This essay is an update on the journey so far of one of the Unisa Department of Psychology’s flagship projects – the People behind the Papers project. For those who are unfamiliar with the project, its aim is to interview a wide cross-section of South African social science researchers in order to capture the human element in research and publication. The purpose is to demystify the professional and personal processes that go into the production of academic knowledge. The project moves beyond the theoretical confines of methodology textbooks to help define, discover and represent the uniquely South African and African traditions in social science research (Butler, 2012). The project features an online space – http://peoplebehindthepapers.co.za – that provides an authentic view of the unique research milieu within South African social science research via interviews with authors of published research who are based in South Africa, as well those who are in the diaspora. The project is also shared with other academics through presentations at conferences, with the latest presentation having taken place at the European Congress of Psychology that was held in Sweden in July 2013. In addition to the online space, it is envisioned that some transcripts will also be published in book form.

With the enthusiasm of the team, the project has grown to include two related projects, which are: ‘People behind the Dissertations’ and ‘People behind the people behind the papers’. The latter is a conversation among publishers and editors who play a big role in publishing the work of ‘people behind the papers’. ‘People behind the Dissertations’ provides a platform for young and aspiring scholars to tell the story of their journey from identifying a research topic to submitting a dissertation, which may include deciding on the research design, choosing a supervisor, support systems and so forth. These young scholars share inspiring stories about the challenges they faced in order to complete their dissertations and theses. Among those interviewed
so far are Puleng Segalo who is a lecturer in the Department of Psychology at the University of South Africa, Jenni Reynolds, Ruchelle Barker and Tabea Tsheole, who are alumni of the Masters in Research Consultation (Marc) programme at the University of South Africa.

In an interview with Fana Simelane, also an alumni of the Marc programme, he tells a story of how the death of his mother spurred him to study hard for his exams and how he used what he was taught in psychology classes to cope with the tragic news of his mother’s passing. In another interview, Puleng Segalo tells Desmond Painter about the joys and challenges of studying in South Africa and the United States, and how her experiences as a postgraduate student paralleled, in surprising ways, to her career as a model.

Nineteen interviews have been conducted with prominent South African psychology academics since the inception of the project. Most of those interviewed work at South African universities or research institutes, but some are based in countries such as Australia, the United States and China. Some of the prominent individuals interviewed include Kopano Ratele, Peace Kiguwa, Mary van der Riet, Martin Terre Blanche, Tony Naidoo, Desmond Painter, Kevin Durrheim, Grahame Hayes, Colin Tredoux, Leswin Laubscher, Mzikazi Nduna, Anthony Collins, Christopher Sonn to name but a few.

To date, eight interviews with developing scholars from different universities in South Africa have been conducted.

The Third Southern African Students’ Psychology Conference, held at the University of the Witwatersrand in June 2013, provided an opportunity for further conversations with South African scholars. Professors Brendon Barnes and Sumaya Laher, both from the University of the Witwatersrand, shared their academic journey and how it impacts on their personal lives. Fana Simelane, Constance Mabela and Tamaryn Nicholson took the audience through their journey and what it meant for them to graduate with Masters and Doctoral degrees. Editors and editorial members
of South African journals in psychology, Anthony Pillay, Eduard Fourie, Peace Kiguwa, Kobus Maree and Gert Roodt engaged with the audience during a panel discussion on whether ‘publishing your work is as scary as it seems’.

By the end of the 2013 academic year we envision three more conversations with contributors in the field of psychology. With the amount of work needed to make this project a success, more hands are most welcome! We would like to extend an invitation to those willing to assist with transcribing interviews already conducted to contact me, Khonzi, at mbathk@unisa.ac.za or Eduard Fourie at fourime@unisa.ac.za. And please do visit http://peoplebehindthepapers.co.za and let us know what you think!

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES**

Khonzi Mbatha is a Junior Lecturer in the Department of Psychology at Unisa. His interests include sexuality, with a specific focus on vulnerable groups; research methodologies; the nexus between public health and mental health; and the politics of race.

**REFERENCES**