional response, especially from those people who saw themselves on the screen. There were requests for a second and third viewing, followed by a lively discussion amongst the villagers. They felt that the circumstances in which they were living were well reflected in the video and they believed that it would be a great help in negotiating development assistance for the village. Initial plans were made to form working groups around the different issues portrayed in the video. In the late afternoon, as the time arrived for us to leave (with our equipment), there was a feeling of disappointment amongst the community, who indicated a desire to have several more viewings that day. However, it was agreed that additional viewings of the video could be arranged at a later stage. We left two copies of the video film with the villagers and arranged for a next meeting to proceed with the research.

In our later involvement with Umzekelo the video proved to be beneficial. As a result of the production of the video, the community had developed confidence for action and several activities were initiated. Working committees were formed around issues such as transport, chicken projects and health care. The people, who had been involved in these issues in the past, but who had been discouraged because of the lack of facilities and problems, had been given the opportunity to present their issues to the community at large in a medium of their choice (the video). As part of the discussions following the viewing of the video, these people invited others to join them, and form working committees to revive their projects or to deal with the problems related to them.

The possession of a copy of the video provided the Residents' Association with the confidence to approach a donor agency for funds for their projects. The community took the initiative to contact donor agencies, invited their representatives to the village and

presented them with a copy of the video, accompanied by project proposals for several community projects. Some of the projects were subsequently funded.

Some members of the Residents' Association volunteered to set up an action committee to liase between the village and the local government with regards to water issues. The video, which showed villagers struggling uphill with wheelbarrows to carry water to their houses, had provided the villagers with a powerful picture of their plight. The action committee presented the local government with a demand for taps in the streets close to their homes. The research team was not involved in this activity, but was updated about the progress made by the action committee.

The production of the video also led to the resolution of a community dispute. There had been a long-standing disagreement on the use of some communal land outside the village between the women and men in the community. The men wanted to use the land to build a school, but the women objected, because they felt the school would be too far away and therefore not safe for their children. The production of the video had encouraged the women to re-open debate on the issue and to ask us to act as mediators during the discussions. This was accepted by the community, and a series of meetings of the different stakeholders was organised. It was resolved to allocate the land for grazing purposes.

Success and shortcomings.
In looking at the Umzekelo video project through the lens of a Participatory Action Research approach some successes and shortcomings can be identified.

The production of the video stimulated a *communal process* of analysing and prioritising development issues by the villagers. In writing the scenario, the various issues of importance were identified, analysed and agreed upon. Through the compilation of an interview schedule, these issues were analysed. The viewing of the video and subsequent discussions by the community assisted further in the joint analysis and prioritising of the community's development issues.

The *data gathering process was connected to an action process and to a certain degree of empowerment* The video production was a data collection and analysis process as well as a tool for planning and action. The video film led to the setting up of committees, which developed project proposals and elicited funds. It also led to negotiations with the government. It was empowering in the sense that it opened up communication channels with the outside world and that it enhanced the community's chances of improving the material conditions in the village.

The research process tapped into the *local knowledge* of the people. The scenario for the video and the interview schedule were put together by the Residents' Association Committee. This ensured that a local perspective and local categories were used for the compilation of the scenario of the video.

The process relied on *local leadership and local organisations*. The chair of the Residents' Association conducted the interviews and the Residents' Association committee was responsible for the scenario.

The local community was involved in the *management of the project*. It was the Residents' Association, which decided on the production of the video and the setting up of working groups to develop projects. Community meetings were held to ratify decisions made by de Residents' Association.

However, in an attempt to operationalise the PAR ideals into the real life situation of Umzekelo several problems were encountered.

Similar to the previous case, we mainly interacted with the Residents' Association Committee and relied on them to report back to the entire community. This implies that we worked with a very *specific subgroup* of the village and as a result concerns of other, less powerful subgroups may not have been captured in the process.

Similar to the previous case, the process in which we engaged was *prematurely ended* because we had no further funds to extend our work with them. At a stage in which we had started to build capacity in the committees to develop development plans we had to abandon them. This may have resulted in a lack of sustainability of the process they had embarked on and eventually led to feelings of disempowerment

The community's lack of technical facilities to film, edit and show the video, independent from us, created a sense of dependency and *disempowerment*. After the filming, the product was taken away, to be returned only several weeks later (in a slightly different form due to editing) and could only be viewed at our discretion. In a sense we had jeopardised the participatory process by maintaining rigid divides in skills between ourselves (technical experts with regards to the video) and the community (providers of the content of the video). This endangered the organic nature of the data collection and action process. Whereas the video production had been an empowering and fruitful process, the product of the process was disappointing.

Some challenges for a Participatory Action Researcher.
As a researcher aspiring to a PAR paradigm I am encountering several dilemmas which I want to pose as a challenge to other fellow participatory researchers

As a researcher I am continuously torn between allegiances to those who pay my fees, the communities I am working with and my own personal and political conviction. My dependence on financial support also sometimes forces me to disengage prematurely from the communities I am working with.

I often feel limited in my endeavour to facilitate empowerment in the communities I am working with, because as a psychologist, my skills are confined to building human/skills capacity in the community. I do not have the means to facilitate the enhancement in material capacity, which is the other essential component in the empowerment process. At times enhancing people's political analysis of a situation and people's skills, without facilitating access to material improvements in their lives has led to a feeling of disempowerment in the communities and myself.

It is difficult as a participatory researcher to combine the roles of facilitator, catalyst, capacity builder and researcher. Communities tend to classify the researcher in a

particular category (usually those of trainer) which often limits one's other roles (those of facilitator).

As an outsider in a community it is often difficult to gain access to all the different stakeholders and sub groups in the community. Gatekeepers usually attempt to confine the researcher to the elites of the community. As a result the most disempowered community members may not have their voice heard in the participatory process.

CONCLUSION.
In this paper an argument was made for a psychological practice in function of national development within a people centred development approach. The Participatory Action Research Paradigm, suggested as the model for psychological practice, argues that in order to contribute to national development, it is important to engage in a participatory process with people in order to generate new knowledge and skills, which will enable them to improve their living conditions and to enhance their quality of life.

This is in contrast to the current changes in the profession of psychology in South Africa, which are geared at producing mid-level psychologists, which are trained in practical counsellors techniques with the aim of executing highly structured intervention models. I believe that there is a need for a different, more exploratory and generative approach to deal with the psycho-social problems of South Africa. This approach demands a different type of training.

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