Academic Success at a Historically Black and a Historically White Higher Education Institution: A Systemic and Critical Race Theory Analysis

by

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ETHICS STATEMENT

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this dissertation, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval.

The author declares that she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's Code of ethics for researchers and the Policy guidelines for responsible research.

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ABSTRACT

Previous studies have shown the various factors and types thereof that influence academic success. However, there is a dearth of South African studies on factors affecting academic success cross-racially, across institutions and across institution types. Thus, the current study sought to identify factors affecting academic success among students at a historically Black higher education institution (HBHEI) and a historically White higher education institution (HWHEI), and to examine how race shapes students' experiences in higher education. The study was qualitative in nature. Five focus group discussions were conducted with participants enrolled for undergraduate degrees at an HBHEI and an HWHEI. One racially mixed focus group discussion and one comprising Black participants only were conducted at the HWHEI. In addition, one focus group discussion comprising White participants only and two comprising Black participants only were conducted at the HBHEI. In total, 31 students participated in the focus group discussions. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The systemic theory and critical race theory were used to interpret the study findings. The following were identified as affecting academic success: psychological factors, personal circumstances, students' lack of information regarding their chosen careers and institutional resources at their disposal, academic workload, institutional factors, daily commuting distance, socio-economic conditions, language/medium of instruction, student protests, and race, prejudice and discrimination. Moreover, distinct experiences on the basis of students' race and the historical racial identities of their respective institutions were identified. Other than its expert academic staff base, the HBHEI was relatively poorly resourced. Black and White, Afrikaans-speaking HBHEI students shared frustrations regarding non-proficiency in the English medium of instruction, and the former reported covert and overt racism, including by academic and managerial staff, and through administrative processes. HWHEI participants generally condemned the Black-on-White racial intolerance expressed during the

#AfrikaansMustFall protests, also expressing varying views regarding the proposed scrapping of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction at the institution. Black students at this institution experienced covert racism by lecturers, tutors and library staff, and in interpersonal contexts in certain spaces on the university campus. These findings highlight the need for better, targeted efforts towards transformation of higher education in South Africa and the development of measures to facilitate academic success and student retention.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a background of the study, outlining the need for the current study, followed by a presentation of the research problem and the justification, aims and objectives of the study. These sub-sections comprise discussions regarding trends in the higher education landscape, particularly those relating to race, access to higher education, functioning and success in higher education especially in the South African context; what this study aims to achieve; and an overview of the theoretical approaches adopted to address the study aims. In addition, I present the study's research questions, followed by definitions of key terms, especially as used in the current study and, lastly, an overview of contents of the subsequent chapters in this thesis.

1.2 Background of the Study

In spite of academic study being a largely individual pursuit, various factors beyond the individual play a role in academic success, either facilitating or hampering it. Thus, it is important to consider the factors within and outside of the individual, that contribute towards academic success. These include psychological factors, factors in one's immediate or intermediate contexts, as well as broader systems whose functioning filter down to impact individuals' lives. This observation led to the conceptualisation of a study investigating factors affecting academic success specifically among undergraduate students at a historically Black and a historically White higher education institution (HEI).

At an individual level, factors such as locus of control, motivation, emotional efficacy and learning styles have been shown to interact with other psychological and cognitive

factors in many ways, either facilitating academic success or serving as buffers for students at risk of academic failure. For example, with regard to locus of control, a negative association has been found between external locus of control and self-esteem, whereas a positive association has been found between internal locus of control and self-esteem (Saadat, Ghasemzadeh, Karami, & Soleimani, 2012). Moreover, academic locus of control has been found to be a significant predictor of academic effort, which in turn, presumably has implications on academic success. Locus of control has also been linked with self-esteem and self-efficacy (Bodill & Roberts, 2013; Sagone & De Caroli, 2014). Furthermore, studies have found a positive association between motivation and academic success (e.g. Amrai, Motlagh, Zalani, & Parhon, 2011; Kaufman, Agars, & Lopez-Wagner, 2008; Ning & Downing, 2010; Vecchione, Alessandri, & Marsicano, 2014). In addition, aspects of emotional functioning, such as emotional intelligence (e.g. Fallahzadeh, 2011; Sanchez-Ruiz, Mavroveli, & Poullis, 2013; Zahed-Babelan, & Moenikia, 2010), emotion regulation (Saklofske, Austin, Mastoras, Beaton, & Osborne, 2012) and emotional self-efficacy have been found to be either positively linked with academic success or to facilitate effective coping and adjustment among students in an academic context (Galla & Wood, 2012; Parker, Hogan, Eastabrook, Oke, & Wood, 2006). Moreover, emotional self-efficacy might correlate not only with academic success, but also presumably with factors such as academic self-efficacy. Some previous studies have also shown associations between learning styles and academic achievement, and between learning styles and other factors, such as personality variables, that are presumably associated with academic success (e.g. Komarraju, Karau, Schmeck, & Avdic, 2011; Okur & Bahar, 2010). In information processing within the cognition sub-field, deep processing of information, as compared to shallow processing (Passer, Smith, Holt, Bremner, Sutherland, & Vliek, 2009), has been found to lead to better information recall. Justification is that the former requires

focus on not only superficial aspects of material, but also the meaning thereof, and therefore, intense engagement with learning material and the application of metacognition.

Moreover, factors within the individual could interact with environmental factors to influence academic success. For instance, within learning, specifically experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), abstract conceptualisation and reflective observation could be affected by proficiency in the medium of instruction, possibly requiring advanced linguistic abilities and engagement in metacognition. This possibility illustrates the interaction between individual factors and factors within the higher education context or the broader system, in influencing academic success. Proficiency in the medium of instruction is largely informed by whether the latter is a first or additional language—which in the South African context largely presupposes race (since neither English nor Afrikaans are the predominant mode of communication for most African university entrants; Vandeyar, 2008)—and possibly, previous exposure to the language (e.g. as a language of learning and teaching (LOLT) in basic education), although acquisition of proficiency as a LOLT is not a given in this context, as demonstrated by the predominant use of code-switching in South African schools (e.g. Chikiwa & Schäfer, 2016; Doidge & Lelliott, 2017). Thus, with reference to proficiency in the medium of instruction as a possible contributor towards academic success, individual factors, the immediate higher education context, such as institutional policies, and external contexts such as the basic education system, as well as the broader socio-cultural and socio-political contexts, have a complex, cumulative bearing on academic success. In the South African context, the latter two are illustrated by the historical, systematic privileging of certain languages over others (Alexander, 2003). Specifically, English and Afrikaans have, since the colonial era, been privileged for use in the education system and official communication, to the exclusion of, and detriment of the development of African languages

beyond domestic and social use or, at best, use until the end of the foundation phase in basic education (Pare & Webb, 2007; Van Staden & Howie, 2012).

In relation to academic success, non-proficiency in the medium of instruction may undermine students' ability to succeed in higher education (McGhie, 2017). This holds negative implications for the prospects of African students in higher education, whose first language is least likely to be either English or Afrikaans (Vandeyar, 2008). This is especially compounded by or, even, could be a contributor towards the reported academic under-preparedness of Black South African students in higher education, as demonstrated by their high drop-out rates, according to Nomdo (2017). The racial demographics of under-prepared first-time higher education entrants can also be inferred from the fact that the public schools that the majority of African learners attend are severely under-resourced (Singh & Bhana, 2015), and the relatively low matriculation rates and poorer quality of matriculants that these schools they produce (Alexander, Badenhorst, & Gibbs, 2005; Yamauchi, 2011). In support of this notion, McKay (2016) asserts that "school results are largely determined by race and class" (p. 190). In relation to this, Lourens and Fourie-Malherbe (2017) found that first-time university entrants who had attended former Model C schools adjusted better to the unfamiliar higher education environment than did those who had not. These factors have implications for the prospects of matriculants from (inherently racialised) underprivileged communities who, in spite of the above-mentioned circumstances, gain entrance into higher education. Moreover, these observations further point to structural issues beyond the individual and the immediate higher education context, that influence academic prospects in higher education.

Other factors within the immediate higher education environment, with structural sources in the broader context, and the potential to influence academic success, are untransformed curricula, and student race and historical institutional racial identity, which

may interact in various ways. Scholars have widely acknowledged African HEIs as products of colonial influence that merely imitate Western institutions (e.g. Nkoane, 2006), condemning their apparent reluctance to meaningfully incorporate African epistemologies into their curricula (Hendricks, 2018; Lebakeng, Phalane, & Dalindjebo, 2006; Mwaniki, van Reenen, & Makalela, 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017). This is said to result in a sense of alienation to students whose life worlds are not reflected in the epistemologies advocated in HEIs (Lebakeng et al., 2006). The interaction between student race, an untransformed curriculum and historical institutional racial identity is demonstrated by a participant in Nomdo's (2017) study who, as a Xhosa person, reported feeling Othered by how lecturers at an HWHEI spoke of, and essentially subjectified Xhosa people and that, broadly, the environment undermined his sense of self up to that point. This and, notably, the student's sense of efficacy in this environment, could further be undermined by the student and staff racial composition at the HWHEI (i.e. the majority being discordant with his own), and his lecturers' race, thereby resulting in a complex set of power relations in relation to the university environment that severely disadvantage the student—whose success in the higher education context is not considered in relation to his experiences in this context. Cross and Carpentier (2009) have also given an account of the injustice perceived by students at a South African HEI, perceiving their interactions with university officials to be marked by racism, with race-based, unequal treatment of students. These authors further argue that, in such contexts, African students from rural areas are immersed into a foreign culture that is exacerbated by, among others, their inability to express themselves in their first languages, an important identity marker, as indicated above, though I argue that this is not necessarily limited to rural students. The issue of rural students' marginalisation on the basis of class and the class divide between these and urban students, even within the Black student body, is confirmed by Nomdo (2017), as shown above, and Singh and Bhana (2015). In view of the

above, participants' race in the current study will be taken into account, to enable consideration of their experiences of higher education on these grounds.

The current study also presumes that there are differences in the institutional cultures upheld at HBHEIs and HWHEIs and, therefore, the extent to which they foster a sense of belonging to students of different races and, therefore, broadly influence their academic experiences, as well as success. Institutional culture has been defined as "the cultural framework (norms, values, codes, rituals, symbols and practices) via which social and intellectual behaviour is regulated within universities, and particularly within academic systems" (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2016, p. 13). My consideration of institutional culture as embodied in historical institutional racial identity is legitimised by not only the apartheid-era classification of HEIs according to race, but also by reasons for such classification, as well as the distinct ideologies or mandates of these institutions and their furthering of the apartheid cause on these grounds (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2016). These institutional identities and associated cultures persisted long after 1994 (Badat, 2010; Robus & McLeod, 2006; Steyn, 2007), as also evidenced by the recent calls for decolonisation of higher education across South African HEIs, with student activists speaking out against inherently racist institutional cultures primarily at HWHEIs (Essop, 2015; Gwangwa, 2016; Indrajith, 2015; RDM Newswire, 2015). In view of the above, in post-apartheid South Africa, HWHEIs bring about an additional, yet essential dimension to the overall experiences of previously marginalised groups, particularly Black students at these institutions. The racial classification of institutions and, therefore, legitimisation of their exclusionary policies and institutional cultures (Cross & Carpentier, 2009; Nomdo, 2017), undoubtedly set the tone for interracial relations in HEIs, not only interpersonally, but also in terms of these institutions' relationships with their diverse student bodies, even in the post-apartheid era.

In the absence of recent research on the prevalence of racism in South Africa, particularly HEIs, similar to the Soudien report of 2008 (Department of Education, 2008), various media reports of incidents of racism at any given point in the broad social context (e.g. Evans, 2016; Spies, 2018; "8 times racists were exposed in SA this year", 2018) and in HEIs either at an interpersonal or institutional level (e.g. "Another alleged racist attack at UFS", 2014; Narsee, 2014; Pilane, 2015; Pilane, 2016; "Racism violently rears its head in North West", 2014; The Institutional Reconciliation and Transformation Commission of the University of Cape Town, 2019) indicate the prevalence of racism in HEIs and the society within which these are embedded, 25 years into the dismantling of apartheid. In view of this, in this study, it is assumed that interracial relations in higher education contexts, not only within the student body, but also between institutions and their student bodies, are informed by similar dynamics. Specifically, it is expected that such relations will have implications on students' experiences and even perceptions of discrimination in higher education, undermine their social experiences and, therefore, factors such as adjustment, a sense of belonging and overall functioning in such an environment.

Students' experiences are presumably not limited to intra-institutional dynamics, but also informed by structural factors. In this regard, structural factors extend to the historical, systematic privileging of Whiteness on the one hand, and inferiorisation of Blackness on the other, corresponding with the disparate, effectively hierarchical living experiences of individuals from these groups on a broad scale, the effects of which persist to date (Badat, 2010). Thus, the systematic discrimination of Black South Africans at the macro level has, over time, filtered down to micro contexts, including institutions and interpersonal contexts, disenfranchising this group economically, politically socially and otherwise. Moreover, since Crocker (1999) has theorised that members of marginalised groups carry schemas of discrimination in relation to stigmatised identities into micro contexts, arguably, the opposite

can logically be considered true for members of privileged groups. This further presupposes different experiences of the higher education context for Black and White students, particularly compounded by institutional historical identity.

Further illustrating the distinct standings of South African HEIs, based on their respective historical racial identities, are reports that graduates of HWHEIs are more likely to be employed than are HBHEI graduates (e.g. Bhorat et al., 2010; Rogan & Reynolds, 2016). This was more recently illustrated in Lourens and Fourie-Malherbe's (2017) study on the transition from higher education to employment with respect to graduates from historically Black and historically White HEIs. Moreover, in general, African graduates have been shown to be less likely to find employment, compared to their White counterparts (e.g. Rogan & Reynolds, 2016). This notion is further supported by Statistics South Africa's (2017) finding that both male and female Africans were least likely to be absorbed into the labour market, whereas the opposite was true for their White counterparts. The apparent preference for graduates from HWHEIs by employers (Fourie-Malherbe, 2017) raises concerns as to whether the quality of graduates from these two types of institutions differ, or if potential employers erroneously believe this to be true. The same could be asked regarding the apparent employer preference for White graduates over African graduates. These reports of a lesser likelihood of employment among African graduates, compared to White graduates (Bhorat et al., 2010; Rogan & Reynolds, 2016; Statistics South Africa, 2017), coupled with employers' preference for graduates from historically White institutions, as mentioned above, and possibly negative perceptions of HBHEIs, suggest that additional factors are at play. In the apartheid era, the quality of education imparted to African learners in basic education was quite low (Ndimande, 2016) and African learners' admission into higher education was severely limited (Gibbon & Kabaki, 2006). In instances in which they could participate in higher education, African students were channelled to HBHEIs that were, predictably, under-

resourced (Africa & Mutizwa-Mangiza, 2018; Bunting, 2006; McGhie, 2017; Zulu, 2008). The stance taken by employers in relation to graduates from these institutions suggests that perceptions of HBHEIs in this negative light prevail. This further demonstrates the persistent potency of structures put in place by the apartheid system, two and a half decades after the dismantling thereof; also indicating the effects of a socio-political context that, despite appearances in a post-apartheid context, has not curbed structures put in place to further the apartheid cause.

Financial constraints are another example of structural factors affecting academic success and, even, retention in higher education. In the absence of funding for their studies, prospective students are forced to either forego tertiary education, while those who are already registered drop out, or seek employment to finance their studies. Opting for the latter would still compromise these students' prospects to succeed, due to greater demands being placed on their time and, possibly, higher stress levels due to additional responsibilities. In turn, these would affect variables such as academic adjustment, self-efficacy and actual academic performance. Specifically, African and Coloured students who drop out of higher education—who consistently have the highest dropout rate (Council on Higher Education, 2018)—have cited financial constraints as a primary reason for doing so (Letseka et al., 2010), whereas a gross majority of African students have cited the same for not enrolling in higher education at all (Matsolo, Ningpuanyeh, & Susuman, 2018). Although free higher education for undergraduate students was pronounced early in 2018 (Phakathi, 2018), access to higher education does not equate access to the material resources needed for one's studies. Thus, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, particularly relative to their peers' socio-economic backgrounds, might be predisposed to feelings of inadequacy and related outcomes, such as isolation (Fernqvist, 2013), poor adjustment (Machika & Johnson, 2015) and not being able to access or purchase educational materials.

The above gives an overview of few of undoubtedly many factors that presumably affect academic success, ranging from individual and interpersonal, to institutional and structural. To comprehensively explore the breadth of factors affecting students' academic success as conjectured above, the current study uses a multi-racial sample of students from an HWHEI and an HBHEI, based on the assumption of different (historical and contemporary) dynamics at the two institutions, and how these intersect with individual students' experiences in these contexts. I will use systems theory and critical race theory to conduct an in-depth analysis of not only factors considered by study participants to broadly affect academic success and the linkages between these, but also between their overall experiences and identified factors, and personal racial identity and the participating HEIs' historical racial identities, also in relation to the broader context. Where the systemic perspective would limit the depth of the analysis when the identified factors pertain to race, I apply the critical race theory perspective.

1.3 Research Problem

The South African higher education system has consistently been permeated with problems ranging from accessibility, the academic under-preparedness of new students, student retention, the low graduation rate and the poor quality of graduates seeking to be absorbed by the labour market, as perceived by employers (Andrews & Osman, 2015; Bhorat, Mayet, & Visser, 2010; Council on Higher Education, 2018; Fongwa, Marshall, & Case, 2018; Letseka, Breier, & Visser, 2010; Masehela, 2018; Oluwajodu, Blaauw, Greyling, & Kleynhans, 2015; Walker, 2018). Cohort studies have shown that a substantial number of first-entrants into the higher education system do not complete their studies (Council on Higher Education, 2018; Department of Basic Education, 2010; Scott, Yeld, & Hendry, 2007). Bhorat et al. (2010) also showed White students to be generally more likely to

graduate, compared to African students, regardless of whether they are enrolled at an HEI classified as either historically White or Black, and African women to have the highest non-completion rate across historically Black and White HEIs. Similarly, the Council on Higher Education (2018) has shown that African students achieved the lowest course success rate for both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes from 2011 to 2016, while White students consistently achieved the highest success rate during the same period.

The above account raises questions as to whether, as it stands, higher education enables all students to fully exploit the economic opportunities presented by post-apartheid South Africa and, in so doing, fully realise their potential. Failure to identify factors that successfully contribute towards or hamper academic achievement would hinder the implementation of appropriate interventions. With non-intervention, access to higher education, the drop-out rate and throughput could continue unchallenged. The current study seeks to identify factors affecting academic success among undergraduate students at a historically Black and a historically White higher education institution, as per their (the students') accounts, as well as the manner in which race shapes these students' experiences at the institutions. The latter is based on presumed distinctions in students' experiences, especially on the basis of their race, and of the historical racial identities of these institutions. Moreover, despite their allusions to students being either advantaged or disadvantaged by race in higher education with regard to their experiences of higher education and factors such as the graduation rate, previous studies have not directly explored the role played by racial discrimination in students' academic success, least of all at the multiple levels and intersections between these, at which the current study sets out to do.

This study is distinctive in its simultaneous focus on conventional individual factors affecting academic success, coupled with consideration of the socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-historical contexts within which students are embedded. This angle assumes

complex interactions between individual factors and the above-mentioned contexts. Presumably, students' individual experiences of, and success in higher education, are shaped by interactions between individual and institutional race or racial identities, and structurally determined racial prejudice and discrimination, which filter down to institutional, interpersonal and intrapersonal contexts. When not focusing on individual factors, such as psychological and psychosocial factors in relation to academic success, many South African studies have tended to exclusively focus on the racialised experiences of Black students in HEIs, particularly HWHEIs (e.g. Cornell & Kessi, 2017; Cross & Carpentier, 2009; Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Machika & Johnson, 2015; Nel, Govender, & Tom, 2016; Nomdo, 2017; Sennett, Finchilescu, Gibson, & Strauss, 2003; Sommer & Dumont, 2011). The current study fills a gap in research on academic success and race in higher education, by drawing links between the two, and elucidating the various ways and contexts in which racial prejudice and discrimination manifest and, in turn, how these interact to affect students' experiences and academic success. Moreover, the current study considers the intersections between various levels of discrimination (including interpersonal, institutional and structural) and between these and other conventional individual (typically including psychological and psychosocial, and those in one's immediate environment) factors in affecting students' experiences of higher education and academic success in this context.

First, I identify the factors affecting academic success and students' experiences based on race (personal or historical institutional racial identity), by obtaining participants' accounts regarding their experiences and factors affecting their academic success at the participating HBHEI and HWHEI. These accounts are obtained through multiple focus group discussions at the participating HEIs. Focus group discussions yield rich, qualitative data, as they comprise elements of both naturalistic observation and interviews (Wilson & MacLean, 2011). Thus, this data collection method would enable me to obtain jointly constructed

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insights into factors that participating students consider to affect their academic success and experiences at their HEIs, as well as to observe group dynamics during the discussions. With this approach, multiple focus group discussions would enable the collection of comprehensive data entailing not only participants' verbal accounts, but also my observation of the extent of consensus and dissent among participants, and their negotiation of these (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009). In my observations of these dynamics, I also note characteristics of interest among the participants, such as inclination regarding a particular topic and individual participants' race and/in relation to the racial make-up of each focus group. This multi-faceted approach towards obtaining data and analysis thereof acknowledges the complexity of participants' experiences, especially in relation to theirs and other participants' racial identities in the focus group context, as well as the institutional and broader social contexts. Moreover, conduct of multiple focus group discussions, which took place for several weeks at a time, ensured my prolonged experience of the study sites and enhanced my familiarity with these from undergraduate, first- to third-year students' perspectives. This would help ensure the credibility of the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Second, I apply the systemic theory and critical race theory to conceptualise the factors cited as affecting academic success, in relation to each other and to the broader socio-cultural and socio-historical contexts. Specifically, I apply Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1994) ecological systems theory, as well as general systems theory principles such as equilibrium, and reciprocity, to map links between the identified factors and various contexts either in which individual students participate or whose functioning affects individual students' experiences of higher education. Using Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1994) ecological systems theory, I identify links between students' academic success and reported individual factors, as well as factors within the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and the chronosystem. I also explain links between academic success and the identified factors in

ways that illustrate systemic principles such as openness, reciprocity and equilibrium. When pertaining to race, I discuss macrosystemic and chronosystemic factors affecting academic success from a critical race theory perspective. In Chapter 2, I also show the equilibrium principle of the systemic theory to subscribe to the critical race theory of race as normal, permanent and entrenched in various societal structures (DeCuir and Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Taylor, 1998, 2009), whose applicability is shown in the discussion of the study findings from the latter perspective in Chapter 6.

The importance of race in students' experiences of higher education is illustrated in my discussion of the study findings from a critical race theory perspective, in order to address the second study aim (i.e. determining how race shapes students' experiences of higher education at the two institutions under study) and its subsidiary aim (i.e. determining how different levels of racial discrimination intersect with one another and with other factors to influence academic success). In this study, I consider race to be an integral aspect of students' experiences in higher education, based on their personal racial identity, their institutions' historical racial identity and the general predisposition towards racialised experiences across contexts, especially given South Africa's racial history (e.g. Adhikari, 2006) and, undoubtedly, its legacy (e.g. Badat, 2010; Robus & McLeod, 2006). As per the tenets of critical race theory (Parker, 2003), this study illuminates overt and covert racial dynamics reflecting the broader socio-historical and socio-political contexts, that influence individual functioning in higher education. In my analysis, I show how personal racial identity, historical racial identity and interpersonal, institutional and structural racism intersect with one another and with other factors to influence participants' experiences of higher education and, where applicable, academic success.

1.4 Justification, Aims and Objectives of the Study

The aims of this study are: i) to identify factors considered by undergraduate students in an HBHEI and an HWHEI to affect academic success in higher education, and ii) to determine how race shapes students' experiences at an HBHEI and an HWHEI. A secondary study aim to ii) is to determine the intersections among multiple levels of racial discrimination and between these and other factors to influence academic success. With regard to the second study aim and its subsidiary aim, the study aims to highlight any emerging similarities and differences in terms of experiences and academic success, between students from different racial backgrounds and in relation to the participating HEIs' historical racial identities. This is based on the assumption that the permeation of race and racism across various structures of South African society, including higher education, influences the overall experiences of students in HEIs on this basis.

To comprehensively explore the breadth of factors affecting students' academic success, the current study obtains a sample of students from an HWHEI and an HBHEI, based on the assumption of varying dynamics pertaining to student and historical institutional racial identity. HBHEIs have often been shown to be under-resourced, with race-based, apartheid-era disparities in government funding being cited as a source. The effects of this deliberate historical omission on students enrolled at these institutions persist (South African Human Rights' Commission, n.d.), resulting in disparate experiences for HBHEI and HWHEI students on a broad scale. For instance, postgraduate students at Walter Sisulu University, an HBHEI, have cited inadequate resources at this institution as one of the reasons for their academic failure (Sonn, 2016). These include an under-resourced library and a limited number of computers, as well as the lack of research centres, and for students in the Faculty of Education, the lack of a computer lab. Similarly, Mavuso (2017), a student at the Tshwane University of Technology's (TUT's) Soshanguve campus, refers to hers as "the most disadvantaged university campus in South Africa" (p. 5), citing among others, poor

accommodation facilities at the institution and a severely under-resourced computer lab, with 70 computers supposedly servicing more than 15 000 students. These, typifying conditions at HBHEIs and contrasting sharply with a substantially higher concentration of resources at HWHEIs (South African Human Rights' Commission, n.d.), indicate gross disparities in, at least materially, the quality of life enjoyed by students at HBHEIs and HWHEIs, and in infrastructural obstacles or facilitators to academic success and by extension, prospects for academic success, for students at the two institution types.

Other than material differences, the institutional cultures at the two institutions are expected to differ, as informed by their historical classification according to race and, therefore, ideological positions. This is embodied in the persistent calls for the dismantling of racist institutional cultures at HWHEIs in recent years (Essop, 2015; Gwangwa, 2016; Indrajith, 2015; Pilane, 2016; RDM Newswire, 2015; The Institutional Reconciliation and Transformation Commission of the University of Cape Town, 2019).

The above discussion illustrates how structural and institutional factors could influence individual students' experiences of higher education and academic success, with race being at the centre of these. In relation to this, the current study's intended exploration of the experiences of students at the HBHEI and the HWHEI, based on participants' race, is informed by the assumption of differential experiences of these study sites by students, on the basis of (students') race. Beyond the above-mentioned infrastructural make-up of HEIs according to their historical racial identities, the unideal experiences of Black students in higher education in general, and in HWHEIs specifically, have been widely documented locally and internationally. These include a low socio-economic status (e.g. Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Letseka et al., 2010), which hampers access to and acquisition of much-needed academic resources; racial prejudice and discrimination across various strata in these contexts (e.g. Cornell & Kessi, 2017; Cross & Carpentier, 2009; Department of Education, 2008;

Woldoff, Wiggins, & Washington, 2011); poor adjustment (Sennett et al., 2003); a

compromised social identity (Bazana & Mogotsi, 2017); and an undermined sense of

belonging (e.g. Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier, & Valentine, 2009; Sakura-Lemessy, Carter-

Tellison, & Sakura-Lemessy, 2009).

Many South African studies (e.g. Cornell & Kessi, 2017; Cross & Carpentier, 2009;

Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Machika & Johnson, 2015; Nel et al., 2016; Nomdo, 2017; Sennett et

al., 2003; Sommer & Dumont, 2011; Sonn, 2016) have typically been conducted either

indiscriminately on students' experiences in higher education, or specifically on Black

students at HWHEIs, giving account of either their broad or race-related experiences in these

settings. The current study is qualitative in nature, providing unique, in-depth, context-

specific insights into factors identified by participants as broadly affecting academic success,

and also examining how race shapes their experiences—academic and otherwise—at the two

participating HEIs.

To enable comprehensive analysis, in addition to identifying factors reported by

participants to affect academic success, I will identify systems encompassing these factors, as

well as observe any emerging inter- and intra-systemic linkages, based on student

participants' reports. In addition, as per my reference to the role of race and racism in this

regard earlier in this sub-section, I will consider the factors identified and participants'

general experiences at the participating HEIs in relation to the broader socio-cultural, socio-

political and socio-historical contexts, using critical race theory.

Beyond the immediate aims of the study, identification of factors reported by students

as affecting academic success could subsequently be used to develop appropriate

interventions to curb a variety of risk factors at the study sites, in an effort to facilitate

academic success and improve retention. The findings could also be used to inform the

service offering of student support units at the relevant HEIs, so that students' needs can be comprehensively met.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions were posed:

1. What factors do undergraduate students in a historically Black and a historically White higher education institution consider to affect their academic success?

2. How does race shape undergraduate students' experiences in a historically Black and a historically White higher education institution?

The following secondary research question to Research Question 2 was posed:

2.1 How do various levels (interpersonal, institutional and structural) of racial discrimination intersect with each other and with other factors to influence academic success?

1.6 Operationalisation of Terms

This sub-section consists of the operationalisation of the key concepts used in this study, including academic success and race, with the latter referring to personal and institutional identity.

1.6.1 Academic success

Studies typically use the grade point average as an indicator of academic success (or factors related to it, such as adjustment) in the higher education context (e.g. Darlow, Norvilitis, & Schuetze, 2017; Parker, Summerfeldt, Hogan, & Majeski, 2004; Van Rooij, Jansen, & Van de Grift, 2017; Warden & Myers, 2017). In the current study, academic success is used to refer to meeting university-specified requirements for successful

completion of academic tasks that either form part of formative assessment or summative assessment, ultimately leading to achieving either a 'pass'[1] (e.g. final mark ≥ 50%) or 'fail' (e.g. final mark < 50%) for modules forming part of the study programme enrolled for. Thus, focus in this regard is not so much on the exceptionality of one's academic success, such as the margin of performance, which might be indicated through the average mark obtained by each participant for a given module or a set thereof.

1.6.2 Race

In this study, race is assumed to reflect the definition ascribed by Biko (1996) to racism as, essentially, "discrimination of a group by another for the purposes of subjugation" (p. 27). To this end, Biko's Black Consciousness Movement defined 'Black' not so much on the basis of physiological attributes, but of collective experiences of systematic discrimination, subjugation and exploitation. Given the apartheid dispensation's systematic marginalisation of South Africans of colour, including those classified by the then system as Indian, Coloured and 'Native'/'Bantu'/'Black' (Erasmus, 2012), participants belonging to the former two categories and Africans are all classified as Black in the current study. This is based on Erasmus's (2012) elucidation of use of the term, 'Black', being redefined by the Black Consciousness Movement to mean a global political identity, as opposed to racial classification.

Where relevant, I make distinctions between members of the Black sub-categories in the form of, for example, reference to 'Africans', particularly when referring to distinct factors pertaining to this group, to the exclusion of members of the other two other sub-categories making up the 'Black' race category, as operationalised in this study. These

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[1] In this thesis, I use single quotation marks to denote nuanced, noteworthy expressions or terms. Such use is distinct from my use of double quotation marks, which I specifically use to denote direct quotations.

distinct factors typically include language use and other distinct experiences of members of these three sub-categories either historically or contemporarily, based on apartheid-era racial classification and accompanying overall positioning in South African society. Although race is admittedly socially constructed (Leonardo, 2009; Stanfield, 1999), especially as demonstrated by the distinct definitions thereof as assumed by Biko (1996) and apartheid South Africa (Erasmus, 2012), the current study acknowledges the uniqueness of certain experiences of members of the Black subcategories, primarily based on distinctions between the sub-categories, however arbitrary. This is especially considering the hierarchical structuring of race as defined by the apartheid government, which translated into a hierarchical, wholly race-based social order with White South Africans at the top of the hierarchy, and Africans at the bottom (Adhikari, 2006). Moreover, distinctions in this study are made considering, for example, unique experiences of people historically identifying as either Coloured or African, which they consider distinct from those of other members within the Black category both pre- and post-1994 (e.g. Adhikari, 2006; Erasmus, 2001; Daniels & Damons, 2011; Kamish, 2008).

Following from the above, in this study, a historically White higher education institution is used to refer to an either English- or Afrikaans-medium HEI that was mandated to exclusively enrol White students during apartheid rule (Jansen, 2003). In contrast, a historically Black higher education institution refers to one that was historically mandated to exclusively cater for Black students across South Africa, including those located in the so-called 'homelands' or Bantustans. I take cognisance of the mergers of post-secondary education institutions including universities, technikons, and education and technical colleges in South Africa, which took place in an attempt by the democratic government to restructure and singly coordinate the South African higher education system post-1994 (Baloyi & Naidoo, 2016; Jansen, 2003). Thus, where necessary, I make the relevant distinctions (in

terms of a given university campus's historical racial classification) when referring to

university campuses that merged with other HEIs with either a concordant or discordant

historical racial classification, but were previously considered independent institutions and,

therefore, historically classified as either Black or White.

1.7 Chapter Outline

In the sub-sections below, I present overviews of the thesis chapters, starting from

Chapter 2.

1.7.1 Chapter 2

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical approaches used in this study, namely, the systemic

approach and critical race theory. The chapter presents an overview and principles of these

theories and their applicability to the study and application in the analysis of findings.

First, application of the systemic theory in this study is based on the notion that

factors affecting academic success can be conceptualised in terms of systemic links between

factors within individual students in higher education, and between those and factors within

the higher education context, and beyond. These represent different systems and their

respective subsystems in interaction with one another (Anderson & Carter, 1978; Levine &

Fitzgerald, 1992) and with the individual, to affect academic success. I also refer to

Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1994) ecological systems theory to illustrate academic success or

the overall university experience as an individual factor possibly in interaction with the

microsystem, mesosystem, exosytem, macrosystem and the chronosystem. The

conceptualisation of academic success as being in reciprocal relationships with other

individual subsystems and external systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is based on the notion

that individuals inherently form part of multiple contexts and systems, at any given point. In

this chapter, I indicate how the systemic theory will also be used to interpret the study findings pertaining to factors affecting academic success.

Second, I apply critical race theory to conceptualise the role played by race in students' experiences of higher education, including academic success. This is based on the notion that, inherently coupled with racism, race plays a critical role in individual students' experiences, not only on the basis of personal racial identity, but also historical institutional racial identity. This is especially considering South Africa's apartheid history, and the persistence of a legacy of a wholly racially demarcated society (Gardín, 2013). Critical race theory assumes that racism forms an essential part of society (Parker, 2003), as also illustrated by its endurance in societies in which racial segregation has been abolished (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011). Thus, it permeates various societal structures, including social relationships, the education context and the macro-economic system, among various others. It is through its inherence in numerous structures that it filters down to dictate various aspects of individuals' lives, depending on their positioning on the racial spectrum. In relation to this, I also make distinctions between institutional (Jones, 1997) and structural racism (Bailey, Krieger, Agénor, Gravis, Linos, & Bassett, 2017; Lukachko, Hatzenbuehler, & Keyes, 2014) and their applicability to, and manifestations in higher education contexts and by inference, possibly in the current study. In this chapter, I state my intention to apply critical race theory to interpret study findings especially pertaining to race, which in some instances is an expansion on the systemic theory perspective, to facilitate a comprehensive analysis that thoroughly takes into account the role played by race and racism in participants' experiences, from a critical race theory perspective.

1.7.2 Chapter 3

Chapter 3 presents a comprehensive review of relevant research on the topic, with a view towards informing the methodological and overall approach towards, and perspective regarding the current study. In this chapter, I present a review of literature on psychological and psychosocial factors, and those external to the individual, that have been shown to be related to academic success to varying degrees, which could reasonably be assumed to emerge as factors affecting academic success and overall student experiences in the current study.

I begin this chapter with a discussion of the self-concept, based on the assumption that the self-concept or individuals' appraisal of themselves encompasses academic success and many other psychological, social, psychosocial, institutional and structural factors that, as shown later in the chapter, are deemed to influence academic success and, broadly, students' experiences in higher education. Unlike psychological and psychological factors, whose links with the self-concept are likely clearer, social, institutional and structural factors are considered to have a bearing on how individuals perceive themselves and (therefore) their experiences of higher education. Specifically, the following factors are discussed in relation to academic success and students' experiences in higher education: academic self-efficacy, adjustment, proficiency in the medium of instruction, socio-economic status, racial discrimination, locus of control, motivation, emotional factors and learning styles.

1.7.3 Chapter 4

Chapter 4 presents the methodological approach adopted in this study. First, I reiterate the research questions, to contextualise the subsequent discussion. Next, I describe the (qualitative) methodology used in this study, also referring to the advantages of using qualitative methodology, such as its potential to facilitate thorough exploration of the topic

under study and to elicit rich, in-depth data (Nieuwenhuis & Smit, 2012) in order to address the research question. Moreover, I clarify my use of qualitative methodology as not equivalent to uncritical consideration of the data obtained in the context of the current study, taking into account the critical standpoint adopted in this study, as indicated by use of critical race theory as one of the theoretical approaches. In relation to this, I state the research approach as comprising the systemic theory and critical race theory, reiterating my explanation of how these theoretical approaches will be applied in the study, as discussed at length in Chapter 2. In recognition of individual students' interactions with, and situatedness within various systems and subsystems, the systemic theory is used in this study to illustrate patterns of interaction between various individual, social and environmental variables, that influence academic success. In addition, I describe my use of critical race theory to clarify how race might shape participants' experiences in higher education, and to address race-related aspects of the first research question (i.e. identification of factors affecting academic success at the two HEIs) to expand on analysis using the systemic theory, thereby enabling analysis from a more comprehensive angle.

I go on to describe the sampling procedures used in this study. Purposive sampling was used for the selection of both the participating HEIs and participants within these, based on whether these met the criteria for inclusion of the study. At institutional level, the primary inclusion criterion was apartheid-era classification of a public HEI as historically Black or historically White; I selected one of each type for inclusion in the study, namely, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU, Garankuwa campus) and the University of Pretoria (UP, Hatfield campus), respectively. At participant level, I targeted first- to third-year undergraduate students for participation, to enable me to gain insight into students' experiences of higher education across the undergraduate study period at both HEIs. As per the tenets of purposive sampling, the sample size was determined by the extent to which

participants met the study criteria (Wilson & MacLean, 2011), as specified above, and therefore, their ability to facilitate the answering of the research questions. A total of 31 participants took part in the study.

Focus group discussions were used to collect the data; a focus group guide entailing questions and probes relating to the two research questions was used to guide the discussions. I also observed the dynamics within each focus group discussion, noting patterns of consensus and dissent and the negotiation of these (e.g. Maxwell, 2005; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009; Stevens, 1996) in relation to topics under discussion and the general course of the discussions.

I had initially intended to conduct at least one focus group discussion comprising Black participants only and another comprising White participants only at either HEI. Due to apparent minimal disclosure at the second focus group discussion comprising White participants only at the HBHEI, especially in comparison to the first focus group discussion comprising Black participants only at the same HEI, I resolved to conduct Black-only and racially mixed focus group discussions thereafter. Ultimately, I conducted three focus group discussions at the HBHEI (two comprising Black participants only with six and eight participants, respectively, and one comprising five White participants only) and two at the HWHEI (one comprising five Black participants only and one comprising a racially diverse group of seven participants). Krueger and Casey (2010) have suggested that two to five homogenous focus groups would be adequate, while Morgan (1997) has suggested the use of three, on the grounds that more would not likely produce new, meaningful insights. On these grounds, I deemed the number of focus group discussions that I conducted to be adequate. This was compounded by Morgan's (1997) notion that a less structured focus group discussion, with little involvement by the moderator, would necessitate a larger number of discussions, due to the substantially divergent views to be expected in such instances. In

contrast, the focus group discussions in this study entailed my use of a focus group guide to guide the course of the discussions.

In this chapter, I also describe my use of thematic analysis to analyse the data obtained. Specifically, I apply Braun and Clarke's (2006) six guidelines for thematic analysis of data, namely, familiarising oneself with the data; generating initial codes; searching for, reviewing, and defining and naming themes; and producing the report. I accompany this with a practical illustration of my application of these guidelines in my study. In addition, I describe my analysis of observational data as entailing reflections on and descriptions of focus group dynamics, including the course of the discussions, patterns of consensus and dissent, and participants' negotiation of these (e.g. Maxwell, 2005; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009; Stevens, 1996).

I also describe the quality assurance measures that I undertook to ensure the study's credibility, and the confirmability, dependability and transferability of findings. Lastly, I present the ethical considerations pertaining to the study, specifying the measures taken to ensure that ethical principles were adhered to in the conduct of this study.

1.7.4 Chapter 5

Chapter 5 presents the study findings from participants at the two study sites. I present the themes, as identified using thematic analysis, as well as findings emerging from the observational data. Firstly, the following psychological factors were identified as affecting academic success: self-regulation, self-efficacy, adjustment and motivation. Secondly, personal circumstances negatively affected participants' emotional well-being and experiences of higher education; the former included participants' own emotional problems, interpersonal relationships, pregnancy, parental conflict, family finances, and parental support and influence on students' career choices. Participants also reported students' lack of

information about their chosen study programmes, about institution-based skills workshops being run, and about the possibility of receiving financial assistance from one's HEI, as reasons for negative outcomes such as dropping out or academic failure.

While some of the themes were unique to either study site, others were universally applicable across the study sites and focus group discussions. For instance, various forms of institutional support were cited as factors affecting academic success. Adequate provision of academic and psychological support, coupled with comparatively poor administrative support, were common to the two institutions. However, only the HBHEI was mainly lauded for its provision of financial support to enrolled students. Moreover, HBHEI participants mainly reported poor infrastructure either on the university campus or in student residences located in the central business district (CBD) as a factor affecting throughput, their ability to access study material or to maintain control over their study schedules, participation in recreational activities, and personal safety on the university campus. HWHEI students' infrastructural concerns were limited to insufficient computers at the university's main library and the limited capacity of the on-campus dining hall, both of which invariably resulted in long queues. Despite the substantial number of concerns that HBHEI students expressed regarding university infrastructure, participants at this institution unanimously lauded the human infrastructure at the institution, in the form of an academic staff base that demonstrates competence and expertise in their respective fields.

Other identified themes were unfair treatment by academic staff, or that resulting from bureaucratic, non-transparent procedures at the institution, as well as the notion that students of some study programmes that are considered prestigious were treated more favourably than were those of the seemingly less prestigious programmes. Lack of accountability by university management and staff, as well as student leadership structures, was reported to disadvantage students and undermine participants' experiences at their

respective institutions. HBHEI participants reported a high workload as a major concern. Nonetheless, participants at this institution indicated that their substantial practical exposure in their respective study fields rendered graduates from the institution highly sought after in the labour market. Some HWHEI participants reported that more tests could be to students' benefit.

As components of the theme, socio-economic conditions, one's family's dire financial situation was reported to shift focus from academic obligations at the HBHEI. Moreover, socio-economic disparities, expressed through ownership of either expensive or inexpensive gadgets, was reported to affect students' self-esteem, according to HWHEI participants. At the HBHEI, socio-economic disparities were illustrated by the affordability of food at the staff cafeteria for some students, which was considered of a better standard, compared to that sold at the student cafeteria. Other ways in which the lack of financial means could disadvantage students at the HBHEI was their inability to peruse or have their exam scripts re-marked, due to unaffordability.

Language was a contentious issue for White, first-language Afrikaans-speaking students and African students at both institutions. First-language Afrikaans speakers, similar to African students, found it difficult to adjust to the English medium of instruction at the HBHEI. The former were hopeful of adjusting academically, despite having had Afrikaans as a medium of instruction throughout their basic education careers. African students found it especially difficult to adjust, due to having experienced the benefits of code-switching in basic education. Despite these issues, the English-only medium of instruction seemingly cushioned the institution against protests similar to those at other HEIs around the country, as use of Afrikaans especially at dual-medium HWHEIs was also a subject of protest at these institutions. At the HWHEI, in light of protests that took place earlier in the at that institution, calling for the scrapping of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, some African students

deemed it unfair that Afrikaans students studied in their first language, while they could not

and had to navigate higher education in an English medium of instruction, with no linguistic

support from the institution. Others were indifferent about the use of Afrikaans, and argued

that it be gradually phased in, to accommodate the latest cohort of students who had

Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. This sentiment was echoed by a participant whose

medium of instruction was Afrikaans, at the time of the study. Some HWHEI participants

were apprehensive about the idea of studying in African languages, due to the apparently

limited vocabulary of these for academic instruction. Instead, similar to White, first-language

Afrikaans-speaking participants at the HWHEI, these participants recounted the career

benefits of an English medium of instruction.

As briefly mentioned above, there were no protracted protests at the HBHEI, unlike in

most institutions around the country shortly before and in the year(s) preceding the study

period. Participants attributed this to the use of one medium of instruction (i.e. English), as

mentioned above; the financial assistance and bursaries that the HBHEI was already

providing to students at the institution; and the fact that labour at the institution was already

being insourced. These were the major issues of contention at protesting institutions around

the country. Despite the peaceful campus atmosphere as a result of not experiencing

protracted protests, some students at the HBHEI noted that the University of Witwatersrand,

an HWHEI, would receive continent-wide media coverage for their concerns, a luxury that

the media did not extend to their concerns regarding their own institution.

At the HWHEI, participants spoke of the disruption to their academic schedules as a

result of protests. Moreover, a number of participants condemned the racial intolerance that

was expressed by the protesters during the *#AfrikaansMustFall* protests, as well as the

violence enacted. A Black participant appreciated the conscientisation that she experienced as

a result of the protests, contrasting this with how she had previously perceived the situation at her HEI with rose-tinted glasses.

Generally limited interaction between members of different ethnic and race groups at the HBHEI was mainly attributed to preference and the sense of familiarity imparted by within-group interactions, and not prejudice. With regard to interracial relations among students, a number of HWHEI participants stated that students were only there to obtain their degrees, giving negligible focus to issues of race on campus. However, some participants reported that physical spaces on the university campuses were non-verbally demarcated according to race and undermined one's sense of belonging. In addition, covert racism by university staff, including lecturers, tutors and library staff, was reported by participants at this institution. In contrast, Black HBHEI participants reported covert and overt racism by both Black and White lecturers, who at times made racially disparaging remarks during lectures. Paradoxically, Black participants at the HBHEI had reported that they chose to study at the institution to avoid racism, anticipating no experiences of racism at this institution, due to its Black-majority student base.

Observational data obtained from the five focus group discussions showed varying levels of disclosure, consensus and dissent, and perspectives regarding the topics under discussion. Broadly, the groups comprising Black participants only at both HEIs entailed high levels of disclosure and, where applicable, a general openness to disagreement and negotiation thereof. Black participants at the HBHEI also tended to discuss the inner workings of their institution's systems and how these affected the student body, perhaps in the hopes that the institution would address their concerns. In the White-only focus group discussion at the HBHEI, there was a generally high level of consensus and participants came across as relatively more reserved and self-corrective, especially in relation to discussions about race and those that could presumably bring to the fore the discordance between

participants' racial identities and the historical racial identity of the institution and its majority (Black) student body. This tendency to self-correct was also observable in relation to discussions about ethnicity in one of the Black-only focus group discussions at the HBHEI.

Participant interactions at the racially mixed focus group varied widely. Although there was a healthy balance of consensus and dissensus, as well as negotiation of dissensus, participants' ability to move into each other's life worlds was seemingly influenced by gender and race. For instance, participants in this group invariably condemned Black-on-White racial intolerance, especially that displayed during the *#AfrikaansMustFall* protests. However, this coincided with either indifference or an inability to relate to Black participants' accounts of experiencing racial discrimination at the institution. In addition, similar to the White-only focus group discussion at the HBHEI, and in contrast with White participants in the racially diverse focus group of which they formed a part, Black participants in this discussion tended to self-correct and make relatively more cautious statements pertaining to issues of race in the institution. It is unclear as to whether this tentative approach towards these issues could be tied to fellow participants' race, gender or both. This was especially considering the fact that the only African participants in this group were female, while the White participants were male. A similarly, relatively tentative approach had been employed by female participants in the Black-only focus group discussion at the same institution, in instances of dissent by the only male participant in that group.

1.7.5 Chapter 6

Chapter 6 presents a discussion of the study findings from both study sites against the backdrop of existing literature, and pertinently, with reference to the application of the systemic approach and critical race theory to interpret the findings. In this chapter, I address the two primary research questions and the secondary research question initially posed in this

study. First, I show how factors cited as affecting academic success, as identified from the themes presented in Chapter 5, can be conceptualised as individual, family, academic, institutional and structural factors; I also show the interactions between these dimensions. Moreover, I illustrate the subscription of these factors and the interactions between them to systemic domains including the individual, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and the chronosystem. In addition, I discuss factors that I have identified as pertaining to race from a critical race theory perspective, at times expanding on what the systemic theory would define as exo-, macro- and chronosystemic factors, for a comprehensive interpretation of findings that takes into account the broader socio-cultural, socio-historical and past and present socio-political contexts. Specifically, I draw broad similarities and distinctions between the experiences of participants enrolled at the HBHEI and the HWHEI, between White students' experiences across the two HEIs, and between Black students' experiences across the two HEIs; and I consider the unique experiences of Black students at the HBHEI and at the HWHEI. In relation to this, I highlight how the study findings, interpreted from a critical race theory perspective, demonstrate individual functioning and experiences within the higher education context to invariably occur within the seemingly inevitable bounds of interpersonal, institutional and structural racism. I also draw attention to the intersections between racial discrimination across various levels and between these and other factors in influencing academic success in higher education.

1.7.6 Chapter 7

Chapter 7 entails a presentation of the conclusions reached in this study in relation to the initial research questions, identification of the study's limitations and recommendations for future studies, as well as researcher positionality. The chapter describes the individual and institutional factors, and factors that are external to the university environment (which can be

construed as mesosystemic, exosystemic and macrosystemic—or structural, from a critical race theory perspective), that affect academic success and students' experiences in higher education. Further, I present previously identified, interrelated individual, interpersonal, institutional and structural factors pertaining to race and racism, to illustrate the links between personal and institutional racial identity, and interpersonal, institutional and structural racism. These are followed by my presentation of the study's limitations and recommendations, especially in light of the findings and the current study's limitations. The chapter concludes with a researcher positionality statement. In this sub-section, I reflect on various aspects of my identity that presumably played a role in my conduct of the study, including engagement with the study participants and the study topic; participants' receptiveness and openness towards to me; and my interpretation or posturing of the study findings in discussing these, or accordance of importance to certain findings or interpretations above others.

1.8 Conclusion

As detailed earlier in this chapter, previous studies have shown a variety of factors ranging from psychological, psychosocial, institutional and structural, to affect academic success and students' experiences in higher education. Given the dearth of studies on factors affecting academic success cross-racially, across institutions and across institutional types, the current study sought to identify factors affecting academic success among students at an HBHEI and an HWHEI, as well as examine how race shapes students' experiences in higher education. Findings from this study could enable the identification of students who are at risk of academic under-performance or dropping out, not only as a result of their demographic profiles, but also their psychological disposition and psychosocial functioning during or upon entry into higher education.

Based on the above observations, in this study, focus group discussions were conducted with undergraduate Black and White students enrolled at the HBHEI and the HWHEI, to obtain reports of factors that they consider to affect academic success. Thematic analysis was used to identify study themes. The systemic theory was used to conceptualise the identified factors in the form of systemic links within and between individual students, the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and the chronosystem. In this regard, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and selected general systems theory principles, including system openness, reciprocity and equilibrium, were used to facilitate this conceptualisation. Moreover, participant accounts and my identification of these as pertaining to race were analysed from a critical race theory perspective, to illustrate how race shapes students' experiences in higher education. In this regard, critical race theory principles (i.e. racism as normal, counter storytelling, interest convergence, intersectionality, Whiteness as property and the critique of liberalism within and across institutions and structures) were used to conceptualise the roles played by personal racial identity, historical institutional racial identity, and interpersonal, institutional and structural racism in students' experiences of higher education.

In Chapter 2, I present the theoretical approaches adopted in this study.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL APPROACH

2.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises a discussion of the theoretical approaches adopted in this study. Firstly, an overview of the systemic theory will be discussed, comprising general systems theory, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and principles of systems theory applied in this study, especially in relation to the current study's assumptions. This is followed by my conceptualisation of the practical application of both the systemic theory and critical race theory in this study. Lastly, I discuss critical race theory, specifically the principles thereof that are relevant to the current study, as well as the implications of those on the subsequent interpretation of factors found to affect academic success.

The systemic theory accounts for the presumed interactions between various psychological, social and environmental variables that mutually influence academic success and its correlates, as discussed in Section 2.2. The theory also takes into account the interactions between different units of a given system (e.g. the interplay between individual functioning as typified by academic success and other individual factors such as psychological and psychosocial factors, and one's immediate environment), as well as that particular system's interactions with other systems (e.g. the broader socio-political system or socio-cultural dynamics). Critical race theory places emphasis on illuminating overt and covert, underlying dynamics, representing the broader social and socio-political context, that influence the functioning of individuals and institutions in a given society. Specifically, critical race theory seeks to clarify the prominent role played by the underlying structural racism (typifying the macrosystem) that influences institutional cultures and practices, interpersonal relations and individual functioning, and (therefore) students' experiences,

including academic success, in HEIs. I argue that the systemic theory and critical race theory complement one another and are both suitable for adoption in this study, considering the immense evidence that factors affecting academic success do not occur in isolation from one another (addressed by the systems theory's assumption of interactions between systems, subsytems and units within each system) and the fact that apartheid-era policies and, broadly, its legislated social engineering, continue to influence various strata of post-apartheid South African society.

2.2 The Systemic Theory

Below, I present the general systems theory, Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1994) ecological systems theory and principles of the systems theory to be applied in this study.

2.2.1 General systems theory

General systems theory developed as a result of the awareness of relationships between biological concepts. Although not equivalent to sophisticated mathematical theories in their explication of scientific phenomena, the general systems theory recognises interconnections between organisms in the social environment, also striving towards explaining social phenomena through considering the complex relationships within social systems (Miller & Miller, 1992). In this regard, a system refers to "a set of interacting units with relationships among them" (p. 11). A system could be conceptualised as a set of units whose relationships are mathematically, grammatically or logically ordered. More specifically, abstracted systems, typically applied in the social sciences, refer to conceptual systems that are defined as such due to observations of interconnections between units within a social system.

According to Von Bertalanffy (1968), unlike the tendency to study interactions between elements of a system, the general systems theory is also concerned with "wholeness" (p. 37), referring to the overall organisation of a given system and a global perspective of events and phenomena. Thus, the theory is primarily concerned with the interpretation of phenomena in terms of whole systems and their components or subsystems. One of this approach's assumptions is that different parts of the system interact with one another, and are therefore interdependent (Anderson & Carter, 1978; Levine & Fitzgerald, 1992). This means that a system can be studied through, firstly, the identification of the subunits of the system, as well as the identification of the structural connections between the subunits. In the current study, subunits within a system and relationships between these can be illustrated by the presumed links between individual factors such as academic success and motivation, academic self-efficacy, locus of control, emotional factors and learning styles, as discussed at length in Chapter 3. Importantly, the general systems theory fosters an understanding that "dynamic interactions manifest in the difference of behavior of parts when isolated or in a higher configuration" (Von Bertalanffy, p. 37). From this view, the general systems theory acknowledges that the behaviour of a system's units is a function of not only the interaction between various units within the system, but also the complexity and configuration of the system at any given point. In relation to this, in the current study, factors considered to affect participants' academic success are explored, also taking into account that the interconnections between social, structural, and (socio-) political factors have a cumulative influence on students' overall experiences and, specifically, academic success in the higher education context. Given the manner in which these filter down to the individual through complex structures, the social, structural and (socio-) political factors would typify the glue that binds the individual's experiences in a given context together, thus explaining individual functioning in relation to other systems that are external to his or her immediate physical

context(s). The application of the systemic theory in this respect is an acknowledgement of the fact that individual functioning could be viewed in the context of other, larger systems with which it interacts in some way (Miller & Miller, 1992). These inter-systemic interactions are illustrated in the discussion of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory below, still within the confines of the systemic theory.

2.2.2 Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory

In his ecological systems theory pertaining to human development, Bronfenbrenner (1979) drew distinctions between the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), which affect an individual's functioning in various ways. Academic success, an individual factor, is the focus of this study, and is presumably affected by various factors in the contexts of the microsystem, exosystem, mesosystem, macrosystem and the chronosystem. The microsystem refers to an individual's immediate context and those who are in direct contact with him or her in such contexts. Bronfenbrenner (1979) adds that an analysis of the microsystem should entail the interpersonal system in its entirety, including all persons with whom an individual is in direct contact and the reciprocal nature of the relationships between these players. Examples of the microsystem are the family environment and school. In the context of the study, the microsystem entails, for example, one's family, friend and peer networks, and others with whom one interacts in the university context.

Similar to the microsystem, relations in the mesosystem vary with regard to the extent of reciprocity between the actors and balance of power. While relations occur in one setting in a microsystem, in a mesosytem, they occur across settings, and between different players across these varying settings. The mesosytem refers to interrelations between a given individual's microsystems, brought about by one's participation in multiple microsystemic

settings at a time. When directly participating in these multiple settings, these linkages making up the mesosystem are established by the individual through direct participation as a primary link, and through supplementary links, referring to participation by other members of one's microsystem(s) in the mesosystem. An example of this is family members' accompanying participation in the university context, along with the individual's participation. Intersetting communication, though not necessarily mutual, may also occur between the two or more microsystems to relay information. Bronfenbenner (1979) defines intersetting knowledge as existing information about or experience of the other microsystemic setting(s). In the university context, for example, family members of first-generation students may neither be able to provide sufficient support to the students to facilitate their success in this environment, nor have the means to do so. This can be linked to intersetting transition, referring to an individual's first entry into a new microsystemic setting, which Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes as "[t]he most critical direct link between two settings" (p. 210). Illustrating the importance of this link, he argues that a developing child who, on the first day of school, is not accompanied by a parent, establishes a solitary transition into the new microsystem (i.e. school), as well as a weak, solitary link with it. The benefits of a multiply linked mesosystem, wherein more than one person from one microsystem forms linkages with a new microsystem, include provision of a source of security for the individual and a model of social interaction, and enables the individual to take initiative in the new setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This implies the importance of perceived social support for new entrants and participants in higher education. Further, Bronfenbrenner (1979) argues that an individual gains substantial developmental benefits when participating in multiple settings that vary in terms of factors such as culture, ethnicity and class.

      Bronfenbrenner (1979) defines the exosytem as settings within which one does not participate, but which influence or are influenced by the individual and microsystemic

contexts in which he or she participates. Bronfenbrenner (1979) posits that studies on the exosystem should necessarily entail an investigation of multiple contexts and settings, and correspondingly, multiple sub-samples, which would be based on an assumption that these influence and are influenced by individuals and various microsystems. Although the current study's focus is not the exosystem, it is expected that participants may cite factors in the exosytem as affecting their academic success. Despite individuals not being in direct contact with the exosytem, the relationship between the two may be bi-directional, with individuals in turn engaging in behaviours that may have an effect on the exosystem.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) defines the macrosystem as "the consistency observed within a given culture or subculture in the form and content of its constituent micro-, meso-, and exosystems, as well as any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies" (p. 258). In addition, the macrosystemic culture and subcultures are supported by members in the form of the values that they espouse. Further, the nature of macrosystem culture and subcultures is discernible from the form and content of subordinate micro-, meso- and exosystems. As argued above, the current study's consideration of historical institutional racial identity especially in relation to participants' personal racial identity serves as acknowledgement of the macrosystem in the South African context. In the current study, the macrosystem is assumed to be characterised by a systematically racist social order, permeating various spheres of South Africans' lives, as discussed in detail in Section 2.4 in this chapter. This assumption is against the backdrop of the country's history of systematic racism that cut across numerous spheres of South African life, whose many effects arguably remain, 25 years into the democratic dispensation. The historical aspect illustrates the chronosystem, which refers to "either a change or consistency over time not only in the characteristics of the person but also of the environment in which that person lives" (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 40). In the current study, the chronosystem may be reflected in the

historical racial positioning of each participating institution, and also informed by the national transition from an apartheid- to a post-apartheid, democratic dispensation. These presuppose a change in time of both the broader socio-political context and institutional identification, at least legislatively. In turn, the latter are intricately linked with the social and/or socio-political order at any given point, which in the current study is represented by the above-mentioned macrosystem. Thus, in terms of the influence of the socio-political context on academic success, an inextricable and inherently reciprocal link is assumed between the macrosystem and the chronosystem in the current study. In fact, one could posit that while the chronosystem reflects the actual change in itself, the macrosystem reflects the actual socio-political and social order at any given point, either before or after the change. From this view, chronosystemic factors could reflect either the process or the repercussions of the change, while the macrosystem reflects the static, macro-level characteristics pertaining to a given phenomenon at any given point before or after the change. Specifically, factors possibly affecting academic success, such as (context-specific) institutional history, culture and symbols, and interpersonal relations (presumably reflect and draw from either the *change* (i.e. the fact of change having occurred) in dispensation and related ideals (i.e. chronosystem), or the contemporary broader socio-cultural and socio-political ideals and contexts (i.e. macrosystem) (see Section 2.4 for a detailed discussion). Another obvious example of the chronosystem in the context of the current study is students' transition into the higher education context.

Based on the above, interrelationships are expected not only between factors within the individual, but also between the individual and micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystemic factors, and the chronosystem. A detailed account of the mechanism underlying the links between different systems and subsystems within systemic theory, is provided in Section 2.2.3 below, detailing the nature of inter- and intra-systemic interaction.

2.2.3 Principles of systems theory

The principles of systems theory discussed below are based on the current study's methodological assumptions. The principles illustrate the mechanism of relationships between systems and their respective sub-systems or units, demonstrating the interplay between various individual, psychosocial and broader systemic factors in relation to academic success.

2.2.3.1 Equilibrium, feedback and open or closed systems

Equilibrium refers to the maintenance of a particular state within a system (Von Bertalanffy, 1968). According to Von Bertalanffy (1968), living organisms are open systems; this is characterised by their exchange of matter with the external environment. By their very nature, open systems are inclined towards a steady state, as opposed to a thermodynamic equilibrium. Thermodynamic equilibrium applies to closed systems, whereas a steady state of an open system "is maintained in distance from true equilibrium and therefore is capable of doing work" (Von Bertalanffy, 1968, p. 142). The open system's composition remains constant, regardless of processes taking place therein and its interaction with the external environment. This also illustrates the open system's equifinality, as demonstrated by its ability to ultimately reach a particular state, in spite of conditions and disturbances of the process. Von Bertalanffy (1968) rejects the idea that individuals seek to maintain a state of equilibrium psychologically and socially. Instead, he argues that organisms actively seek stimulation and are inclined towards change, which means that they thrive on a state of disequilibrium (Thelen & Smith, 1998). This is especially evidenced by human development. Thelen and Smith (1998) further explain the concept of equilibrium as follows: "In equilibrium systems, the noise [that the system is exposed to] is damped out and the system as a whole remains in equilibrium" (p. 269). In contrast, "[i]n nonequilibrium systems [...],

fluctuations [within a system] can become amplified and overtake the organization of the whole system, shifting it to a new order of organization" (Thelen & Smith, p. 269). The individual presumably represents a nonequilibrium system. Von Bertalanffy (1968) has argued that homeostasis is not applicable to non-utilitarian human activities, referring to activities that do not advance self-preservation and survival. Although academic success or individual university students evidently do not subscribe to homeostasis or equilibrium, as defined by Von Bertalanffy (1968), the broader system might subscribe to this principle, possibly suggesting that it is a closed system. However, Von Bertalanffy (1968) has indicated that nothing new can possibly emerge in closed systems and that the predictable pattern of interactions in such systems is organically primed. This precludes the notion that the macrosystem in the current study might be closed. Rather, the macrosystem in this study seemingly subscribes to Thelen and Smith's (1998) idea of an open system that has an attractor state (i.e. a particular set of behaviours, preferred over countless others). In the current study, the macrosystem as conceptualised by critical race theorists, specifically in terms of race and racism, is highlighted as an open system wholly inclined towards a particular attractor state (see Section 2.4 for details). Thelen and Smith (1998) also posit that although a self-organising (whole), open system has a range of patterns at its disposal, it tends to display only a limited subset of these, such that it can be said to have an affinity for a particular state. A system's stability can be determined through: i) the statistical likelihood of being in a particular state, as opposed to others (other states); ii) settling back to the original equilibrium position following a small perturbation to the system; and iii) its response to internal, natural fluctuations, such that the stability of a system's attractor is indicated by the system's smaller margin of deviation from the attractor state. Critical race theorists' stance regarding the inherence of racism within the fabric of society (DeCuir and Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Taylor, 1998, 2009) and its various structures alludes to the enduring

stability of racist structures that cut across contexts to ultimately affect individual students' academic success or, broadly, experiences in higher education.

The overly deterministic assumptions of the feedback principle deters its use in the current study, especially given the qualitative approach used in this study, as described in Chapter 4. This is especially considering Von Bertalanffy's (1968) statement that feedback is especially applicable to biological systems, contrasting with the fact that "[t]he open-system model is basically nonmechanistic" (p. 163). Feedback, which forms an integral part of cybernetics, presupposes the existence of specific mechanisms through which a system engages in goal-seeking or self-controlling behaviour.

The non-subscription to homeostasis or equilibrium discussed above renders humans open systems, which means that "components are free to relate to each other in nonlinear ways" (Thelen & Smith, 1998, p. 272). This suggests that there are multiple ways in which the individual-human system can organise itself, thereby precluding the possibility of the prediction of patterns on the basis of individual system components, such as those of a microsystem. Becvar and Becvar (2000) further state that a system's openness is determined by the extent to which it allows external information to influence its functioning, which is considered applicable in the current study. Closed social systems, in contrast, are characterised by their impenetrability to, and lack of influence from outsiders, and vice versa. Examples of closed social systems are reclusive religious sects; families that are completely isolated, socially; and on a broader scale, nationals of despotic regimes such as North Korea.

Demonstrating the current study's subscription to the openness principle in relation to academic success, one's functioning in a higher education context presumably both influences and is influenced by factors not only within the individual, the higher education (sub-) system, representing a microsystem, affiliate microsystems in addition to higher

education (representing the mesosystem), but also subsequent functioning or prospects (e.g. future employment or employment prospects), which represent the exosytem.

2.2.3.2 Reciprocity

Since subsystems are generally interrelated, with each of them related to the system as a whole, action by any of these subsystems has an effect on other subsystems and on the whole system. This observation is compatible with the systemic notion that "the whole is more than the sum of its parts" (Thelen & Smith, 1998, p. 272), suggesting that a system's patterns cannot be determined on the basis of its individual components. This highlights the importance of investigating the nature of a phenomenon in its entirety, as illustrated by the relationships between sub-systems and/or systems pertaining to the phenomenon, as opposed to isolated elements thereof.

In relation to the above observations, the basic assumption of the current study is that the factors identified as affecting academic success are related to academic success and, possibly, to each other. Just as Bronfenbrenner (1979) assumes that the relationships between the different systems and between individuals in a given microsystem are reciprocal and mutually contribute towards one's development, so are the following relationships considered to be reciprocal: a) between subsystems within an individual, b) between subsystems within a microsystem and in relation to the individual, c) between different microsystems and their respective subsystems in a mesosystemic context and in relation to the individual, d) between the exosystem and the individual and, possibly, between the subsystems of the exosystem, and e) between the macrosystem and the chronosystem, and between these and the subordinate systems, including the individual. This underpins the assumption in the current study that the factors found to affect academic success across systems are reciprocal in various ways and to varying degrees. Illustrating the non-subscription of the ecological

systems theory to linear relationships, but rather, acknowledgement of the complexity of the relationships between factors within a given system and between levels of organisation, Thelen and Smith (1998) describe the actual nature of relationships from this perspective as follows (p. 267): "... causality is multiply determined over levels and continually changing over time". From this perspective, different levels of organisation or factors interact to cause a particular effect, illustrating multiple levels of reciprocity. This multiply determined causality occurs within a particular context and at a particular time.

As discussed above, there is presumably an interplay between factors within the individual and the environment, which influence academic success in many ways. As also previously mentioned, academic success in higher education symbolises the relationships between past, present and future scenarios involving the individual and other contexts that are represented by, among others, academic institutions in basic and higher education, industry and the social order. Frequently cited factors such as the academic under-preparedness of higher education entrants (informed by the basic education system) (e.g. Cross & Carpentier, 2009; Nel, Troskie-de Bruin, & Bitzer, 2009; Nomdo, 2017), as well as employment prospects following graduation, highlight the role that higher education plays as a bridge between these realms, indicating the openness of the higher education system, beyond the individual. As such, the higher education landscape is evidently in constant interaction with other systems, such as its feeder- and recipient markets (i.e. basic education and the labour market, respectively), as described above. The applicability of a systemic perspective to the construal of, and positioning of the higher education context in a broader context, is evident, especially with regard to reciprocity between systems.

2.3 Overview of Practical Application of the Systemic and Critical Race Theories

In keeping with systems theory as discussed above, in my interpretation of the study findings, I will consider the factors cited by participants as affecting their academic success, the interrelationships between those factors and academic success, and between each other. I will also take into account unique aspects of the two study contexts (HBHEI and HWHEI) that seemingly prime participants' citation of certain factors as affecting their academic success. Moreover, participants' immediate contexts and the factors cited therein will also be considered in relation to the broader South African socio-cultural and socio-historical contexts. Exploration of these contexts (macrosystemic and chronosystemic, from a systems perspective), when pertaining to race, will be expanded to interpretation using a critical race theory lens.

It is important to note that factors cited as affecting academic success cannot necessarily be *neatly* delineated from the broader socio-cultural and socio-historical contexts. Thus, I anticipate the possibility of, for instance, participants citing prejudice or discrimination as an affecting factor, which can be explored in relation to other cited, affecting factors from a systemic perspective, but also obviously drawing from the broader socio-cultural and socio-historical contexts, and explicable from a systemic perspective as a macrosystemic and/or chronosystemic influence, and simultaneously explicable from a critical race theory perspective. My anticipation of multiple strata encompassing factors that affect academic success and experiences in higher education justified the use of critical race theory and the systemic theory alongside one another, thereby allowing for the interpretation of relationships between identified factors with reference to psychological, psychosocial, institutional and structural factors in the broader socio-political context. While proponents of decolonial and postcolonial theories emphasise the need for broad societal transformation and advocate for the transformation of structures such as higher education curricula, knowledge

and broader university systems (Hendricks, 2018), and for the incorporation of African epistemologies into university curricula (Lebakeng et al, 2006; Mwaniki et al., 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017), the current study focuses on structural and institutional factors relating to HEIs, as well as their interrelationships with subordinate structures that ultimately filter down to individual social actors, to include psychosocial and psychological aspects.

2.4 Critical Race Theory

The current study's acknowledgement of both overt and underlying racial dynamics in the higher education context and in relation to the broader social context necessitates an interpretation of the higher education landscape and accompanying experiences that are informed by critical race theory. Critical race theory emphasises the prominence of the role played by race and its influence within society and its various structures.

According to Martinez (2014), critical race theory was developed in 1989 by legal scholars of colour, in recognition of the essential role played by race and racism and accompanying power dynamics in United States (US) society. This was in opposition to critical legal studies (CLS), which gained traction in the Civil Rights Era and, despite its acknowledgement and criticism of a legal system that is essentially biased and reflecting societal power relationships, failed to acknowledge the role of race in the systems of law in the US, instead showing an inclination towards a liberal, colour-blind philosophy (Martinez, 2014). Tate (1997) places the movement's development in the 1970s. However, he acknowledges the civil rights movement and legal studies as mentioned above, as forming critical race theory's foundations, in his reference to the latter's pre-1970s history, and the civil rights movement's provision of rich intellectual resources on which critical race theory could build. Thus, critical race theory's subsequent development represented an intellectual continuity in activist thinking and scholarship. In contrast to CLS, critical race theorists

contended that the denial and dismissal of race would only ensure the prosperity of

institutional and systematic racism (Olson, 2003). Critical race theory drew inspiration from

the American civil rights movement and affiliated scholarship, with its proponents who were

legal scholars, arguing that race formed the very fabric of the legal system, as it did of

(United States) US society (Martinez, 2014).

The following sub-sections entail a discussion informed by critical research theory,

conducted both broadly and in relation to the study context, on race and racism, institutional

and structural racism, and the key principles of critical race theory.

2.4.1 The conceptualisation of race and racism

In the current study, it is expected that race-based differences in factors considered to

affect academic success and the presumed relationships between these factors, would

highlight the need for meaningful, systematic reform of the higher education landscape.

Solórzano's (1997, 1998) argument that the centrality of race and racism in social structures

should inform research, acknowledges race and racism as essential to society's functioning.

Gillborn (2006) describes critical race theory as one not consisting of "an exclusive set of

propositions" explaining situations or predicting phenomena, but one consisting of "a set of

interrelated beliefs about the significance of race/racism and how it operates" (p. 250).

Fanon (1963; 1988) has argued that racism is systematically employed by a legitimate

institution, such as a colonising country, the success of which depends on the exploitation of

native inhabitants of the colonised country, leading him to conclude that racism is a

consequence (of colonial ideals), rather than a cause. In such an instance, exploitation in the

form of economic or military oppression, harnessed by a political system, is a necessary

condition for the occurrence of racism. In the South African context, there is no denying that

colonial-/apartheid-era racial classification and accompanying privileges and oppression of the various race groups persist, and are probably most evidently demonstrated by the persisting, race-based socio-economic inequalities, as detailed in later sections in this chapter. Fanon (1988) has further suggested that racism is *informed* by culture, such that the evolution of a system's culture has an effect on its racial manifestations. Broadly, following industrialisation and subsequent technological advances in the labour market, the economic relations within the colonial system were substituted with more effective ones accompanied by an evolved, less obvious mode of racism. Inasmuch as economic relations are still in existence, yet diplomatically exploitative, so does racism operate in disguise. On this basis, it could be concluded that social relations between racially diverse groups in neo-colonial contexts are essentially governed by colonial-era economic forces and are bound to manifest according to the latter's tenets (Fanon, 1988). Fanon's (1963; 1988) inferences in this regard illustrate how racial discrimination, preceded by arbitrary racial classification, serves the interests of colonialism. In the same manner, apartheid-era racialisation of HEIs, whose legacy persists, served systemic goals, enabling the government at the time to maintain control over its idealised social order, including social mobility and wealth distribution, according to race (see, for example, 'Colonial/apartheid epistemologies in HEIs' in Section 2.4.2).The racialisation of HEIs in apartheid South Africa served the systematic goals of the then government; the persistence of this racialisation in post-apartheid South Africa cannot be denied, as demonstrated by the widely acknowledged maintenance of these institutional identities (e.g. Badat, 2010; Robus & McLeod, 2006; Steyn, 2007). Further serving as demonstration of this persisting segregation, are the student protests over the past few years across South African HEIs, calling for the dismantling of colonial legacies, particularly in HWHEIs (Essop, 2015; Mwaniki et al., 2018).

2.4.1.1 Institutional racism

Institutional racism refers to the perpetuation of racial inequalities by a given institution's structures (Jones, 1997). Gillborn (2006) also aptly argues that racism be construed not only in relation to its intentions when perpetrated, but also its "effects of disadvantaging one or more ethnic groups" (p. 252). South Africa's history of broad systematic racism prior to 1994 needs no introduction. In the context of the current study, institutional racism within an HEI context might stem from the policies, practices and culture of a specific HEI, informed by national policies or not. The construal of institutional racism in the current study, as perpetuated directly by individual HEIs (Lebakeng et al., 2006), is in consideration of the disadvantageous effects of institutional cultures, policies or actions (regardless of the intentionality associated with them; Zamudio et al., 2011) that disadvantage members of certain race groups.

An example of institutional racism could be the apparent relegation of indigenous knowledge systems and cultures, including but not limited language, in South African HEIs, demonstrated by lack of curriculum reform or 'transformation', rather. Some scholars argue that 'reform' implies "cosmetic change" (Makgoba, 1997, p. 181) that is devoid of any major structural modification, thereby according some legitimacy to the previous, ill-conceived curriculum, whereas transformation refers to complete change (Ramose, 2003). One could argue that White supremacy's embeddedness in the very structure of South African society, as indication that the abolition of apartheid was merely symbolic, is further demonstrated by the persistence of structures that were previously used to advance the cause of the apartheid government (Badat, 2010), while marginalising Black South Africans to varying degrees (Lebakeng et al., 2006). Parker's (2003) view that racism cannot be seen as individual acts of prejudice, but forms an essential part of society, necessitates that its eradication be systemic and directed at institutions and structures within which it is embedded. As demonstration of

racism' extensive reach, virtually rendering it permanent, as argued by critical race theorists, Zamudio et al. (2011) argue that in societies in which racial segregation has been abolished for several decades, comprising many members who have not lived through the injustices of such a system, race continues to permeate various structures within society, including the legal system, social relationships, neighbourhood composition, the education context, as well as the macro-economic system. This disillusionment has been acknowledged in relation to the notion of the 'born-free' generation by post-apartheid born South African youth (e.g. Chauke, 2018; Wa Azania, 2014).

South African HEIs' racial identities go beyond mere history, as demonstrated by acknowledgement of the lack of transformation in these contexts by scholars (e.g. Badat, 2010; Steyn, 2007). This is especially in consideration of marginalised students' recent wave of protests against, among others, racist institutional symbols or more broadly, cultures, that undermine their sense of belonging in these contexts, including the *#RhodesMustFall*, *#Luister*, *#OpenStellenbosch* and *#AfrikaansMustFall* campaigns (Essop, 2015; Gwangwa, 2016; Indrajith, 2015; RDM Newswire, 2015). In relation to the study aims, discordance between HEIs' historical racial identities and those of previously marginalised students may foster (real or perceived) exclusion and negatively affect these students' sense of belonging at these institutions, which studies have shown to affect academic performance and psychological functioning (e.g. Bair & Steele, 2010; Sennett et al., 2003; Woldoff et al., 2011). The same may not go for White students at a historically White HEI presumably due to their relative position of privilege in broader society, embodied in structural racism, as discussed in the sub-section below.

2.4.1.2 Structural racism

Bailey et al. (2017) define structural racism as "the totality of ways in which societies foster racial discrimination through mutually reinforcing [inequitable] systems [...] that in turn reinforce discriminatory beliefs, values, and distribution of resources" (p. 1455), whereas institutional racism takes place within and between institutions. These authors add that institutional policies and practices may or may not *explicitly* subscribe to race, yet discriminate on its grounds, nonetheless. Citing Link and Phelan (2001), Lukachko et al. (2014) define structural discrimination as "macro-level conditions that constrain the opportunities, resources, and well-being of socially disadvantaged groups" (p. 45), thereby reinforcing the social influence of dominant groups on the one hand, and on the other, disadvantaging marginalised groups on a broad scale.

I argue that structural racism in the South African context thrives due to the enduring effects of apartheid-era policies, whose elaborate social engineering ensured the sustainability and, ultimately, self-reproduction of the then legislated racism in various spheres of South African society. The deliberate channelling of resources towards the White South African population and denial of these to Black South Africans (underpinned by, essentially, a denial of their equally human status) by the apartheid system, coupled with a socio-political and socio-cultural structure that equated Whiteness with superiority and therefore deserving of material, intellectual, economic and various other types of abundance, and Blackness with the opposite, ensured a social structure wholly resting on legislated, racially discriminatory policies and practices (Mhlauli, Salani, & Mokotedi, 2015; Modiri, 2012). These were not automatically dismantled in 1994 along with the dismantling of an inherently racist political dispensation (Modiri, 2012). As per Lukachko et al.'s (2014) definition of structural racism, the post-apartheid maintenance of economic power by White South Africans ensured the maintenance of structural inequalities in South African society. In their study, Lukachko et al. (2014) assess political participation, employment and job status, educational attainment and

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judicial treatment as measures of structural discrimination on the basis of race. The endurance of structural racism in the South African context, as per Bailey et al.'s (2017) definition and Lukachko et al.'s (2014) measures, is demonstrated by unequal access to amenities such as housing, education (Murray, 2016), employment, earnings, and healthcare, among others. Bailey et al. (2017) distinguish between institutional and structural racism on the grounds that institutional racism primarily refers to the type of racism contained in and perpetuated by distinct institutions, whereas structural racism pertains to forces beyond any given institution, illustrated by sustained, discriminatory networks across various institutions within a given society. Some of the domains pertaining to the current study that demonstrate the maintenance of structural racism are discussed below.

Unemployment and underemployment have been found to be most prevalent among Africans, irrespective of gender (Statistics South Africa, 2017). In 2017, African men recorded an unemployment rate of 29%, and White men, 6.1%. Further, White men in the same period recorded an absorption rate of 72.3% into the labour market, and African men, 45.6%. African women recorded an unemployment rate of 33.3% and White women, 7.4% in 2017. Moreover, 2.6% and 61.1%, respectively, of White South Africans were in low-skilled and skilled employment in 2017 (Statistics South Africa, 2017). In contrast, 34.7% of Africans in the labour market were in low-skilled employment and 16.7% in skilled employment in the same period. Evidently, despite the implementation of redress policies such as Affirmative Action and Black Economic Empowerment, aimed at minimising racial inequalities in the workplace and increasing Black South Africans' participation in the economy (Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act of 2003; Employment Equity Act of 1998), race-based socio-economic disparities persist. Unemployment, poor living conditions and limited access to resources are predominant among Black South Africans, particularly Africans (Gardín, 2013; Statistics South Africa, 2017) who,

historically, fared comparatively worst. Thus, the carrying over of apartheid South Africa's socio-economic make-up along racial lines into democratic South Africa in 1994 and beyond, further means that the material conditions informed by the superiorisation and inferiorisation of different South African race groups, coupled with the internalisation of these distinctions, persist and, therefore, so do their effects and/or correlates.

As further demonstration of the persisting racialisation of South Africa's education system, unequal access to basic and higher education by learners and the differing quality of education (Christie, 2010; Yamauchi, 2011) received by learners on the basis of class and, fundamentally, race, prevail. The educational experiences of African learners in township schools, the teaching that they receive, and their academic results, are significantly inferior to those of learners in well-resourced, wealthier schools (Murray, 2016; Singh & Bhana, 2015) that also previously catered exclusively to White, Indian or Coloured learners. Unequal education, in this regard, broadly refers to basic and higher education, and that provided as far back as early childhood development (Fourie, 2013). The inferior education systematically provided to Black South Africans was legitimised through legislation such as the Bantu Education Act of 1953.

2.4.2 Principles of critical race theory

Critical race theory subscribes to the following principles: a) racism as normal, (b) experiential knowledge (and counter storytelling), (c) interest convergence, (d) intersectionality, (e) Whiteness as property; (f) critique of liberalism (Ladson-Billings, 2013; McCoy and Rodricks, 2015). These are discussed in detail below.

a) Racism as Normal

Critical race theorists posit that racism is normal as it is ingrained in the very fabric of society, and therefore enduring, not incidental or random (Ladson-Billings, 2013). These theorists posit that racism is ingrained in social structures and may seem unrecognisable or invisible (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Taylor, 1998, 2009), such that those that are marginalised perceive racist incidents as isolated. Contrary to such perceptions, DeCuir and Dixson (2004) instead argue that "racist hierarchical structures govern all political, economic, and social domains" (p. 27), thereby Othering marginalised people in these contexts. Thus, critical race theorists argue that racism is permanent, despite the socially constructed nature of race. In relation to this, referring to the United States of America's (USA's) context, Carmelita Castañeda and Ximena Zúñiga (2013) define racism as follows:

"*[T]he set of institutional, cultural and interpersonal patterns and practices that create advantages for people legally defined and socially constructed as 'white,' and the corollary disadvantages for people defined as belonging to racial groups that were not considered Whites by the dominant power structure*" (p. 58).

The definition above can be applied to the distinct racial categorisations of apartheid South Africa, which persist today, along with the associated privileges or disadvantages. Further, in their articulation of the permanence of racism, DeCuir and Dixson (2004) stated, "Racist hierarchical structures govern all political, economic, and social domains. Such structures allocate the privileging of Whites and the subsequent Othering of [P]eople of[C]olor in all arenas, including education" (p. 27). This perspective acknowledges that racism permeates various structures within a given society, including higher education.

b) Experiential Knowledge (and Counter storytelling)

Critical race theorists recognise the knowledge possessed by people of marginalised identities and that emanating from their lived experiences as legitimate (Solórzano & Yosso,

2001). Marginalised groups' experiences of racism have the potential to facilitate the understanding, analysis and teaching of racism within higher education (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Further, these theorists posit that the exclusion of epistemologies of marginalised people particularly in higher education contexts serve as demonstration of racism within these institutions. McCoy and Rodricks (2015) describe these epistemologies by marginalised people as "counterstories", which entail personal stories and stories about other people, serving to *disrupt* master narratives. Thus, critical race theory legitimises the voice of marginalised groups over that of the majority or master narratives.

c) Interest Convergence

Interest convergence refers to when marginalised groups' interests are seemingly taken into account, with this being only due to the incidental convergence of theirs and the interests of groups that are in power (Bell, 1980; Brown & Jackson, 2013; Taylor, 2009). McCoy and Rodricks (2015) further state that, specifically, the social, political and economic interests of Black people in the USA are advanced only when their advancement would equally benefit those in power. For example, these authors posit that HEIs may admit Black students to meet diversity criteria set for them, despite these institutions not exerting effort into ensuring the social and cultural inclusion of, and availability of resources to Black students. The concept of interest convergence is borne from the idea that those in control and therefore benefitting from racial injustice cannot authentically advocate for social justice.

In response to a legal case in which the USA's Supreme Court ruled in favour of a university's race-based admission policy favouring Black applicants (*Grutter v. Bollinger*), Yosso, Parker, Solórzano, & Lynn (2004) argued that, in addition to equal-opportunity education, HEIs should ensure equal opportunities to succeed across races. These include the

retention of, and provision of financial aid to Black students. Thus, critical race theory posits that, despite appearances such as compositional diversity (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015) and the creation of an impression that equality is attainable and an ideal to aspire towards, HEIs' institutional racism is demonstrated by their failure to put in sufficient effort to ensure equal opportunities for success for Black students.

d) Intersectionality

The intersectionality principle in critical race theory acknowledges the intersection of multiple marginalised identities and how these cumulatively influence the experiences of any given person (Bartlett & Brayboy, 2005; Brayboy, 2005; Gillborn, 2015; Kumasi, 2011; Lynn & Adams, 2002; McCabe, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). These include factors such as race, class, disability, homophobia and gender. In practice, the influence of intersecting marginalised identities would mean that, disabled, homosexual or female Black students or those of a low socio-economic status would differ from those of those with no disability, of a high socio-economic status, who are male or heterosexual. Thus, certain marginalised identities or the combination thereof assumed by a person can influence how he or she is perceived and treated by others (Ladson-Billings, 2013). In relation to this, Ladson-Billings posits that critical race theorists do not seek to essentialise the experiences of individuals within any given racial groups.

Despite the increased accessibility of higher education in post-apartheid South Africa, access to and success in higher education remain, to a large extent, race- and class-based (Council on Higher Education, 2019; Letseka et al., 2010; Masehela, 2018; Walker, 2018). This was also recently brought to light by the 'Fees Must Fall' movement, which saw a surge of student protests across South African HEIs since late in 2015, calling for the scrapping of higher education fees, particularly for students from poor backgrounds and the 'missing

middle', whom the state's funding system considered too rich to receive state funding, although they are admittedly too poor to cover their own higher education costs ("Why are South African students protesting?", 2016). Furthermore, the interrelations between class and race cannot be denied, given the historical, systematic manipulation of class, with race as a basis in South Africa, the outcomes of which arguably persist, as argued elsewhere in this chapter. Prior to the declaration of free higher education at the end of 2017, access to higher education has largely been determined by socio-economic status, as well as one's prospects in higher education, to a large extent based on the quality of the basic education received (for a detailed discussion on these, see Section 3.4 of the Literature Review chapter).

e) Whiteness as Property

The view of Whiteness as property stems from its inherent association with privilege, thereby constituting a valuable asset (Harris, 1993; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). This intersects with the property rights, historically exclusive to White South Africans. In the South African context, these were cemented by the Natives Land Act of 1913, which allocated 7% of arable land to Black South Africans, forcing them to lease land from White farmers and rendering it illegal for them to purchase land in White areas, thereby effectively dispossessing them of a critical asset for survival and self-determination. This was later accompanied by Black South Africans' confinement to Bantustans, while their presence in what was considered South Africa was acceptable only insofar as they could provide labour to White South Africa. This demonstrates the lengths to which the governments of the day protected White privileges, as anticipated by Harris (1993). Property rights, according to Harris (1993), facilitate the establishment of an "exclusive club" (p. 1736) that in turn enables access to various resources. Thus, Whiteness is equated to property, as it can be bartered for access to resources. In the South African context, Whiteness as property has been

demonstrated through, for example, its historical exchange for exclusive access to property, economic prosperity, quality education and higher education (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). Moreover, Patton, McEwen, Rendón, and Howard-Hamilton (2007) argue that the use of a curriculum drawing from Western perspectives and, broadly epistemologies, in higher education, coupled with the capital that higher education can bestow on its beneficiaries, also serves as indication of Whiteness as property. Aspects of Whiteness as property, pertaining to the education context, are discussed in detail in the sub-sections below.

Colonial/apartheid epistemologies in HEIs

In reference to the racialisation of higher education, as an example, Zamudio et al. (2011) cite the advocacy of Eurocentric ideologies and ways of knowing, as demonstrated by the elevation of these above indigenous knowledge systems, as the maintenance of a racist status quo. African HEIs are widely acknowledged as, essentially, products of colonial influence that merely imitate Western institutions, instilling an individualist and elitist Western mentality (Nkoane, 2006). In relation to this, scholars have referred to 'epistemicide', to describe the killing of (Ramose, 2003) or "manufactured absence of African epistemologies" (Fataar & Subreenduth, 2015, p. 106) or cultures (Lebakeng et al., 2006). Evidently, Western or broadly, White-supremacist education systems, are vehicles of their respective cultures and, therefore, the identities associated with these. In relation to this, Lebakeng et al. (2006) refer to the untransformed curriculum across South African HEIs as a source of alienation for African students, arguing that "the curriculum does not speak to the experiences of learners, since [it] does not reflect their philosophical, social and technological realities of their environment" (p. 73–74). Concerns regarding this have recently been expressed in the call for decolonised education in South African HEIs by scholars and activists (Hendricks, 2018; Mwaniki et al., 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017).

Zamudio et al. (2011) have argued that education has been used as a tool to enforce and perpetuate the perceived, inherent distinctions between "non-[W]hites" or "the other" (p. 17) and Whites, and to disseminate "master" narratives of dominant groups that, as a result, remain in a privileged position to justify and legitimise colonisation. Similarly, Parker (2003) cites the adoption of a European epistemological framework as a form of hostility, as experienced by minority students, including African-Americans, in the USA's predominantly White HEIs.

Epistimicide, as detailed above, is bound to result in the perceived inferiority of African epistemologies and their sources in the local context, a view that is likely to be detrimental to the general self-concepts of students who, at least in theory, identify with the marginalised epistemologies. Further, a context in which epistemologies that do not reflect these students' experiences are normalised and deemed legitimate, to the exclusion of African epistemologies that the students can identify with, may undermine the students' sense of belonging in that context.

In recognition of this, student activists in South Africa continue to advocate for decolonised education (Mwaniki et al., 2018). I also argue that curricula based on apartheid- and colonial-era epistemological frameworks negatively affect the academic (and socio-psychological) experiences of students from marginalised racial groups. White supremacy, which presupposes Western epistemological legitimacy, coupled with broad systematic incapacitation of other race groups, bestowed dominant race groups with social capital, thereby reinforcing White South Africans' perceived superiority and potential to thrive across contexts, while contributing towards the inferiorisation and internalised inferiority of Black South Africans. I argue that due to such systematic advantages, the experiences (academic and socio-psychological) of White students in historically Black HEIs are not affected in a manner similar to that of Black students in previously White HEIs.

Language of learning and teaching (LOLT)

Arguably, colonisation or its successor, apartheid, is legitimised through the continued use of master narratives, as elucidated above, in contemporary South Africa. Other than the failure of many South African HEIs to incorporate indigenous epistemologies in their curricula as discussed in the above sub-section, further evidence of lack of transformation in higher education is the continued use of English and Afrikaans as mediums of instruction, to the exclusion of African languages, effectively hampering the academic success of students whose first language is neither of the two, as discussed in detail in Chapter 3 (i.e. Literature Review).

In the 1970s, the apartheid government sought to impose Afrikaans as a language of learning and teaching, a move that was, arguably, tantamount to stripping Black learners and Black society in general, of their indigenous identity (Alexander, 2003). This attempt was no different from the presumed then and continuing effects of use of English in the same manner on indigenous identities. Post-apartheid South Africa has seen English being placed in a privileged position as a LOLT and in various other contexts (Tshotsho, 2013) and, paradoxically, being perceived as indicative of upward social mobility by Africans (Alexander, 2003; McKay & Chick, 2001; Msila, 2009; Singh & Bhana, 2015). Currently, former Model C schools, which predominantly catered to White learners in the past, equally, if not more so, cater to many Black learners (Singh & Bhana, 2015). African children's enrolment in former Model C and private schools encourages exclusive use of English as a LOLT, which in extension, might privilege use of English in the social context and further contribute towards the inferiorisation of African languages. This permeation of English usage into social and even domestic interactions might differ for learners in township and rural schools. However, the generic use of English as a LOLT from the intermediate phase until

matric in township and rural schools, after exclusive use of the mother tongue in the foundation phase, suggests that African learners in non-former-Model C schools are not immune from the privilege officially accorded to English above African languages. Use of the mother tongue as a LOLT in the foundation phase is an exact replica of the apartheid government's authorisation of mother-tongue usage in the first three to four years of schooling, following the 1976 uprisings (Alexander, 2003). Paradoxically, these learners are set to be worse off in higher education, where the medium of instruction is exclusively either English or Afrikaans. Various benefits are associated with fluency in the LOLT (e.g. Barrett, Barile, Malm, & Weaver, 2012; Posel & Casale, 2011), thus, highlighting the benefits of mother-tongue usage as a LOLT.

In higher education, students' proficiency in the medium of instruction and therefore, their capability of succeeding in this context, is largely determined by their mastery of the medium of instruction during basic education. This chain of events, coupled with implications of mastery or non-mastery of the medium instruction, highlights the various paradoxes associated with African students' chances of succeeding in higher education, a system which, as suggested by Zamudio et al. (2011), is itself both a product and vehicle of racial inequalities. The imposition of a non-mother-tongue LOLT sets students up for failure and, in the process, normalises under-achievement by African students, for whom little—if any—effort has been made to meaningfully integrate their languages into intermediate basic education and beyond, and higher education.

f) Critique of Liberalism

Critical race theorists denounce concepts such as equal opportunity, meritocracy, race neutrality, incremental change, colour blindness and objectivity (Bartlett & Brayboy, 2005; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ford & Airhihenbuwa, 2010; Lynn & Adams, 2002; Museus, 2013;

Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Taylor, 1998). Rather, these theorists argue that these concepts, discussed in detail in the sub-sections below, only serve to preserve the interests of those in power (e.g. Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

Equal opportunity, meritocracy and race neutrality

The 'meritocracy myth' refers to the flawed notion, according to critical race theorists (Mitchell, 2013), that individuals deserve equal treatment, regardless of structural inequalities. In the higher education context, meritocracy would constitute the assumption that all students have equal opportunities to succeed and to access the resources needed to do so. Along with the assumption of 'equal opportunities', such an approach ignores the structural barriers that are in place, preventing people with marginalised identities from accessing the said opportunities (Mitchell, 2013). Further, these assumptions presuppose race neutrality, disregarding the implications of race within the confines of structures that are inherently racist (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015).

Incremental change

Incremental change refers to the assurance that change can be attained if gradually implemented. Critical race theorists argue that slow introduction of change only serves the interests of those already benefitting from sustained inequalities (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004), as it simply maintains the status quo for a longer period. An example of the futility of this phenomenon is institutional policies, practices and cultures that have not been reformed, 25 years into the post-apartheid dispensation. This is embodied in the concerns brought to the fore during protests across South African HEIs, which called for, among others, the dismantling of colonial legacies and racist institutional cultures, particularly in historically

White HEIs (Essop, 2015; Hendricks, 2018; Gwangwa, 2016; Indrajith, 2015; RDM
Newswire, 2015).

Colour-blindness

Proponents of critical race theory argue against the concept of colour-blindness,
arguing that it undermines social justice (Parker, 2003). This is because colour-blindness
seeks to look past racial classification and, as a result, fails to take into account the disparities
brought about by racial classification, resulting from racism or, more broadly, structural
racism.

Parker (2003) further argues that the role of critical race theory in the legal context,
particularly in the USA, where the theory has been applied to varying contexts, would be to
demonstrate that the interpretation of the law as objective and colour-blind is flawed. One
could argue that in the educational context, as in the current study, it would be equally flawed
to disregard the influence of individual and institutional or even, structural racial background,
and the manner in which these may affect individual functioning in such contexts. In this
study, students from different racial backgrounds are expected to have different social and
academic experiences of the HEIs in which they are enrolled, depending on the latter's
historical racial identity. It is also assumed that dynamics relating to factors identified as
affecting academic success in this study would differ according to race and historical
institutional racial identity.

Some scholars (e.g. Marè, 2011) have argued against race-based theorisations,
arguing that these would, ironically, risk marginalisation of other important indicators such as
class and gender, promote thinking along the lines of race and hamper social cohesion. In
fact, there is currently a growing emphasis on distinctions on the basis of class, rather than
race, with reference popularly being made to class-based inequalities, as opposed to racial

inequalities (e.g. Kane-Berman, 2015). Marè (2013) also considers the use of race as an organising principle in various spheres of society "regrettable and dangerous" (p. 43), instead arguing for a "utopian" way of thinking seeking to "escap[e] a social world made in the image of apartheid". These views rightfully acknowledge the concept of race as a social construct, rather than fixed and essential, and seem particularly favourable for South Africa's post-apartheid reconciliation project, considering the country's segregated past. However, as argued by Alexander (2007), disregarding race is tantamount to disregarding individuals' social realities. Moreover, apartheid-era racial classification has had undeniable effects on, among others, individuals' material conditions, thus warranting continuing emphasis on race in post-apartheid South Africa, so as to enable the restoration of those conditions, if nothing else. Here, I particularly, unjustly highlight material conditions above others (e.g. psychological, socio-psychological) because, given their stark tangibility, the effects of historical racial classification on them cannot be called into question.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (2006) have argued that, despite the apparent subjectivity and malleability of race as an ideological construct, theorisations on race are warranted and dismissal thereof as a social construct would justify the perpetuation of inequalities. Thus, the dismissal of race within a society idealising cohesion, such as South Africa, would in effect, perpetuate social injustice, by perpetuating existing inequalities that are essentially attributable to racial categorisation. Similarly, Leonardo (2009) and Stanfield (1999) acknowledge that, although socially constructed, the concept of race plays a major role in the social context and the institutions governing it. Leonardo further posits that "we have invested [race] with material institutions" (p. 124). It is in view of the above-mentioned concerns that, in addition to the systems theory, critical race theory is considered an important lens through which to analyse the higher education landscape, due to its legitimisation of the perspectives of what Parker (2003) refers to as "outsider groups" (p.

185), whose exclusion is often taken for granted in contexts within which they are marginalised.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter entailed a discussion of the theoretical approaches underpinning this study, namely, systems theory and critical race theory. Firstly, principles of the systemic theory and several perspectives and applications by proponents of this theory, were discussed in relation to factors affecting academic success in higher education. Secondly, as aspects of critical race theory, distinctions were made between types of racism, including institutional and structural racism. Further, principles of critical race theory in higher education were discussed in relation to academic success and broadly, students' experiences in higher education. Justification of the use of both the systems theory and critical race theory was provided, along with an overview of the practical application of both theories in this study.

The following chapter comprises a review of literature related to the study topic and aims.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

The aims of this study were to identify factors that undergraduate students in a historically Black and a historically White HEI consider to affect academic success, as well as to explore how race shapes these students' experiences in their respective institutions. In relation to the aims of the study, this chapter comprises, firstly, a discussion of the self-concept, which includes reference to components of the self-concept, their interactions with one another and contribution towards the maintenance or modification of the self-concept. Emphasis on the self-concept is due to the assumption that academic achievement or success, in general, forms an integral part of the self-concept in the context of the study (i.e. the higher education context) and, therefore, cannot be theoretically separated from other components of the self-concept that respond to, affect or facilitate academic success.

This is followed by a broad discussion of various factors considered to affect academic success according to previous studies, as well as their relationships with one another, if applicable. These factors, which presumably serve as factors affecting academic success or students' experiences in higher education, are as follows: academic self-efficacy, adjustment (including social and academic adjustment), language proficiency, socio-economic status, racial identity (personal and institutional), racial discrimination, locus of control, motivation, emotional factors and learning styles.

Following the above, I present factors affecting academic success, as previously suggested in existing literature, namely, academic self-efficacy, adjustment (including social and academic adjustment), language proficiency and socio-economic status. I also refer to factors previously found or suggested to be positive facilitators of academic success, namely,

locus of control, motivation, emotional factors and learning styles. I illustrate how the former

three have been consistently shown to play a role in academic success or its correlates, such

as academic self-efficacy, whereas the notion of learning styles having an effect on academic

success, as well as their existence, has been highly contended.

In line with my adoption of the systemic theory and critical race theory as the lenses

through which to consider factors affecting academic success and race as a likely contributor

towards students' experiences of higher education, I point out any existing and theoretical

links between the variables discussed in this chapter. In this regard, I draw links within and

between individual factors and institutional factors, as well as factors in the external

environment, such as (student/family) socio-economic status and those in the broader socio-

cultural realm, such as racial discrimination. In line with the tenets of critical race theory, as

discussed in Chapter 2, racial discrimination in this chapter is discussed, by referring to Black

students' experiences of racism in academic contexts in local and international studies, and

how these affected their functioning in these contexts.

3.2 The Self-Concept

In this section, I define the self-concept, of which academic success forms a part, and

elucidate on how factors that presumably affect academic success as shown in Section 3, also

form part of or contribute towards the self-concept, particularly given the assumed dynamics

at the two study sites in the current study. Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton (1976) distinguish

between the academic and non-academic components as parts of the general self-concept.

The academic self-concept is primarily concerned with academic pursuits, while the non-

academic self-concept comprises three broad categories, namely, the social self-concept,

emotional self-concept and physical self-concept. I argue that, other than their effects on the

self-concept, non-social, non-academic, non-emotional and non-physical factors may also, in

fact, form part of the self-concept, as they have implications on how an individual perceives himself or herself either independently or in relation to others or the external environment. In turn, these factors have the potential to affect an individual's experiences in a given environment or, more specifically, determine another aspect of the self-concept, namely, academic success in the context of this study.

The current study considers academic self-efficacy, which forms part of the academic self-concept as theorised by Shavelson et al. (1976), and is discussed in detail in Section 3.1, to be a possible factor affecting academic success. Moreover, considering the various components that broadly make up and influence the self-concept, as elucidated above, I anticipate that various other psychological, social, psychosocial and structural factors such as adjustment, discrimination, language, motivation, locus of control, emotional self-efficacy and the adoption of learning styles, as well as socio-economic status (See corresponding sub-sections in Section 3) could affect students' academic success or overall experiences in the higher education context. This anticipation is due to the links previously shown between these factors and academic success in previous studies.

In addition to the above, the historical racial identities of HEIs, racial identities of students enrolled at these institutions and perceived racism are assumed to either make up or inform the students' self-concepts. This is in line with Bandura's (1997) suggestion that the self-concept is determined by one's interaction with the environment. It is in view of this that this study considers participants' race and institutions' historical racial identities in consideration of factors assumed to affect academic success.

Baron and Byrne (2006) describe the self-concept as encompassing all the factors contributing towards one's definition of oneself. Obviously, interactions between these factors might not only affect the manifestation of related aspects of the self-concept, but also unsettle one's self-concept. For example, firstly, discrimination could directly influence an

individual's experiences or hamper a certain individual outcome (e.g. academic success), as a result of direct mistreatment or discriminatory treatment. Secondly, discrimination may covertly influence individuals' psychological and even physical health (Cormack, Stanley, & Harris, 2018; Dinh, Holmberg, Ho, & Haynes, 2014; Hardeman, Medina, & Kozhimannil, 2016) (and therefore, the emotional, physical or social self-concept), further demonstrating the extent to which the social environment can affect individual functioning and, therefore, a seemingly individual pursuit such as academic success. Poor psychological well-being or an eroded self-concept as a result of discrimination could have negative implications for the academic success of targets of discrimination. Studies have also shown a negative self-concept due to general feelings of inferiority or predisposition to victimisation (e.g. racial inferiority or discrimination) across contexts (e.g. Najdowski, Bottoms, & Goff, 2015). However, a study wherein members of a racial group at the receiving end of prejudice had high private regard for the ingroup, despite their awareness of the negative regard accorded to the group by members of the outgroups, suggests that discrimination does not unequivocally have a negative impact on the self-concept of marginalised groups (Wiley, Perkins, & Deaux, 2008). This raises questions about the implications of perceived racial discrimination on various components of the self-concept, other than academic success, for members of marginalised groups. This suggests that racial discrimination may, in fact, mediate the associations between academic success and factors known to correlate with it (e.g. academic self-efficacy; Di Giunta, Alessandri, Gerbino, Kanacri, Zuffiano, & Caprara, 2013). In addition to the above, mere exposure to an environment with a historical racial identity that is incongruent with one's own racial identity may negatively affect various aspects of individuals' self-concepts. It is in consideration of the above-mentioned observations that the current study seeks to explore the manner in which personal race and historical institutional racial identity affect academic success or, broadly, experiences at the two study sites.

In their study, Close and Solberg (2008) found a negative correlation between students' levels of psychological distress and self-efficacy. The latter has been consistently linked with actual academic achievement in previous studies (e.g. Di Giunta, Alessandri, Gerbino, Kanacri, Zuffiano, & Caprara, 2013; Meral, Coyal, & Zereyak, 2012). Moreover, failure to adjust could result in psychological distress. In turn, this could negatively affect self-efficacy (Close & Solberg, 2008) and, ultimately, academic achievement in higher education. In relation to this, health and well-being have been found to predict the academic success of Ghanaian adolescents (Glozah & Pevalin, 2014). Similarly, Beauvais, Stewart, DeNisco, and Beauvais (2013) found that academic outcomes positively correlated with emotional well-being and resilience. In the South African context, Dass-Brailsford (2005) found that African students from disadvantaged communities who performed well academically, also showed resiliency, motivation, goal-orientation, initiative "and experienced the self as possessing a measure of agency" (p. 581). In the current study, given their indication of students' ability to cope with the demands of academic life and the general higher education context, social and academic adjustment may be identified as affecting students' academic success.

Socio-economic incongruities have been shown to negatively affect individuals' health and well-being (Albor et al., 2014) and a relationship has been found between low socio-economic status and self-esteem (e.g. Falci, 2011). Such relationships indicate ways in which the socio-economic status can negatively affect the self-concept. It is in view of this that the current study anticipates that socio-economic status, as a presumed aspect of the self-concept, might affect academic success.

3.3 Factors Affecting Academic Success

In this study, it is assumed that not only do the identified factors have distinct relationships with academic success, but that they might be linked with each other in various ways. This sub-section consists of a discussion of factors assumed to affect academic success.

3.3.1 Academic self-efficacy

Nonis, Hudson, Philhours, and Teng (2005) acknowledge that students' psychological attributes, which influence academic success, are the result of a combination of factors, such as past academic experiences, abilities and self-assessment. In the current study, academic self-efficacy is assumed to refer to subjective beliefs regarding one's capability to succeed academically; the definition of academic self-efficacy as such is based on Louw and Edwards's (1997) definition of general self-efficacy as individuals' own beliefs regarding their abilities to do/execute certain tasks. This definition is also bolstered by Bandura's (2012) acknowledgement that self-efficacy differs across contexts. In the higher education context, academic self-efficacy presumably prevails, particularly in relation to one's studies.

Previous studies have shown a direct link between academic self-efficacy and actual academic achievement, suggesting that higher academic self-efficacy tends to influence academic achievement (e.g. Cătălina, Stănescu, & Mohorea, 2012; Di Giunta et al., 2013; Meral et al., 2012; Narasimha & Reddy, 2017). Muwonge, Schiefele, Sseyonga, and Kibedi (2017), on the other hand, have shown a link between self-efficacy and metacognition, whose benefits are discussed at length elsewhere in this chapter. Other variables with which academic self-efficacy has previously shown a link are self-regulation, locus of control, intrinsic motivation and the use of learning strategies (Bartimote-Aufflick, Bridgeman, Walker, Sharma, & Smith, 2016). The latter three's distinct contributions towards academic success are discussed in detail in the latter sections of this chapter.

The link between academic self-efficacy and achievement may be complicated by other factors within the academic environment. An example of this is language proficiency in the medium of instruction in higher education. Language proficiency may undermine a sense of academic self-efficacy for students who are not proficient in the medium of instruction. In addition, other concepts assumed to have an association with self-efficacy, such as motivation, self-regulation and metacognition (e.g. Komarraju & Nadler, 2013; Zuffianò et al., 2013), may also be negatively affected by lack of language proficiency.

In their study on school racial composition, Hopson, Lee, and Tang (2014) found that, of the 318 schools studies, those with African-American learners in the majority tended to report poorer academic outcomes, as well as concerns regarding safety, behaviour, social support for the learners and, in general, an unfavourable environment. In the South African context, township or rural schools primarily attended by African learners are under-resourced, with a lower quality of instruction, and were, under the auspices of the then Bantu Education Act of 1953, historically mandated to provide inferior education to Black learners, which was reflected in the minimal provision of resources to these schools and a curriculum equipping these learners for a life of perpetual servitude, as envisaged for the Black collective (Nkomo, 1990). The bulk of state resources was channelled towards White schools. Gross inequalities on these grounds between South African schools remain (Ndimande, 2013). With the abolishment of segregated schooling, along with the apartheid system, former Model C schools have taken to admitting students of all races, and typically attract learners of a higher socio-economic background, as they tend to be more expensive than rural and township schools are (Ndimande, 2006). The arguably lesser predisposition to under-preparedness for higher education and a lesser likelihood of being a first-generation student for this student sub-population, suggests a higher likelihood of success in higher education. The factors described as concerns in Hopson et al.'s (2014) above-mentioned study, presumably also a

concern in under-resourced South African schools serving learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds, could also negatively affect the learners' perceived academic self-efficacy. Presumably, a poorly resourced schooling environment does not instil a personal sense of being equipped to thrive academically, particularly when confronted with the lack of material resources to do so. Prince and Nurius (2014) have argued that a positive self-concept would enhance long-term educational aspirations and success. One could argue that learners who are exposed to basic education conditions that were historically designed to produce academic non-achievers that, in turn, erode the learners' self-efficacy, will inevitably thwart academic achievement, let alone long-term academic aspirations. Exceptional learners from such environments who, despite the odds, get admitted into higher education, could either continue succeeding academically, despite limitations, or be exposed to an environment with a new set of challenges that they are unable to cope with. Difficulties with adjustment for such students are discussed in detail in Section 3.3.2.

Illustrating the importance of the social environment in self-efficacy, Bandura (2012) posits that "[s]eeing people similar to oneself succeed by perseverant effort" (i.e. social modelling; p. 13) enhances self-efficacy. In addition, social persuasion, which refers to persuasion by others to believe in oneself, enhances perseverance and, ultimately, self-efficacy. Other sources of self-efficacy, as identified by Bandura (2012), are experiences of mastery in a given task, as well as optimal physical and emotional states.

3.3.2 Adjustment

A study by Rodgers and Tennison (2009) identified symptoms of adjustment disorder among first-year students. This clinical condition could ostensibly have a negative effect on affected students' academic success and retention, as well as undermine their general sense of well-being during their academic careers. In relation to this, Dix, Slee, Lawson, and Keeves

(2012) found that, in a sample comprising public and private, and rural and urban schools in Australia, there was a positive correlation between high-quality implementation of a mental health programme and academic performance, regardless of the learners' socio-economic status. Adjustment to university is particularly important to consider as a possibly affecting factor, taking into account Rodríguez, Tinajero, and Páramo's (2017) assertion that this variable mediates the effect of some predictors of academic achievement such as gender, parents' education levels and family support. The above-mentioned studies suggest an association between optimal mental health and academic performance, thereby suggesting a need for HEIs to establish means to ensure adequate mental health.

Nightingale et al. (2013) found that students who experienced an increase in adjustment levels also tended to have higher emotional efficacy and management strategies which, in turn, facilitated effective adaptation. In contrast, those with low, yet stable levels of adjustment had lower emotion self-efficacy and management strategies, and poor academic outcomes. Family background may also have an effect on students' adjustment and related factors. As shown by Darlow, Norvilitis, and Schuetze (2017), 'helicopter parenting', which involves parents' excessive control over their children, affording the latter little autonomy, has an indirect effect on students' adjustment in college, in turn negatively affecting academic success. Llamas, Morgan Consoli, and Nguyen's (2018) focus on intragroup marginalisation and conclusion that such marginalisation by friends predicts psychological distress among first-year Latina/o college students, alludes to the importance of an immediate social support network following transition into higher education.

In an earlier study at a South African HEI, Sommer and Dumont (2011) investigated various psychosocial factors' facilitation of academic adjustment and, thus, prediction of academic success. The study found that intrinsic motivation and perceived stress predicted adjustment and that, to some extent, the relationships between academic success and the

factors included in the model proposed in that study (i.e. motivation, self-esteem, perceived stress, academic overloading, self-esteem and help-seeking) were partly mediated by academic adjustment. Evidently, there are various psychosocial factors underlying either academic or social adjustment, which could be mediators of the relationship between the latter variables and academic success.

Nel et al. (2016) provided an overview of social and academic adjustment factors that either facilitated or hampered students' adjustment to their peri-urban, historically disadvantaged South African HEI. Academic adjustment factors included academic support from lecturing staff and academic departments; financial support; a high workload, teaching methods that differed from those in high school and lack of accommodation. Social adjustment factors comprised social and emotional support and disintegration, which included social isolation, being homesick and difficulty adapting to change. In their study in the USA, Lopez and Jones (2017) found that fathers' highest level of education and interaction with faculty predicted participants' academic adjustment. This finding suggests that parental education levels (arguably, generally lower for Black students due to historical disadvantage) and cultural barriers between, for example, Black students and non-Black university staff, could hamper effective interaction, let alone communication between these students and their lecturers. This could further be compounded by such students' enrolment in HWHEIs with institutional cultures that are dissonant with the students' identities. Lopez and Jones (2017) further suggest that students' social and academic involvement could enhance their social adjustment. These observations allude to the role of institutional, psychosocial and socio-political dynamics in both social and academic adjustment.

In keeping with the role of broader dynamics, as discussed above, Sacker, Schoon, and Bartley (2002) investigated the effect of material resources on psychosocial adjustment and academic achievement during the developmental course. These authors have suggested

that a family's material deprivation is likely to lead to its constituents identifying with equally materially deprived peers in the surrounding neighbourhoods. On this basis, it could be argued that identification with individuals of a similar socio-economic status enhances self-esteem, given the possibly negative feelings that could arise from perceptions of the obvious inequalities between oneself and individuals of a higher socio-economic status. Thus, exposure to peers from different socio-economic backgrounds could arguably have negative implications on the esteem of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The recent announcement regarding the subsidisation of undergraduate studies in South African HEIs could mean that socio-economically disadvantaged students' ability to cope in this context may be drastically compromised, upon gaining a heightened sense of awareness of their relatively deprived material conditions, in comparison to other students (Machika & Johnson, 2015). Thus, a comparatively low socio-economic status might negatively affect such students' ability to adapt in such a setting, thereby affecting their social adjustment.

Poor adjustment patterns can affect areas other than the student's academic success, such as physical health or mental health, as mentioned earlier in this sub-section, or lead to various social problems. Students may turn to substance abuse while attempting to adjust to the higher education context. LaBrie, Ehret, Hummer, and Prenovost (2012) have identified an association between adjustment and alcohol consumption. Local studies have shown that alcohol use and abuse is prevalent in the South African student population, and that use tends to increase along with year of study (e.g. Nkoana, Sodi, & Darikwa, 2016; Van Zyl et al., 2015). In turn, alcohol consumption as a means to cope with poor adjustment could bring about a different set of long-term complications, such as alcohol dependence (Hayatbakhsh, Najman, Bor, Clavarino, & Alati, 2011), poor physical and psychological well-being (Mentzakis, Suhrcke, Roberts, Murphy, & McKee, 2013; Wardell, Read, & Colder, 2013) or health, and various other social problems (Govender, Nel, & Mogotsi, 2015; Kheswa &

Hoho, 2017), as well as have a directly negative effect on academic performance. In summary, the inability to adjust could predispose students to difficulties such as substance abuse and its accompanying effects.

The transition from basic to higher education is a major one. Proficiency in the medium of instruction could also compromise academic adjustment. The extent and implications of code-switching in basic education are discussed extensively in Section 3.3, shown to have dire effects on students' proficiency in the medium of instruction in higher education. Other than an unfamiliar academic context and medium of instruction for students previously exposed to code-switching, many students also have to contend with an unfamiliar social and cultural environment (Buchanan, Ljungdahl, & Maher, 2015). The drastic change in environment might bring about a sense of alienation and undermine the students' sense of mastery over their environments. Sennett et al. (2003) have indicated that this may particularly prove problematic for African students in HWHEIs, as they are likely to be accommodated in university residences entrenched in the historical culture of the institution, and immersed in unfamiliar environments that do not instil a sense of belonging. Nomdo (2017) reports on similar challenges experienced by a Black University of Cape Town (UCT) student, who felt alienated, with no sense of belonging, and essentially Othered at the university, with its urbanised culture and, primarily, stark Whiteness, which was antithetical to his own identity and background. In relation to this, David and Niță (2014) found that alienation among first-year students negatively correlated with positive self-perceptions and a sense of control over events, and that trust in others lessened feelings of alienation. A context that one does not identify with, as outlined by Sennett et al. (2003), is unlikely to instil a sense of trust in the environment or in other social actors, particularly if this interaction is permeated by keen awareness of dissonance between personal racial identity and historical institutional racial identity or institutional culture, which may inherently be racist. Wide

discrepancies in the minority and majority statuses of social groups within a particular context are likely to lead to what Ployhart, Ziegert, and McFarland (2003) refer to as 'stigma consciousness', referring to "the extent to which a person expects to be stereotyped by others" (p. 238). Needless to say, such a context may bring about a continuous sense of anxiety and apprehension, which could negatively affect the potential to adjust among historically marginalised students, regardless of numerical status, in such contexts (Kellow & Jones, 2008). It is in view of this that the current study explores the experiences of Black and White students in historically Black and White institutions, to determine the racially diverse student samples' experiences according to historical institutional racial identities. Specifically, the study explores how personal and historical institutional racial identities, and factors related to these, shape students' experiences in higher education.

Alienating institutional cultures, as discussed above, may lead to attrition. This is presumably probable for students in higher education institutions with a historical racial identity that is dissonant to their own, as also shown above. Given the historically racialised nature of South African HEIs, the current study samples students of different races from an HBHEI and an HWHEI. In the analysis of data, in addition to all participants' overall experiences of factors affecting their academic success, I also especially consider participants' experiences of factors affecting academic success, according to race and other arguably racial factors such as proficiency in the medium of instruction, which presumably contributes towards adjustment (see Section 3.3.3 for a detailed discussion). Where relevant, participants' majority and minority status at their respective institutions in relation to the findings will be highlighted in the interpretation of findings.

The alienation and marginalisation experienced by Black students in HWHEIs reportedly also stems from few Black academics who serve as role models and the adoption of Eurocentric curricula that do not reflect these students' existential experiences

(Department of Higher Education and Training, 2016), as also shown in Nomdo's (2017) above-mentioned study. In HBHEIs, alienation may occur as a result of ethnicity, xenophobia, sexism and homophobia (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2016). In view of this, the current study seeks not only to identify comprehensive factors affecting academic success, but to also highlight factors unique to either institution, that may be alienating participants on the aforementioned or other grounds.

3.3.3 Language proficiency

A presumably large percentage of African entrants into higher education have an African language as a first language. The transition into higher education, therefore, requires proficiency in a language that is not the predominant mode of communication for most African university entrants (Vandeyar, 2008). This predisposes them to poor academic performance and academic self-efficacy, especially in the absence of a support structure that might have been provided by basic education instructors in the form of translation of concepts into learners' home language or code-switching (Chikiwa & Schäfer, 2016; Doidge & Lelliott, 2017), which refers to the use of more than one language in a classroom context, typically used to facilitate understanding for non-speakers of the LOLT.

English proficiency has been identified as a predictor of academic achievement and prospects in the labour market in local and international studies (Barrett et al., 2012; Posel & Casale, 2011). Barrett et al. (2012) found a positive relationship between academic motivation in relation to Mathematics and English proficiency among non-native learners at an English-medium school. Thus, students who are not proficient in the medium of instruction in this study might report low academic motivation, and the latter variable may be a contributor towards low academic success. Based on academic self-efficacy's prediction of academic success, as shown in previous studies, proficiency in the medium of instruction in

higher education may be assumed to have implications not only for academic success, but also the psychosocial functioning of the individual, as represented by self-efficacy.

Hrbáková, Hladík, and Vávrová (2012) have stated that metacognition plays a major role in academic success. Metacognition refers to being conscious of one's own mental processes (Rahimi & Katal, 2012). Probyn et al. (2002) posit that lack of competency in English when it is a LOLT leads to learners resorting to rote learning, which hampers the possibility of metacognition, as described above. In the current study, lack of proficiency in the medium of instruction could undermine metacognition and, therefore, sufficient grasp of academic concepts, resulting in academic under-performance.

The problematic nature of language proficiency is demonstrated by the wide usage of code-switching in many schools where English is not a first language for the majority of Black or, more specifically, African learners in township and rural schools (Chikiwa & Schäfer, 2016; Doidge & Lelliott, 2017). One would assume that learners in former Model C schools are better off because of more sustained and regular exposure to the use of English as a medium of communication. However, Halle, Hair, Wandner, McNamara, and Chien (2012) demonstrated that learners who attained English proficiency by kindergarten, despite it not being their first language, fared as well in reading and Mathematics as did first-language English learners over time, whereas those who attained proficiency by the first grade fared *nearly* as well as first-language English learners did over time, although the discrepancies either persisted or narrowed down. Those who had not attained proficiency by the first grade had the largest initial discrepancies, as compared to first-language learners; these narrowed down over time, too. Thus, despite the relatively longer exposure to the exclusive use of either English or Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, students whose first language is not either one of these are not necessarily much better off than their counterparts who

matriculated from township or rural schools that did not exclusively use either English or Afrikaans due to code-switching practices.

In addition to the above, the nuances of the English language in academic settings differ from those of use during non-formal communication. For instance, Cummins (2014) emphasises the importance of teaching academic language to learners, in adherence to the Common Core State Standards, which emphasises a need for specific subject areas to be carefully addressed by both content teachers and English-as-a-second-language teachers. In addition, Harrington and Roche (2014) went on to state that the best predictors of academic outcomes in an English-medium course for a sample of first-year university students whose first language was not English, were academic writing and the recognition of low- and high-frequency words. Observations relating to the importance of academic English, coupled with the findings in the studies cited above, suggest that African learners who are more socially exposed to English during social interaction, are not necessarily more advantaged in academic settings, compared to those attending rural and township schools, where English is typically a second language or, at best, an additional first language, and code-switching is the norm. This further suggests that the long-term academic prospects of these learners may not differ, supporting Mkhize's (2016) assertion that the exclusion of learners' everyday linguistic practices hampers their epistemic access.

It is important to note that, despite the challenges associated with non-mother tongue education, there are advantages to fluency in more than one language. Studies have shown that it has many advantages for cognition, as shown by its contribution towards the performance of executive functioning tasks (Sorge, Toplak, & Bialystok, 2018), and its association with visual processing and object finding efficiency (Chabal, Schroeder, & Marian, 2015), and visual attention (Friesen, Latman, Calvo, & Bialystok, 2015). Other studies have demonstrated bilingualism's or multilingualism's promotion of creativity,

efficient problem-solving and flexibility in relation to academic or problem-solving tasks, and the role that it plays in cognitive processes such as memory and attention (Cushen & Wiley, 2011; Hernández, Costa, & Humphreys, 2012; Leikin, 2012). This could mean that bilingual or multilingual students who have attained fluency in an HEI's medium of instruction may have an advantage in terms of success, compared to their non-proficient peers. However, as concluded above, lack of academic proficiency specifically in English could be detrimental to the immediate academic success of students who are not first-language English speakers, yet multilingual. This is true for many Black South Africans in general, who are multilingual, yet not necessarily fluent in conversational English (Webb, Lafon, & Pare, 2010), whereas paradoxically, English is one of only two mediums of instruction (alongside Afrikaans) for the greater part of basic education (from Grades 4 to 12; Van Staden & Howie, 2012) and exclusively so in higher education (Ndebele & Zulu, 2017).

There is also a need to take into account the paradox relating to code-switching, as experienced by teachers. On the one hand, English is typically associated with social mobility and various career-related advantages, at the expense of African languages (McKay & Chick, 2001; Msila, 2009; Singh & Bhana, 2015). Alexander (2003) posits that the perceived advantages of the English language have been touted since the colonial period in South Africa, the effects of which persist in present-day South Africa, perhaps on a much larger scale than previously. Indeed, Posel and Casale (2011) found substantial discrepancies in income between South African adults describing themselves as proficient in English, as compared to those who are not proficient. The importance attached to English above African languages is further informed by the historical denunciation of African customs and practices, including language during the apartheid era, as a tool of oppression (Alexander, 2003; Kamwangamalu, 2003; Prah, 2007). These factors have presumably led to learners and their parents in township and rural schools preferring the exclusive use of English as a medium of

instruction. This results in teachers having to tactically strike a balance between using English as a LOLT on learners who do not have sufficient grasp of the language. In order to enable comprehension of the subject material, these teachers resort to code-switching (Probyn, 2009). The teachers in Probyn's (2009) study acknowledged that code-switching "kills [the learners'] English" (p. 128), as the learners will have to, in future, independently navigate through their academic careers with the exclusive use of English, a language that they describe as a foreign language. Given the above, language proficiency in the medium of instruction in higher education has the potential to undermine the academic experiences and outcomes of non-native speakers of English or Afrikaans, the primary media of instructions at South African HEIs.

Despite the challenges associated with non-proficiency in the medium of instruction, questions have previously been raised with varying levels of cynicism as to whether African languages can be developed to the extent that they can be used as media of instruction in higher education, let alone throughout basic education (Foley, 2004). In a recent study, Van Rooy and Coetzee-Van Rooy (2015) showed that language measures such as matric marks for languages and marks on academic literacy tests do not predict academic success in university. However, other studies have shown that Black high school learners are not proficient in academic English, lacking an understanding of key academic terms, thereby undermining subject understanding, despite use of English as a LOLT since Grade 4 (e.g. Pare & Webb, 2007). This presupposes poor academic performance. In view of this, calls for mother-tongue education in South African HEIs continue (Webb et al., 2010). The closest response to such calls by South African HEIs, thus far, is the University of Kwazulu Natal's (UKZN's) ground-breaking introduction of compulsory isiZulu for all students from the 2014 academic year. As demonstration of its commitment to the incorporation of isiZulu into its curriculum, UKZN has also adopted the language as one of the mediums of instructions for

B.Ed. Honours specialisation modules, with the option for enrolled students to use it as a language of research for their research projects (Mkhize & Balfour, 2017). Foley (2004) also argued that the enforcement of African languages as media of instructions in higher education would be a form of "social engineering" (p. 60), evidently failing to take into account the social engineering that went into the advancement of the Afrikaans language, which led to its establishment not only as a legitimate language and means of communication, but also in academic and occupational settings both in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. Such criticism seemingly regards the obstacles associated with the development of African languages as far outweighing the potential benefits that such an undertaking would extend not only to African students, but to the development of indigenous languages and to the speakers thereof within the broader society. Such an undertaking would also demonstrate the post-apartheid government's commitment to the reformation of South African society following the country's segregated past with deeply entrenched inequalities, whose legacy remains.

3.3.4 Socio-economic status

The role played by the socio-economic status in academic achievement or general functioning within an academic context, as found in some studies (e.g. Branson, Hofmeyr, & Lam, 2014; Fergusson, Horwood, & Boden, 2008; Ho et al., 2016), is neither limited to an individual student's personal financial circumstances nor his or her family's socio-economic standing. Schools that are primarily located in South African townships and rural areas are predominantly poor due to historical factors and their inability to bring into effect a competitive fee structure enabling them to supplement the state's contribution (Branson et al., 2014; Christie, 2010; Ndimande, 2006). By virtue of their locations and the socio-economic standing of their beneficiary communities, these schools have inherited the inequalities of the apartheid system, leading to lack of resources ranging from educational materials,

overcrowded classrooms and unfavourable physical conditions. The combination of these factors significantly lowers the quality of the education imparted onto learners at these schools, thereby significantly lessening their opportunities to succeed beyond high school education. Such learners' educational experiences, the teaching that they receive, and academic results, are significantly inferior to those of learners in wealthier schools, particularly those formerly designated as White and Indian, due to their historically exclusive enrolment of learners from these respective race groups (Branson et al., 2014; Christie, 2010; Yamauchi, 2011). This results in a discernible achievement gap between learners enrolled in historically disadvantaged and historically advantaged schools (Taylor, Van der Berg, Reddy, & Van Rensburg, 2015), and thwarts the former's future prospects even before they exit basic education.

A low family socio-economic status could also lessen the prospects of students in higher education. Limited financial resources even in higher education might mean that such students have to find employment in order to finance their studies or living costs, given the recent pronouncement of free higher education in public South African HEIs (Phakathi, 2018). On the other hand, being employed while studying has the potential to put such students under tremendous strain, reduce their potential to succeed in higher education, and possibly result in attrition. In fact, Branson et al. (2014) have shown that a significant number of students who drop out in basic education are from low socio-economic backgrounds, whereas Letseka et al. (2010) attest to the same for those dropping out in higher education. In fact, according to the latter, African and Coloured students who drop out from higher education give a higher rating to financial constraints than academic reasons for their decisions to drop out.

It is important to note the possible difficulties of accurately distinguishing between the effects of racial discrimination and socio-economic status. This is because of the inherent

relationship between race and socio-economic status in the South African context, with socio-economic inequalities presumably continuing to be a direct result of racial inequalities, as systematically engineered by the apartheid government. Black students from disadvantaged backgrounds in Dass-Brailsford's (2005) study gave accounts of the manner in which their disadvantaged backgrounds affected their studies. These included not having a library in their township, where they were residing during their studies, being vulnerable to crime when returning home late, lack of transportation, being unable to cover expenses relating to their studies and other amenities and not having separate study areas in their homes. The multiple stressors experienced by these students, with poverty as a primary source, which was also reflected in the very structures of their environments (e.g. lack of or poorly resourced libraries in townships, townships not being in close proximity to amenities such as HEIs, financial constraints pertaining to their studies and evidently being from poor households), are evident. In consideration of this likely intersection between socio-economic status and race, critical race theory will be used in the current study to identify the intersections between these and any other emerging marginalised identities, as well as their cumulative influence on participants' experiences (Bartlett & Brayboy, 2005; Brayboy, 2005; Gillborn, 2015; Kumasi, 2011; Lynn & Adams, 2002; McCabe, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

Studies have reported on the shame or stigma associated with poverty (e.g. Li & Walker, 2017; Reutter, Stewart, Veenstra, Love, Raphael, & Makwarimba, 2009; Simons, Houkes, Koster, Groffen, & Bosma, 2018), with others focusing on variables that could be regarded as indicators of poverty. For instance, similar to Keene and Padilla (2010), Kelaher, Warr, Feldman, and Tacticos (2010) found that stigma abounds among marginalised individuals residing in disadvantaged areas, referred to by the former as "high-poverty" neighbourhoods (p. 1216). Many other studies have found an association between stigma and unemployment and receiving welfare benefits (e.g. Contini & Richiardi, 2012; Kelly, 1996;

Li & Walker, 2017; Simons et al., 2018; Stuber & Schlesinger, 2006). Thus, the

stigmatisation of poverty or the shame associated with it may not always be explicit. This

means that students from disadvantaged backgrounds may be acutely aware of their relative

disadvantage in stark contrast with their peers from more affluent backgrounds. This could

lead to the internalisation of stigmatisation and negatively affect such individuals' self-

esteem and other aspects of the self-concept, as well as adjustment. Fernqvist (2013) has

found that learners from low socio-economic backgrounds employ self-exclusion by, for

instance, declining participation in activities with peers, to avoid being exposed, and

therefore become alienated from their peers. In addition, Zhang, Li, Liu, and Xie (2014) have

found self-esteem to be a mediator of the relationship between social exclusion and stigma

perception among people with disabilities. Since academic self-efficacy is considered an

important marker of self-esteem in relation to one's primary occupation (i.e. being a student)

in the study's context, it is assumed that a low socio-economic status may not only affect

academic success, but could also somewhat be associated with adjustment (particularly social

adjustment) and, possibly, academic self-efficacy. Academic self-efficacy is particularly

important, in relation to socio-economic status, since students of a low socio-economic status

may not have access to learning resources such as being able to purchase text books and

photocopy learning material, Internet access, or even computer literacy. These could

independently undermine academic self-efficacy and performance. In the current study, the

likelihood of a low socio-economic status negatively affecting such students' self-esteem, as

described above, could mean that students are less likely to seek help when necessary, either

within social or academic settings, which could have negative implications for both social

and academic adjustment and, possibly, academic success. Studies have also shown direct

links between socio-economic status and psychological well-being or mental health. For

instance, Ibrahim, Kelly, and Glazebrook (2013) found that UK students of a lower socio-

economic status are at a higher risk of depression. Similarly, Simić-Vukomanović et al. (2016) showed that students of a lower socio-economic status were more likely to report symptoms of depression and anxiety. Assari, Preiser, and Kelly (2018) have reported links between education, income, which reasonably presupposes socio-economic status, and emotional well-being. However, these associations were moderated by race, such that the mental health gains derived from a higher income were observed among White participants, but not Black participants, thereby suggesting structural racism as an impediment for the latter. In support of this notion, Assari, Gibbons, and Simons (2018) report that a higher socio-economic status is, in fact, associated with more depressive symptoms among Black youth residing in predominantly White residential areas, due to enduring exposure to racial discrimination in these contexts. As shown earlier in this sub-section, academic success as early as during basic education is largely determined by individual or school socio-economic status, both of which are inherently racialised. The above demonstrates the negative implications of socio-economic status on students' psychological and mental well-being, which might in turn hamper academic success. Assari, Gibbons, and Simons's (2018) finding complicates expectations regarding the implications of a high socio-economic status on the academic success and, broadly, experiences of Black participants in higher education in the current study. The above observations suggest not only distinct effects of socio-economic status and poor psychological well-being on academic success, but also the cumulative effects thereof.

3.3.5 Racial discrimination

Racial discrimination in the academic context in South Africa has been widely reported in both high schools and higher education. The Soudien report (Department of Education, 2008) released just over 10 years ago provided a comprehensive account of the

nature and prevalence of racism specifically in South African HEIs. The discussion below gives an overview of race and the dynamics and implications thereof in the education context in South Africa.

3.3.5.1 Personal racial identity

Perceptions of racial discrimination, in keeping with findings in some studies (e.g. Barrett et al., 2012; Woldoff et al., 2011), would be expected to negatively affect respondents' academic experiences and, possibly, achievement. However, Brown and Tylka (2011) found that more exposure to racial discrimination was positively associated with resilience among African-American students who reported having received more racial socialisation messages. In a more recent study, Cunningham, Francois, Rodriguez, and White Lee (2018) also reported that a strong racial identity enhances resilience among Black adolescents when exposed to negative youth experiences. These findings were confirmed by Burt and Simons (2015) specifically for female African-Americans in their encounters with the criminal justice system. This trend suggests that heightened awareness of one's membership to a particular, marginalised group, may serve as a buffer against the potentially negative effects of racial discrimination. Heightened awareness of one's marginalised group, in this instance race, could result in heightened awareness of the injustices affecting one's group. This awareness would presumably necessitate the development of strategies to counter instances of prejudice or discrimination. This is compatible with Brown and Tylka's (2011) above-mentioned reference to the association between resilience and racial discrimination among African-American students with predominantly more exposure to racial socialisation messages. In fact, the private collective self-esteem (i.e. own regard for the ingroup) of members of marginalised groups has been found to be negatively associated with public collective self-esteem (i.e. outgroup members' regard for the ingroup), such that high private

collective self-esteem is typically associated with low public collective self-esteem (e.g.
Thomas, 2017; Wiley, Perkins, & Deaux, 2008). This suggests that members of the ingroup
may be consciously, intentionally cultivating positive regard for the group, in spite of
outgroup members' negative regard for the group. This then presumably results in resilience
in inverse proportion to racial prejudice, or awareness thereof.

In their study, Outten, Giguère, Schmitt, and Lalonde (2009) showed that in
intergroup contexts, Black Canadians' assumption of a racial identity emphasising the
uniqueness of the Black experience in relation to other race groups was associated with
attributions of racially ambiguous situations to racial discrimination. In contrast, those with a
racial identity inclined towards assimilation were less likely to attribute similar situations to
racial discrimination. This raises questions regarding contextual factors at play that may
result in, on the one hand, a strong racial identity heightening awareness of racial
discrimination and unequivocally fostering resilience during exposure to discriminatory
incidents or, on the other hand, heightening sensitivity to neutral situations and misattributing
these to racial discrimination. Coleman, Chapman, and Wang's (2012) finding may explain
the above observation, wherein a strong racial identity coincides with misattributions of
ambiguous situations to racial discrimination. In their study, these authors found a negative
association between colour-blind racial attitudes and race-related stress among African-
American students, when well-being was controlled for. This would suggest that, among
individuals with adequate levels of psychological well-being, the less salient one's racial
identity, then the less prone one is to experiencing racial discrimination as a significant
stressor, despite being a member of a marginalised group. Thus, the findings in Outten et al.'s
(2009) study may presuppose mediation by poor psychological wellbeing among the
participants with a salient race identity. Moreover, poor psychological wellbeing may
coincide with depleted cognitive resources, necessitating that one resort to stereotypes or

more easily accessible interpretations, thereby resulting in the misattribution of neutral situations to racial discrimination. Given the observed importance of psychological wellbeing in its contribution towards how members of marginalised groups judge social situations, in the current study, it might be important to especially note participants' accounts of their experiences in relation to race and psychological health. Where applicable, in the interpretation of findings, links will be drawn between participants' experiences at their HEIs and reported markers of well-being. However, the extent to which psychological wellbeing can be divorced from racial experiences is unclear, as mere reports of such incidents, or awareness thereof or their inevitability, could presuppose poor psychological wellbeing. Previous studies have consistently shown racial discrimination to be associated with poor psychological wellbeing or functioning (Benner, Wang, Boyle, Polk, & Cheng, 2018; Sellers, Caldwell, Schmeelk-Cone, & Zimmerman, 2003; Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006; Williams et al., 2008).

In relation to the above, I also argue that on their own, previous experiences of racial prejudice/discrimination in a context that emphasises racial distinctions and, as a result, brings individuals' racial identity salience into the foreground, could deplete psychological resources and, even, lead to the misattribution of neutral situations to race, as reported by Coleman et al. (2012). Moreover, immersion in contexts that emphasise racial distinctions could prime participants' framing of their experiences according to race. This presupposes a not too discernible link between participants' psychological wellbeing *per se*, and their reports of racial discrimination or prejudice. In fact, critical race theory suggests the inevitability and inherence of racism in institutional and social structures (Zamudio et al., 2011). Based on the above discussion, in my drawing of links between reports of racial prejudice or discrimination and well-being in the interpretation of findings, I will also note

instances wherein participants explicitly link their experiences of racism to some or other measure of wellbeing.

With regard to academic experiences, specifically, hardiness and resilience have been shown to serve as buffers against the effects of discrimination, and to even lead to considerable investment in academic achievement by members of marginalised groups (e.g. Eccles, Wong, & Peck, 2006). A study has shown that a positive ethnic identity among Latino learners is associated with the adoption of more adaptive coping mechanisms as opposed to engagement in externalising or deviant behaviour, in reaction to discrimination by peers. However, discrimination was considered a threat by learners with a strong ethnic identity, when it was perpetuated by an authority figure, such as a teacher or administrator (Umaña-Taylor, Tynes, Toomey, Williams, & Mitchell, 2015). These authors argue that ethnic identity salience heightens awareness of racial/ethnic discrimination by an adult in a developmentally salient context such as a school, thereby resulting in distress. 'Developmentally salient', in this regard, refers to a context that contributes significantly to learners' development.

The assumption in the current study is that the prevalence of racism in HEIs and the broader social context heightens awareness of racial differences and, therefore, promotes salient racial identities and, therefore, acute awareness of racial discrimination. This assumption is extended to possible experiences of stereotype threat among students prone to discrimination, taking into account Wout, Danso, Jackson, and Spencer's (2007) finding that stereotype threat was more salient among individuals belonging to marginalised groups who, incidentally, highly identified with their groups. It could also be argued that anticipated exposure to racism either based on personal experiences or expectations due to the context (e.g. a personal racial identity that differs from the HEI's historical racial identity) may hamper psychological well-being. This, possibly coupled with various other stressors that

could be identified as unique to Black students in higher education in the current study, is arguably unlikely to lead to Black students' disregard for racial discrimination as a stressor, despite holding colour-blind attitudes, as suggested above by Coleman et al. (2012).

Bair and Steele (2010) have demonstrated that racial prejudice or the anticipation thereof has a detrimental effect on targets' cognitive functioning. These authors investigated the impact of racism on Black university students' execution of tasks requiring self-control, based on the extent of the students' racial centrality. Racial centrality, in this regard, refers to the extent to which individuals attach importance to their self-identification according to race. The study found that self-control during the completion of a cognitive task was depleted when participants had been exposed to a prejudiced comment by confederates, as opposed to a neutral one. This was particularly pronounced among those with high racial centrality. Based on this, it suffices to say that individuals with a racial identity that differs from that of the HEI at which they are enrolled could report lower academic self-efficacy and success prospects due to actual or anticipated prejudice or discrimination, given the theoretical link between academic performance and cognition. Moreover, these individuals may have strong racial centrality, possibly enhanced by immersion in a setting that is dissonant with their personal racial identities. This may be further intensified by incidents of or perceived personal racism, and awareness of institutional or, even, structural racism, as discussed in detail elsewhere in this chapter and in Chapter 2 of the thesis.

3.3.5.2 The effects of racism on cognitive functioning and performance

The relationship between academic outcomes and discrimination, including personal, institutional and structural racism, has been discussed at length in this chapter. Further in demonstration of this relationship, in their study, Umaña-Taylor et al. (2012) found that the grade point averages of male students of Mexican origin with perceptions of discrimination

declined over time. These authors argue that exposure to high levels of discrimination distracts one from school work and hampers concentration levels, ultimately affecting academic performance. Wong, Eccles, and Sameroff (2003) have shown that racial discrimination in an academic environment can result in diminished interest in academic achievement among victims of discrimination. Similarly, Bodkin-Andrews, Denson, and Bansel (2013) contended that discrimination by teachers showed an association with academic disengagement and self-sabotage among high school students.

The above discussion draws attention to the broad effects of prejudice on general academic performance. Research on stereotype threat has shown the vast effects of prejudice on specific cognitive tasks. These, as discussed below, could be regarded as indicative of the negative implications of prejudice on individuals' overall functioning. Stereotype threat, as a self-defeating reaction to perceived discrimination among members of groups that are prone to discrimination, has been widely documented as a barrier to individuals' academic success in international studies (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Stereotype threat refers to "apprehension about confirming a stereotype" about oneself (Aronson, 2002, p. 282).

Prejudice has been widely shown to affect stigmatised individuals' performance of cognitive tasks. McGlone and Aronson (2006) found that female subjects in their study performed better in a spatial task when their alternative (i.e. not gender-related) identities as private-college students were primed prior to the experiment. These authors concluded that reminding subjects of other identities, other than their gender, which is typically associated with under-performance in spatial tasks, lessened the subjects' apprehension regarding their performance. In another study, it was pointed out to students at a prestigious North American university, prior to a test, that learners from the high school that they graduated from were poorly represented at the university; their performance on the test was worse than that of their peers. In addition, in their study, Carr and Steele (2009) concluded that stereotype-threatened

individuals perform poorly due to perseverance in the use of inflexible problem-solving strategies, despite these proving to no longer be effective. It could be argued that stereotype threat places an additional burden on individuals' cognitive function, which reduces cognitive efficiency, thereby resulting in inflexible problem-solving strategies. Carr and Steele's (2009) study also found a positive association between stereotype suppression by the subjects and the likelihood of engaging in inflexible perseverance. In the current study, one could argue that perceived or anticipated discrimination could serve as a constant reminder of the presumed inferiority of members of marginalised groups in the historical context of a given HEI, which poses a constant threat to their academic performance in that context. Experiences of racial prejudice or discrimination are known to undermine affected individuals' academic experiences and prospects for academic success (e.g. Umaña-Taylor, Wong, Gonzales, & Dumka, 2012).

The feelings of inferiority resulting from stereotype threat or an internalised sense of inferiority could be counteracted by witnessing members of one's ingroup succeeding in a task. Such witnessing instils a sense of efficacy or enhances efficacy beliefs, lack of which may result in depression and anxiety (Bandura, 1995). Once again, the latter indicates a link between psychological well-being and perceptions of racism, as demonstrated by stereotype threat. Bandura (1995) also posits that efficacy beliefs can effectively be strengthened through vicarious experiences, entailing the witnessing of one's social models engaging in certain experiences. In their study, Elmore and Oyserman (2012) refer to identity-based motivation, wherein members of a particular gender outperform those of the opposite gender when this is considered identity-congruent. These authors suggest that boys and girls observe which behaviours are congruent with their genders in a particular environment; when academic success is gender-congruent, then members of that gender exert more effort in their academic work, and are more likely to identify themselves as focused in relation to their

studies and have a positive outlook regarding their academic success. In view of this, one could argue that members of different races could form an academic self-concept or, more specifically, academic self-efficacy, on the basis of witnessed or perceived performance by ingroup members.

Bhorat, Mayet, and Visser (2010) have shown that White students consistently perform better than Black students in higher education, regardless of institutional historical identity. This could suggest that, beyond immediate experiences or anticipation of racial prejudice in that context, Black students' awareness of racial inequalities beyond the higher education context undermines their general sense of self-efficacy in relation to their White counterparts, as well as academic self-efficacy in that particular context. Against this backdrop, Prince and Nurius (2014) have found that the academic self-concept has an effect on academic success and aspirations, and help-seeking behaviour specifically relating to academic pursuits. The possibly negative effects of HWHEIs on Black students' academic self-concept and self-efficacy could be related to the idea of internalised racism, as alluded to by research on stereotype threat. Black students could internalise the low expectations from others regarding their success in higher education, particularly if they are aware of these. In relation to this, Prince and Nurius (2014) state that exposure to images that do not reflect positive identity development for members of one's ingroup, such as poor social conditions, impinge on individuals' formation of a positive identity. In the current study, participants are asked about their confidence regarding completion of their studies within the anticipated period. In the analysis, I will take into account similarities or emerging differences in this regard between participants at the two institutions, especially according to participant race and, where relevant, race-related experiences at the institutions under study.

Evidently, the development of a positive academic self-concept is also likely to be negatively affected by not only awareness of ingroup members' under-performance in higher

education, but also social inequalities in the broader social context. The taxing nature of exposure to racial discrimination, real or imagined, is evidenced by studies on African-American students by Davis, Dias-Bowie, and Greenberg (2004) and Woldoff et al. (2011). The students in these studies reported feeling that they have to prove that they are worthy of being in these environments by excelling academically, or risk living up to the stereotype that they are intellectually inferior. Similarly, Owens and Massey (2011) have argued that awareness of racial stereotypes increases the performance burden which, in turn, negatively affects performance. In the South African context, Black students at UCT, an HWHEI, have reported feeling that they were not worthy of admission to the institution and that they had to prove themselves, to counter the stereotype of Black intellectual inferiority and laziness (Cornell & Kessi, 2017). Participants also reported that their awareness of stereotypes held against Black students hampered participation in class and, therefore, academic outcomes. In the interpretation of findings, I will take into account participants' experiences according to race, as well as any references by participants to race and racial prejudice or discrimination in relation to their experiences at the two institutions.

3.3.5.3 Institutional racial identity

It is worth noting that racial discrimination may not only occur at a personal level, but may be perpetuated by legitimised entities. Set structures within institutions may hamper students' sense of belonging. For instance, seemingly harmless traditions and cultural events or activities at an HEI with a particular historical racial identity may exclude students with a dissonant racial identity. In instances where participation is compulsory, these students may participate without necessarily identifying with the particular tradition or, broadly, culture. Such students may feel that their own traditions are undermined and interpret this as active exclusion of what these and therefore they, as adherents, stand for. As a result, these students

may not feel validated within that particular context. This is compatible with Bair and Steele's (2010) reference to "reminders of stigmatized identities" (p. 127). This phenomenon can be ascribed to the Black participants in Cornell and Kessi's (2017) study, who in accordance with protests against racist institutional cultures and symbols in South African HEIs, described the statue of Cecil John Rhodes at UCT as a symbol of oppression that also inferiorised Black students at the university campus. One participant explained his feelings and ways of relating to others and his environment, as evoked by the statue, as follows: "I still felt the power of the colonizers on my colonized forefathers and myself in contemporary South Africa" (p. 1889). The prevailing sentiment among participants in this study was a sense of alienation in an environment that is dissonant with their own (racial) identities and symbolically oppressive.

As discussed extensively in Chapter 2, institutional racism in higher education can also manifest in, through curricula, the advancement of certain epistemologies above those of marginalised groups or, essentially, the epistemicide exacted on indigenous knowledge systems. Referring to his experiences at an HWHEI, a participant in Nomdo's (2017) study pointed out that lecturers referred to Xhosa people in a way that invalidated and Othered them. He described the self-alienation that he was required to engage in as a Xhosa person, in accordance with the invalidation and subjectification of Xhosa people by the said lecturers as follows: "... even you, when you write you are not expected to come from your home" (p. 203). This participant's experience is an embodiment of 'double consciousness', which in this context refers to the navigation of two opposing worlds in an effort to achieve academic excellence (Bazana & Mogotsi, 2017).

The perpetuation of institutional racism in the South African context is embodied in Gibbon and Kabaki's (2002) assertion that "the higher education system itself serve[s] to construct and maintain the social, political and economic features of the apartheid order" (p.

124). In contemporary South Africa, this entails the continued existence of structures that maintain historical privileges for certain racial groups and historical disadvantages for others on the other hand, illustrating a largely unchanged society at the structural level, which filters down to higher education contexts.

The perpetuation of an institution's historically racial mandate could manifest in the form of power relations between students and the institution, with the latter represented by, for example, university authorities, academic staff and administrators. In relation to this, Watson and Siler (1984) identified communication between first-year African-American students with university officials in predominantly White universities as a major source of anxiety. In the current study, it is assumed that disparities between an HEI's historical racial identity and students' race could hamper effective communication between students and university officials. In relation to this, Cross and Carpentier (2009) have given an account of the injustice perceived by students at a South African HEI, who perceived their interactions with university officials to be marked by racism, with race-based, unequal treatment of students. In the interpretation of findings, the current study will take note of reports of such instances.

Cross and Carpentier (2009) further argue that, in such contexts, African students from rural areas are further immersed in a foreign culture that is exacerbated by, among others, their inability to express themselves in their first languages, an important identity marker. Bazana and Mogotsi (2017) interrogate this aspect of higher education, arguing that HWHEIs are exclusionary and, by their very nature, undermine Black students' social identity, inclusive of their languages and culture, thereby affecting their self-esteem and self-concept in these contexts. These authors further argue that Black students' relinquishing of the Black identity facilitates ease of assimilation into HWHEIs. This places Black students from middle-class backgrounds at a relative advantage, compared to rural students, due to

their experience of assimilating into White culture and negotiating their identities in White spaces, such as private school education and having good command of English. These features render such students *less Black* and, therefore, more palatable to White society. The negative judgement meted out onto students who are not proficient in English is not limited to social situations, but also the strictly academic context. Vandeyar (2008) has indicated that lack of proficiency in the medium of instruction does not only have a direct impact on learners' academic performance, but can lead to a type of vicious cycle in which teachers in English-medium schools negatively judge and react to the learners' "ability to express themselves in English" (p. 291). The teachers pay less attention to these learners, who in turn may act out rebelliously or view themselves from the teachers' perspective, which has negative implications for their academic and, possibly, general self-concept. It is important to note that, in such contexts, teachers act as representatives and agents of the institution and its culture. Thus, the rejection of learners' identity markers (i.e. language, in this instance) and generally undermining their sense of self is tantamount to denunciation by the institution, which could undermine the affected students' sense of belonging within the institution. Vandeyar's (2008) focus is on high school learners. In higher education, students' non-proficiency in the medium of instruction is more likely to come to the fore in their academic work. Either negative feedback regarding language use or poor performance as a result of it could be disheartening to these students. In fact, their poor proficiency might especially be observable from their written work because of their reluctance to participate in class activities that might expose their non-proficiency. This has implications on these students' self-esteem specifically in relation to this aspect, and the depth with which they can engage with academic material in the context of lectures or class/tutorial discussions.

Bandura (2012) argues that an environment that individuals cannot personally control hampers the exercise of personal agency, instead requiring the generic exercise of proxy

agency to facilitate some form of control in the individuals' interests. Proxy agency entails "influencing others who have the resources, knowledge, and means to act on [individuals'] behalf" (p. 12) to secure personally desirable outcomes. Presumably, the ability to exercise proxy agency in such contexts can be undermined by the lack of social capital in such contexts, especially in anticipation of HWHEIs' racially non-representative staff composition (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2016). The latter might mean that historically marginalised students in these institutions do not have an abundance of especially influential figures that they deem relatable and, essentially, proxy agents.

As indicated elsewhere in this chapter, various stressors in the academic context have the potential to affect students' ability to cope with academic demands. This means that the incidental experiences of such stressors by Black students in HWHEIs, in conjunction with personal racial identity and institutional racial identity dynamics, have a cumulative effect on these students' academic experiences and, specifically, success.

Racial discrimination, which has been identified as a major issue of contention across HEIs (Department of Education, 2008), as also shown by student protests against racist institutional cultures in HWHEIs, are expected to undermine marginalised students' sense of belonging to the institution (Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier, & Valentine, 2009; Sakura-Lemessy, Carter-Tellison, & Sakura-Lemessy, 2009). Glass and Westmont (2014) have proposed that HEIs impart a sense of belongingness to all their students after determining that cross-cultural interaction did not necessarily result in a sense of belongingness, with the latter having a rather positive impact on academic performance. In addition, cultural events, among others, had a positive impact on a sense of belongingness, lessened the effects of racism and encouraged cross-cultural interactions. These findings are especially applicable to HEIs with salient, historical racial identities, as those in the current study. In each of the HEIs in the current study, the maintenance of a culture reflecting the HEI's historical racial identity could

mean that a diverse student population is disregarded, leading to an undermined sense of belonging for students whose racial identity differs from that of the institution.

Locally and internationally, the qualitative and quantitative studies conducted typically sample students from only one HEI. The current study sampled participants from two HEIs with distinct historical racial identities. In the South African context, many studies (e.g. Cornell & Kessi, 2017; Cross & Carpentier, 2009; Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Machika & Johnson, 2015; Nel et al., 2016; Nomdo, 2017; Sennett et al., 2003; Sommer & Dumont, 2011; Sonn, 2016) have been conducted on Black students either at HWHEIs or in higher education in general, specifically exploring their race-related or overall experiences in these settings. To comprehensively explore the breadth of factors affecting students' academic success, the current study obtained a sample of students from an HWHEI and HBHEI, based on the assumption of different socio-cultural dynamics and experiences at the two institutions. Adding to the distinctions between HBHEIs and HWHEIs, is the fact that HBHEIs were previously under-resourced, due to race-based disparities in government funding, which have been shown to persist to date (e.g. Kujeke, n.d.). For example, postgraduate students at Walter Sisulu University, an HBHEI, cited inadequate resources as one of the reasons for their failure to complete the research component of their respective programmes (Sonn, 2016). These included the lack of a computer lab for the students of the Faculty of Education, few computers, no research centres and access to few dissertations and theses in their library to refer to, for guidance. The relative lack of resources broadly at HBHEIs is demonstrated by shortage of staff and inefficient student services; poor student accommodation and teaching and learning facilities; as well as inefficient transport and technology systems (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2016). These have the potential to negatively affect the academic success of students enrolled in these institutions. HEIs located in peri-urban areas, which are primarily historically Black, also reportedly tend

not to enjoy urban corporate support networks similar to urban HEIs, thereby further thwarting these institutions' prospects for development (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2016). To counter this, it has been suggested that a funding model that takes into account historical inequalities between HBHEIs and HWHEIs should be adopted, to further the development of, and capacity building at HBHEIs. It has also been argued that the incorporation of HBHEIs into local and regional economies would help these institutions carry out their teaching and research mandates (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2016).

Other than the direct impact of their resource pools on students' academic success, institutions' historical racial identities may negatively affect student adjustment. Failure to adjust could be exacerbated by instances of active, personal acts of discrimination, taking into account the prevalence of personal racist incidents in the broader socio-cultural context in South Africa, let alone HEIs. This is despite substantial developments in patterns of participation in higher education in South Africa, with Black students' enrolment rates almost equalling or, even, exceeding those of White students in some HWHEIs (Turner & Wildsmith-Cromarty, 2014; Van Wyk, 2010). Although the institutional cultures at HWHEIs and HBHEIs presumably differ due to the institutions' distinct historical racial identities, it cannot be concluded that, for instance, Black students are immune from racism at the HBHEIs because of a corresponding historical racial identity. This is because racial discrimination can occur both interpersonally (e.g. in interpersonal relations) and structurally. Illustrating the latter instance, Black students remain prone to (racialised) structural inequalities (i.e. inequalities within historical or contemporary institutional, and broader social and socio-political structures), such as socio-economic inequalities and accompanying disadvantages, as elucidated in Section 3.3.4; a medium of instruction in which the majority is not proficient (see Section 3.3.3); relatively low access to and success in higher education;

and a non-representative academic or managerial staff composition. These undermine Black students' subjective sense of belonging and prospects for success in higher education in various ways, as discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

As further demonstration of the post-apartheid structural racism directed towards HBHEIs and, therefore, their student constituency, the standard of education at these institutions is perceived to be lower than that at HWHEIs (Jansen, 2003). This is further confirmed by the relatively fewer employment opportunities for students at these HEIs, with employers showing a preference for graduates from HWHEIs over those from HBHEIs (Lourens & Fourie-Malherbe, 2017). These observations necessitate consideration of the effects of not only interpersonal and institutional racism, but also of structural racism, on academic success. It is in view of this that the current study considers not only participants' racial identity, but also the historical racial identities of the participating HEIs, with the assumption that students of different races at these institutions experience these contexts and the factors affecting their academic success differently, based on these multiple identities. Further, other than consideration of participants' immediate higher education contexts in the analysis of data, I will also consider how structural factors inform the institutional and individual factors cited by participants as affecting their academic success.

There is a complex interplay between individual, institutional and structural factors, as described above, specifically affecting students' experiences in higher education. Some South African HEIs have introduced measures to address historical inequalities in the higher education context by introducing affirmative action (Erasmus, 2010; Soudien, 2010). The aim is to increase access to higher education for previously marginalised groups through the implementation of race-based admission criteria and affording preferential admission to previously marginalised groups (Ncayiyana, 2012). However, some argue that affirmative action is tantamount to 'reverse racism', while others argue that academically

unprepared/inept students are being admitted solely on the basis of race (Fischer & Massey, 2007). Participants in Cornell and Kessi's (2016) study attested to being perceived in this manner. Fischer and Massey (2007) also found evidence of stigmatisation of students from marginalised groups and that it undermined their academic performance, as characterised by the concept of 'stereotype threat'. These varying experiences of racism, personal, institutional or structural may, over time, lead to either despondency or increased resilience among the marginalised students, with the potential to affect academic achievement, as discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

3.4 Facilitators of Academic Success

Below are several factors identified in existing studies as either facilitating academic success or serving as buffers for at-risk students, despite unfavourable conditions.

3.4.1 Locus of control

University students have previously reported factors that can be as ascribed to internal and external locus of control as playing a role in their academic success (Naude, Nel, Van der Watt, & Tadi, 2016). Locus of control refers to subjective beliefs about the extent to which one can control one's circumstances, with a distinction made between internal and external locus of control. Internal locus of control refers to an individual's assumptions that he or she is largely in control of his or her circumstances, whereas external locus of control refers to the belief that one's circumstances are determined by phenomena or events external to oneself (Rotter, 1966). In Naude et al.'s (2016) study, internal locus of control comprised integration, whereas external locus of control comprised amotivation and external regulation. The authors further suggest that external locus of control did not necessarily translate into a negative outlook regarding participants' academics or into poor academic outcomes.

However, external locus of control renders an individual subject to external forces and is more likely to foster a sense of helplessness when one is feeling overwhelmed by challenges. In demonstration of this, Saadat, Ghasemzadeh, Karami, and Soleimani (2012) found a negative relationship between external locus of control and self-esteem, and a positive relationship between internal locus of control and self-esteem. Au (2015) found that student-level internal locus of control predicted students' academic experiences.

In turn, according to Arslan and Akin (2014), students with an internal academic locus of control tend to engage in metacognition, whose benefits for academic success have been reported in various sub-sections of this chapter. Further, Bodill and Roberts (2013) have found academic locus of control to be a significant predictor of academic effort, more so than subjects' implicit beliefs about intelligence being either a fixed or malleable trait; this result suggests that locus of control plays a more significant role than do individuals' subjective beliefs about what constitutes intelligence, which subsequently determine their beliefs about efforts required for task performance and, ultimately, actual performance. These results serve as evidence of the importance of locus of control not only in relation to academic success, but in a context considered to expose students to various stressors with the power to bring about a sense of helplessness.

Other than its direct effects on exertion of academic efforts and link with self-esteem, locus of control has also been linked to self-efficacy (Bodill & Roberts, 2013; Sagone & De Caroli, 2014). The reason for this link could be that locus of control is directly related to exertion of academic effort. Believing that one is subject to external forces outside of one's control could lead to low exertion of academic effort, whereas the belief that one is in control of one's circumstances is considered more likely to result in high exertion of effort. In turn, locus of control, coupled with effort exertion, could affect self-efficacy and, perhaps, actual academic performance. Internal locus of control, as opposed to external, has also been shown

to buffer the effects of stress (Krause & Stryker, 1984). Thus, the role of locus of control could be twofold, namely, to mediate academic self-efficacy and to buffer the possible stressors associated with one's studies or academic settings.

3.4.2 Motivation

A substantial number of studies have found either a positive association between motivation and academic success or a negative association between the latter and amotivation (e.g. Amrai, Motlagh, Zalani, & Parhon, 2011; Kaufman, Agars, & Lopez-Wagner, 2008; Vecchione, Alessandri, & Marsicano, 2014; Warden & Myers, 2017). In addition, Alfaro, Umaña-Taylor, Gonzales-Backen, Bámaca, & Zeiders (2009) found that, for minority Latino boys, perceived discrimination predicted academic motivation, and that the latter further mediated the relationship between perceived discrimination and academic success. This suggests a complex set of interactions between motivation and academic success in a context within which individuals might consider themselves prone to discrimination, due to individual and historical institutional racial identity. In their qualitative study, Ghasemi, Moonaghi, and Heydari (2018) found learning motivation to be one of the factors reported by participants as affecting their academic engagement, referring to the extent to which students devoted effort towards academic activities.

Ning and Downing (2010) have posited that, not only is there a one-directional relationship between motivation and self-regulation, with motivation presumed to have an effect on self-regulation, but that there is a reciprocal relationship between the two, with self-regulation predicting motivation, but the latter proving to be a stronger predictor of academic performance than self-regulation is. One could further argue that the relationship between academic self-efficacy and motivation could be reciprocal. Further, self-regulation may be reflected in students' learning styles, discussed in detail in Section 3.4.4 in this chapter.

Social support can also ostensibly serve as a motivating factor. For instance, Elsheikh et al. (2018) found an association between students' motivation and characteristics of tutors, including not only their subject knowledge, but also ability to ignite discussions. Turki, Jdaitawi, and Sheta (2018) also identified an association between achievement motivation and what they termed 'social connectedness'. At a more micro level, Kunanitthaworn et al. (2018) found an association between closeness with family members, conceivably serving as a form of social support, and intrinsic motivation among first-year Thai medical students. Locally, in their study on first-year Psychology students at the University of the Free State, Naude et al. (2016) also found that participants acknowledged the importance of "a warm, supportive context", with "an easy-going lecturer interested in their well-being" (p. 45), and support from family and friends and in the form of group work. Only a few of the participants preferred an autonomous context, thereby highlighting the importance of a support structure in the academic context. The effects of lack of social support are demonstrated by Llamas et al.'s (2018) finding that intragroup marginalisation of Latina/o students by friends predicted psychological distress, which was in turn mediated by social support from friends and locus of control.

Previous studies have drawn distinctions between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is presumed to be based on external incentives or motivation sources, for the achievement of particular goals, whereas intrinsic motivation refers to the attainment of a particular goal for its own sake, or because one finds the task preceding the goal enjoyable or interesting (Vansteenkiste, Niemeic, & Soenens, 2010). Ryan and Deci (2000) argue that extrinsic motivation is not less effective than intrinsic motivation, as it may include acceptance of the value and usefulness of certain goals, which individuals may work towards with a sense of willingness and determination. However, it has also been argued that any task that is associated with a tangible reward unequivocally undermines intrinsic motivation,

probably in favour of extrinsic motivation (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001). Based on the demands placed on students in HEIs, their short-term and long-term goals, as well as study or career goals, are presumably likely to constitute extrinsic motivation. In their study on traditional and non-traditional students, Warden and Myers (2017) found no significant association between extrinsic motivation and academic performance, but found a positive association between the latter and intrinsic motivation particularly among non-traditional students, referring to students aged >25 years. Elsheikh et al. (2018) found female students to have higher motivation levels, compared to male students, and also identified gender differences in relation to type of motivation. In that study, female students displayed intrinsic motivation, inclusive of altruistic behaviour, whereas extrinsic motivation was predominant among male students. Kunanitthaworn et al. (2018) found an association between being female and extrinsic motivation, and between amotivation and being male. These authors further argue that higher levels of study require motivation types other than extrinsic motivation. Ryan and Deci (2000) added that there are varying levels of autonomy associated with extrinsic motivation, such that greater internalisation (i.e. taking in) or integration (i.e. transformation of regulation such that it matches one's values and needs, and emanates from one's sense of self, thus accompanied by self-determined actions) of regulation demonstrate higher levels of commitment to a goal.

Elliot (1999) distinguished between performance and mastery goals, with the former pertaining to comparison of one's competence in a task with that of others, and the latter referring to mastering a task. Performance and mastery goals are associated with distinct sets of affect, cognition and behaviour, and are marked by distinct processes and outcomes. Performance goals entail decreased task enjoyment, shallow processing of learning material and withdrawal of effort in the case of failure, whereas mastery goals entail the opposite. In addition, Elliot (1999) refers to a distinction between avoidance and approach motivation.

Approach motivation refers to actions that are driven by a positive event or potential thereof, whereas actions resulting from avoidance motivation are driven by either a negative event or potential thereof. Further, along with mastery goals, performance-approach goals pertain to an inclination towards positive possibilities. In contrast, performance-avoidance goals are associated with avoiding negative possibilities. Based on the above discussion, it is assumed that the extent of motivation, regardless of the type thereof, plays an important role in academic success.

3.4.3 Emotional factors

Studies have shown positive associations between emotional intelligence and academic success (e.g. Fallahzadeh, 2011; Gharetepeh, Safari, Pashaei, & Kajbaf, 2015; Sanchez-Ruiz, Mavroveli, & Poullis, 2013; Zahed-Babelan & Moenikia, 2010). Another study identified emotion regulation as a facilitator of adaptive coping, particularly within an academic environment (Saklofske, Austin, Mastoras, Beaton, & Osborne, 2012), further indicating that emotional intelligence mediates the association between affect and stress in such a context.

A demanding and stressful academic and social context could ordinarily lead to considerable anxiety, which has been shown to be effectively countered through emotional efficacy (Galla & Wood, 2012). Emotional self-efficacy could also help students with adjustment problems, having been shown to successfully facilitate the transition of undergraduate students from high school to a university context (Parker, Hogan, Eastabrook, Oke, & Wood, 2006). Emotional self-efficacy broadly refers to "beliefs in one's emotional functioning capabilities" (Pool & Qualter, 2012, p. 306). Students with high emotional efficacy in Parker et al.'s (2006) study were shown to not only have transitioned successfully into a university setting, as shown by their persistence during their first and second years of

study, but also scored higher on this construct than did their counterparts who eventually dropped out. Many studies have been conducted on the relationship between academic success and emotional intelligence, rather than emotional self-efficacy. Emotional self-efficacy may form one of the many components of emotional intelligence, which includes "verbal and nonverbal appraisal and expression of emotion" (Mayer & Salovey, 1993), the regulation of one's and others' emotions and the ability to effectively apply emotional content during problem-solving. Therefore, findings from studies exclusively on emotional intelligence do not unequivocally determine the extent of emotional self-efficacy.

The ability to cope in a demanding academic environment, as shown in the studies cited above, is likely to buffer the effects of stress in such a context, and the possible effects thereof on academic success. Ineffective coping skills and general ability to regulate one's emotions or, broadly, emotional self-efficacy, might be found to affect academic success, and related factors such as academic self-efficacy.

3.4.4 Learning styles

Previous studies have examined various types of learning or learning styles, with some showing links between learning styles and academic achievement, or between learning styles and other factors, such as personality variables, which are at times assumed to have an association with academic success (e.g. Komarraju, Karau, Schmeck, & Avdic, 2011; Okur & Bahar, 2010). Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory identified four dimensions, namely, active experimentation, concrete experience, abstract conceptualisation and reflective observation, as integral components of the learning process. Presumably, the latter two can be either facilitated or hampered by language proficiency in the medium of instruction, as they may require advanced linguistic abilities and, to some extent, engagement in metacognition, especially in reflective observation, as it refers to the ability to reflect on and analyse

information. Similarly, cognitive psychologists have drawn a broad distinction between deep processing and shallow processing of phenomena, in reference to information processing (Passer, Smith, Holt, Bremner, Sutherland, & Vliek, 2009), suggesting that deep processing leads to better information recall, as compared to shallow processing. In relation to academic studies, it could also be argued that, since they require focus on not only superficial aspects of material, but also the meaning thereof, deep processing generally involves intense engagement with learning material, as well as application of metacognition.

Despite its benefits, failure to engage in metacognition could be thwarted by limited language proficiency. Studies have shown the importance of metacognition in the learning of a second or foreign language (e.g. Mehrdad, Ahghar, & Ahghar, 2012), with some finding metacognition to be a better predictor of achievement than intelligence is in this regard (Pishghadam & Khajavy, 2013). The possible influence of language proficiency in either facilitating or undermining general academic success has been discussed in detail in Section 3.3. Based on the above, effective learning strategies may be found to affect academic success. Biggs, Kember, and Leung's (2001) learning styles measure broadly taps into motivation for learning, as opposed to a technical learning approach towards a specific course. This would suggest that scores on learning styles would not be a direct consequence of language proficiency, but might reflect participants' general self-efficacy, as well as academic self-efficacy, and might be associated with academic self-efficacy. This is especially because the measure somewhat focuses on the amount of effort that individuals exert in their studies and the extent to which this is influenced by their short-term and long-term academic and/or career goals. In fact, Biggs et al. (2001) assert that learning style is not a fixed trait, but an outcome of the interaction between student factors, the teaching context and approaches towards learning for a specific task and learning outcomes. Thus, the authors argue that learning style is a result of the interaction between various parts of a dynamic

system. This view is compatible with the theoretical assumptions made about the possible links between the identified factors in this study, as well as the study context.

In relation to the above, Biggs et al.'s (2001) Revised Two Factor Study Process Questionnaire (R-SPQ-2F) distinguishes between learners who set out to perform as well as possible in their studies and those who do the bare minimum only so as to secure a pass. Other than the possible association between the scores obtained on learning styles and other factors, as described above, self-regulation could also determine the amount and type of effort exerted in academic tasks; therefore, such efforts, demonstrated by learning style, could be informed by motivation levels. Ryan and Deci (2000) have argued that intrinsic motivation facilitates high-quality learning. Thus, learning styles could be informed by motivation levels, which in turn could be influenced by other factors pertaining to academic success, such as academic self-efficacy and language proficiency.

Pashler, McDaniel, Rohrer, and Bjork (2009) interrogated the credibility of studies suggesting links between types of learning styles and modes of instruction, which presumably have an effect on academic performance, as detailed above. These authors argued that only rigorous research designs, such as factorial randomised study designs, would accurately determine the nature of the relationship between learning styles and the effectiveness of different methods of instruction. The authors concluded that thus far, no methodologically sound studies have shown links between learning styles and the effectiveness of instruction methods. Of those studies with rigorous methodologies, none showed any practical benefits of method of instruction based on learning style, thereby rendering findings suggesting otherwise weak and unverifiable.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter included a discussion of academic success in relation to factors previously found to be somehow associated with it. Firstly, the self-concept was discussed, on the basis of the prevailing assumption that academic self-efficacy forms an integral part of the self-concept in an academic setting. This was followed by a discussion of adjustment, inclusive of social and academic adjustment, then language proficiency, socio-economic status, racial discrimination, as well as locus of control, motivation, emotional factors and learning styles. The latter four were identified as facilitators of academic success or buffers against possible barriers to academic success, based on existing studies. The discussion highlighted the links previously shown between certain factors and academic success. Further, these were shown to also interact with one another in many ways, with various assumptions made about the nature of those interrelationships.

The literature review presented a large variety of psychological and psychosocial factors found to affect academic success. Unlike the quantitative studies mainly referred to in this chapter, which focus on a prescribed set of variables influencing or associated with academic success, the current study, which is qualitative in nature, will enable an exploration of context-specific factors of academic success, as experienced by participants. The study's exploratory nature will ensure that participants spontaneously cite factors that they consider to affect their academic success, which will be analysed thematically and, considering findings relating to race as also discussed in this chapter, further interpreted in relation to race, specifically participants' race, historical institutional racial identity, and institutional and structural racism. The literature reviewed in this chapter highlights the current study's uniqueness, in that it considers a comprehensive set of factors that have a bearing on students' academic success and experiences. The study not only considers individual factors presumed to affect academic success, that are illustrated by the psychological and

psychosocial factors discussed in the chapter, but also anticipates academic success and

students' experiences to be affected by interpersonal, institutional and structural factors

particularly relating to race and racial discrimination. Complex interactions among the latter

and in relation to students' academic success and experiences in higher education, and to

other factors, are anticipated.

The following chapter presents the research methodology employed in this study.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study's methodology. First, the study's research questions are reiterated. This is followed by a discussion of qualitative research methodology as the methodology adopted in this study. Thereafter, I present the research approach adopted in this study, as comprising the systemic theory and critical race theory, as well as the manner in which these will be applied in the study, taking into account individual students' interactions with and situatedness within various systems that cumulatively affect their academic success and experiences of higher education. In my presentation of the research methods used, I describe my use of purposive sampling to select an HBHEI and an HWHEI, as well as first-to third-year undergraduate students from these HEIs for participation in the study. In addition, I specify focus group discussions as the method used to collect the data in this study, also clarifying how verbal and observational data were gathered during these. This is followed by a discussion of my use of thematic analysis to analyse the verbal, audio-recorded data, and of the technique applied to analyse observational data, as entailing the observation of patterns of interactions among focus group members. Lastly, the quality assurance measures taken and ethical considerations are presented.

4.2 Research Questions

1. What factors do undergraduate students in a historically Black and a historically White higher education institution consider to affect their academic success?

2. How does race shape undergraduate students' experiences in a historically Black and a historically White higher education institution?

The following secondary research question to Research Question 2 was posed:

2.1 How do various levels (interpersonal, institutional and structural) of racial discrimination intersect with each other and with other factors to influence academic success?

4.3 Methodology

Qualitative research methodology was adopted in this study. Qualitative research is an exploratory approach towards research, seeking to obtain rich, in-depth data from research participants, cognizant of their situatedness within specific social and cultural contexts (Nieuwenhuis & Smit, 2012).

Despite the adoption of qualitative methodology in this study, it is worth noting that, given the critical standpoint of the current study, the adoption of qualitative methodology— especially characterised by the data collection and analysis methods used—does not equate uncritical accordance of weight to all participants' perspectives, without situating these within the broader socio-cultural, socio-historical and socio-political context. According to Eagle, Hayes, & Sibanda (2006), standpoint methodologies (of which critical race theory is an example) criticise interpretive approaches, from which qualitative methodology draws, for their lack of commitment to emancipatory research conduct. This is given the fact that such approaches could, for example, in the interests of legitimising all subjective experiences, "afford the same weight to a right-wing, racist interpretation of affirmative action policies as they would to the interpretation of such policy by a disadvantaged person" (p. 500). In contrast, critical race theory, one of the theoretical approaches used in the current study, "pushes us [...] to recognize silenced voices in qualitative data" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 38). The critical stance adopted in this study is further demonstrated by the deliberate centring of racism (interpersonal, institutional, structural and macrosystemic) and race (personal and historical institutional), and their implications on academic success and

experiences in the current study. This is especially evident in the racialisation of academic success, as extensively argued in Chapter 3.

4.4 Research Approach

As discussed extensively in Chapter 2, the systemic theory and critical race theory are used in this study to conceptualise the factors found to affect academic success in relation to each other, to the systems within which they are embedded, and to the broader context; as well as to identify how race shapes students' experiences of higher education. Higher education students participate directly or indirectly in multiple contexts and systems that, in turn, influence each other in many ways. Thus, the systemic theory in this study is used to illustrate the anticipated interactions between various psychological, individual, social and environmental variables that mutually influence academic success. I will be using Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979, 1992) to identify the situatedness of factors identified as affecting academic success within systems within which the individual participates, such as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and the chronosystem. Moreover, in acknowledgement of the possibility of both inter- and intra-systemic interactions between the factors identified, I apply the following principles of the systems theory to conceptualise the links between the factors within and across systems: system openness, reciprocity and equilibrium. The systemic approach was specifically used to address the first research question, comprising presentation of the themes identified as pertaining to academic success, then considering the possible links between the themes as subsystems of the individual, micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems, as well as the relationships between these, as illustrated by the themes. This approach subscribes to the systemic theory and principles, as adopted in this study and detailed in Chapter 2.

Critical race theory was used to address the second research question and its secondary research question and, where applicable, was used to also address aspects of the first research question to expand on interpretation using the systemic theory, as discussed below. Critical race theory seeks to illuminate the dynamics underlying the functioning of, for example, individuals or institutions in certain contexts. Critical race theorists assume that structural racism influences institutional cultures, policies and practices, interpersonal relations, as well as individual functioning (e.g. Bailey et al., Jones, 1997; Zamudio et al., 2011). Therefore, in the context of this study, race—as represented by participant race and historical institutional racial identity—as well as structural and institutional racism are assumed to shape students' higher education experiences, including academic success.

In the current study, the assumption is that students' experiences of higher education cannot be separated from their racial identities and their institutions' historical race identities, as well as the historical and contemporary positioning and implications of these identities. This view emphasises an intertwining of students' experiences and academic success with the broader institutional, social and historical contexts. In keeping with this perspective, critical race theory is used to address the second research question, thus taking into account the racial dynamics in the study contexts—personal, interpersonal, institutional, structural and otherwise—as presumably informed by the broader context, in shaping students' overall experiences in these contexts. The critical race theory principles applied in the current study were racism as normal, counter storytelling, interest convergence, intersectionality, Whiteness as property and the critique of liberalism (see Section 2.4.2 for a detailed discussion of these) within and across institutions and structures.

Other than its use to conceptualise how race shapes participants' experiences in the study contexts, critical race theory is further employed for an expansive interpretation of factors affecting academic success. Similar to the use of critical race theory in this study to

conceptualise participants' experiences at their HEIs, the latter use thereof will enable interpretation of factors found to affect academic success in view of the broader South African socio-cultural, socio-historical and socio-political contexts, thereby expanding on the systemic interpretation for factors pertaining to issues of race.

4.4.1 Sampling

Purposive sampling was used for sampling at both institutional and participant levels. Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling that comprises the selection of a sample that fits the purpose of a study (Babbie, 2014). This study is concerned with factors deemed to affect undergraduate students' academic success in higher education, and how race (individual and historical institutional) shapes students' experiences in higher education. Thus, I selected one public HBHEI and one public HWHEI as study sites. I identified Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (or "SMU", Garankuwa campus) as one such HEI, and selected it to the exclusion of other HBHEIs due to its close proximity and, therefore, the relative ease with which I would be able to access study participants from this institution throughout the data collection process. SMU is located near Garankuwa, which is a township near Pretoria. The university was established in 1977 as a training site enrolling Black medical students (Digby, 2013). I selected the University of Pretoria (or "UP", Hatfield campus), a previously White, Afrikaans-medium HEI, for inclusion as an HWHEI in the study. Despite its status as an HWHEI, the racial composition of the student body seems to have evened out over the years at this institution. At the time of the study, White students made up 47.8% of the undergraduate student population; African students made up 43.9%; Indian students, 5.5% and Coloured students, 2.8%. Currently, the representation of these demographics is as follows, respectively: 41.9%, 48.7%, 6.4% and 3%. I obtained permission

to conduct the study at the two HEIs from their respective Research Ethics Committees (see Appendices A, B, C and D).

At the participant level, I targeted undergraduate students at SMU and UP for participation in the study. Specifically, I obtained permission to conduct the study on all first- to third-year students at SMU and on first- to third-year students enrolled for at least one Humanities module at UP. My inclusion of first- to third-year students only was so as to ensure that the participants had more or less equivalent enrolment periods at both the HBHEI and the HWHEI, especially considering the likelihood of some degree programmes exceeding three years. Moreover, heterogeneity in terms of enrolment period would provide insight into the experiences of HEI students across the undergraduate study period.

At both institutions, participants were initially recruited by means of posters strategically placed on noticeboards at the university campuses under study, inviting students who met the selected criteria to participate in the study (See Appendix E). Upon prospective participants' responses to the advertisement by contacting me, arrangements were made to hold focus group discussions at a time convenient to a given group of prospective participants. Where the posters did not attract sufficient numbers of participants to enable arrangements for one focus group discussion, I revised my recruitment strategy accordingly. In this instance, the research assistant and I approached small groups of students on the two university campuses, inviting them to participate in the study based on whether they met the inclusion criteria (i.e. first-, second- or third-year students at SMU or first-, second- or third-year students enrolled for at least one Humanities module at UP). We took the contact details of students who showed interest in participating and met the study's criteria, then either informed them of a pre-scheduled focus group discussion or, at a later stage, contacted them to make arrangements for the next focus group discussion.

The number of participants recruited was based on the envisaged number of participants per focus group discussion and focus group discussion type (i.e. Black-only, White-only, or racially mixed), such that no further participants could be recruited when the maximum number of possible recruits for a given focus group discussion had been reached. Since 12 is the recommended cut-off participant number, and 5 the minimum (e.g. Krueger & Casey, 2010), I aimed for a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 10 participants per focus group discussion, to enable me to effectively manage the discussions.

Initially, I had intended to conduct Black-only and White-only focus groups, to ensure racial homogeneity and maximise disclosure within each discussion (Elliot & Associates, 2005). In such instances, I recruited individuals meeting the respective criteria for either type of focus group discussion. However, after conducting racially homogenous focus group discussions (two comprising Black participants only and one comprising White participants only), wherein I observed minimal disclosure in the White-only focus group, I resolved to in future, recruit an additional Black-only group and a racially diverse group of participants, instead of a White-only group (see the relevant sections of Section 4.4.2, for methodological justification). The two focus groups at the HBHEI, comprising Black participants only, were made up of six (three male and three female participants) and eight (seven female and one male participants) participants, respectively. The focus group discussion comprising White participants only at this institution comprised five participants, one of whom was male, and the rest, female. The focus group comprising Black participants only at the HWHEI was made up of five participants, one of whom was male, and the rest, female. The racially diverse focus group at this institution was made up of seven participants, three of whom were female and four, male. See Table 5.1 in Chapter 5 for details regarding the composition of all five focus groups. As per the tenets of non-probability sampling and purposive sampling in particular, participant recruitment was not aimed at representativeness, but rather, I was

concerned with the extent to which participants met the study criteria (Wilson & MacLean, 2011), whose inclusion would enable me to address the research questions.

4.4.2 Data collection procedures

Data were collected by means of focus groups discussions (see details thereof in Section 4.4.3). Prior to the commencement of each focus group discussion, I explained the study aim to the participants and orally provided a summary of ethical aspects of the study and the study procedures. Participants were also given consent forms (see Appendix F) to complete and hand back to the researcher prior to the commencement of each discussion. All focus group discussions took place in a quiet area or room at the two university campuses, with a duration of at least 50 minutes each. Refreshments were served during these. The focus group discussions were audio-recorded. I moderated all the focus group discussions, while a research assistant acted as a scribe and took notes, in addition to taking responsibility for other administrative aspects of the focus groups. The latter mainly entailed taking participants' biographical information and contact details, so as to facilitate the transfer of airtime vouchers, which were used as incentives for participation in the study. Two students assumed the roles of research assistants throughout the data collection process. Other than those mentioned above, their roles also entailed assisting with the recruitment of participants, ensuring that the audio-recording equipment was fully functional at all times during the discussions, and functioning as scribes. One research assistant was a Black, female, isiZulu-speaking undergraduate student enrolled for studies at an HBHEI in the Tshwane region. The second was a White, male, English-speaking Honours student enrolled for studies at UP. The former took the above-mentioned administrative responsibilities for, and attended the Black-only focus group at UP and the two Black-only focus group discussions at SMU. The latter performed similar duties at the White-only focus group discussion at SMU and the racially

mixed focus group discussion at UP. The involvement of either research assistant was so as to ensure that, as far as possible, the moderating team—or at least one member thereof in the case of the White-only focus group—shared some characteristics with the participants (in this instance, race and seemingly being in the same age group as the participants), so as to facilitate a sense of rapport and disclosure (Berg & Lune, 2012; Elliot & Associates, 2005).

4.4.3 Data collection method

A focus group discussion is a setting in which the researcher moderates a discussion regarding a variable of interest between a small group of participants (Wilson & MacLean, 2011). Focus group discussions were used to collect the data in this study. I conducted the focus group discussions at the two participating university campuses; three at SMU and two at UP. In total, I conducted five focus group discussions. Each focus group consisted of 5 to 8 participants.

4.4.3.1 Justification for use of focus group discussions

Focus group discussions enable the collection of rich data in qualitative studies and, unlike interviews, enable a group of participants to engage in an interactive, informative discussion relating to the research topic (Wilson & MacLean, 2011). Further, this data collection method enables observation of how participants collectively construct meanings, and defend and persuade others in favour of their respective positions. In the current study, I deemed focus group discussion an appropriate method to use, so as to generate jointly constructed insights into factors that students consider to affect their academic success and experiences at their respective HEIs, based on aspects of their identities—more specifically, on their racial identities—and their institutions' historical racial identities. In turn, similar to the inclination of focus group discussions, race is a socially constructed phenomenon

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(Leonardo, 2009; Stanfield, 1999), albeit with tangible effects for social actors, which they also negotiate or contend with in various spheres, as detailed in Chapters 1 to 3 of this thesis. Thus, race, one of the primary foci of this study, justifies the use of focus group discussions to collect the data. My assumption was that the racial dynamics and exposure thereto or negotiation thereof at both HEIs and in the broader socio-cultural context, would also play out during the focus group discussions. In relation to this, Wilson and MacLean (2011) posit that, unlike interviews, focus group discussions are naturalistic, in that the discussions between participants are dynamic and take the form of natural conversation, with participants in this setting being able to share anecdotes, agree or disagree and tell jokes.

4.4.3.2 Data collection technique

As a means to address the study aims, a focus group guide (see Appendix G) was used to gather information from participants on factors that they considered to influence academic success). In this regard, following the use of engagement questions (Elliot & Associates, 2005) aimed at easing participants into the discussion, I posed questions to participants regarding their experiences and challenges at either institution since enrolment, possible reasons for student attrition and for poor academic performance, and support received from the institution, while allowing discussions pertaining to these topics to unfold naturally. Moreover, other than questions on the focus group guide that pertained to perceived student demographics on the basis of race and racial integration patterns on the two university campuses, I also asked participants about the role possibly played by racial integration patterns at the institution in students' overall or academic experiences, as per the second study aim. Nonetheless, I also assumed that, should race play a role as anticipated, then this would spontaneously emerge during the course of the focus group discussions. This is especially considering the assumed inherence of race in individuals' experiences across

contexts, as per the tenets of critical race theory (see Chapter 2). The transcripts of all five focus group discussions are presented in Appendix H.

Although the focus group elicited responses on participants' personal experiences, these experiences are presumably shaped by various aspects in the social realm, which renders them essentially socially constructed. The questions posed were structured in a way that elicited participants' accounts of their experiences within a particular context, namely, either an HBHEI or a HWHEI historically and currently situated in a particular socio-political and socio-cultural context. These experiences were also presumably shaped by participants' positioning within the higher education context, by virtue of both their (racial) identities in these contexts and the historical racial identities of the institutions, both of which are admittedly socially constructed (Leonardo, 2009; Stanfield, 1999). Therefore, participants' experiences were elicited, related, and interpreted in consideration of these identities. This acknowledgement of the inextricable link between individual experiences and the broader context draws from my application of the systemic theory and critical race theory in this study.

In addition to the collection of verbal, audio-recorded data, I also observed patterns of interaction between focus group members, which constituted observational data. This would enable my appraisal of broad patterns of interaction between participants and of their behaviour, including the extent of consensus and dissent among them, and their negotiation of these (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). The collection of observational data herein subscribes to Madriz's (2000) stance that focus group discussions comprise elements of interviews and participant observation, thereby enabling the collection of more comprehensive data.

4.4.3.3 Racial composition of the focus groups

As indicated in Section 4.4.1 above, I had initially intended to conduct focus group discussions comprising Black-only and White-only participants, to ensure racial homogeneity and, therefore, maximise disclosure within each discussion (Elliot & Associates, 2005). The benefit of racially homogenous focus groups was that they countered the possibly negative effects of a racially diverse focus group on individuals' abilities to candidly express their views, particularly against the backdrop of, presumably, a set culture of intergroup relations at any given HEI, as well as the broader socio-cultural context. Further, similarly to the basic assumptions of this study, the deliberate use of either a strictly homogenous or fairly racially diverse focus group implicitly serves as acknowledgement of the possible interplay between the historical racial identities of HEIs, individual participants' racial identities, and the broader social-cultural context, taking into account how these may affect participants' candidness or academic experiences at their respective HEIs. I conducted a total of four racially homogenous focus group discussions; three at the HBHEI and one at the HWHEI.

Use of racially homogenous focus group discussions did not, however, preclude diverse participant perspectives, especially for the Black-only focus groups in this study. Instead, the dynamics in these discussions were in line with the commendation of focus group discussion for facilitating the plurality of voices and for legitimising participants as collective co-constructors of knowledge (Fine, 1994). Another advantage of racial homogeneity, including between participants and between participants and the moderating team in this study, was illustrated by the extent of the rapport cultivated between participants in the Black-only focus groups and I at the two study sites. This, in turn resulted in participants' palpable openness during the discussions. Participant openness was demonstrated by the informal language used by participants during the focus group discussions and, in some instances, resorting to the use of their vernacular languages—which I encouraged when it

occurred, due to mine and the Black female research assistant's combined fluency in the Sesotho and Nguni language groups—to better express themselves (see transcripts of the Black-only focus group discussions in Transcripts 1 and 3 of Appendix H). This dynamic embodied Madriz's (2000) stance that "a sensitive understanding of people's lives requires shared symbols, meanings, and vocabularies" (p. 841), as illustrated in language, thereby in turn demonstrating the dynamic nature of those focus group discussions. These developments during the focus group discussions arguably illustrate the social construction of meaning in these contexts (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Madriz, 2000). Referring to the visibilization of women of colour through the use of focus group discussions in feminist research, Madriz (2000) argues that this data collection method facilitates the "tearing down [of] the walls of silence that have hidden women of color's triple and overlapping marginality: being female, being of color, and, usually, being poor" (p. 841). Thus, in the current study, my conduct of the three focus groups particularly comprising Black participants only demonstrably gave a voice and visibility to Black students in higher education, regardless of institution type (i.e. HWHEI or HBHEI), considering this student population's broad-scale historical marginalisation in South Africa and the enduring legacy thereof socio-culturally, socio-economically and otherwise.

Another benefit of using focus group discussions, as opposed to other data collection methods, was that I could directly observe the dynamics of interracial relations or participants' apparent openness to expressing certain views, whether 'negative' or 'positive', in either the racially diverse or homogeneous focus group contexts. I make reference to these (race-related) observations and those pertaining to gender dynamics in the focus group discussions in Chapter 5, as part of the study findings. These observations are in line with Madriz's (2000) argument that focus group discussions comprise elements of both individual interviews and participant observation. Madriz (2000) further posits that interaction between

focus group members and the moderator decreases intra-group interaction within the focus group setting and the allocation of credence to the participants, while increasing the moderator's influence on the course of the discussion. I found this to be especially true in the Black-only focus group discussions, as discussed above. In sharp contrast, I observed a palpable discomfort in the focus group discussion comprising White participants only at the HBHEI, especially when the discussion steered towards either interracial relations on campus or when, seemingly, participants' responses could be construed as speaking in a disparaging manner about the institution, whose historical racial identity is discordant to theirs. I also assumed that these participants' apparent self-censorship and hesitation were compounded by my own racial identity, which is discordant to theirs. It is on the basis of these dynamics that I decided not to facilitate a White-only focus group discussion at the HWHEI as initially planned, to guard against possibly similar dynamics, such that only four racially homogenous focus group discussions were ultimately conducted in this study (i.e. two Black-only focus group discussions at the HBHEI, one White-only focus group at the HBHEI and one Black-only discussion at the HWHEI). Justification for this decision is embodied in Elliot and Associates' (2005) reference to the need for a focus group moderator to be found to be relatable by participants. Thus, instead of emphasis only on the merits of focus group participants' homogeneity (i.e. their ability to unreservedly share important insights on a particular topic; Krueger & Casey, 2010), it would seem that moderator characteristics in relation to the group play an equally important role. Therefore, instead of a White-only focus group at the HWHEI, for parity with the HBHEI, in addition to the Black-only focus group conducted at this HEI, I conducted a second group with a racially diverse sample, partly to also observe how these participants would negotiate their perspectives (Wilson & MacLean, 2011) in relation to factors affecting their academic success at the HEI. Indeed, the course of the discussion in this focus group was relatively more dynamic, compared to that in the

White-only focus group, and participants deferred to me as the facilitator to a lesser extent and interacted with each other more; these interactions entailed agreements, disagreements and negotiation of meanings, among others. This corresponds to Madriz's (2000) reference to an inverse relationship between group members' interaction with one another and with the moderator.

4.4.3.4 Number of focus group discussions

In total, I conducted five focus group discussions—three at the HBHEI and two at the HEI. Krueger and Casey (2010) have suggested that two to five homogenous focus groups would be adequate. In the five focus group discussions conducted in this study, participants were homogeneous in terms of their subscription to the study's inclusion criteria, namely, undergraduate students in their first, second or third year of study at either participating institution. Morgan (1997) has suggested the use of three to five groups as a rule of thumb, arguing that this is based on the notion that "more groups seldom provide meaningful new insights" (p. 16). This author has further argued that research projects with heterogeneous participants would necessitate more focus group discussions, as a diverse set of participants hampers the possibility of coherent opinions and experiences being drawn from the data. In my study, following my resolution not to include a White-only focus group at the HWHEI, I assumed that an additional, racially diverse focus group would suffice, given my assumption of participants' possibly diverse perspectives in relation to the questions posed, as a result of this diversity. This decision was based on the notion that, in spite of whichever course that the discussion would take, participants' interactions in this context would still presumably reflect broader institutional and societal dynamics, given the population from which this sub-sample was drawn. This focus group discussion would also suffice in contributing towards addressing the study's research questions, given that the focus of my analysis would

primarily be on factors perceived to affect academic success, along with these perceptions or experiences in this regard on the basis of either student or historical institutional race, which I anticipated to emerge during the course of the discussion.

Overall, I consider the five total focus groups conducted to have been in line with recommendations by scholars, as discussed above. Moreover, given the actual nature of these focus group discussions (i.e. use of the focus group guide and my involvement in steering the course of the discussion), the number of those conducted is presumed adequate, considering Morgan's (1997) argument that the less structured focus group discussions are and the less involved the moderator is in steering the course of the discussion, then the larger the number of focus groups required. The divergent views stemming from such unstructured groups would result in a more variable and less coherent set of findings. This possibility was effectively countered in the current study, as shown by use of the focus group guide for structure, as well as my involvement as a moderator in steering the course of the focus group discussions. Furthermore, as additional justification for the number of focus group discussions in the current study, in their analysis of 40 focus groups, Guest, Namey, & McKenna (2017) found that three focus groups could sufficiently enable the identification of the most prevalent themes in a given data set. It is also important to note that, given the qualitative nature of this study, there was no intention for the study findings to be generalised to other contexts. Rather, qualitative research is concerned with thick descriptions of particular cases (Seale, 1999). In fact, Seale (1999) argues that long periods of conducting fieldwork, resulting in immersion in the study context, reasonably leads to the gathering of sufficient thick descriptions to warrant applicability of particular findings to the population from which a given sample was drawn. As demonstration of my immersion in the study context, I held the focus group discussions at the two study sites on different days over several weeks at a time. This ensured my prolonged experience of the study sites and

enhanced my familiarity with these, from participating undergraduate students' perspectives. Seale (1999) further posits that prolonged contact with the study sites and the resultant gathering of rich data reasonably accord readers the prerogative to make judgements about the relevance of certain findings to other, similar situations or contexts. In addition, with reference to theoretical generalisation in qualitative research, Mitchell (1983) argues for individual cases to be selected not so much on the basis of their typicality, but that of their explanatory power. Further, according to this argument, the focus group discussions conducted in this study are adequate insofar as the data obtained can enable logical inferences, as opposed to statistical inference (Mitchell, 1983).

4.4.3.5 Focus group size

In terms of the composition of each focus group, Krueger and Casey (2010) have recommended a range of 4 or 5 to 12 participants. These authors argue that smaller groups of up to eight are suitable for topics that might be construed as sensitive or personal, or when participants have expertise in the topic. The small group size in this instance would presumably enable an in-depth discussion of the topic. A larger group, as argued by these authors, would result in trivial, short responses and fewer opportunities for elaboration. The advantage of a smaller focus group (i.e. eight or fewer participants) is that each participant has more opportunities to talk, which results in richer data. The number of participants in the focus group discussions in the current study ranged from five to eight, thereby providing a rich source of data to enable me to address the study's research questions. Morgan (1997) posits that access to a higher number of participants and their ideas at a time, when compared to in individual interviews, is a strength of focus group discussions. In the current study, the five focus group discussions conducted comprised a total of 31 participants; 12 at the HWHEI and 19 at the HBHEI.

4.4.4 Data analysis method

I transcribed the audio-recorded data verbatim, with the assistance of the Black, female research assistant who was present at three of the focus group discussions (at the Black-only focus group discussion at UP, and the two Black-only focus group discussions at SMU). Then, I carefully checked the transcribed data and cross-checked these with the audio recordings, for quality. This entailed carefully reading and checking if the transcribed data corresponded with the audio-recordings. During this process, I made corrections to the transcripts as needed. Thereafter, I analysed the data.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method involving the extraction of themes or patterns from a given data set (Rice & Ezzy, 1999). Similar to Ely, Vinz, Downing, and Anzul's (1997) critique of the apparent "emergence" (p. 208) of data on the grounds that an impression of themes residing in the data is inadvertently created, Braun and Clarke (2006) add that the language used in respect of the identification of themes implies one's theoretical position. From the latter authors' perspective, reference to the "emergence" or "discovery" of themes presupposes a researcher's presumed passive relationship with, or interpretation of the data. In the current study, I take accountability for my subjective, value-laden interaction with the data in my analysis. This is especially in consideration of my use of critical race theory as a theoretical framework. This stance is also illustrated in the researcher positionality statement presented in Chapter 7, Section 7.6, in which I declare my positioning in relation to the study and the possible influence thereof in my appraisal and treatment of the data. Thus, I acknowledge the active role that I, based on or along with my positionality, play in my interpretation of the study findings. Moreover, I acknowledge that my identification of themes from the data

obtained is informed by both the data and my own biases and decision-making in respect of the prominence or foregrounding of data items in this data set.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the researcher plays a key role in determining what constitutes a theme. Moreover, the "keyness" of a theme is equally decided upon by the researcher and as to whether it "captures something important about the data in relation to the overall research question" (p. 82). In view of this, I omitted themes that I did not consider to be related to the research question. Specifically, I omitted the theme, "Miscellaneous" due to its lack of relevance, and some aspects of the sub-theme, "Infrastructure" due to participants' disclosure of possibly sensitive institutional information, from the presentation of findings in Chapter 5 and from the interpretation of findings in Chapter 6. Moreover, I deliberately excluded all content relating to the above-mentioned Infrastructure sub-theme from the transcripts shown in Appendix H; I also make no reference to that content in this thesis. Since the omitted content does not address the research questions, according to my appraisal, the integrity of the findings presented and discussed is not compromised as a result of these omissions.

Braun and Clarke (2006) draw a distinction between data-driven and theoretical themes. The former refers to themes that are not constructed or identified in consideration of the researcher's theoretical interests. The latter type of analysis is "driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest in [a particular area]" (p. 84), and is therefore "analyst driven". In this study, the latter is embodied in my analysis of data in respect of race and the observational findings presented in Section 5.3.14 in Chapter 5. These observations are in line with my theoretical assumptions, as presented in Chapter 2. Other than my broad reference to patterns of consensus and dissent, and negotiation of these in the focus group discussions, I also particularly analyse these on the basis of the general legitimacy accorded to participants' identities in the broader society. In this regard, I specifically refer to

participant race and gender, both of which constitute marginalised identities, according to critical race theory (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

Braun and Clarke (2006) have provided the following guidelines on phases of thematic analysis of data, while emphasising that these are mere guidelines and open to flexible application by researchers:

1) Familiarising oneself with the data. This stage involves transcribing the data, carefully reading the data and noting one's initial ideas in relation the data. In this study, I familiarised myself with the data by re-reading the transcripts after initial transcription and conducting quality checks. During this process, I conceptualised possible codes or themes under which some of the participants' statements could fall, also making notes to this effect.

2) Generating initial codes. This involves systematic identification of interesting features of the data across a given data set and grouping them under their respective codes. In this study, I assigned codes to each statement made throughout the data set, thereafter also double-checking if all data items corresponded with the assigned codes, and revising these allocations when necessary. Importantly, I ensured that codes were assigned for each statement or group of statements made.

3) Searching for themes. This entails grouping related codes to form a theme, resulting in the development of multiple themes that are related to particular data items. In the current study, I grouped related codes to make up a theme, then ascertained as to whether each statement corresponded with the theme under which it was assigned by virtue of being assigned to a particular code.

4) Reviewing themes. During this phase, the researcher ascertains "if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2). This phase results in the development of a thematic map of the analysed data. In my study, where necessary, I revised the grouping of certain codes under some themes and the assignment of certain

statements under some codes. Ultimately, I ensured that each statement or group of statements fell under a particular code and that each code and its corresponding statements fell under a relevant theme (see Table I1 and Figure I1 in Appendix I for the initial and final thematic maps developed during the course of analysis in this study).

5) Defining and naming themes. In this phase, the researcher continuously refines the themes and the story presumably told by the analysis, further illustrated by clear definitions and naming of themes. In the study, I refined the initial labels assigned to themes, further ensuring that the final names assigned corresponded to each data item. This is illustrated in the revision to the themes and theme names as shown in Table I1 and Figure I1 in Appendix I. Drawing from Ely et al.'s (1997) notion that qualitative data analysis is recursive rather than linear, Braun and Clark (2006) posit that thematic analysis is not a linear process, but a recursive one, involving moving back and forth across the six steps of thematic data analysis. In the current study, this was illustrated by the processes that I undertook in Steps 2 to 5, ultimately leading to the final themes as presented in Chapter 5.

6) Producing the report. This entails the selection of data extracts that vividly represent each theme, and demonstrating links between one's analysis and the research question and literature, ultimately producing a report of the analysis. This phase is illustrated particularly in Chapter 6 of this thesis, wherein I critically discuss and interpret the findings in terms of the theoretical approaches adopted and existing literature.

To illustrate my undertaking of Braun and Clarke's (2006) above-mentioned sixth step, in order to address the first research question, the presentation of themes that emerged regarding factors that participants consider to affect academic success in higher education (as presented in Chapter 5) was followed in Chapter 6 by the interpretation of these largely from the systemic perspective. In keeping with the systemic theory, the factors identified as per the identified themes were interpreted in terms of their theoretical links to the following systems,

and to each other as either (grouped or distinct) subsystems forming part of one or more of the following: the individual, the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and the chronosystem. This aspect of analysis and interpretation was informed by the assumption of reciprocity between the following: a) subsystems within an individual, b) subsystems within a microsystem and in relation to the individual, c) different microsystems and their respective subsystems in a mesosystemic context and in relation to the individual, d) between the exosytem and the individual and, possibly, between the subsystems of the exosystem, and e) between the macrosystem and the chronosystem, and between these and the subordinate systems, including the individual.

In instances wherein, as described above, the influence of the macrosystem and the chronosystem on the identified factors pertained to race and racism, with identified factors straddling the systemic and critical race theory domains, I adopted the critical race theory lens for a more comprehensive and specialised angle from which to interpret the study findings in this regard, which also addressed the second research question in this study. In this regard, I specifically teased out themes relating to race (including personal and institutional historical racial identity) and racial prejudice and discrimination (including interpersonal, institutional and structural) and interpreted them according to critical race theory. In addition to this, I examined certain factors that I assumed to theoretically pertain to race, which participants did not necessarily explicitly tie to race, to clarify how these are a function of race or racism from a critical race theory perspective. This stage of data analysis sought to elucidate the mechanisms through which race and racial prejudice or discrimination (individual, institutional, structural and beyond) permeate and shape students' experiences and, specifically, success in higher education. Consideration of both participants' accounts of factors that they consider to affect their academic success and the underlying role of race and racial dynamics at the HEIs under study, presumably influenced by broader structures, such

as the historical socio-cultural and socio-political contexts, subscribe to the critical approach adopted in this study.

In addition to my analysis of the verbal, audio-recorded and transcribed data obtained from the discussions, I also present as part of the findings my observations of the dynamics of each focus group discussion, as well as the nature of the interaction between group members across all five focus groups. The latter is especially in correspondence with Onwuegbuzie et al.'s (2009) notion that focus group data can yield individual, group or interaction data, depending on the unit of analysis as defined by the researcher. These authors add that, "although themes can yield important and interesting information" (p. 5), the presentation and interpretation of themes only would lead to the neglect the presentation of important data such as patterns of consensus and dissent between group members, thereby effectively marginalising the voices of dissenting group members. To ensure comprehensive analysis of the data obtained and to add rigour to the study, in Chapter 5, I also present my overall impressions of the dynamics of each focus group discussion, based on its general course, also taking into account participants' broad *negotiation* of dissent and dynamics pertaining to consensus. Where applicable, I consider these in relation to individual participants' demographic variables, such as race, ethnicity and gender. According to Maxwell (2005), acknowledgement of dissent enhances the descriptive, interpretive and theoretical validity of the findings and, therefore, understanding of the phenomenon under study. In addition to dynamics pertaining to consensus and dissent, Stevens (1996) has suggested the following as important to consider when analysing interactions in focus group discussions: "... group processes, emotional charge, how group members' interactions buil[d] on each other, power dynamics [... and] group stories" (p. 173). Consideration of these is illustrated in Section 5.3.14. For rigour, where applicable in my analysis of group dynamics, I corroborate the observations made with the audio-recorded and transcribed data, as thematised in the

preceding section in Chapter 5. Similar to the findings based on the audio-recorded, transcribed data, in Chapter 6, I interpret the group interaction data using the systemic theory and critical race theory principles, based on their applicability.

4.5 Quality Assurance

The sub-section below presents measures taken to ensure the quality of the methods used in this qualitative study, and of the findings obtained.

4.5.1 Credibility

Credibility is concerned with the truth-value of the research. It can be ensured through, among others, prolonged engagement with the study site and gaining familiarity with the context, to allow for testing for misinformation, as well as persistent observation of characteristics that are most relevant to the research problem so as to focus on these in detail (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

First, multiple focus group discussions were held in this study, which also ensured that, despite my considerable experience of the HWHEI outside of the context of this study, over time, I gained considerable understanding of how both HEIs under study functioned, at least from undergraduate students' perspectives. Moreover, the focus group discussions at both study sites were held on different days over several weeks at a time, which further ensured prolonged experience of the study sites and enhanced familiarity with these, from participating students' perspectives.

Second, illustrating my persistent observation of characteristics that are most relevant to the research problem during focus group discussions, as recommended by Korstjens and Moser (2018), I observed participants' interaction patterns with one another and with me, as the moderator, as well as their level and inclination of engagement with topics under

discussion, particularly those pertaining to race. Then, I linked my observations to participants' racial identities and the historical racial identities of their HEIs, as per the theoretical foundations (i.e. critical race theory) of this study and the second study aim (i.e. identifying how race shapes students' experiences in higher education). This strategy was based on my assumption that the racial dynamics and exposure to these at the two HEIs and in the broader socio-cultural context, would play out during the focus group discussions both verbally and in the form of focus group dynamics.

Reflexivity

To ensure reflexivity, Seale (1999) argues that a research report should reflect a researcher's position. Moreover, details should be provided regarding the data collection process and context, to enable replication; as well as those regarding the theories and ideas informing the study, and methodological reporting. This level of reflexivity would enable readers to assess the credibility of the research findings. Further, Seale (1999) states that reflexivity entails making one's theory and preconceptions explicit. The former refers to one's values, prejudices and subconscious desires.

In demonstration of my reflexivity during the conduct of this study, I present my positionality as the researcher in Section 7.6 in Chapter 7, specifying my theoretical positioning and life experiences informing my assumptions and perspective during the conduct of this study, and how these might have affected aspects of my conduct of this study at various points. Specifically, in that sub-section, I refer to the particular lens that I assume in relation to the study, as a result of my identity as a Black South African woman and my assumption of the inherence of race and racism in various spheres of South African society, including the higher education context. This assumption is informed by my exposure to narratives on, and my own personal experiences (or recollections thereof) of an apartheid-

South Africa strictly demarcated on the basis of race, as determined by macro socio-political structures, whose dictates filtered down to various subordinate spheres, down to the minute details of everyday life and distinctions therein on the basis of race. These and the presumed legacy of that period, compounded by my adoption of critical race theory as a theoretical approach in this study, informed my assumption that personal and historical institutional racial identity play an integral role in the experiences of higher education students, to the relative detriment of Black students in general, and students enrolled in HBHEIs. I acknowledge that these biases likely informed various aspects of my conduct of this study, including the extent to which participants of different races and I deemed each other relatable enough to enable their openness with me and honesty, and my receptiveness towards them and their experiences; my positioning and interpretation of participants' accounts; and the prominence that I accorded to study findings based on their resonance with my expectations and assumptions.

Other than the above-mentioned indicators, my experience of the HWHEI in this study both as a student and employee meant that I was familiar with relatively more terms and concepts used by participants at this institution and with the university environment, compared to the HBHEI. This resulted in minimal probing of participants' responses at the HWHEI, compared to that in the discussions at the HBHEI. Nonetheless, to facilitate rapport at both institutions, I consciously introduced myself as a postgraduate student to the focus group participants, prior to briefly mentioning what the study was about and what the focus group discussion would entail. This was in the hopes that my identification as a student would counter unequal power dynamics that might have otherwise emerged (Elliot and Associates, 2005), and facilitate a sense of rapport between the participants and I, and in turn, facilitate participants' candidness during the focus group discussions.

4.5.2 Confirmability and dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency or reliability of findings, while confirmability is related to neutrality or objectivity (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Seale, 1999). Dependability and confirmability can be attained through use of an audit trail, which entails transparent description of research steps taken at commencement of a research project, through its development, and when reporting findings. In this study, a comprehensive account of the study procedures is provided, including when data collection commenced, the study procedures followed, data analysis procedures, and the raw findings and interpretation thereof, with a comprehensive account of how interpretation was undertaken (as shown in Chapters 4 to 6 for a thorough description of the research procedures followed before, during and after data collection, and in the study findings and interpretation thereof). Moreover, I provide the audit trail in Appendix I, detailing the procedures undertaken in this study, decisions made and my reflections, where applicable, thereon.

Prior to analysing the data, I also thoroughly checked for consistency between the transcripts and the recorded raw data, to ensure that the transcripts matched the recordings, so as to enhance dependability (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Dependability in this study has also been enhanced through my provision of the transcripts (Appendix H), in line with Seale's (1999) proposal that internal reliability can be ensured by showing the reader the data corpus from which codes were derived and on the basis of which conclusions were made. This, Seale (1999) argues, "is like inviting the reader to participate in an inter-rater reliability exercise" (p. 156). Similarly, based on the definition of confirmability as the extent to which the findings can be corroborated by peers (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Tobin & Begley, 2004), my provision of the transcripts also contributes towards the confirmability of findings.

4.5.3 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which qualitative research findings can be transferred to contexts other than that of the study, and using different participants (Bitsch, 2005; Tobin & Begley, 2004). According to Bitsch (2005), transferability is ensured through the presentation of thick descriptions of the data and use of purposive sampling. Purposive sampling enables the researcher to draw from the in-depth knowledge of key informants regarding the issues under study (Schutt, 2006). Korstjens and Moser (2018) state that thick descriptions pertain not only to participants' behaviour and experiences, but also to the study context, so that an outsider can find these meaningful. Seale (1999) adds that the provision of thick descriptions of settings enables readers to "vicariously experience" (p. 41) the study settings. I provide a comprehensive description of the two study sites in Section 4.4.1 in this chapter. In addition, in my discussion of findings (Chapter 6), I provide in-depth descriptions of both study contexts in relation to the study findings. These descriptions would enable readers to judge the extent to which findings from the study contexts could be applied to other contexts that they know. Moreover, purposive sampling was used in this study to ensure that data were obtained from participants within HEIs meeting criteria relevant to the research question, as shown in Section 4.4.1. Specification of the sampling criteria for target HEIs and participants in this study and those who actually took part in the study, would enable readers to conceive of the applicability of the current study findings to HEIs and students with demographic profiles similar to those specified in the current study.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

I obtained permission to conduct the study from participating HEIs and ensured that participants took part voluntarily in the study, with full understanding of what the study

entailed and that they could withdraw participation at any time without any penalties (Appendices A–D, F). All participants provided written informed consent (Appendix F) to participate in the study (Russell & Purcell, 2009). Participants were given the option to use pseudonyms during the focus group discussions, to maintain their anonymity, if they so required. Although the study presumably posed no foreseeable risks to participants, they were informed that should they require psychological counselling as a result of participation in the study, they could access student psychological services at their respective university campuses, at no cost. The contact information of student psychological services' offices was either presented in the information sheets provided to participants, or I verified if participants knew of the student counselling division on their university campuses and the locations thereof, prior to commencing with data collection.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter presented the methodology used in this study. First, the research questions were presented. This was followed by the research methodology used, then an overview of the research approach adopted for this study. Thereafter, I presented the research methods, including sampling procedures and techniques, data collection procedures and the data collection method, namely, focus group discussions. Thematic analysis and analysis of observational data were described in detail in terms of ways in which they were used to address the study's two research questions from the two theoretical perspectives adopted in this study. This was followed by a description of the quality measures taken in relation to the study, as well as ethical considerations.

The following chapter presents the study findings.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study findings. First, I present a detailed description of the study sample, including participants' race, gender, degree programmes and year of study; the HEI in which each participant was enrolled; the focus group discussion in which each participated; and the dates on which each discussion was conducted. Thereafter, I present the study themes pertaining to the verbal, audio-recorded data and findings pertaining to the observational data.

The identified themes include factors directly affecting students' academic success, as well as those broadly affecting their academic experiences, either explicitly as stated by participants or as surmised by me. Some commonalities were found between participants at the two HEIs, and between Black participants at the two HEIs. In other instances, certain factors were found to be unique to either institution. The observational findings presented entail varying dynamics across the five focus groups, with varying levels of consensus and dissent, and the negotiation of these. Race and gender are shown to have possibly played a role in participants' interactions with one another and with me, and in their engagement with the discussion topics. Race is shown to have contributed towards the extent of disclosure and openness towards the course of the discussions, especially in the racially homogenous focus groups.

In addition to discussing factors explicitly identified by participants as affecting their academic success and therefore addressing the first research question, Chapter 6 will also entail a discussion of factors presented in this chapter, that I assume to have implications on

students' academic experiences, particularly helping address the study's second research question.

Following a description of the study sample and details pertaining to the focus group discussions below, I present the following themes, along with their respective sub-themes, where applicable: psychological factors, personal circumstances, lack of information, institutional support, lack of accountability to students, lack of extracurricular activities, distance between residence and university, unfair treatment at the institution, workload, socio-economic conditions, language, student protests and prejudice. Thereafter, I present the observational findings.

5.2 Description of Sample

The sample comprised a total of 31 participants from the five focus group discussions conducted. Table 5.1 presents a comprehensive description of the study sample, including participant names and biographical information, and details regarding the focus group discussions.

Table 5.1: Participant and Focus Group Information

Name	Race	Gender	Study programme	Year of study	Study site	Number of focus group discussion (FGD) at study site	Date of FGD
Nontsikelelo	Black	Female	Human Physiology Genetics and Psychology	3	HWHEI	1	15 April
Makaziwe	Black	Female	Human Physiology Genetics and Psychology	3	HWHEI	1	15 April
Presti	Black	Female	Bio-Chemistry and Human Physiology	3	HWHEI	1	15 April
Reabetswe	Black	Female	BA: Psychology	2	HWHEI	1	15 April
Nhlanhla	Black	Male	BA General: English Literature	2	HWHEI	1	15 April
Brendan	White	Male	B. Eng Mechanical	2	HWHEI	2	18 April
Willem	White	Male	BCom Accounting Sciences	2	HWHEI	2	18 April
Thuli	Black	Female	BA Humanities	2	HWHEI	2	18 April
Hlohi	Black	Female	BA General	3	HWHEI	2	18 April
Tumi	Black	Female	BCom Human Resource Management	2	HWHEI	2	18 April
Joubertus	White	Male	B Eng Mechanical	1	HWHEI	2	18 April
Geenan	Black	Male	Veterinary Science	1	HWHEI	2	18 April
Thabo	Black	Male	BPharm	2	HBHEI	1	16 March
Katlego	Black	Male	Oral Hygiene	3	HBHEI	1	16 March
Lonwabo	Black	Male	Oral Hygiene	3	HBHEI	1	16 March
Snenhlanhla (Sne)	Black	Female	Oral Hygiene	3	HBHEI	1	16 March
Maningi	Black	Female	BSc Physics	2	HBHEI	1	16 March

Zinhle	Black	Female	BSc Mathematics	2	HBHEI	1	16 March
Ilska	White	Female	Dentistry	1	HBHEI	2	14 April
Esmarie	White	Female	MBChB	1	HBHEI	2	14 April
Hesmari	White	Female	MBChB	1	HBHEI	2	14 April
Lisa	White	Female	Dentistry	1	HBHEI	2	14 April
Jaco	White	Male	MBChB	1	HBHEI	2	14 April
Dembe	Black	Female	MBChB	4	HBHEI	3	21 April
Tsholofelo (Tsholo)	Black	Female	Occupational Therapy	1	HBHEI	3	21 April
Anele	Black	Female	BSc Physics	2	HBHEI	3	21 April
Dzanga	Black	Female	BSc	2	HBHEI	3	21 April
Lerato	Black	Female	Oral Hygiene	3	HBHEI	3	21 April
Phuti	Black	Male	BSc	2	HBHEI	3	21 April
Sonto	Black	Female	Occupational Therapy	2	HBHEI	3	21 April
Kholofelo (Kholo)	Black	Female	BSc	2	HBHEI	3	21 April

All participants were enrolled for undergraduate studies at their respective institutions. The data were collected from 16 March to 21 April, with the data collection period straddling the end of Term 1 and the beginning of Term 2 at the two institutions. The all-Black focus group discussion at the HWHEI comprised five participants, one of whom was male, and four, female. The mixed focus group discussion at the HWHEI comprised seven participants, with three Black female participants, one Black male participant, and three White male participants. All participants at this institution were registered for undergraduate studies at their respective institutions. Participants at the HWHEI were enrolled for at least one module in the Faculty of Humanities.

The first all-Black focus group discussion at the HBHEI comprised six participants, with three male and three female participants. The second all-Black focus group discussion at this HEI comprised eight participants, seven of whom were female, and one, male. The all-White focus group discussion at the HBHEI comprised five participants, with four female, and one male. Participants at the HBHEI were all enrolled for studies in the Health Sciences.

5.3 Factors Affecting Academic Success

Below is a presentation of themes and sub-themes pertaining to factors identified by participants as contributing towards academic success.

5.3.1 Psychological factors

5.3.1.1 Self-regulation

Participants identified several self-regulation strategies that either contributed or hampered their ability to succeed in their studies.

In order to succeed academically, participants acknowledged that it was important to set priorities and strike a balance between academic and various non-academic activities, such as socialising, going to church and engaging in extracurricular activities.

"*I think balancing your social and academic life, 'cause when you come here, there is always gonna be a 'Monday singles', 'Thursday student night', 'Friday what-what'. So, if you don't realise, you're gonna attend everything, every day. But then, you need to balance; maybe have some sort of timetable: OK, I'm gonna go out two times a week or maybe—OK, two times a month, and then on Friday, I'm gonna cross-night. On this day, I'm gonna do this … You should be able to ... to know yourself and know what you want and be able to get what you want*". (Presti, participant at the HWHEI, FGD 1)

Thus, participants recognised the importance of effective time management to adequately accommodate various academic activities, even suggesting formally drawing up a schedule for studying. Geenan, a student at the HWHEI, pointed out that first-year students might especially be side-tracked by their newly found independence:

"*I think it's just about prioritising, so if people like, especially first-years come here and then they think you go to university and it's free and open and [inaudible] and you study*

whatever, and then at the end of the day, they don't go to class, they skip class and don't study and everything just piles up and up, and that's when subjects get intensively hard".

Esmarie, a second-year student at the HBHEI, stated that there was a tendency by students, especially poor performers, to underestimate the initial workload or difficulty of the work, which would then become progressively more difficult to understand and keep up with.

Peer pressure was also identified as an influencing factor. While Joubertus, a student at the HWHEI, stated that staying in a university residence especially predisposed one to the pressure to go out with peers "*cause they're practically your brothers; you're living with them; you feel compelled to go out with them and participate and everything*", Lonwabo, a participant from the HWHEI, pointed out that he stays in a university residence in town, which was especially not conducive to studying because of the many shops and clubs in the area.

Participants at the HWHEI also indicated that it was important for students to take responsibility and approach the relevant people or structures on campus that could help them with time management and study skills, such as scheduled workshops. Emphasis was also placed on establishing connections with other students for support and motivation, which would in turn influence the students' study schedule:

"*It's your responsibility as a student to know that you have to do stuff and try and go there, go out there and look for help if you need it. Besides time management, I think, if not the university, but you should try and as a student try and engage with other students and then like, form study groups and stuff like that. In that way, you know you will get motivated; and when other students are studying, you also know that you have to study. If you cannot manage yourself, then try and find people who are already at that level that you're trying to get to, so that you get motivation*". (Reabetswe, HWHEI, FGD 1)

Notably, participants at the HBHEI did not express concerns similar to those mentioned above, about engagement with other students, due to a mentorship programme in place at the university, that mentees reported greatly benefiting from.

5.3.1.2 Self-efficacy

Jaco, a Medical student at the HBHEI, pointed out that being able to withstand the practical demands of the course, which in turn affected adjustment, was important for succeeding:

"*... we're studying dissections next year on cadavers, and that can be a huge, huge problem if you just cannot deal with the fact that you're slicing other human beings open, and if you can't deal with that, you literally just cannot become ... you can probably still carry on and if you have the determination to push through that year, it will be OK, I guess, but I feel if you cannot deal with that, then you can't become a doctor. If you like ... if you faint at the sight of blood, unless you personally work through that problem, you might drop out*".

Although individuals' awareness of their low self-efficacy in relation to their academic performance may not unequivocally result in poor performance, low self-efficacy may be indicative of an inability to meet one's own standards or may reflect current, self-perceived unsatisfactory academic performance. For example, one participant struggled to come to terms with peers performing better than herself, despite perceiving herself as working harder and attending classes, which resulted in feelings of despondency and uncertainty. Further, Maningi (HBHEI, FGD 1) admitted to being less confident that she would complete her studies in record time, compared to during her first year of study, because of other students' prevailing perceptions of the difficulty of her study course:

"*they are introducing that ... 'aah, you won't pass in Organic Chemistry ... you won't' [...] eish, I think I'm not confident*".

5.3.1.3 Adjustment

Participants primarily referred to problems with adjusting to a new environment, especially after having led a relatively more sheltered life with family or the transition from high school, as important contributors towards academic failure, or even attrition. Hlohi (HWHEI, FGD 2) stated, "*Everything, it was just so overwhelming, where like, in high school, as they said, it was kind of like the school fed you and it didn't seem like it was hard, and then when you get here, it just overwhelms you 'cause it's very different from what you're used to in high school*". Esmarie (HBHEI, FGD 2) shared these sentiments: "*I think, especially still even though we've written a few tests, we still don't know what to expect, how they're gonna ask it; and at school, you were used to your teachers' tests or how they ... they'll just ask it like this, you know the setup of the test, and now you don't know what to expect, you're writing a lot of subjects on computers. So you don't ... I think just the uncertainty, the unpredictable ... it's the unpredictable tests, what they may ask, what they did*".

Participants concurred on discernibly poorer performance, especially in their first year of university studies, that was uncharacteristic of them since high school, which considerably lowered their self-esteem and self-efficacy. For example, Presti (HWHEI, FGD 1) described her shock at her poor performance, followed by despondency throughout the first year of study, "*Then I came here; I was so motivated. OK, in high school, I used to be like, the best Maths student; came here, my first test, I got like 27%. I'm like, this is not my script*".

Similar to other participants, Nontsikelelo (HWHEI, FGD 1) attributed her initial performance to the inherent differences between high school and university, as well as the initial lack of skills required to succeed in the university environment: "*I think it was the shock of going from high school to varsity. That was quite, I mean, it was quite a big jump. I*

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was overwhelmed like, [inaudible] enrolled, and time management and study skills and all those things felt like ... it fell apart and ... but I made my way up".

An unorthodox strategy that two of the participants at the HWHEI applied, in addition to acquiring the skills needed to succeed, was missing classes, having realised that these did not enhance their own learning, even considering class attendance a waste of time. Presti, for example, acknowledged that "*something that might work for someone else is not gonna work for me*".

Another participant provided an account of students whose struggle to adjust, demonstrated by lack of self-control following separation from parents, led to substance abuse: "*Well in first year when I got here, in res, they had quite a few engineers who dropped out. But most of them were like alcoholics and drug addicts*". (Brendan, HWHEI, FGD 2)

Despite their initial reservations, participants ultimately adjusted well, both socially and academically. Hesmari (HBHEI, FGD 2) adjusted better once she got over the initial fear regarding not knowing how to do what was expected of her:
"*Sometimes there were really scary things, especially with the practical stuff, when you feel like you don't completely know what to do, and now you actually have to do it, but except for that, I think everything went well and you adjust well, and you actually learn a lot ...*".

Similarly, Lisa (HBHEI, FGD 2) quickly learnt that people were friendlier than she had expected, which put her at ease:
"*... as soon as we walked out of the hall where we all got together for our first assembly, everybody ... people would just come up to you and they would introduce themselves and they'll tell you this is what they're studying and I was ... I was really shocked by it because I didn't think that people were gonna be so ... how can I put it ... so friendly about things*".

Specifically illustrating social adjustment as an influencing factor, participants referred to the struggle to adjust and to make friends after enrolling. Referring to coming to

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grips with the fact that there were countless other students and that excellent or poor performance does not earn any one student recognition or, at the very least, special attention, Reabetswe (HWHEI, FGD 1) states that: "*And it was really, really, really hard and ... for me, I also struggled with lectures; like, I wouldn't ... I missed most of my lectures, like, I felt like I don't wanna go to class because there are so many other students in class. I feel so afraid to even ask questions or talk to the lecturer, or even talk to the person next to you, like, it was just a whole new different terrible thing there. It was very bad*". She added that she "*made a lot of progress*" in terms of adjusting, since knowing what was expected of her and learning time management skills. She added, "*I don't feel as horrible as I felt about going to class; now I have friends, someone that I know I'm gonna sit next to and ask questions, and with the whole interaction with the lecturers, I don't really do much of it, but in tutorials, I try and speak my opinion and ask questions, and so far, I'm doing really much better than last year*".

Nhlanhla (HWHEI, FGD 1) found that maturity played a role in his ability to adjust: "*I think, myself, I wasn't really shocked when I came here to this university because I think I came here when I was a bit older, so, I was like a bit more mature and mentally psyched into this whole thing. So like, I didn't have that very rough experience. I'm not saying I had distinctions or ... you know, but I'm saying like, I didn't struggle much 'cause of like, my age, maybe*".

5.3.1.4 Motivation

For several participants and their peers, the prospect of obtaining one's degree particularly in record time, and gaining financial independence once employed, were enough to motivate them to work hard towards their studies: "*... we wanna be independent, we wanna work; I think it's with attitude isn't it?*" (Sne, HBHEI, FGD 1). In contrast, participants studying towards a BSc at the HBHEI contended with disparaging remarks about

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their study course, which had varying effects on their motivation levels. Katlego dismissed such remarks: "*it's not about the money*", in response to taunts about comparative income prospects for a BSc graduate. In contrast, Maningi felt demotivated by the discouraging remarks made by other students about her study programme.

Ilska (HBHEI, FGD 2), who acknowledged that the strict admission criteria for her study programme (i.e. Dentistry) nationwide ensured the perceived obligation to complete the study course, also felt incentivised to perform well due to the financial benefits thereof: "*And my motivation personally is to complete my course without paying the university a cent. I wanna get a bursary every year*".

A considerable number of participants at the HBHEI found it difficult to remain positive throughout their studies with the prospect of being employed in a field that they love: "*The other reason [as to why I am considering dropping out] ... It's because I was promised the golden goose (Tsholo: Oh yah.) and I was promised the golden egg, and I just got a normal Easter egg, a marshmallow. We applied for Medicine and when you get there at [administrative building] there, they advise you, 'Take BSc; you will do Medicine next year'. Never gonna happen. They give you false hopes ...*". (Phuti). Admission of students into a different programme with the possibility of admission into Medicine at a later stage also occurred at the HWHEI, as reported by Presti.

This and the difficulty of remaining motivated were prevailing sentiments for participants enrolled for a BSc degree in the second Black-only focus group at the HBHEI. Anele, whose friend had dropped out due to feeling "trapped", doing a course that s/he was not interested in, stated: "*How're you gonna get straight As [so that you be admitted into Medicine] when you're doing something you don't love, in the first place? And then you just pass and once you're in the second level, it gets more harder and then how're you gonna get straight As?*"

Phuti (HBHEI, FGD 2) was considering dropping out due to the feelings of despondency brought about by studying towards BSc, a course that he was not passionate about: "*Mind you, at this time, there is nothing to pick you up that, 'Yah! I'm doing the course ... I'm waking up doing the course that I love'. [inaudible] This year, I'm not even attending classes anymore. I don't even see the point of living (Another participant: Yah.). I'm just waiting for the day my mom will see in my eyes that, ay ay ... 'Shame ... my child, I can see ... [inaudible]. Leave it; let's not waste money, leave it as it is'. Because really, I don't see my point. I'm looking at myself in class, I mean like what am I doing here, am I really here to just get **a** [any] degree?*"

In contrast, participating Medical students at the HBHEI, who were typically satisfied with their study course, though admitting to not having been studying long enough to possibly consider dropping out (at approximately 3 months into the first year of study), did not foresee dropping out and felt hopeful. "*'Cause I feel very few people actually want to drop out, want to fail, but usually that they cannot continue for all either reasons of finances or repeating another year just to do over what you've done because of re-dos and stuff. So, I feel it's more like you are stopped than you ... because of your efforts, you did not succeed than rather that, 'I just don't want to do it anymore; I'm done'*". (Jaco). Ilska referred to a friend who had dropped out simply because she felt that she had made the wrong career choice: "*Well, we haven't been here for long, but we know a girl ... she doesn't ... it's not about the university, she doesn't wanna ... she doesn't know if she still wants to study Medicine. So, it's more about the course than the university*".

5.3.2 Personal circumstances

Participants referred to unique, personal circumstances as contributing factors towards their academic success. Clarifying the extent to which emotional problems could affect one's

functioning in the higher education context, Hlohi (HWHEI, FGD 2) stated, "*And sometimes emotional things will kind of like, set you back, no matter how much you try and avoid them and try and ignore them, sometimes they just come and bite you constantly. So, it's pretty hectic*". Similarly, Thabo (HBHEI, FGD 1) elucidated the extent to which worrying about the family's dire financial state can negatively affect one's studies, as follows: "*So really, when you are here you are supposed to think about education, and you're thinking about ... I'm consuming, like ... I'm using money meant for use at home [...] So that thing can come to affect you, and even if like, when your siblings have problems, those problems, when your parents tell you, they come to affect you. If something is happening at home, there is no way that you can concentrate while you are at varsity.*"

As part of students' personal support system, parents play an important role in students' functioning in higher education. This is also demonstrated by their influence on students' career choices and decisions relating to their studies. For example, Joubertus (HWHEI, FGD 2) gave an account of an acquaintance who could not decide which study course to change to and "*just chose something that their parents would've liked them to*" and ended up discontent with the programme, wanting to change courses. In contrast, Hlohi (HWHEI, FGD 2) mentioned a friend who was given the option to discontinue his studies by his parents, which she considered a significant gesture of support: "*... they told him, 'Just discontinue your studies for the year, and just come back home and calm down a bit, do some introspection and stuff and you go back next year, if you like it'*". Further illustrating the extent to which parental relationships affect students' functioning, Hlohi explained how parental conflict undermined her attempts to focus on her studies: "*... listening to them sometimes discourages you, and you'll be like, why are you here in the first place if they're gonna fight because of you*".

Interpersonal relationships were also identified as a contributing factor, particularly affecting students' focus on their studies. With agreement from another participant, Thabo (HBHEI, FGD 1) explained how intimate relationships affected students: "*We involve ourselves in relationships whereby we have problems in them, and then when you are stressed, I'm thinking about that (A participant laughs) boy ... When she's in my heart, I can't think about anything*". In another instance, a student was reported to have dropped out due to pregnancy: "*... she fell pregnant and then decided to stay at home. So, basically, her life just came to a standstill*". (Makaziwe, HWHEI, FGD 1)

5.3.3 Lack of information

Lack of information was cited for negative outcomes such as dropping out, failure. Referring to an acquaintance who changed courses after failing another course, Nhlanhla explained: "*... he didn't know what it was all about (Moderator: Oh I see) ... there was no career guidance*". In relation to this, Joubertus emphasised the importance of career guidance in basic education: "*I think if there was more information and more open days considering different types of jobs or different types of directions to study, it would give children in high school an idea of what they want to do*". Makaziwe stated that, although there are workshops aimed at imparting important skills to students, information regarding these was not widely available: "*They're always running, but they're not always in our face like, this is happening, you need to know that this is happening. They run them behind closed doors, so it's either you know about it or you don't know about it*". At the HBHEI, Katlego provided an account of a newly matriculated student who had been admitted into Medicine, but dropped out due to not having sufficient information about the possibilities of financial assistance: "*I think he was not informed. He didn't know [...] relevant people ...*".

5.3.4 Institutional support

5.3.4.1 Academic support

There was general consensus that the HEIs under study were doing enough to provide academic support to students. The support measures provided varied across the two HEIs and faculties.

There was a mentorship programme in place at the HBHEI, wherein students were assigned mentors, who could provide various forms of academic support to the mentees. To enhance the effectiveness of this initiative, Ilska suggested "*A more intense tutorship or tutor–student relationship; more than ... not only assigning a mentor for a group of people, but a personal mentor or a tutor*". In a similar vein, Sne suggested that the mentorship initiative be strengthened and that measures be taken to ensure that mentors are performing their duties: "*Because in mentorship, in the mentorship eh ... thing, they tell you that you meet with your mentees and you should sign. So what is happening is that, maybe I'm a mentor, they are ... two of them are my mentees, I won't have any meeting with them, I'll only go to them to ask for signatures, as if I did the work, while I didn't. I think they should supervise that, they should check into that, if mentors are doing their jobs*". Thabo added that making the mentorship programme compulsory for all courses would ensure its effectiveness.

Further, Ilska elaborated on the measures that the university took to enhance students' academic experiences: "*They e-mail you the slides; OK, they probably do it at any university, but they do ... they really go to the next level to ... how you ... understand the work. And if you don't understand, you have the freedom to ask. So, there's no ... you don't have to hesitate, you don't have to be scared about that*".

Referring to measures taken by her faculty at the HWHEI, Presti, a BSc student, stated the following:

"*I think in our faculty, they evaluate all the marks and see what's going on. If your semester mark is like there, for the first time, OK, your semester test is gonna come with a paper at the back like, to tell you that your marks are bad. It's either you drop the module or you make a plan. And the faculty advisor actually calls you and explains to you ... like, tries to give you study methods that could work for you, and she is gonna follow you until your second semester test to see if you've made progress or what*".

Nhlanhla, a Humanities student at the HWHEI, was not aware of such an initiative in his faculty and thought that following up on students' progress might, in fact, be effective for Humanities students. However, he added that the faculty had the Writing Centre, which helped students acquire writing skills.

5.3.4.2 Psychological support

Participants at the HWHEI unanimously agreed that the institution had sufficient support systems in place and that it was up to students to make use of the services. For instance, Geenan stated that: "*I don't think there's anything [that the university can do to support students at risk of dropping out] because I've heard that there's a lot of counsellors who people actually go to and it's ... then it's up to students that they have to make the appointment because I've heard in one of my lectures people are saying, if you fail this, then you go and see someone, here's their numbers on the board, so, it's up to students*".

Hlohi attributed students' failure to make use of support services to their unrealistic expectations regarding the benefits that they are supposed to reap from these services: "*... most students don't use it because they realise that it's not a magic pill. That the moment you go to the counselling and stuff, some people expect it to be that thing like, 'after I go, somehow miraculously, they'll feel sorry for me and then will give me marks'. So, they just feel that it's hopeless and somebody will be all like, 'What's the point? Let me just drop out;*

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'cause either way I'll go there; they won't give me a potion to make me smarter; best thing I just drop out'".

Geenan, a student at the HWHEI, acknowledged that awareness regarding support mechanisms was raised in lectures. However, Sne at the HBHEI wished for more personal concern and interaction from lecturers: "*... like they taught us just strictly, when I came here in 2014, they were like, 'This is not high school; we're not going to follow you. If you ... if you stay in your room, sleep the whole day, we're not going to ask you where you are. We're not going to even care'. Our English lecturer, my goodness ... she told us that and, of course, from that day, I knew that at varsity, they don't care. They don't care about you; the only thing that they care about is money. 'You must pay us!'"*. This lack of personal concern was reiterated by Reabetswe, referring to her first-year experience at the HWHEI: "*... and nobody knows your name; nobody even cares about you, whether you're doing great, you're getting 100s or 90s or whatever, nobody gives a damn about that*". This realisation compounded her difficulties with adjusting to the higher education environment.

5.3.4.3 Financial support

The HBHEI provided substantial financial support to students; this sentiment was almost unanimous among participants at that HEI. Thabo explained, "*... most of the Medunsa students ... they don't face financial exclusions. They make sure that they provide something for you [...] So, we don't get time to stress about finances*".

Several other participants at that institution had arrived in first year with no accommodation nor funds to study, and received support:

"*... I didn't have anything, by anything, I mean anything [...] I didn't have money to register, and then I spoke to them, they registered me, you see. And then I didn't have money to ... I didn't have anything to eat and everything; I went to Financial Aid. I went to see some of the*

psychologists because I had some problems, for free ... I also went to Financial Management, they gave me money for caf [cafeteria] and everything, so ... for the whole year, you see. So, uh ... in a way, they understand when somebody is really in need and wants to study".

Emphasising the extent of the support provided by the university, Lisa stated that: "*I personally feel that if you drop out, it's not that much of the university's fault because they give you everything you need to pass well. So, you can't really say you're gonna drop out because of finances because if you really want something and you work hard for it; you will get a bursary. So, the university really gives you everything you need **not** to drop out*".

Sne argued that, although accounts of the university's provision of financial support may be true, it was dependent on each case, stating that the university would not fund her studies in second year, as she had not sought funding during her first year.

Thabo recognised that financial support was especially important to Black students: "*... most of the Blacks, we come from disadvantaged backgrounds ...*". He also noted that worrying about finances shifted focus from one's studies: "*you get yourself stressed about things that are irrelevant, more than focusing on your education.*"

5.3.4.4 Administrative support

Participants cited various administrative problems that negatively affected their experiences at their HEIs. The registration process at the HBHEI was described as lengthy and inefficient, with Phuti reporting having arrived for registration as early as 4:00 and left only at 17:00 and had to come back tomorrow again, as the process had not been completed: "*Mind you, this is 4 a.m., I didn't even eat breakfast; 4 a.m. to 5 p.m. ... how? And then I have to come back tomorrow; mind you, I'm not done; come back the following day to complete their process, and then you go to the computers and they're like, now they are doing online registration on a computer at their computers; which needs their Internet, which can shut*

down at any second (Another participant: Oh yah.) and everything has to freeze (Another

participant: Oh, they did, actually. Another: For about an hour; it did do that; it shut down).

It did. It shut down, and then it opened at the time they were just about to close (Another

participant: Or have lunch)".

Students were left destitute if not registered: "*Imagine if you're from Limpopo; you*

came that day (Phuti: Thank you.), where are you gonna sleep?" (Anele). Kholo elaborated

further: "*You can't finish your registration. I mean, you can't get a res without actually*

finishing your registration".

For some, administrative mishaps directly affected their academic performance and

duration of studies. Sonto, also from the HBHEI, described her department as "*very*

disorganised with about everything […] they will give us wrong test dates, they will give us a

booklet ... like, they just gave us a booklet now with books that we were supposed to buy in

January [this focus group discussion took place in April]". Lonwabo, described as Katlego's

friend in the following excerpt, was forced to enrol for a course that he had no interest in, due

to misinformation: "*... in a way, it will discourage you; my friend wanted to go into BSc. He*

always wanted to do BSc, you see. It's just that already now it's late, you'll [speaking to

Lonwabo] do it after ... maybe, probably after the degree [Lonwabo agrees]. So yah, that's

the w... that's the thing that ... it ... it actually discourages you, you know …".

Nonetheless, other participants, particularly those from the all-White focus group

discussion, reported being happy with the smooth, organised registration process. For

example, Lisa reported: "*... a lady started talking to us and she told us that we must excuse*

the university because registration is usually very unorganised. And then we were expecting

this huge ... you know, I don't m ... ja, chaotic, these people running and you don't know

where to go, and then we got in there and everything was organised!"

Other administrative problems reported regarding the HBHEI were wrong test timetables, administrative staff taking breaks at inconvenient hours that were not synchronised with students' class and break times, thereby interfering with students' ability to address administrative issues on-site, and disputes regarding whether fees had been paid due to an inefficient record-keeping system.

At the HWHEI, Willem reported that his department was efficient: "*So, they gave us timetables [inaudible] beforehand, we knew what we have beforehand. There was no clashes, no mix-ups [… It was] very organised*".

Presti (HWHEI student) had a different experience: "*You waste a year trying to get into Medicine, then you only find out [in] November that you're not gonna get into Medicine, and they told you [that] you were. And then, if you fail, they exclude you. They don't send you an e-mail to tell you that they've excluded you; they just block you. You're just blocked and you don't know what's going on. You come to campus, you attend class every day; you don't know you're blocked until (laughs) marks come out and you're like, 'Why aren't I there?' You go and ask, and then they tell you, you're excluded since last semester and you're like, 'What!?' Ya, so they must just find ways*".

Hlohi, a third-year student at the HWHEI, had to enrol for a first-year module after only recently being informed that she needed it in order to graduate. Thuli at the same HEI had to re-do modules that she had already passed: "*… So, last year when I was here to register for second year, all those modules I was doing didn't reflect and I had to register for first year modules again. So, which means I had to do two first-year modules*". She recalled a similar experience by a classmate that cost him his graduation: "*… and while I was doing Archaeology last year, there was this guy who said he's repeating all his … all the years with Archaeology because they lost his records; he has to repeat from first to the last—he didn't graduate*".

5.3.4.5 Infrastructure

Participants at the HBHEI predominantly reported safety as an issue of concern. Thabo raised concerns about lax security at the institution: "*We have the CCTVs, but like, they cover us, but like, they're not working (Participants laugh) And even if you can look at the gate, people can just access the gate. You can just jump over the fence there, it is not that electrified. Like, we are not secure ...*".

Due to heavy traffic on the main road across the HBHEI's main gate, the student body had, for years, called for more effective traffic control measures, as explained by Katlego: "*If you are staying here, you can take ... stand maybe 10 or even 20 minutes there, waiting there so that cars can pass. To cross to the other side. I'm sure they're waiting for somebody to ... to get hit by a car, then they'll put a robot*". Indeed, five weeks later, while conducting the second focus group discussion, it emerged that a student had died after being hit by a vehicle: "*Right now, this might not be academically involved, but one biggest example [of awareness of problems, yet remaining unresolved] that really touched me ... Three weeks ago, a girl was run over by a car (Participants: A bus! Not by a car, a bus), a bus, at the entrance (Another participant: a 'hit and run'). We do not have a robot there. How many years is that?*" (Phuti). Other participants added that this incident had not even made the news.

Further, participants from both institutions cited Wi-Fi access on campus as a positive contributor towards their experiences at their institutions, although this was not true for students residing in off-campus university residences at the HBHEI. In addition, participants at the HWHEI complained about the constant queues at the university's main library, due to the limited number of computers. Geenan added, "*... not everybody has the privilege of Internet access out of campus, so ...*". Daily long queues also at the on-campus dining hall at the HWHEI, were identified as extremely inconvenient.

Jaco commended the facilities at the HBHEI: "*We have a good library. We ... academically, progress is ... we are up to standard and up to date and with all the other universities there are, because all of our lectures are electronic. All our notes are also posted to us within time. All our textbooks are up to date. We have a good bookstore; it's not like we're lacking books*". In contrast, some participants at the HBHEI indicated that the institution lacked what could be considered basic amenities, especially in comparison with other universities: "*Wits invests in everything, from the resources for the students— everything. They have a lot of libraries, they have a lot. Here, if you wanna scan a document and e-mail it, I don't think I can do it here*". In general, many of the participants at the HBHEI expressed various concerns about amenities at the institution. They generally bemoaned the institution's ineffective use of available land and the insufficient number of buildings at the institution for academic activities, student accommodation or other uses. These participants also made several suggestions in this regard. For example, Tsholo suggested: "*But there could be other alternatives, which is town, finding a place and actually buying it, renovate it and it's going to be fine*".

Participants residing in university residences at the HBHEI unanimously complained about the lack of sports facilities at the institution. As explained by Sne, "*You find that they are playing rugby in the same field that they are playing soccer. When they are practising, they are halving the field; it's rugby this side, it's soccer that side (Participants laugh). Inside [a specific building], we write exams, we play tennis, we play volleyball, we do everything*".

Another infrastructural issue that directly affected students' academic progress and, in fact, contributed towards failure, was reportedly the limited number of cubicles needed for Dental students to practise in at the HBHEI. Lerato explained: "*If you have maybe the lowest mark on one of your modules, they fail you because the cubicles in the clinic are not enough,*

and the dental chairs as well, that is the disadvantage. [If you have the lowest mark] In any

of your modules, they just fail you, even if you pass the exam, they fail you because the

cubicles are not enough. So, you must make sure that you maintain a certain standard".

Participants at the HBHEI also indicated that the closure of the library at set times

dictated their studying schedule, directly disadvantaging students academically.

Phuti elaborated on the impact: "*Which university in the world allows their library to*

close? On what earth? Well-knowing that Physiology [the prescribed textbook] is this big? If

you give me a certain amount of time to study that book, or I have a certain amount of time in

the library, for research ... some of us, we don't have laptops; I need the computer in the

library, but then ... ey ..., they're not gonna allow you there, and then we live off-campus, far

... in like ... in town. And I'm given a limited amount of time here on campus, like the last time

that they can see me here on campus is like, at 10. If I don't climb the bus at 10, that's it, I

have to sleep over, rather; if they allow me to sleep here or not. [inaudible] If I don't have a

friend, then what?"

Despite the above-mentioned concerns, HBHEI participants lauded the competence

and expertise of their lecturers, presumably in comparison with lecturers at other institutions.

This was especially worth noting, as academic staff makes up the human infrastructure at the

institution. In relation to this, Jaco provided the following explanation: "*The lecturers that*

give you certain chapters of that subject have specialised in that subject, so they really know

what they are talking about. So, that's really helpful because you can und ... you ... as the

lecturer's giving class, you can see that this person have a huge background of the

information that they are trying to present to you".

5.3.5 Lack of accountability to students

Participants reported various instances of lack of accountability by university management, the student representative council (SRC) and staff, which undermined their experiences at the institutions. At the HWHEI, Tumi indicated that the university does not address students' concerns: "*I think the university doesn't address it [deeper/racial/political issues"] enough, and also the implementation of what they are saying, you know; they're saying they want to be equal and things like that, but they're not actually implementing it*".

At the HBHEI, Sne reported that university management did not regulate the SRC, which did not adhere to its own constitution. She further pointed out that measures should be put in place to ensure that "*... people are doing whatever they are supposed to do. Lecturers are lecturing during the time they are supposed to lecture*", as opposed to showing up to class late or absolving themselves of teaching responsibilities by declaring large chunks of the syllabus to be "self-study".

In response to students' concerns, as presented by the SRC to university authorities, regarding the quality of the food served at the student cafeteria, Sonto reports the following response by a university representative: "*... and this guy [university representative] actually said, 'I'm not going to fire those people'; he [SRC president] asked for them to fire those people. He said, he literally said, 'I'm not going to fire the catering people and I'm not going to be dictated [to] by children'*". In another instance, additional university transportation scheduled for the mid-morning, daily commute of students in off-campus university residences was cancelled, despite the students' needs (e.g. lectures commencing later in the day or not having alternative, free transportation in case of missing an earlier bus).

A participant reported the lack of accountability, though not explicitly linked to academic experiences, that was displayed in the service provided by the university clinic at the HBHEI. Thabo described his visits to the university clinic for an infection that went

untreated for several days: "*And then I went there, they said 'Come the next day', I went the next day, and then they say ... I went after ... like, it was 1; 1, 2, 3, 4 ... they told me that, 'no we are leaving ... we're having a dressing, we are dressing somebody; come the next day'. I spent three days*".

5.3.6 Lack of extracurricular activities

Social events at the HBHEI, if any, were typically scheduled at inconvenient times, such as just before exams. Kholo explained students' need for participation in organised social activities as follows: "*We need ... we need to ease our minds, at times. It really gets hectic as time goes on ...*". The lack of sports facilities also severely limited students' participation in extracurricular activities and social lives. Sonto explained the importance of participating in social activities as follows: "*I don't know half of these people in this school because there is never something like, oh let's have a social get-together, just to get our minds off things. It doesn't have to be a bash, you don't have to drink our minds out; just to sit and talk, and I get to know someone who's not doing Occupational Therapy, you know.*" Sne speculated that perhaps the institution overly focuses on academics, neglecting leisure, which could be counterintuitive: "*W ... we ma ... may even say studying is boring because of this, because of this, because you do not do your hobbies. You are studying*".

5.3.7 Distance between residence and university

Participants in off-campus university residences at the HBHEI cited various inconveniences. Paradoxically, some students preferred to study on campus, avoiding a noisy environment and Internet connection problems at their residences in the CBD, and yet, their presence on campus was determined by the availability of university transport. As Kholo explained, "*... you need to stop everything you have to do and rush to the bus, where you find*

there is only one bus, it's gonna get full, you need to get there early and you have to stop whatever you're doing at the library". Students who miss the last afternoon bus would be compelled to make alternative overnight accommodation arrangements with acquaintances. Alluding to the possible implications of this scenario for the students left behind, Phuti enquired: "*If I don't have a friend [to accommodate me overnight], then what?*" Sonto further explained that missing the bus to campus could mean not being able to attend classes: "*They tell you: 'Well, there is nothing we can do about it. The last and only 9 o'clock bus has left; you have to take a taxi'. I can't; I don't even know where taxis are in town. So, if something like that were to happen to me, I would have to skip school because I don't even know where to begin to take a taxi to school*". Sonto also described how she arrived late for a test because a bus driver had gotten lost, to which two participants added: "*the lecturers don't care*". Sonto had no choice but to write as fast as she could, as no provisions were made for her inadvertent late arrival.

Thuli, the only participant to cite distance from campus as an issue at the HWHEI, explained the repercussions of her own commuting ordeal: "*Mine [first couple of months studying] were a nightmare because I was travelling from Soshanguve and I didn't have res and I failed two semester tests, then I managed to pass*".

Participants in the all-White focus group discussion at the HBHEI resided in off-campus homes, four with their parents, and one with a relative. Their main concern was safety when driving home at night, after being held up on campus. This also hampered the extent to which they could remain on campus to complete their work, as explained by Ilska: "*… so we can't walk or stay here, and work on something until 10 o'clock. You can, but you have to drive far and it's not a safe road to drive; so I'll say for safety, it's the most disadvantaged, but not in the university, just where it's situated, in the community, quite far*

out of the ... out of everything else. But inside the university, it's very safe. I haven't felt ...

unsafe".

5.3.8 Unfair treatment at the institution

Participants at the HBHEI reported various forms of unfair treatment at the institution. Some participants even attributed student failure to unpleasant personal encounters that such students had had with the said lecturers. Sonto asserted, "*... there is this thing of ... lecturers are failing you, and are failing you not because of your marks, but because she spoke to you in a certain way, but then you spoke back; she does not like you from that day and she will fail you ...*". In a similar vein, Thabo revealed that some students had even dropped out due to victimisation by lecturers: "*So you'll find out that I passed ... the people ... those people that I'm talking about [who dropped out], they've passed very very well, yah, but because of the ... of the ... their manners, the way they interacted with lecturers, yah, they got victimised and then they dropped out*". According to Sonto, bureaucratic, non-transparent procedures make it difficult for students to request perusal of their test and exam scripts. She added that lecturers failed students for indiscretions in class: "*... they come here, they're telling you that, 'That's why I failed you guys; because these girls talked to me in a bad way, the other day'*". Several participants agreed to having witnessed this incident. Lerato added that some lecturers' lack of professionalism extended to other contexts: "*they have a tendency of embarrassing you in front of your patients; 'Why are you doing this? Huh?' That is very unprofessional, in front of a patient!*"

Participants also reported experiencing unfair treatment based on the perceived prestige (or lack thereof) of their study programmes. Phuti explained, "*The school can just forget about everyone and focus on people who are doing a certain course [Other participants agree] (Another participant: Especially Pharmacy). Yah; Pharmacy students*

and Medicine (Moderator: They focus on those students?) Yes, they focus on those students; they can make sure that the labs that they are using are proper, everything for them is scheduled, their schedules are very well prepared ...". In relation to this, Dzanga explained details of her tight, but short exam schedule as follows: "*... 'cause I remember last year, I had to write my exams in one week in like, the end of May, and the entire June, I was sitting at home doing nothing. And everyone else is writing their exams, so I'm like, how is that fair and I'm like, no, it's because they're doing other courses; I don't know why they need special attention. So, what they teach us is that some people are more special than other people*". Evidently, a test or exam timetable that does not make provision for adequate preparation for each subject within a given programme could directly hamper academic performance.

Moreover, participants at the HBHEI stated that some students were exempted from academic exclusion, despite poor performance, due to their stature or relationships with members of the SRC. For example, Lerato argued: "*One person can repeat four times, one year, and then they'll still ... but then, isn't it they say I think after two times you're ... you're excluded? But that person will be repeating after four years, they can appeal and then you see them in the following class or what so not, they're back. But then there's someone who only repeated once, they're not back. I think there's corruption, in terms of the exclusion cases*". She added, "*only if you know people in the SRC, your things will succeed*".

5.3.9 Workload

Participants at the HBHEI reported feeling overwhelmed by a high workload. Supported by other participants, Sonto described the various academic pressures that students have to contend with, as follows: "*I remember last year, it was a Monday, we wrote four tests on Monday. The very same Friday, we wrote three tests (Dembe: And classes still continue.). Classes still continue, like they don't care*". Tsholo further explained the possible penalties of

missing class in an attempt to circumvent the pressure: "*And the thing, what the problem is, OK fine, you wanna skip the 7:45 class, you can't keep on skipping it because you haven't attended anything on that day, you have to sign the register, and if you miss a certain amount of classes, then (Another participant: They won't let you write; Another participant: Then you have a problem.)*". In addition, Dembe elucidated how especially first-year Medical students would be expected to perform various academic activities in a given week, including tests while classes are ongoing, as well as practicals, adding: "*I think that's the reason why we're failing to perform; because of time*".

In contrast, some participants at the HWHEI suggested that more tests could be given to maximise chances of exam entrance and to help better prepare students for exams, which are usually tougher. Moreover, positive aspects regarding students' expected outcomes at the HBHEI was the practicals that students at this institution were exposed to. As elucidated by Dembe, a Medical student, "*Advantages for me are that, compared to other universities, here we have more practicals, in terms of exposure in the hospital, because you find that people from other universities ... they do not have as much exposure as we are given here, to be on the field*".

5.3.10 Socio-economic conditions

The family's financial situation was cited as a major stressor, particularly for Black students at the HBHEI. Thabo described feeling guilty that being at university meant that money that could otherwise be spent on his siblings was instead spent on him. Elaborating on how this and other family financial circumstances affected particularly Black students' experiences in university, Thabo stated: "*So when you get here, you find out that you don't have ... like financially, your family does not support you financially. And then you have to ...*

to be thinking about food while you have to read", also adding that "*If something is happening at home, there is no way that you can concentrate while you are at varsity*".

Some participants at the HBHEI knew of a student who had dropped out due to financial strain, without having first approached the financial office for assistance.

Nhlanhla, with whom several other participants at the HWHEI agreed, explained how socio-economic disparities at the institution could generally result in low self-esteem and negatively influence students' experiences at the institution: "*… students struggle with confidence. Like, we come here and we see all these people carrying iPhone 6, 6 Plus, and you've got a Samsung Galaxy, and you feel like, inferior*".

Participants at the HBHEI also cited non-affordability of certain services as an impeding factor. For example, Kholo explained, "*But then, we are not allowed to look at our exams, you have to pay ... sorry ... R500. I'm not gonna pay to see my exam. Just to see where you went wrong, especially at the end of the year*". Re-marking reportedly cost more than four times this amount. In addition, not being financially well off meant that many students who could not afford better and more expensive food in cash at the staff cafeteria, had to contend with sub-standard food at the student cafeteria, as explained by Kholo: "*At least we can pay, that's why we prefer going to staff caf. There are people who don't have the money*".

5.3.11 Language

The medium of instruction at the HBHEI is English and all students were, at the time of the study, required to take a compulsory language module. Participants were mostly aware of the disadvantages of not being first-language speakers of the participating HEIs' respective mediums of instruction. Thabo described his experiences upon arrival at the HBHEI as a first-year student: "*So that thing comes to affect my performance because when I go to read, I see the slides but I didn't hear anything [in lectures delivered in English]. (Participants*

laugh) Yah, it affected me a lot to a point whereby I saw that yah, now I'm struggling. I had to ta ... to take extra lessons for English, even though we were attending English, but I had to take another extra lesson".

Against the backdrop of protests at the HWHEI calling for the scrapping of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, Reabetswe stated the following: "*it's very much easier when something is being explained in a language that you've grown up with and you understand it better, 'cause the Afrikaans kids ... they get that, and we don't get that. Some of us don't even understand, we have to live with dictionaries because we have to get meaning ... the proper meaning of words, so that you don't get the context of what you're studying wrong*".

In contrast to the above, Nontsikelelo was of the opinion that English was appropriate to maintain as a medium of instruction, due to most people's exposure to the language in the basic education system: "*I'm sure every single school like, OK, not every single school, but most schools are taught like ... English is the medium of instruction or like it's a universal language. So I mean, personally for me, I don't think I'll understand any scientific work in Zulu. It's like, what is an enzyme in Zulu? So, you're lost and you know you wouldn't understand fully. So, in English ... I think English is the way to go*". Similarly, some participants did not see value in the incorporation of African languages into the higher education context; some anticipated that it would be a costly and chaotic exercise. Makaziwe elucidated the latter concern as follows: "*... if we're gonna have all the languages that we have in South Africa being taught here in varsity, it's gonna be chaotic, honestly speaking, and we're not gonna find as many educated people to actually do the jobs, to teach in all those languages and stuff.*" In addition, several participants added that African languages were not feasible for use as mediums of instruction, due to what they seemingly construed as the languages' inherent vocabulary limits and difficulty. Hlohi, a Black female participant at the HWHEI, stated: "*I'm actually pleased with English 'cause like, I don't understand my*

home language like, it's too deep for me. Even writing my home language, it's crazy ...".

Willem, a White, Afrikaans-speaking male, added: "*Like she said, if you wanna bring in all the other languages, it's kind of impossible because I spoke to one of my friends in res ... He said not all the words 'are active'; but not all the words are in African languages*".

Reabetswe went on to make suggestions as to how the HWHEI could accommodate students whose home language was not either one of the mediums of instruction: "*They can have tutorials, not that they have to translate everything into your mother tongue, but at some point, they have to make it easier for you by trying to use your mother tongue so that things that are difficult for you to understand, they become easy*".

Hlohi advocated for the use of English as the only medium of instruction at the HWHEI, as follows: "*Like, let us all study in one language, let us all be equal 'cause there's like people from other provinces; I'm pretty sure English, they can't really hear it but then they're just there instig ... they're using it because it's the only thing that they gave them. So, let us all be equal, I get it, like English is not a lot of people's home language. So, it's best if we all actually suffer inconvenience ...*". Although he agreed with this sentiment, Willem argued against the call for immediate elimination of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction: "*They want Afrikaans to fall immediately; that's impossible to me because you get a third-year student that's been studying in Afrikaans all his life and it's not his fault that he chose to study in Afrikaans, but what happened in history is not his fault. [...] If they wanna take Afrikaans, there must be a few years because it just can't happen **now***".

Katlego, an HBHEI participant, pointed out the disadvantage of the transition from high school to university, in terms of stricter implementation of the medium of instruction: "*In my first year, aah I struggled a lot because, you know, at ... they spoon-feed ... they spoon-feed you there at high school. So you just come here as just somebody ... a White person, with white beards there and then he's busy speaking fast and everything*". Hesmari,

whose LOLT in high school had been Afrikaans, explained how the English-only medium of instruction at the HBHEI affected her: "*When you're used to going to school in this language, and suddenly you have to switch so quickly, where I think if you had that perspective of going to Tuks [a colloquial term for UP, a historically White, Afrikaans-medium HEI, currently an English- and Afrikaans-medium HEI] or somewhere, where you have more options, it's a bit of a disadvantage*". Esmari shared these sentiments, adding that the language barrier negatively affected her performance: "*The language is a problem for me right now, because I study also in Afrikaans. But they say you adjust in about six months, so it's OK. (Moderator: So you haven't gotten there yet?) No I haven't gotten there yet, but I believe I will. But it's difficult, and I can see in my marks as well sometimes, but it's OK*". In contrast, Jaco described his bilingual background and the benefits thereof as follows: "*I personally went to school ... my home language is Afrikaans, but I spent my entire school career in an English school. So, I'm fully adapted to the English system*". Brendan, a participant at the HWHEI, reported that studying in his home language, English, was "*fine and positive*".

Several participants at both HEIs anticipated long-term professional benefits of having had English, instead of Afrikaans, as a medium of instruction. Similarly, Nhlanhla, from the HWHEI had the following to say: "*I think English is OK as a medium of instruction 'cause I can imagine if I went to look for a job in Germany with a Psychology degree taught in Zulu (Participants laugh). So, I think this language will limit my opportunities*".

5.3.12 Student protests

At the time of the study, there had been a wave of student protests at HEIs across the country over at least two consecutive years. Participants reported varying experiences of "protest season" at their respective institutions. The latest focus of protest at the HWHEI had been "Afrikaans Must Fall", with protestors calling for the exclusive use of English as the

medium of instruction. Nontsikelelo explained how this affected students: "*That disrupted us a lot, in terms of our work, 'cause our timetable had to shift and to try and accommodate the time that we lost too about the lectures and stuff*". Some participants expressed concern about the opportunistic nature of the protesters, who took the liberty to express racial intolerance. Brendan, a White, male participant at the HWHEI, argued that the student political parties promoted racial division and radicalised those expressing such intolerance: "*... the main instigators of it were all the political parties, causing trouble with the minority of the students. They were almost like, radicalised, sort of like view with like, tunnel vision ...*".

Hlohi, a Black, female participant, explained how the protests changed her political awareness, leading to her realisation of inequalities at the HWHEI: "*I actually do see a problem, hey. Everything was rosy, I was seeing life in rose-coloured glasses until the political parties came around and then they just started making it a fuss, like you know that day when you just happened, and it's like a 'shattered-glass' moment where you're like '(gasp), really?!'*" However, she condemned the intolerant manner in which the protests were carried out: "*Like, why would you wanna threaten other people, like 'Take your language and go back where you came from!' That is pretty wrong; it's not the right way to go about it; like, why make it such a terrible thing, make them seem like such horrible people, instead of just saying, 'Let's all be equal; let's all use one language'*". Willem, a White, male participant, added: "*The way the EFF implemented it [protests calling for language policy revision] was wrong; they want it to happen now*". Concurring with the condemnation of the violence surrounding the protests at the time, Hlohi added: "*I always ask myself, 'Why do people break down things when they are not happy with something?'; 'What did that monument do to you?[...] it's just there, it's a monument, it's inanimate, so let it be'*". Tumi, a Black, female participant, argued that although political parties may have been "instigators"

in this scenario, as already pointed out by other participants, theirs were an attempt to address previously raised racial and political issues that the university had a history of not addressing.

In contrast to the HWHEI, participants at the HBHEI did not experience violent, protracted protests. As articulated by Ilska: "*We all know what happened at the other university a month ago, at Tuks or Stellenbosch, we can ... we all know; across the country, there were a lot of violent acts. And while this was going on, I wanted to like take photos and 'meanwhile, at Medunsa', because everything was so quiet and so little people actually knew what was going on*". Further, unlike the rest of the country and the HWHEI under study in particular, when these occurred, protests at the HBHEI were not related to the medium of instruction, tuition fees or insourcing of labour. As indicated by one participant: "*In my opinion, I don't think that there's anything to complain about because they give out very nice bursaries at the university, and if you do well, like if you get 75% and more in a year, then you get all your tuition fees off [...] And the other universities have this big thing about 'Afrikaans must fall' and we are an English university; so, there was no such thing as that ...*". This relative peace was identified as a major advantage by participants at the HBHEI.

In addition, referring to the tendency by political leaders at the HBHEI to advance causes of a select group of students enrolled for certain courses through campus-wide protests, Katlego stated that students enrolled in other courses, who wished not to participate in the protests, were threatened with penalties and revocation of support for their causes in future. He considered this a disadvantage and stated that "*People are more political than they are here to study*". Not only did internal university structures dissuade some students from protesting against what they deemed to be legitimate concerns, but also, structures external to the university seemed to differentially accord legitimacy to institutions across South Africa. Referring to the HBHEI's recent name change that the student body was disgruntled with, that had not even received press coverage, Tsholo stated: "*If Wits were to change its name, I*

mean, people in Nigeria would know (Participants laugh). Right now, even with Fees Must

Fall, it's 'cause Wits stood up (Phuti: Because Wits finally stood up. Other participants

agree). That's when it got popular".

5.3.13 Race, prejudice and discrimination

5.3.13.1 Ethnic and race relations among students

Participants at the HBHEI mostly reported limited interaction between students of different races and ethnicities at the HBHEI, largely due to preference. Jaco's (a White, male participant at the HBHEI) justification of this inclination was as follows: "*... we all come*

from different places to a brand new spot and we're uncomfortable, you go to what you know

there, and then once you feel like, OK, this is where I belong, you go further out to meet other

people and make friends". Most Black participants shared this sentiment and attributed the relative lack of racial tension to the high ratio of Black students at this campus, compared to White students. However, Thabo, a Black student, attributed the interracial relations to the student racial composition at the HBHEI as follows: "*Even though we are within a Black*

institution, they [White students] feel like, it is as if they are forced, because most of the ... the

people at this varsity are Blacks, as they (gesturing towards other participants) have said

that they are dominant. So, with them, they are just forced. But if you can look, in classes;

when they sit, they sit two-two-two. So, with us ... with me, I can say that, you see, the ... the

... the issue of racism ... it is existing, but indirectly ...".

Similar to the interracial relations, Black students at the HBHEI pointed out a general lack of interactions across ethnicities, also attributing this to preference and a general tendency to keep to one's own ethnic group. Sne articulated this as follows: "*Even with us;*

we have tribes, isn't it? Have you noticed that in first year, you go with the Sothos (Other

participant: Yah), if you are Venda, it's Vendas. Even with us, we segregate ourselves, based on like, opposites ...". However, some participants further described relations across Black ethnic groups as surpassing the above-mentioned indifference, with some groups being blatantly unaccommodating of others. Nonetheless, Black participants felt that inter-ethnic interactions were necessary, as these would enable them to learn different languages, which would be useful in professional practice.

In the mixed-race group at the HWHEI, a White participant noted that the institution is "*fairly [racially] integrated*", while another, referring to interracial relations among students, stated that "*I don't think anyone really cares about who they work with because everyone's here to get their degree*". The latter view had been reiterated by Makaziwe in the Black-only focus group: "*We're just here to like ... each and every person is here to mind their own business at the end of the day. So, we just learn to live with each other to pass time until you get your degree and you're done*". Further, referring to interracial relations on campus, Presti explained, "*I think it's just race, but then it's not much of a big deal 'cause personally, I haven't experienced any [strained interracial peer relations] ...*". Nontsikelelo agreed, seemingly resigning herself to the inevitability of racism: "*The only disadvantage, really, would be the race card 'cause it ... I also haven't been affected by it. I don't think it's that necessary, but it is there and I don't think it's gonna go in a while*". Several other participants stated that they had not personally experienced racism in their interactions with other students on campus, although someone knew people who had. Nhlanhla added that Black people condemned White people in private, yet "*grovel in their presence*" and that they were somewhat to blame, as a result. Expressing slightly different sentiments, Hlohi, a student at the HWHEI, stated that some people attributed seemingly neutral situations to racism, arguing that the racist behaviour is being enacted subtly. She described such instances

having the following effects on her: "*it just unsettles me 'cause like, some people just make mountains out of ant-hills.*"

Although they had mostly reported diplomatic interracial relations among students, participants agreed that the occupation of space on campus was demarcated along racial lines. Makaziwe (HWHEI, FGD 1) explained, "*Like, you normally see Black people in the areas that I walk in, and in other areas, there are more Whites*". In relation to this, Hlohi (HWHEI, FGD 2) admitted to feeling that she did not belong in predominantly White spaces on the university campus: "*And mostly I like chilling with my White friends, and then when you walk through the door, they give you that look like, 'What are you doing here?; you're so not ... you don't belong here', and stuff like that. It kind of like unsettles you, and you wonder if you belong here*". Explaining the negative effect that this had on her, she added, "*... so sometimes I just feel like putting myself in ... maybe trying online education or something 'cause like, I don't like that feeling where people are looking at me and undermining me because of my race and stuff*". Hlohi's experience was the only one within this theme to be explicitly linked to a participant's academic experience. Interestingly, Katlego, with whom Zinhle agreed regarding the anticipated "racism-free" context, chose to study at HBHEI to avoid racism: "*I didn't want any trouble, any ... (Another participant adds, "Racism") racisms and everything!*"

5.3.13.2 Racial discrimination by university staff

Participants at both institutions reported racial discrimination by university staff, including academic staff. Though mostly covert, incidences of overt racism at the HBHEI included lecturers making racially disparaging remarks to Black students such as, "*Even your leaders are like this. We know that this kind of thing is expected from people such as you*". (Thabo)

Illustrating covert racist practices in class, Makaziwe (Black, HWHEI, FGD 1) stated that these were observable in how lecturers interacted with students: "*maybe when a person— a White person—asks a question in class, the response they get is more detailed, specific and what-not; but when you ask a question, it's just like they're trying to just rush over on your answer*". Thabo described similar instances at the HBHEI: "*... even the Black lecturers, they tend to favour other races, like, races than us. Like, you'll find that when a Black person is asking something, they don't really pay attention, but when it turns out to be another race, mostly White people, they give them more attention than us*". In agreement with Black participants' reference to instances of racism in academic spaces, Reabetswe (Black, HWHEI, FGD 1) further explained, "*... like when a Black student would raise their hand in class, wanting to ask a question, the lecturer would take time to notice them, or even notice them, but then just carry on speaking, and only attend to them after they're done speaking. And then when, in case where a White person raises their hand, it's almost as if they respond immediately to them*". Furthermore, lecturers would sometimes give differential treatment to students during lectures, based on language. Presti (HWHEI, FGD 1) recounted one such experience as follows: "*I think I've experienced it [racism], even though I didn't take it to the brain and all that 'cause in class there was a time like, Afrikaans students ... they ask things in Afrikaans, and then the lecturer will explain in Afrikaans, forgetting that some of us don't know Afrikaans*".

According to Makaziwe, unequal treatment of students based on race was also reflected in tutors' either personal or impersonal interactions: "*... sometimes when you ask the demis [tutors] to come help you, they have this funny attitude towards you, it's like they don't wanna help you, but they have to because it's their job. And when you see how they interact with other learners, it's like a whole different setup*". Racial discrimination from non-academic staff at the HWHEI pertained to library staff. Illustrating this, a participant

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recounted the following scenario: "*You get there, you're a Black person, you're carrying your water, they tell you water is not allowed. A White person is gonna get there carrying juice, water, a burger, but they ... they let her pass. If you're inside and you're talking, your voice is so low, they will shush you, but then if it's a White person, then it's like OK, it's fine, 'cause your voice is smooth*".

Black HBHEI students felt that they could not raise issues of concern with the predominantly White senior managerial staff at the institution, attributing this not only to racial differences between themselves and the said staff, but also their impressions of staff's racist attitudes towards them. Sne reported the following regarding her previous interactions with management and her impression of their treatment: "*... they're just going to show you that ... 'go down there, you don't qualify to talk to me'. [...] I'm talking on a personal level because I ... I've been interacting with them, you see. It's ... it's like, there is that thing within them that 'we are still' uhm ... 'we' ... 'we are still' uuh ... 'people with power', however, they ... they still have power over the Black population*". Another participant, Katlego, agreed with this sentiment, adding that most students felt this way; he elucidated his impression as follows: "*They show us that ... that face, that ... we are Whites and they still do it ...*". This participant also indicated that this attitude extended to White clinical supervisors' interactions with Black students. He added that Black supervisors would perhaps treat Black students more empathetically: "*Rather, if it was somebody who's Black ... like, even the way ... even the way they correct you, you'll feel that, you know, in a way they have sympathy for you, they explain things better, they are not in a rush for you*".

5.3.13.3 Racially discriminatory administrative processes

Participants at the HBHEI described discriminatory administrative processes at the institution that deliberately disadvantaged Black students. There was general consensus

among participants at the second Black-only focus group that White students got preferential treatment in terms of admission to study programmes. Specifically, several participants stated that, "*When you're White, you go into Medicine*" or get enrolled for the Bachelor of Dental Surgery programme. To the resounding agreement of other participants, Kholo stated that there was only one White person enrolled in the BSc programme, which is considered least prestigious at the institution: "*We only have one White person in BSc […] The whole of BSc; literally from the first year until Honours, there is only one White guy there*". She added that there were no Indian students either in the BSc programme and questioned, "*It hurts 'cause, I mean, why, why, why … are they different from us? You know what I mean?*"

At the HWHEI, Willem stated that, although the university makes an effort to teach students about racial integration, it is lacking in implementation, referring to the fact that "*… you're not allowed to have a Black and a White as roommates*", to which other participants responded with surprise and concern.

5.3.13.4 Staff racial composition

The staff racial composition at the two institutions was predominantly White, with Black academic staff in the minority, according to participants. Presti explained the extent of this disparity in her experience at the HWHEI, "*Lecturers … I don't even think I have a Black lecturer this year. No Black lecturers; only maybe one tutor, like just visiting that day. (Another participant: Visiting; laughs)*". Nhlanhla agreed: "*I think, with the staff, it's mostly White; the lecturers […] you will hardly come across Black staff*".

Thabo, a participant at the HBHEI, further pointed out the non-representative composition of managerial staff and its implications for Black students' ability to raise their concerns: "*But, OK, in the management offices, in higher ranks, you'll … you'll not find a Black person, or even our Vice-Chancellor currently, that person is not … is not Black, he's*

... White, you see, I don't want to be racist (laughs), right. Mm ... yes, um ... in terms of, when we want umm ... to raise our views on the university, we find it difficult to approach the management ...".

5.3.13.5 Student racial composition

The student racial composition at the HWHEI was considered more or less even, whereas there were more Black students than those from any other group at the HBHEI, with White students in the minority. Joubertus was of the opinion that the HWHEI had "*done a good job of how they accept people*", considering the opportunities that the institution provides to applicants from different schools and from urban and rural areas, in terms of the ratio of admission across these applicant groups to ensure representivity.

The composition of students in university residences at the HBHEI determined the types of social activities that took place, as elucidated by Ilska, a White participant: "*So, there's a lot of social events, we don't ... we just don't attend them. They're especially for the people in residence, and no there are no White people in the residence, and the [inaudible] group [referring to event-organising group], their focus point is on the Black people*". Ilska and her fellow focus group participants emphasised that they had the option to attend these, but simply elected not to, as these did not resonate with their interests.

5.3.14 Observational findings

In this sub-section, I present findings based on my observations regarding the dynamics of each focus group discussion. These entail my appraisal of the behaviour of, and interactions between focus group members, and in relation to the topics under discussion and to me as the moderator. Where applicable, I corroborate the observations made with excerpts

from the discussion. I discuss these observations in this sub-section as part of the study findings.

5.3.14.1 HBHEI, FGD 1

In the first Black-only focus group discussion at the HBHEI, participants freely interacted with no apparent reservations about either agreeing or disagreeing with one another. These participants also elaborated on each other's views and experiences and, where necessary, supported others' views with their own experiences. In some instances, participants presented alternative ways of appraising certain phenomena. For example, following reference to experiences of racial discrimination by university staff, the discussion was spontaneously extended to inter-ethnic and interracial relations among students at the HBHEI, and took the following course:

Zinhle: *It's about approaching [members of other races], isn't it? (Lonwabo: because we are also not trying to associate with them) Yah, to be honest, I also don't approach them.*

Sne: *Because, can I make a point again? Even with us; we have tribes, isn't it? Have you noticed that in first year, you go with the Sothos (Other participant: Yah), if you are Venda, it's Vendas. Even with us, we segregate ourselves, based on like, opposites ... If they are not with you, you won't befriend them, or something like that. Even with us, I think, what he's saying ... even us, we have a problem, ourselves. We don't approach people, we want them to come to us every time (Other participant: exactly).*

Notably, these participants were quick to note and agree that, unlike overt and covert racial discrimination by staff, inter-ethnic and interracial non-interaction between students was common across all ethnic and race groups, due to preference or a sense of familiarity stemming from interaction with one's group.

In other instances, participants allowed for differences in opinions. This was true even if the majority of the group agreed on a certain aspect. In such instances, the group did not attempt to challenge or invalidate the dissenter's views. For example, a number of participants had commended the university's provision of financial assistance to students, to which Sne responded, "*[...] it depends on the situation. Because I remember I went to the financial office and they said 'because your parents paid for you, not NSFAS or any bursary, we cannot help you'*".

These participants also seemed quite eager to open up and freely express their views regarding negative aspects of their institution, based on their experiences. Participants took advantage of this platform to make themselves heard, perhaps in the hopes that the institution would effect changes and address students' concerns regarding the institution.

5.3.14.2 HBHEI, FGD 2

Participants in this group were mostly agreeable with each other and tended to corroborate or add to each other's views. Moreover, none of the participants were accommodated in the university residences. Instead, they resided with family or extended family, which meant that their experiences with regard to long-distance commuting were largely similar.

As indicated in Chapter 4, these participants generally came across as reserved, compared to those in all the other focus groups and, especially, those at the HBHEI. This reservation was especially palpable when pertaining to criticism of the institution, particularly with reference to race. In the excerpt below, Ilska provided an elaborate explanation regarding White students' largely unexercised option to attend social events at the institution, as these primarily appealed to Black students. The other participants supported her view only when Ilska neared the end of her elaboration. In turn, observing her resolve to clarify that the

event-organising group did not actively exclude White students from participating in the events, felt extremely uncomfortable to me. The excerpt below also shows my own attempt to reassure her that I understood what she meant:

"[...] So, there's a lot of social events, we don't ... we just don't attend them. They're especially for the people in residence, and no there are no White people in the residence, and the [inaudible] group [referring to event-organising group], their focus point is on the Black people. But it's not about ... like that, I don't wanna make it sound like that. (Another participant: We can attend if we want) Yes! They don't limit you, it's just a normal ... it's the natural instinct of man. You're attracted to different ... (Moderator: No, I understand.)".

Building on the observation above, participants in this group tended to consciously self-correct, possibly for fear of being construed as racist, especially considering the discordance between theirs and the institution's historical racial identity. This is illustrated in the following excerpt, entailing Jaco's recollection of the lack of chaos that he had expected at registration and the dissipation of his initial scepticism, as a result: "[...] that really made me feel 'OK now, **these people ... this university** knows what it's doing; it's effective, it's organised, I'm gonna be fine' [...]".

5.3.14.3 HBHEI, FGD 3

Overall, participants in this group mostly related to, corroborated and built on each other's experiences and personal accounts regarding the institution. These pertained to issues such as inefficient administration at the institution, the disadvantages associated with enrolment in the BSc programme and race and ethnic relations among students at the institution.

Participants allowed differences in opinions and maintained courteous interaction with participants whose experiences differed from their own, also demonstrating empathy for

their counterparts with different sets of concerns. There was a general tone of despondency, if not resentment, regarding various institutional structures' treatment of the BSc programme. Half of the participants in this group were enrolled for the BSc programme and their concerns were treated with empathy by the rest of the group. For instance, Tsholo, an Occupational Therapy student, expressed the following regarding the institution's treatment of BSc students' concerns: "*Even that thing with the BSc, they were even saying in that meeting that, 'Ohh, the state of the BSc course is in such a bad way' and all these things. OK then, do something, anything, to show that something is gonna be changing, but nothing happens*".

Participants broadly criticised the institution's apparent preferential treatment of the Medicine programme and its students, to the detriment of students enrolled in other programmes. As shown in Section 5.3.8 above, this was illustrated in most of these participants' complaints that Medical students received preferential treatment in the form of, for example, more evenly spaced out exam timetables. Regardless of these sentiments, Dembe, the only Medical student in this group, assertively expressed similar struggles that she was undergoing. Despite the fervour with which the majority had expressed their discontent regarding this programme's apparent favourable treatment, the group did not challenge or invalidate this participant's experiences. Rather, similarities were drawn between the different programmes with regard to test timetables coinciding with lectures.

In addition to highlighting the benefits of, and interest in inter-ethnic relations and learning other local languages, participants in this group expressed strong views regarding ethnicity, ethnic exclusion and particular ethnic groups' unwillingness to share resources across the student body. These participants also readily declared that their sentiments were not xenophobic. These are illustrated in the excerpt below:

Tsholo: *[...] the Swatis who're in fourth year would pass notes down to the first-year Swatis, and then they would pass notes, and pass this, what what, but only if you're Swati. So,*

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maybe if you ask to have some of that, "I'm sorry, but we can't help", and they will act like

they can't; you know that they have stuff. [...] (Participants: 'Cause we're not xenophobic.

And they form a society!). And the thing is, we're not xenophobic in the slightest. We don't

care that you're Congolese, OK, but don't come around here and then you [inaudible], and

you form societies.

In relation to this, possibly as an attempt not to perpetuate stereotypes, another

participant tended to be self-corrective in reference to ethnicity:

Kholo: *[...] but I have noticed now that we are having ... if I can say, 'cultural*

divisions' (Moderator: OK). Yah. Zulu people will stick together; actually, not that I'm

saying Zulu people. **I don't wanna ... Let me not ... I'm not being specific** *but, for example, a*

lot of Vendas will probably chill together there. Hey, I'm Pedi, but I don't speak Pedi. But I

wanna learn Venda, but some people won't be accommodative for me to learn. Some Tsongas

will chill there together.

5.3.14.4 HWHEI, FGD 1

Mostly, there was mutual correction and attempts to challenge each other to reflect in

this group, and a merging of views on certain topics, or at least a willingness to. Participants

in this group built on each other's views, with participant accounts at times jolting other

participants' recollection of similar experiences. For example, in response to a participant's

(Makaziwe's) account of racist treatment by lecturers and tutors, Presti recalled, "*I think it's*

the same with mine 'cause like, I think I've experienced it, even though I didn't take it to the

brain and all that 'cause in class there was a time like, Afrikaans students ... they ask things

in Afrikaans, and then the lecturer will explain in Afrikaans, forgetting that some of us don't

know Afrikaans. So, we get to lose out on other points and the tutors like, they're best friends

with Afrikaans students".

In terms of race, some of the participants seemed to have resigned themselves to the fact that racial discrimination was a reality on the university campus that they had to contend with, or acknowledged its existence, even though it did not personally affect them. Makaziwe stated, "*So, you just keep your cool, you just continue with what you're doing, but you can see and you can notice what is happening around you*". Presti added, "*[...] but then it's not much of a big deal 'cause personally, I haven't experienced any, but you get people who are affected by it around me [...]*".

Participants' views widely differed regarding the scrapping of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, with some arguing that Black and Afrikaans students would be equally disadvantaged, others stating that the issue did not concern them, and others acknowledging the benefits of studying in English. In general, compared to the rest of the participants, Nhlanhla, the only male participant, readily disagreed with the other participants, without attempting to negotiate consensus or move into their life worlds. Female participants' disagreements with one another or with Nhlanhla were generally more tentative. This observation and participants' negotiation of consensus—or at least, facilitation of mutual understanding regarding how concerns regarding the medium of instruction could be addressed—are illustrated in the following exchange, subsequent to Nhlanhla's disagreement with the idea of mother-tongue education:

Reabetswe: *Yes, can I just add to what ... In my opinion, like, not like we have to get the whole material in your home language, but there should be some kind of a supplement to your studies, like maybe tutorials. They can have tutorials, not that they have to translate everything into your mother tongue, but at some point, they have to make it easier for you by trying to use your mother tongue so that things that are difficult for you to understand, they become easy (Moderator: OK).*

Nontsikelelo: *Can we ask questions? (Moderator: Yes, sure.) OK; but I feel like, every ... I'm sure every single school like, OK, not every single school, but most schools are taught like ... English is the medium of instruction or like it's a universal language. So I mean, personally for me, I don't think I'll understand any scientific work in Zulu. It's like, what is an enzyme in Zulu? So, you're lost and you know you wouldn't understand fully. So, in English ... I think English is the way to go.*

Presti: *I don't think she [Reabetswe] means it that way. I meant like, when you explain, 'No, Ntsiki, ama enzymes uwafaka kanje ukuze uthole kanje', you know. Now you know, instead of using English all the way.*

5.3.14.5 HWHEI, FGD 2

In light of the racially charged *#AfrikaansMustFall* protests that had taken place at the HWHEI earlier that year, participants of different races in this focus group unanimously condemned the racial intolerance expressed during the protest. In contrast, none of the participants reacted to a participant who had recalled her presence being seemingly questioned at a space predominantly populated by White students at the institution, and considering enrolling for online education as a result.

Somewhat similar to the tendency to self-correct by participants in the all-White focus group discussion at the HBHEI, Black participants in this focus group also made seemingly cautious statements. For instance, with regard to mother-tongue education, Tumi stated the following: "*[...] so, I think it's quite impossible to include every language. Because I mean how would ... there are so many languages, but I think it would be umm ... nice to have maybe just one African language for those students that think that they want to be taught in their home language, but then another thing is, then the others are gonna be like 'No, this and that; we want ours in and ...', so I think, I think it should just stay the way it is because it's*

just gonna be too ... too much havoc". This tentative approach could also be likened to that employed by female participants in the Black-only focus group discussion at the HWHEI, in instances of dissent by the group's only male participant. Thus, it is unclear as to whether the approach stemmed from gender, racial differences or both.

Willem was the only participant who had Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. Although he vehemently argued against the immediate scrapping of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, he agreed with other participants that a reasonable solution would be to delay the scrapping at least until the latest cohort of Afrikaans-speaking students had completed their studies. Moreover, Black participants and Willem seemed to agree on the disadvantages of instruction in African languages. Overall, Black participants seemed to cautiously negotiate their positions within the focus group and in relation to broader institutional issues pertaining to race, in ways that their White counterparts in this group did not.

In spite of the above observations, participants in this focus group related to, and corroborated each other's experiences, or perhaps out of politeness, reserved comments on unique participant experiences when these were race-neutral. In instances of disparities in such perspectives, participants candidly disagreed and discussed these, at times to the point of mutual understanding. At times, these participants shared advice regarding personal concerns that other participants had cited as affecting their academic success or experiences.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter presents the findings obtained from the thematic analysis of the focus group data and analysis of the observational data based on the discussions. The chapter began with a description of the study sample and participants' biographical information, and indication of each participant's HEI and of the focus group discussion in which he or she participated. This was followed by the presentation of identified themes and findings from

observational data. Below is a summary of the themes and accompanying sub-themes, where applicable, and of the observational findings. The following chapter presents an interpretation of the findings in this chapter from the systemic and critical race theory perspectives.

Psychological factors

Several psychological factors were identified, including self-regulation, self-efficacy, adjustment and motivation. First, participants identified self-regulation strategies that they should be implementing to enhance academic success, such as time management, balancing academic and non-academic activities, and not succumbing to peer pressure.

Self-efficacy was illustrated by the ability to manage the practical aspects of one's academic course, regardless of personal sensitivities, particularly for Medical students. Some participants expressed general self-doubt regarding their abilities and uncertainty regarding timeous completion of studies.

A distinction was drawn between academic and social adjustment. The first year of study typically challenged students to adjust both socially and academically. In the former instance, some participants initially struggled to make friends. With regard to academic adjustment, several participants reported that the transition from high school to university was unexpectedly difficult and was demonstrated by poorer performance. Participants gradually adjusted and found personal ways of coping.

Participants were mostly motivated by the prospect of obtaining a degree, given how far they had come either with their studies or based on strict admission criteria, and gaining financial independence once employed. However, a substantial number of participants who were enrolled for a BSc reported low motivation levels to complete and continue their studies, as they had been under the false impression that they would eventually gain entrance into Medicine.

Personal circumstances

Several unique personal circumstances were identified as factors contributing towards academic success. These included emotional problems, parental support, parental conflict, interpersonal relationships and pregnancy.

Lack of information

Participants cited lack of information for negative outcomes such as academic failure and dropping out. Some students dropped out or changed courses due to lack of career guidance in basic education or of information about financial assistance, and lacking important study skills while unaware of relevant workshops provided at one's institution.

Institutional support

Various aspects of institutional support were identified as enhancing or impeding factors. There was general consensus that both institutions provided sufficient academic support, which included mentorship programmes, writing skills workshops and follow-ups on poorly performing students by faculty representatives.

Participants at the HBHEI were generally satisfied with the financial support received, which they acknowledged as an important contributor towards student retention and focus on one's studies.

Participants at both institutions reported various administrative problems that negatively affected their experiences and, in some cases, contributed towards prolonged study periods. Some participants reported satisfaction with administrative procedures at the HBHEI, whereas a substantial number reported administrative mishaps at this institution, particularly at registration and during the course of the study year.

Infrastructure

Safety was reported to be a major concern at the HBHEI. Participants at both HEIs lauded Wi-Fi access on campus as a factor influencing success. However, participants at the HBHEI reported that the institution lacked various facilities, especially when compared to other institutions, which in some instances either directly or indirectly determined their academic outcomes. These participants also lauded their lecturers' professional competence and expertise.

Lack of accountability to students

Institutions' lack of accountability took on various forms, including dismissal of students' concerns and failure by university management to hold the SRC and staff accountable. In turn, these influenced participants' academic success or experiences in several ways.

Lack of extracurricular activities

Participants at the HBHEI unanimously complained about either the lack of or ill-timed extracurricular activities at the institution. Participants recognised that though theirs is a study environment, it would be beneficial for them to take respite from studying once in a while.

Distance between residence and university

Commuting distance was generally a major concern for participants at the HBHEI. Specifically, those residing in off-campus student residences cited various obstacles regarding daily commute to and from the university; this could result in non-attendance and

late arrival for classes or tests. Participants residing with family off-campus cited safety as a concern, due to distance and the fact that academic activities at times continued until late at night.

Unfair treatment at the institution

Unfair treatment particularly at the HBHEI included unpleasant personal encounters between lecturers and students, with participants arguing that this could result in being deliberately failed by the lecturers in question. Bureaucratic, non-transparent procedures relating to the perusal of examination scripts were also cited as a concern that could directly influence student outcomes. In addition, participants reported that some courses were treated as more prestigious than others and that, therefore, even academic schedules and the scheduling of tests unfairly favoured students of some courses over those of other courses. Some participants also stated that academic exclusion could be determined by one's stature or relationships with members of the SRC.

Workload

Participants at the HBHEI reported an overwhelmingly high workload. However, participants from this institution also lauded the quality of their training due to practicals offered by the institution, which led to their favourable consideration in the job market. On the contrary, some participants at the HWHEI were of the opinion that the provision of more tests or tests more closely resembling the exam to students could help either maximise their chances of exam entrance or better prepare them for exams.

Socio-economic conditions

Socio-economic conditions were reported as a major stressor at the HBHEI, thereby affecting particularly Black students' academic experiences. The perceived high costs of perusing examination scripts and applications for re-marking also meant that students could not make use of these services at will, which directly influenced their academic outcomes. In addition, participants at the HWHEI drew links between economic disparities and self-esteem.

Language

The medium of instruction at the HBHEI is English and all students took a compulsory language course. Black and Afrikaans-speaking White students reported challenges with their understanding of academic material as a result of the language barrier, especially during the period of adjustment to higher education following high school.

Black participants at the HWHEI acknowledged the disadvantages of not studying in their home languages and suggested ways in which the university could lessen these, such as the provision of course-specific keywords for Black students to use. Some participants lamented the futility of incorporating African languages into higher education, arguing that the languages are complex or cannot be used in higher education due to the inherently limited vocabulary. Other participants suggested that only English be used at the currently dual-medium HWHEI, as this would minimise the disadvantages experienced by Black students (relative to Afrikaans-speaking students), who did not have either language as a home language. An Afrikaans-speaking participant and several other Black participants in both HWHEI focus group discussions argued against the immediate elimination of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, as demanded by the "Afrikaans Must Fall" protesters, instead stating that Afrikaans could be phased out gradually to accommodate learners who had Afrikaans as

a LOLT in basic education. Some of the participants at both institutions considered the use of English as a medium of instruction as an advantage in the job market.

Student protests

Participants at the two institutions under study experienced the higher education 'protest season' differently. Participants at the HBHEI reported that there had not been protracted protests due to the accessibility of funding at the institution, already insourced labour and use of English as a medium of instruction, as these had been the three core concerns in higher education protests throughout the country. Instead, students at the HBHEI had undertaken small-scale protests related to particular study courses.

Some participants at the HWHEI blamed political parties for "radicalising" students during protests at the institution. The liberty taken by protesters to express racial intolerance was also condemned by participants at this institution. Nonetheless, a participant recalled having been conscientised as a result of the protests, after having appraised the situation pertaining to inequalities at this institution with "rose-coloured glasses". Another participant added that notwithstanding the manner in which the political parties were addressing the concerns, the university had previously failed to address the racial and political issues raised before the current wave of protests.

Prejudice

Participants at the two institutions reported civil interracial relations among students, with the exception of a participant who reported an undermined sense of belonging during interracial socialising in certain contexts on the university campus. Most participants at the HBHEI stated that the clear inter-ethnic and interracial divisions among students at the institution were simply due to preference and a tendency to keep to one's own.

Black participants at the HWHEI reported covert racial discrimination, including by academic, library and academic support staff, whereas those at the HBHEI reported both overt and covert racial discrimination by Black and White academic staff. In addition, Black participants at the HBHEI reported racially discriminatory administrative processes, in the form of preferential admission of students into certain courses.

The student racial composition was described as more or less equal between Black and White students at the HWHEI. At the HBHEI, White students were in the minority and Black students in the majority. In addition, some participants at the HWHEI reported that there were few, if at all, Black lecturers in their study courses. Participants at the HBHEI pointed out the non-representative composition of managerial staff, which was presumed to negatively affect Black students' ability to raise concerns at the institution.

Observational findings

Observation data showed varying dynamics across the five focus group discussions. There was a generally high level of disclosure and less apparent self-censoring among participants in the Black-only focus group discussions at both the HBHEI and the HWHEI. The two Black-only focus group discussions at the HBHEI were invariably marked by consensus, dissent, and a general openness towards negotiating the latter. The discussions at these focus groups flowed seamlessly even when there was dissent, such that there was no discernible indication that any of the emerging topics were construed as too sensitive to discuss. In contrast, participants in the White-only focus group discussion were markedly more reserved and self-corrective, particularly in relation to topics pertaining to race. This was seemingly attributable to the discordance between participants' racial identity and that of the majority of the student body, mine as the moderator, and the institution's historical race identity. There was a generally high level of consensus regarding various issues in this group.

The self-corrective inclination referred to above was also observed among Black participants in the racially mixed focus group discussion at the HWHEI. In contrast to their White, male fellow participants, these participants adopted a more tentative approach towards negotiating their positioning regarding theirs or the student body's concerns about issues pertaining to race at the HWHEI. Moreover, perhaps due to an inability to relate to these, other participants hardly engaged with these participants when the latter mentioned personal experiences of racial discrimination at the institution. This was despite mutual condemnation of the Black-on-White racial intolerance expressed during the *#AfrikaansMustFall* protests. Nonetheless, when these did not pertain to race, participants in this focus group corroborated each other's experiences, shared advice with one another, negotiated dissent—at times to the point of agreement—and reserved comments regarding fellow participants' unique experiences. In addition, participants in the Black-only focus group discussion at the HWHEI mostly negotiated dissent, as illustrated by engagement in mutual correction and some participants challenging others to reflect on the possible merits of certain perspectives. These participants also corroborated and built on each other's accounts. However, the only male participant in this group deviated from the female participants' generally tentative approach towards expressing and negotiating dissent.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

This study identified factors considered by undergraduate students in an HBHEI and an HWHEI to affect academic success in higher education; determined how race shapes students' experiences at an HBHEI and an HWHEI; and identified intersections among various levels of racial discrimination and intersections between these and other factors in influencing academic success. The current study is unique in that, its use of the systemic theory to interpret the links between the various factors found to affect academic success, highlights the importance of contextualising students' experiences of higher education and success in this context, within various systems and subsystems. Moreover, in addition to its exploration of conventional factors affecting academic success, such as individual (including psychological and psychosocial) and environmental factors, it comprehensively considers these within interpersonal, institutional and structural racial contexts. The current study explored the role played by racial discrimination in students' academic success and experiences at multiple levels (interpersonal, institutional and structural) and in terms of intersections among these levels, as well as between these and other factors, to cumulatively influence students' experiences of higher education and academic success.

This chapter entails interpretation of the study findings presented in Chapter 5. First, I reiterate the study's research questions, then present my approach towards interpreting and discussing the findings. This is followed by the actual interpretation of the findings according to each research question and the corresponding theoretical approach. In this chapter, I merge my interpretation of both the themes and observational findings presented in Chapter 6. Observational findings in Sections 6.4 and 6.5 are reflected in, for example, my reference to

levels of consensus or dissent regarding, or specifically, participants' reactions or interaction patterns in relation to the themes under discussion.

Specifically, I first present my interpretation of the study findings addressing the first research question, while also referring to relevant literature. Then, I group the identified themes according to the systems and subsystems under which they fall, based on the ecological systems theory perspective. This is accompanied by a discussion of the inter- and intra-systemic linkages between the factors found to affect academic success. Due to the comprehensive manner in which critical race theory can aid interpretation of identified *factors (affecting academic success) relating to race*, I discuss and interpret these in-depth from a critical race theory perspective in the subsequent section, instead of using the systemic theory. Critical race theory is used to interpret factors pertaining to how race shapes students' experiences and academic success in higher education, therefore addressing the second research question, the secondary research question to Research Question 2, and some elements of the first research question—as per my above explanation regarding my interpretation of factors affecting academic success from a critical race theory perspective, as opposed to the systemic perspective. My use of critical race theory to address the research questions in this study serves as acknowledgement that, when pertaining to race, students' experiences of higher education and factors affecting students' academic success in higher education cannot necessarily be clearly delineated from one another, nor can either of these be divorced from the broader socio-cultural and socio-historical contexts (see Section 2.3 for a detailed description of the application of the two theories in this study). Similarly, in addressing the secondary research question to Research Question 2, in acknowledgement of my inability to neatly draw distinctions between how race and racial discrimination (either in terms of intersections between the various levels thereof, or in intersections with other factors) shape students' experiences and academic success, I do not present a distinct section

interpreting findings in this regard. Rather, I merge my interpretation and discussion of findings on Research Question 2 and its secondary research question. Where applicable in this regard, I distinctly draw attention to instances wherein race and racial discrimination (at interpersonal, institutional or structural levels) are found to either directly or indirectly affect academic success, specifically—as opposed to experiences only—and instances wherein race and racial discrimination intersect with other factors to influence academic success, specifically.

The section pertaining to interpretation of findings from the critical race theory perspective comprises a discussion of the following as broad contributors towards academic success and experiences of higher education: interpersonal racism, institutional racism, structural inequalities, and intersectionality (referring to specific intersecting identities or characteristics). I also present my conceptualisation of the theoretical links between interpersonal, institutional and structural racism, supplementing this with the preceding findings and identified linkages between those. Lastly, I present the conclusion to the chapter.

6.2 Research Questions

The following research questions were posed:

1. What factors do undergraduate students in a historically Black and a historically White higher education institution consider to affect their academic success?

2. How does race shape undergraduate students' experiences in a historically Black and a historically White higher education institution?

The following secondary research question to Research Question 2 was posed:

2.1 How do various levels (interpersonal, institutional and structural) of racial discrimination intersect with each other and with other factors to influence academic success?

6.3 Discussion Approach

In my interpretation of findings in this chapter, first, I discuss the findings based on themes obtained and observational findings as presented in Chapter 5, regarding factors that participants explicitly considered to affect academic success. In this regard, I also consider the systemic links between factors identified as pertaining to academic success, from the perspective of interrelations between the individual and the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro and chronosystems, as well as their subsystems, in relation to each other and to academic success. However, I leave my discussion of certain factors pertaining to race in the micro-, exo- and chronosystems for incorporation into the subsequent interpretation using critical race theory. Given their nature, I universally apply critical race theory to the race-related observations and themes on factors affecting academic success that pertain to the macrosystem (as based on the systemic theory), expanding on their appraisal using tenets of the former theory, to enable analysis from a comprehensive angle taking into account broader historical and contemporary socio-political and socio-cultural contexts.

Second, to address the second research question (and some aspects of the first research question pertaining to race, as indicated above) and its secondary research question, I interpret the relevant findings in consideration of race (including personal and historical institutional racial identity) and racial prejudice and discrimination (interpersonal, institutional and structural), using the critical race theory lens. Relevant findings in this regard refer to observations and themes or sub-themes that either explicitly pertained to race, according to participants, or that I identified as such. Further addressing the second research question and its secondary research question, I elucidate the links between certain identified factors and race, some of which participants did not necessarily explicitly tie to race, to clarify how these are a function of racial prejudice or discrimination, including interpersonal, institutional and structural racism. Lastly, I discuss interactions between interpersonal,

institutional and structural racism both in theory and in terms of how these manifested in the current study in relation to students' academic success and experiences in higher education. The critical race theory approach to the analysis of findings sought to elucidate the mechanisms through which race and racial prejudice or discrimination (individual, institutional and structural) broadly shape students' experiences and, specifically, academic success in higher education.

6.4 Research Question 1

What factors do undergraduate students in a historically Black and a historically White higher education institution consider to affect academic success?

6.4.1 Psychological factors

Several psychological factors were identified as affecting academic success; namely, self-regulation, self-efficacy, adjustment and motivation.

6.4.1.1 Self-regulation

In this study, self-regulation is used to refer to efforts taken by one to control one's circumstances. Illustrating self-regulation as a factor affecting academic success, participants indicated the importance of effective planning, managing one's time, setting priorities, avoiding peer pressure and striking a balance between academic and non-academic activities such as going out, participation in sports and either the maintenance or distractions of intimate relationships. The above were considered to either facilitate or hamper focus on one's studies and, therefore, academic success.

Time management has consistently been identified as a factor affecting academic success in previous studies (e.g. Barlow-Jones & Van der Westhuizen, 2017; Naude et al.,

2016), with Warden and Myers (2017) identifying it as a concern especially in relation to traditional as opposed to non-traditional (e.g. distance education) students. In Malinga-Musamba's (2014) study at the University of Botswana, first-year students noted that peer pressure could influence how they manage their time. Peers' possible influence on first-year students' time management might be exacerbated by the latter's inability to effectively manage their newly found independence. Current study participants indicated that newly found independence was a major obstacle to academic success for first-year students, who may simply miss class and not study, due to not having anyone to account to. This lack of accountability and young adults' susceptibility to peer pressure (Govender et al., 2015)—which is possibly at its peak in first year, when students are still navigating the higher education context in an attempt to find their place in it—could cumulatively have major negative implications on academic success. Moreover, the study participants reported that academic failure could be due to students' tendency to underestimate the workload or difficulty of the work, then fall behind as the work becomes progressively difficult. In this instance, there seems to be an interaction between poor time management and factors such as low motivation and academic self-efficacy, taking into consideration students' initial neglect of academic tasks, subsequently followed by the perceived, seemingly insurmountable difficulty thereof, as a result of sustained neglect. To counter the above, HEIs could impart time management skills onto first-year students as part of the orientation programme for first-year students.

In the current study, participants cited prioritisation of tasks and the risk of bending to peer pressure also in consideration of the vibrant social life near the HWHEI and the fact that off-campus HBHEI residences were located in a busy CBD with numerous clubs and shops nearby. In contrast, participants residing at on-campus residences at the HBHEI commended the virtual seclusion that the university environment accorded them, which enhanced focus on

their studies, as there were no distracting environmental features nearby, such as clubs. Govender et al. (2015) reported a similar finding in the South African context, with a campus's physical location reportedly helping students avoid misusing alcohol.

It is important to note that engagement with peers was not unequivocally considered to negatively affect academic success. Participants at the HWHEI cited the importance of establishing networks with other students for support, such as study groups, and engaging with one's social models, for motivation. Although participants at the HBHEI did not mention these, they reported benefitting greatly from the mentorship programme provided at the institution. These illustrate the importance of social and peer support, as also shown in previous studies (e.g. Buchanan et al., 2015; Llamas et al., 2018). Beyond social interaction or seeking social support for its own sake, it would seem that the mechanism through which this variable affects academic success is its enhancement of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995).

6.4.1.2 Self-efficacy

Confidence in one's ability to withstand the practical demands of the course was identified as a factor either affecting academic success or reflective of one's academic prospects. A participant reported feeling despondent and uncertain about her academic prospects—suggesting poor academic self-efficacy—based on unfavourable comparisons between hers and her peers' performance, sharply contrasting with her self-perceived high academic potential and efforts. Another participant reported that she did not expect to complete her studies within the stipulated period, which was in contrast with how she felt in her first year, attributing this to other students' comments about the difficulty and redundancy of her course with regard to career prospects. As indicated by Bartimote-Aufflick et al. (2016), poor academic self-efficacy may coincide with other personal variables such as self-regulation, locus of control, intrinsic motivation and the use of learning strategies. These

correlations render plausible the assumption that poor academic self-efficacy can logically result in academic failure. This stance explains the possibility that participants' citation of poor academic success is an indicator of possible academic failure.

The latter, above-mentioned participant's concern regarding peers' remarks highlights the importance of perceived social support to academic self-efficacy. Disparaging remarks by peers might be perceived to indicate lack of social support by the participant. The importance attached to peers' opinions could also be due to one's life stage. As noted by Govender et al. (2015), young adults' poor, independent sense of self renders them vulnerable to peer pressure and is characterised by the desire to fit in. In addition, although one could argue that this student's poor academic self-efficacy might be due to non-exposure to relatable social models, referring to people similar to herself succeeding in the course (Bandura, 2012), exposure to fellow BSc students and mentors at the HBHEI contradicts this conjecture. Perhaps, as suggested by Bandura (2012), poor self-efficacy in this regard could be due to poor subject mastery or sub-optimal physical or emotional states. This is especially considering that this participant indicated that she felt less confident in her second year of studies that she would complete her studies within the prescribed period than she did in her first year, and that she felt discouraged by the negative remarks by peers regarding BSc students' academic and career prospects.

Notably, few participants across all focus groups admitted to not feeling confident about completing their degrees within the stipulated period, thereby presumably reflecting their academic self-efficacy. Although this could be true, it is worth speculating as to whether social desirability bias might have played a role in the number of participants admitting to low academic self-efficacy. Social desirability refers to the tendency by participants to give distorted responses so as to conform socially and to over-report traits that are considered desirable (Neuman, 2012).

6.4.1.3 Adjustment

Adjustment in various forms was cited as a facilitator of academic success. Difficulties with the transition from either the home environment or high school were attributed to academic failure and, in some instances, attrition. With regard to the transition from high school, participants specifically cited factors such as not having known what to expect in a higher education context (e.g. how tests are set and writing many computer-based tests) and being "spoon-fed" in high school, which did not prepare them for the academic demands of university. Similarly, Nel et al. (2016) found teaching methods that differ from those accustomed to in high school as obstacles to academic adjustment. Computer-based tests might be especially disadvantageous to students who are not computer literate upon entry into higher education, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds or who have attended poorly resourced schools not offering computer literacy as a subject. In demonstration of this and, therefore, the manner in which systemic inequalities may academically disadvantage certain students in higher education (as discussed comprehensively in Section 6.5), as conjectured in the current study, a participant in Ndimande's (2016, p. 40) study stated: "We [in township schools] don't have resources--we don't have computers. We need resources so that we don't have to wish to send our children to formerly White-only schools". Indeed, Barlow-Jones and Van der Westhuizen (2011) have previously found that digital literacy contributes towards students' success in an information technology course, with lack of exposure to computers prior to enrolment influencing students' academic success in computer-related subjects. Considering the link between academic adjustment and academic success (e.g. Rodríguez et al., 2017), HEIs could use the academic support systems that are in place to offer programmes to first-year students, orientating them on, broadly, academic

demands of higher education, and equipping them with academic coping and skills relevant to their fields of study. This could speed up first-year students' academic adjustment.

A number of participants reported discernibly poorer academic performance upon entering higher education, compared to high school, as indication of difficulties adjusting academically. An overall sense of being overwhelmed at the beginning of tertiary studies was reported by many of the study participants, understandably due to sudden immersion in a socially and culturally unfamiliar environment (Buchanan et al., 2015), compounded by the need to adjust academically, too. One participant referred to the new university context as quite impersonal, where no one knew her or cared to know her personally, so much that even good academic performance could not earn her recognition, compared to in high school. Buchanan et al. (2015) refer to this phenomenon as "performance shock" (p. 296), wherein top achievers in high school are confronted by the unsettling reality of even better performing peers in the university context. Another participant attributed her poorer performance in first year to not having had the skills required to succeed in higher education, which include time management and study skills. Similarly, Buchanan et al.'s (2015) first-year participants in an Australian study cited time management as an important skill to acquire in preparation for higher education. Some students explored unconventional coping strategies that they found to be effective, such as self-study, as opposed to attending class. Similarly, in their local study on first-year students, Naude et al. (2016) found that only few of the participants preferred an autonomous study context. This preference may be indicative of high levels of self-regulation by these students. On this basis, HEIs could explore other forms of teaching such as online learning, or at least blended learning, to accommodate the diverse student base and corresponding preferences.

For some students, poor self-discipline, compounded by separation from one's parents and suddenly not having anyone to depend on and to tend to one, resulted in substance abuse.

Failure to deal with one's newly found independence from parents might be as a result of the helicopter parenting referred to by Darlow et al. (2017), referring to excessive parental control, found to indirectly affect students' adjustment by these authors. Further confirming the above finding, LaBrie et al. (2012) have shown an association between adjustment and alcohol consumption. Thus, it would seem that students struggling with adjustment to the higher education environment turn to substance use. The study finding also confirms local studies that have shown alcohol consumption to be prevalent in South African HEIs (Nkoana et al., 2015; Van Zyl et al., 2015). Interestingly, alcohol or substance use was not mentioned as a factor affecting academic success at the HBHEI. This confirms Govender et al.'s (2015) suggestion that alcohol consumption is higher among students enrolled in HEIs with a greater number of liquor outlets near campus. Similarly, participants at the HBHEI had mentioned that the university environment, especially for students residing at the on-campus university residences, was conducive to studying, especially due to the virtual absence of clubs near the university.

Turning to substance abuse may also indicate the said students' poor emotional self-efficacy, given Parker et al.'s (2006) finding that emotional self-efficacy facilitates students' transition from high school to university. Nightingale et al. (2013) have also suggested a positive association between adjustment levels and emotional efficacy and management strategies, which substance-abusing students may lack.

Establishing social support networks in the form of friendships helped ease students' adjustment. An HWHEI participant who initially felt apprehensive regarding attending class, let alone actively participating by engaging with the lecturer, reported subsequently feeling less apprehensive as, now in her second year of study, she had a friend that she could sit next to and engage with in class. Although this student still did not interact with lecturers in class, she had since become a much more active participant in tutorials. Another participant was

immediately put at ease during her first few days at the university upon realising that her peers were friendlier than she would have expected. In the same manner, Llamas et al. (2018) have demonstrated the importance of immediate social support networks, having found that marginalisation by friends among first-year students results in psychological distress. Buchanan et al. (2015) also highlighted the importance of establishing friendships in facilitating adjustment in higher education.

One participant considered his maturity upon admission to have eased his adjustment, having heard other participants' ordeals in this regard. Although he did not consider himself an excellent academic performer at the time, he found it easier to adjust at the HWHEI, as he was more mentally prepared and mature, presumably more than the typical first-year student would be. Indeed, Hamid and Singaram (2016) have attributed the average higher score on fortitude obtained by UKZN Medical students with previous tertiary educational experiences to their maturity, compared to the lower scores obtained by those who had enrolled for a degree in Medicine immediately after high school. Incidentally, these authors also found that male students displayed higher fortitude levels, compared to female students. Older students may show better adjustment due to emotional maturity or better emotional efficacy as a result of age or life experiences, enabling these students to better withstand the demands of the higher education environment.

6.4.1.4 Motivation

Participants reported varying levels of motivation regarding their studies. Some participants displayed extrinsic motivation, reporting that the prospects of being employed motivated them to complete within the stipulated time frame. Similarly, another participant was motivated to maintain good academic performance, to take advantage of the funding provided by the university for consistently good performance. Sommer and Dumont (2011)

have also previously found extrinsic motivation to predict academic performance among students at a South African HBHEI. This result supports the notion of HEIs incentivising good performance, to facilitate academic success. The above results are compatible with Ryan and Deci's (2000) stance regarding extrinsic motivation not necessarily being any less effective than intrinsic motivation is. Interestingly, the current findings were contrary to Elsheikh et al.'s (2018) finding of female, Sudanese Medical students displaying intrinsic motivation, as also shown by engagement in altruistic behaviour, while their male counterparts displayed extrinsic motivation. In the current study, extrinsic motivation was exclusively displayed by female participants. This result is compatible with that of Kunanitthaworn et al. (2018) on Thai Medical students. Societal gender roles and dynamics in a given context might influence the type of motivation displayed by gender. For example, societies in which men are socialised to value prestige and social status, and cultivate their sense of ambition, while women are socialised to be nurturing caregivers, could influence these groups' inclination towards extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, respectively.

Other participants, particularly BSc students at the HBHEI (as shown in Table 5.1 in Chapter 5), displayed amotivation. Many of these participants had enrolled for the BSc programme while under the impression that they would subsequently be allowed to register for Medicine. Some even considered dropping out or knew students who had, due to lack of motivation to persist through the BSc course, in turn owing to the course that they had no interest in becoming progressively difficult per year level, coupled with uncertain career prospects as BSc graduates. This indicates the lack of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for this group. One such participant counted on his mother to notice his lack of interest, then ideally encourage him to drop out. These students' selection into the Medicine programme was dependent on academic achievement, such that only a certain number of high performers in the BSc programme could be admitted into Medicine. Arguably, this encouraged focus on

performance goals, as opposed to mastery goals (Elliot, 1999), with students vying for good performance relative to other students, and not focusing on mastering the subject material. This is evidenced by the study process and outcome characteristics of performance goals, as outlined by Elliot (1999), including surface processing of study content, withdrawal of effort upon performing poorly and low task enjoyment. One could argue that, based on their accounts, the apathetic BSc students demonstrated the latter two. Surface processing of material can only be presupposed based on these students' lack of interest in the course and, for some, poor academic performance. Broadly, BSc students who preferred enrolment into the Medicine programme were likely to be displaying either performance-approach goals (Elliot, 1999), with their primary focus being to outperform other students so as to ensure admission into the Medicine programme; or performance-avoidance goals, with focus being to avoid retention in the BSc programme due to not performing optimally. In this regard, this study makes an important contribution to the understanding of motivation and how the environment can contribute towards inclination towards different aspects of either mastery or performance goals, and therefore, the exertion of effort in one's studies and, ultimately, academic success.

In addition to the above, other students' disparaging remarks about the BSc course for a participant for whom this was a preferred study programme, and poor prospects of enrolling in Medicine for those who preferred it, were extremely demotivating to participants, thereby mostly resulting in despondency. Evidently, the above-mentioned student who preferred the BSc programme, could probably benefit from further information about her preferred career, which could then serve as a buffer against peers' discouragement. This is especially considering that other participants who were passionate about the BSc programme, who considered it to compare favourably with others and to hold good career prospects, could

hold their own in discussions with peers who questioned their study choice. These students were also quite positive about their academic prospects.

In view of the above, it is important that universities clarify exact conditions under which students can be enrolled in a given course, and also specify if prospective students should be mindful of any limits in the number of admissions. Further, HEIs could provide some career guidance to aspiring students who could not be admitted into their preferred study programmes.

6.4.2 Personal circumstances

Although the factors discussed in this sub-section are referred to as "personal", it is evident that they are a result of individuals' interaction with external systems especially in the mesosytem in the context of this study. Emotional problems were identified as a contributor towards academic failure, hampering functioning in the higher education context. Moreover, a study participant found herself at the centre of her parents' conflict, which hampered her ability to focus on her studies. Another participant indicated that students could experience feelings of guilt due to their families' financial situation, while they (students) are spending money at university, that the whole family could benefit from back home. The participant added that this could hamper students' focus on their studies. Emotional wellbeing has previously been associated with academic outcomes (e.g. Beauvais et al., 2013), while emotional efficacy has been positively associated with adjustment among students (Nightingale et al., 2013). Arguably, poor emotional wellbeing may place a cognitive burden on students, thereby hampering their problem-solving abilities or broadly, functioning in the academic context and, therefore, negatively affect academic success.

A participant expressed high regard for the support shown by an acquaintance's parents, who encouraged their child to discontinue his studies for a year to introspect, then

decide whether to continue or not. Some parents would choose courses that they preferred for their children, putting these students at risk of dropping out. These findings highlight the importance of parental support to students, and how the lack thereof—or the overly intrusive variety—could hamper adjustment and functioning in higher education, including academic success. Jama, Mapesela, and Beylefeld (2008) posit that non-traditional students, used to refer to Black students from low socio-economic backgrounds in the South African context in that study, are likely from families with a minimal educational background, who do not know how to support children attending university. Lack of parental support could also undermine students' self-efficacy, particularly in their initial years of studies, with obvious consequences for academic success. Bandura (2012) attributes self-efficacy to task mastery and optimal physical and emotional states. Perceived lack of parental support, compounded by poor task mastery—especially at the beginning of one's studies—and a suboptimal emotional state resulting from the perceived lack of support, has the potential to undermine self-efficacy. As shown by McGhie (2017), lack of parental support could be especially detrimental to first-generation students.

Problems in intimate relationships were identified as a factor with the potential to negatively affect academic success. In relation to this, unplanned pregnancy was identified as having led to some students dropping out. Similar to the current study, Matsolo, Ningpuanyeh, and Susuman (2018) found that unplanned pregnancies had the potential to affect enrolment in higher education, though to a lesser extent than did other factors. On its own, academic life could be characterised by a high workload, as also shown in this study, accompanied by anxiety. The added pressures of problems in interpersonal relationships or life-changing circumstances such as pregnancy, compounded by an anticipated sense of isolation and a compromised emotional state, are likely to negatively affect academic success.

To counter students' attrition as a result of pregnancy, HEIs could put support structures in place to support and retain students who fall pregnant during the course of their studies.

6.4.3 Lack of information

Participants reported lack of information as a causal factor in outcomes such as dropping out or academic failure. For instance, some students reportedly failed courses because they did not know what these entailed, due to lack of career guidance. Giving credence to this finding, some participants in Matsolo et al.'s (2018) study had similarly cited early career guidance as a contributor towards dropping out. Moreover, a participant at the HWHEI in the current suggested that, to counter the prospects of uninformed study choices, career guidance should be offered in basic education. High school learners in Dabula and Makura's (2013) study expressed various negative emotions in relation to being selected for participation in a career guidance programme in the Eastern Cape; these included feeling anxious, scared, nervous, lost and confused. The authors considered this to demonstrate the learners' lack of exposure to career guidance initiatives, and therefore, lack of vital knowledge about their career prospects, which they would subsequently carry into higher education. Thus, the notion of students dropping out or being disillusioned by their chosen study programmes due to the lack of career guidance is plausible. Lourens and Fourie-Malherbe (2017) add that having limited, if at all, knowledge of available career choices is particularly true for learners from rural areas.

Some participants reported the wide availability of workshops aimed at equipping students with various, relevant skills at the HWHEI, although information regarding these workshops was not widely available. Other participants insisted that it was students' responsibility to be on the lookout for, and seek out such opportunities, for their own benefit. However, as previously mentioned, several studies have reported students' apparent

reluctance to seek information or help when needed, for various reasons (e.g. Eisenberg, Golberstein, and Gollust, 2007; Lourens & Fourie-Malherbe, 2017). Another student at the HBHEI reportedly dropped out due to lacking sufficient knowledge about obtaining funding for his studies. In contrast, other students had sought such information out when needed and received the necessary help, with one participant even having related his own account of having been in a similar situation, urging the above-mentioned acquaintance to seek help. Given this, it would seem that students' help-seeking behaviours vary. Arguably, poor adjustment into the higher education context, coupled with anticipated, possible language barriers between some students and university support staff and a generally unfamiliar environment, could deter students from seeking help. In addition, as argued extensively in Section 6.5.4.4, students might be unwilling to seek help regarding funding, especially when they are in dire need, or to engage in discussions about such with their peers, due to feelings of shame regarding their indigent state.

6.4.4 Institutional support

Illustrating the importance of support structures in the higher education environment, various forms of support were identified as contributors towards academic success, including academic, psychological, financial and administrative support. Institutional infrastructure was also reported to play a role in students' experiences of the university environment. The contribution of institutional support factors towards academic success is discussed below.

6.4.4.1 Academic support programmes

There was consensus that academic support, which both institutions sufficiently provided, contributed towards academic success. The role of academic support in this regard confirms previous South African study results (e.g. Naude et al., 2016; Nel et al., 2016). The

academic support provided at the HBHEI included a mentorship programme, which participants cited as a positive contributor towards their academic success. This suggestion is in line with Alexander and Bodenhorn's (2015) finding that Black, female postgraduate students at a predominantly White institution in the US reported that the support that they received from their faculty encouraged them and enhanced their self-efficacy and self-esteem. To enhance the mentorship programme's effectiveness, HBHEI participants suggested that group mentorship be scaled down, such that each student is assigned a personal mentor or tutor. Alexander and Bodenhorn's (2015) above-mentioned study entailed the use of personally assigned faculty mentors; therefore, this suggestion might indeed have merits. A more personal approach towards mentees might especially enhance first-year students' adjustment in the higher education context. This is in consideration of Steyn, Harris, and Hartell's (2014) observation that some HEIs facilitate easier transition for first-year students through mentorship programmes, among others. Similarly, Heirdsfield, Walker, Walsh, and Wilss (2008) and Thomas (2012) suggest peer mentorship for first-year students, which they also assume to facilitate easier transition into higher education. Moreover, since mentors at the HBHEI took advantage of lack of supervision by asking mentees to indiscriminately vouch for them, participants suggested that stricter measures be taken to ensure that mentors actually perform the duties assigned to them. Thus, as with various other individuals and strata within university structures (see Section 6.4.5), HBHEI participants expressed a need for a sense of accountability from academic mentors, to enhance the programme's effectiveness.

The Health Sciences Faculty at the HWHEI assigned a faculty advisor to track students' progress for each module, by contacting poorly performing students, to explain the implications of poor marks for a given module (e.g. discontinuing the module) or suggest student-appropriate study methods. The latter raises questions as to whether intervention

relating to student-appropriate study methods is an attempt to establish and recommend the appropriate approach towards learning for each student. Notably, other than reference to the need for study skills and teaching methods that differ from those used in high school, none of the participants cited learning styles as a factor affecting their academic success. This is in contrast with previous studies linking learning styles to academic performance (e.g. Komarraju et al., 2011; Okur & Bahar, 2010).

The effectiveness of performance tracking and follow-up by a faculty advisor might be due to the seemingly personalised approach towards students' academic shortcomings, and the fact that it constitutes a personalised form of academic, institutional support. This is especially considering the wish for a caring attitude from lecturing staff, as expressed by participants in the current and previous studies (Buchanan et al., 2015; Naude et al., 2016). Moreover, a Humanities student at the HWHEI thought that an initiative similar to that of the Health Sciences Faculty might be effective in his faculty. However, the Humanities Faculty also had a Writing Centre whose aim was to equip students with academic writing skills, which was considered beneficial. This is compatible with Harrington and Roche's (2014) notion that academic writing is one of the best predictors of academic outcomes for first-year students for whom English (when used as a medium of instruction) is not a first language.

6.4.4.2 Psychosocial support

The HWHEI was unanimously reported to have sufficient support systems in place, meant to meet students' psychological healthcare needs—a factor that participants also considered to affect academic success. An association has previously been found between mental healthcare services and academic performance (e.g. Dix et al., 2012). However, students at the HWHEI in the current study reportedly had misconceptions regarding the role of student counselling services. Some expected instant results, and poor academic performers

forewent counselling upon realising that the mere act of seeking the service did not entitle them to leniency for poor academic performance. This assumption of entitlement to leniency without exerting the necessary effort might indicate such students' poor academic self-efficacy, which in turn might be related to their psychological states at the time, especially considering the nature of the support service that they would be seeking. Some of the reasons that Eisenberg et al. (2007) found to negatively predict the take-up of mental health services for 37–84% of students positively screened for depression were lack of perceived need and scepticism about the effectiveness of treatment. These might be applicable to non-help-seeking students referred to in the current study.

HWHEI participants acknowledged that, as a means to ensure that students were aware of the various support structures provided by the institution, lecturers informed them about these in class. However, students at both institutions wished for a more caring attitude and personal concern from lecturers. This confirms Naude et al.'s (2016) finding in the South African context, regarding the importance of "an easy-going lecturer [who is] interested in [students'] well-being" (p. 44). In Buchanan et al.'s (2015) study, participants appreciated staff members' approachable nature, and regarded teachers knowing students' names as a friendly, personal gesture.

6.4.4.3 Financial support

With few exceptions, the HBHEI was reported to provide financial support to many of its students. This positively influenced access to higher education for students enrolled at this institution, and facilitated their retention. Moreover, the assurance of having funding for not only tuition, but also food and accommodation, ensured that students from poor socio-economic backgrounds did not lose focus on their studies as a result of their families' financial situation. Similarly, various studies have shown financial constraints to be a major

hindrance towards access to, and retention in higher education (e.g. Breier, 2010; Letseka et al., 2010; Matsolo et al., 2018), while provision of funding by an HEI has been shown to especially facilitate students' academic adjustment (Nel et al., 2016). The importance of financial support can be considered in relation to socio-economic status, which is discussed in detail in Section 6.5.4.4.

6.4.4.4 Administrative support

HBHEI participants cited various administration problems, including lengthy, inefficient registration processes; clashes between students' availability and that of administration staff; and an inefficient record-keeping system leading to disputes about the payment of fees. In some instances, students received wrong test dates, which directly affected their academic performance, or enrolled for wrong study programmes due to misinformation, thereby lengthening the duration of their studies. At the HWHEI, some participants reported receiving timetables timeously, with no clashes. However, a participant from the Health Sciences Faculty reported being assured that she could subsequently enrol for Medicine, similar to the BSc students at the HBHEI, when in fact, she could not do so. In addition, students in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the HWHEI were not informed when they had been academically excluded, only realising this once they did not obtain marks for tests written. Participants at this institution were also required to re-register for modules that they had previously passed because of poor record keeping, and were informed when about to graduate that they had to, for example, enrol for certain first-year modules.

The above results show the role of seemingly non-academic factors' contribution towards academic success, from students' perspective, highlighting the need for institutions' administration systems to function efficiently. Seemingly, the importance of these factors lies in their either direct or indirect effects on studies. For HBHEI participants, lengthy

registration processes meant that students could not secure accommodation, which compromised their safety, as they would have to seek alternative accommodation. In some cases, the unavailability of administrative staff meant that students could not purchase much-needed academic material. Wrong test dates or timetable clashes mean that students do not get sufficient time to prepare for tests or exams, which could directly affect academic performance. In addition, poor record-keeping of courses passed or misinformation about certain modules' credit-bearing status could lead to a longer study duration, despair among affected students and, potentially, attrition. It also has negative financial implications on students, some of whom might not have the means to cover unnecessary tuition costs. Moreover, being persuaded to register for a course that one does not prefer, with unfulfilled promises of being able to subsequently enrol for one's first choice (i.e. BSc students at both the HWHEI and the HBHEI) could lead to despondency and lack of motivation, as demonstrated by participants at the HBHEI, and lead to academic failure or attrition.

Other than the effects of poor administration processes on students' success or experiences, Saif (2014) and Husniyah (2009) have cited the institutional benefits of universities ensuring the satisfaction of their client base, similar to profit-making institutions. These benefits are outlined in Section 6.4.5. Further, in his student development theory, Astin (1984) has posited that time is the most valuable resource for students, urging university staff to recognise that time spent by students on non-academic activities "can affect the way students spend their time and the amount of effort they devote to academic pursuits" (p. 523). Nell and Cant (2014) have suggested that staff in South African student administration departments cultivate their sense of empathy towards students, given the low score obtained for this variable in their study on student satisfaction. These authors also suggest a need for the development of an effective service quality model for South African HEIs, so as to increase student satisfaction.

6.4.4.5 Institutional infrastructure

Participants at both institutions cited the availability of free Wi-Fi on the university campus as a facilitator of academic success. This was especially considering that not all students had the privilege of accessing the Internet off-campus. Moreover, HWHEI participants suggested the installation of more computers at the university's main library, arguing that the lack of, or limited access to these, especially disadvantaged students with no means to access the Internet off-campus. Moreover, an HWHEI participant complained of the long queues at the university's on-campus dining hall, regarding this as highly inconvenient. Despite the significantly higher number of complaints regarding infrastructure, compared to those of participants at the HWHEI, participants at the HBHEI were satisfied with some of their amenities, in relation to which they compared favourably with other institutions. Some of the facilities that HBHEI participants considered beneficial, putting them on par with other institutions—if not forerunners—were the sufficiently stocked campus bookstore, electronic lectures, the electronic availability of lecture notes and, with regard to human infrastructure, highly knowledgeable and competent academic staff. Confirming the role of infrastructure, as cited by the study participants, Alammary (2012) found that the use of educational technology enhanced student learning and achievement at the University of Bahrain. In addition, in relation to the limited availability of computers at the HWHEI's main library, as mentioned above, Soria, Fransen, and Nackerud (2013) found that the retention rate and the grade point average were positively associated with library usage among first-time, first-year undergraduate students. Thus, the limited computer resources at the HWHEI's main library may be hampering students' ability to access or effectively engage with academic material and, therefore, their academic success, especially considering the limited access to the Internet off campus. This is in contrast with Adeyemi and Adeyemi (2014), who, in their

study on Nigerian colleges, found that library facilities did not predict academic achievement. However, referring to the Kenyan context, Gudo, Olel, and Oanda (2011) suggested that universities ought to provide quality teaching, research and community service, and that this can be achieved through, among others, institutions' investment in their physical facilities. Beyond the direct impact on enrolled students' experiences, poor university infrastructure may deter prospective students from enrolling at a particular institution. As posited by Price, Matzdorf, Smith, and Agahi (2003), institutional facilities may have an impact on the choice of university.

I discuss other factors pertaining to infrastructure in Section 6.5.4.1, from a critical race theory perspective, based on the assumption that infrastructural lack or means, in those instances, cannot be divorced from the participating institutions' historical racial identities.

6.4.5 Lack of accountability to students

Many HBHEI participants were not satisfied with the functioning of the SRC, and the fact that the university did not regulate the council, whose members carried themselves as they pleased. The same went for lecturers who arrived late in class and avoided teaching responsibilities by declaring large chunks of the syllabus as self-study. Moreover, the university showed lack of accountability to students by not addressing concerns such as the poor conditions of, and quality of the food served at the student cafeteria. In addition, the university's transportation schedule was changed without consultation with students. Another participant reported consistently poor service from the university's student health services.

In his study at a Jordanian university, Saif (2014) found that students considered the quality of administration and personnel services moderately important. In another study, Husniyah (2009) found that students at Aleppo University in Syria were not satisfied with managerial services. These findings are consistent with those mentioned above in the current

study. In their study on two South African HEIs, Gbadamosi and de Jager (2009) found associations between students' trust in management, perceptions regarding institutional readiness for change and overall satisfaction with their institutions. Evidently, diminished trust in managerial structures in the current study has negative implications on students' general impressions of the institution and its willingness to bring about change.

The above findings highlight the importance of ensuring that all stakeholders are held accountable and of ensuring transparency regarding lodging complaints and measures taken to address these. Students' observation of parties in various positions of authority not being held accountable could lead to a sense of helplessness and disempowerment in the university environment. In turn, this could deter students' help-seeking and broadly, negatively affect students' university experience. In addition, knowing that certain parties cannot be held to account predisposes students to maltreatment and, even, victimisation, as shown by students who have reportedly dropped out of the HBHEI in favour of other institutions, due to mistreatment by lecturers (see Section 6.4.8 for details). In relation to this, in their Australian study, Brown and Mazzarol (2009) found that student satisfaction predicted student loyalty to an institution. Thus, poor measures to ensure student satisfaction could undermine students' loyalty to the HBHEI and, ultimately, the university's image. These authors add that universities' brand image may be just as important as it is for other types of organisations. Similarly, DeShields, Kara, and Kaynak (2005) recommend that, to enhance students' experiences, universities also adopt more customer-oriented principles. The above recommendations confirm the need for institutions in this study to adequately address students' concerns.

6.4.6 Lack of extracurricular activities

HBHEI participants reported that their participation in extracurricular activities was rare, as the university either did not have the required facilities for these (e.g. sports) or the schedule for socials often clashed with the academic schedule. Participants at this institution complained about not being able to take much-needed breaks from academic activities, as a result. In previous studies, Hunt (2005) found that participation in extracurricular activities did not improve academic performance, while Thompson, Clark, Walker, and Whyatt (2013) determined that such participation can hamper academic studies. The current study finding is in contrast with these studies, suggesting that means taken by the HBHEI to develop amenities for extracurricular activities and to schedule these accordingly, so as to maximise students' participation, could hold positive implications for students' academic success. Participants' reference to not being able to take a break from academic activities implies that participation in extracurricular activities might, in fact, subsequently enhance their focus on their studies. This might be related to Tokoyawa and Tokoyawa's (2002) finding that participation in extracurricular activities was associated with, among others, levels of academic involvement. In addition, as also stated by the participants, participation could enable students to establish friendships, which have been found to be an important source of social support, which in turn has positive implications for academic success and other individual variables that facilitate academic success (see Sections 6.4.1.1 and 6.4.10.1).

6.4.7 Distance between residence and university

HBHEI participants' experiences relating to distance between their residences and the university are detailed in Section 6.5.4.1 of this chapter. The only participant at the HWHEI who cited distance as a factor affecting academic success initially resided in a township at a distance of approximately 40 km from the university. She added that she failed two first-

semester, first-year modules, as a result of those initial few months during which she had not secured residence near the university. Previous studies have widely reported the negative implications of long-distance commute to university, which presupposes the lack of, or unaffordability of available accommodation near the university campus for those affected, on students' experiences or prospects of succeeding in higher education (e.g. Barlow-Jones & Van der Westhuizen, 2011; Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Harper, Smith, & Davis, 2018; Jama et al., 2008).

6.4.8 Unfair treatment at the institution

HBHEI participants reported various unfair practices at the institution. These ranged from unpleasant personal encounters with, or victimisation by lecturers, which could reportedly lead to students failing or, even dropping out. Further, bureaucratic, non-transparent procedures regarding the perusal of test or exam scripts led to students not making requests to peruse their scripts and check the accuracy or fairness of marks allocated to them. Evidently, this could mean that students cannot challenge decisions regarding mark allocation and, therefore, risk academic failure. A participant at the HBHEI also felt undermined by being reprimanded harshly in front of patients by lecturers, a practice that she deemed unprofessional. Moreover, HBHEI participants reported that some students were exempt from academic exclusion simply because of their social stature or their relationships with SRC members (see Section 6.4.5 regarding perceptions of the SRC).

To address the above, HEIs could introduce measures to make the following transparent: academic exclusion measures and criteria for appeal; complaints procedures and disciplinary measures for staff. Not only would this empower students, to counter the sense of helplessness that they might experience as a result of perceived unfair treatment by authority figures at HEIs, but it would also enhance student satisfaction. This would also be in

consideration of the fact that students' academic experiences in higher education are considered as important as their social experiences are (Al-Sheeb, Hamouda, & Abdella, 2018), as well as their experiences of university administration, given the significant role played by the latter in various facets of students' lives. It is also worth noting Astin's (1984) above-mentioned notion of time being a valuable resource for students, best spent on their academic pursuits, that faculty and administration staff should be cognisant of.

Most HBHEI participants enrolled for the BSc programme reported experiencing unfair treatment by the institution due to the lower prestige accorded to their study programme, compared to, for example, Medicine and Pharmacy. These participants added that the facilities used by students enrolled in the latter programmes were in better conditions, and that BSc students' exam timetables did not make provision for adequate preparation for each written subject—which could obviously hamper academic performance—unlike those of Medical students. This may not only undermine the overall experiences of students whose study programmes are treated as less prestigious, but also result in dissatisfaction with the institution in general. Brown and Mazzarol (2009) have outlined the various benefits of student satisfaction for the university's image.

6.4.9 Workload

Some HBHEI participants reported feeling overwhelmed by a high workload, especially given a tight test timetable that coincided with the regular timetable for lectures and practicals. Missing class to recover could lead to students being penalised and not allowed to write exams for a given module. Local studies have shown similar results regarding a high student workload. First-year students in Nel et al.'s (2016) study considered their workload too high, which hampered their adjustment in higher education and put them

at risk of failing. Similarly, participants in Naude et al.'s (2016) and Zulu's (2008) studies cited a high workload as a hindrance to their academic success.

Contrary to the above, some participants suggested more tests to maximise opportunities of gaining exam entrance, also arguing that these would help students prepare better for exams. More testing opportunities, resulting in competence in a given module, would likely enhance students' perceived self-efficacy relating to the module. In the current study, a high workload in relation to practicals was reported to be beneficial in the long-term for graduates of the HBHEI. The HBHEI participants unanimously commended the university's provision of more practicals, compared to other medical schools, positing that more intensive and vast clinical exposure during their studies advantaged graduates from the HBHEI over those from other institutions in the employment market. These two points relating to more testing opportunities and practicals highlight the fact that students appraise their success or success prospects in higher education in terms of not only current academic performance, but also in consideration of the long-term benefits of the training that they receive.

6.4.10 Systemic relationships between factors affecting academic success

To illustrate the subscription of academic success to tenets of the systemic theory, in this section, I discuss the inter- and intra-systemic links pertaining to the factors discussed in detail in Sections 6.4.1 to 6.4.9, as also shown in Table 6.1. Table 6.1 depicts all factors in this study found to affect academic success and experiences within the individual, the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and the chronosystem. Aspects of the macrosystem and the chronosystem (with the exception of adjustment, which is discussed in Section 6.4.10.1), as well as other micro-, meso- and exosystemic factors that pertain to race are discussed comprehensively in Section 6.5 from a critical race theory perspective. As

opposed to disparate foci on how isolated factors or some sets thereof affect academic

success as is typical of most studies on this topic, this section highlights the importance of

contextualising students' experiences of higher education and success in this context, within

various systems and subsystems.

Table 6.1: Factors Affecting Students' Academic Success and Experiences in Higher Education from an Ecological Systems Theory Perspective

Domain	Factor
Individual	Self-regulation
	Self-efficacy
	Adjustment
	Motivation
	Help-seeking behaviour
	Emotional problems
	Lack of information
Microsystem	Institutional structures: Management; SRC; university staff; infrastructure; and administrative, academic, financial and psychosocial support structures
	Peers
	Social networks
	University residences
	University transportation services
	Extracurricular activities
	Inter-ethnic relations
	Interracial relations
	Institutional racism
Mesosystem	Parental support
	Parental conflict
	Family financial constraints
	Intimate relationships
	Pregnancy
	Daily commute
Exosystem	Media
	Employment prospects
	Career guidance
Macrosystem	A racialised social order
	Structural racism
Chronosystem	Students' transition to higher education
	Transition from an apartheid- to a post-apartheid political dispensation
	Transition from racially classified higher education institutions to a post-apartheid higher education context

Drawing from Sections 6.4.1 to 6.4.9 above, the non-linear nature of the interrelationships between factors affecting academic success is illustrated in the discussion below, coupled with a demonstration of these factors' subscription to the principles of system openness and reciprocity between and within systems and affiliate subsystems. Moreover, the discussion takes cognisance of the unique, context-specific ways in which the interrelationships among the identified factors and between these and academic success

manifest in the current study. This perspective subscribes to Thelen and Smith's (1998) notion that "causality is multiply determined over levels and [is] continually changing over time" (p. 267), acknowledging the complexity of the relationships identified in the current study.

6.4.10.1 Individual factors

Individual factors identified as affecting academic success include psychological factors (i.e. self-regulation, self-efficacy, adjustment and motivation), emotional problems as an aspect of personal circumstances and, to some extent, lack of information, resulting from lacking access or exposure to certain information and inclination towards help-seeking. These factors are not wholly individual, considering their interactions with other factors encompassed in systems that are external to the individual, as will be shown below.

As discussed earlier in Section 6.4.1.1, poor self-regulation, shown to entail poor time management and low motivation and academic self-efficacy, demonstrates interrelations between subsystems within the individual. In addition, demonstrating the link between the individual and external systems, self-regulation was also found to entail regulation of oneself in consideration of, or in spite of, the external environment such as the avoidance of peer pressure, involvement in extracurricular activities, socialising and involvement in intimate relationships.

Moreover, the social and physical environments characterising the institution or university residences, also shown to play a role in self-regulation, allude to microsystemic factors' influence on self-regulation and, therefore, academic success. As a microsystem, the university comprises many other subsystems. In addition, individual students are exposed to, and participate in various subsystems within the university microsystem; these may include the social interactions and relationships formed within the university environment or affiliate

environments, such as university residences. Microsystemic factors in the university context found to enhance self-regulation and/or in some way or the other, academic success, included engagement with peers, establishing networks with other students (e.g. forming study groups) and mentorship programmes.

With regard to the manifestation of academic self-efficacy in the current study from a systemic perspective, self-comparison with peers and the apparent effect of peers' opinions on participants' academic self-efficacy demonstrate the effect of interactions between individual factors and subsystems within the university microsystem, on academic self-efficacy and, potentially, on academic success. In addition, the effects of peers' disparaging remarks about one's preferred study programme on academic self-efficacy constitutes the link between the social microcosm within the university microsystem and individual functioning.

Participants' reference to employment prospects and an uncertain career trajectory as factors affecting motivation and, in turn, academic success, illustrates the role of the exosystem in academic success. Moreover, a participant who counted on his mother to notice his lack of motivation and encourage him to drop out illustrates the lack of intersetting knowledge by the mother (representing the mesosystem) regarding how her son was coping in the university microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Intersetting knowledge refers to the information or experience that players within a particular microsystem (e.g. the family) have about or of settings of other microsystems (e.g. university). Lack of intersetting knowledge in this instance also presupposes the parent's relatively weak supplementary link with the university microsystem, other than the primary link involving the student. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the student would establish a weak, solitary link with the university microsystem, as a result.

Identified as an aspect of personal circumstances in the current study, emotional problems constitute individual factors. However, the reported effects of parental conflict on a participant's ability to focus on her studies; and of parental support, problems in intimate relationships and unplanned pregnancies on various aspects of the individual's functioning and academic prospects, demonstrate the role of other microsystems in which students participate outside of the university context. Illustrating individual functioning within a mesosystemic context, these evidently affect students' ability to thrive academically and otherwise. Specifically, as indicated above, parental support demonstrates parents' participation or, at least, an interest in the university microsystem, which establishes supplementary links with the latter (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Parents who are open to communication with their children about their experiences and, specifically, fulfilment regarding their studies, participate in intersetting communication, which refers to communication about other microsystems within which their children participate. This enhances knowledge about the university microsystem and can enable such parents to better support their children. As indicated earlier in this sub-section and in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.2), such support might also strengthen the links that a student establishes with the university microsystem and, therefore, his or her ability to thrive in it.

Interaction between the exosystem and individual factors in influencing academic success is demonstrated by lack of information (individual) about one's chosen career and exposure to career guidance (exosystem), accompanied by suggestions for early career guidance, as factors affecting academic success and, potentially, attrition. Students' lack of information was, in some instances, shown to be due to individual factors such as help-seeking behaviour. Moreover, as shown in the discussion in Section 6.4.3, failure to seek help may be due to a sense of unfamiliarity with the university context, compounded by

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anticipated barriers to interaction with university staff, some of which may draw from the macrosystem (e.g. language, racial differences and socio-economic status).

Adjustment showed interrelations between the self, in the form of one's perceived ability to function or thrive in the higher education context, the physical university environment, social support networks within the university context, and various factors pertaining to students' transition into the higher education environment. The latter included struggles with meeting the demands of university life, such as how tests are set, lacking the skills needed to thrive in this context, failure to effectively deal with one's newly found independence, and maturity.

In view of these, adjustment can be construed as an effect of the chronosystem on the individual, based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. This is given the fact that entry into the higher education system constitutes a different phase, developmentally and otherwise, in individuals' lives. This is also demonstrated by the fact that, for the individual, entry into higher education is characterised by transitioning from a fairly predictable and sheltered environment as a high school learner and, for most students, in the care of one's parents, to one necessitating an overall sense of independence. Further, transition into higher education necessitates successful intersetting transition, as posited by Bronfenbrenner (1979). Lack of parental support (or other important sources of social support) would lead to the establishment of weak solitary links with the university microsystem. For some students, successful intersetting transition might be complicated by a sense of isolation when not receiving sufficient family support, coupled with lacking the resources needed to thrive in the new environment. As demonstrated in the current study, the establishment of intra-setting links proved effective for some participants, demonstrated by students having derived some comfort from forging friendships with peers. Bronfenbrenner (1979) posited that a multiply linked mesosystem, with more than one person from one

microsystem forming linkages with a new microsystem, provided a sense of security for the individual and a model of interaction. The current study equally shows the benefits of a multiply linked microsystem, with individuals forming ties with other players in various contexts within the university microsystem.

6.4.10.2 Institutional factors

The various types of institutional support discussed in Section 6.4.4, as well as lack of accountability to students, lack of extracurricular activities, unfair treatment at the institution and workload, demonstrate interactions between various (sub-)structures within the university microsystem (e.g. university staff, social networks, the SRC, administrative processes, university amenities and infrastructure, and academic and psychosocial support structures) and individual factors such as psychological functioning, academic performance, adjustment or efficacy, and thriving in general in the university context. Moreover, in recognition of the potential for family financial constraints—which presuppose a mesosystemic influence—to affect students' academic prospects, the HBHEI provided financial support to many of its students. Family financial constraints could also draw from macrosystemic, racialised disadvantage, as discussed in detail in Section 6.5.4.4. Thus, in such instances, the university microsystem mitigated mesosystemic and macrosystemic factors that could otherwise hamper students' academic success. Students' reported need for extracurricular activities is compatible with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) commendation of the developmental benefits of participation in multiple, varying settings.

6.4.10.3 External factors

Distance between one's residence and the university reflected another, different microsystem in which commuting students participated. A participant's report of the long

distance between her initial residence (a Black township) and the university, which presupposed long commute to the university (an HWHEI), could be construed as an aspect of the mesosystem. However, as discussed in detail in Section 6.5.4.1, long commute to the university cannot be divorced from macrosystemic factors such as apartheid-era spatial planning and, arguably, socioeconomic status. The latter is specifically considering that securing accommodation near the university may also be determined by affordability. Given the above, distance from university is discussed comprehensively as a macrosystemic factor in Section 6.5.4.1.

6.5 Research Question 2

Primary Research Question: How does race shape undergraduate students' experiences in a historically Black and a historically White higher education institution?

Secondary Research Question: How do various levels (interpersonal, institutional and structural) of racial discrimination intersect with each other and with other factors to influence academic success?

6.5.1 Interpretation from a critical race theory perspective

To illustrate the multiple structures permeated by race, therefore shaping the study participants' experiences in higher education, throughout Section 6.5, I discuss themes pertaining to racial encounters and experiences in interpersonal, institutional and structural contexts (which, from the systemic perspective, are shown to fall under the chronosystem, macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem and microsystem, as presented in Table 6.1), as perceived both by participants and based on my deductions according to the tenets of critical race theory. The extent to which, specifically, participants' academic experiences and success

are shaped by these encounters in these three realms are also discussed. In my discussion of these race-related themes as pertaining to each relevant realm, I also refer to specific, applicable principles of critical race theory, as presented in Chapter 2. Lastly, I present my conceptualisation of the linkages between interpersonal, institutional racism and structural racism, also indicating how these were demonstrated, where applicable, in the current study.

6.5.2 Interpersonal racism

Below, I discuss inter-ethnic and inter-racial relations among students at the HBHEI and the HWHEI, with reference to the manifestation of interpersonal prejudice and discrimination in these relations, where applicable.

6.5.2.1 Ethnic and race relations among students

Participants of different races at both institutions reported engaging in limited interaction with students of other races on the university campus. The predominant justification for this was the sense of comfort or belonging brought about by aligning oneself with people of a similar background, especially in an initially unfamiliar context. The phenomenon of ingroup preference has been widely documented (e.g. Everett, Faber, & Crockett, 2015; Kawakami et al., 2014; Verkuyten, 1991). While Verkuyten (2009) argues that ingroup preference is a protective measure towards one's self-identity, due to the perceived threat to that identity in a multicultural context, Greenwald and Pettigrew (2014) posit that it serves as a basis for intergroup discrimination, more so than does overt hostility towards outgroups. In addition, Louw-Potgieter and Nunez (2007) argue that individuals with prejudiced attitudes towards outgroup members may deliberately structure their social environments to avoid contact with outgroup members. These postulations match observations made by a Black participant at the HBHEI regarding an apparent reluctance by

student members of other races to interact with him when he attempted to engage in casual conversation or to mingle with them. Another participant at the HBHEI alluded to similar sentiments, in reference to the reluctance by student members of other ethnic groups to share resources cross-ethnically. Refusal to share academic resources with members of other ethnic groups can decidedly put some students at an academic disadvantage. The same goes for such refusal in relation to race in interpersonal contexts. Such disadvantage, as influenced by interracial avoidance, is illustrated by Thabo, a Black HBEHI student, as show in the following excerpt:

"*With me, I can say ... with me, you see, I'm a person who likes to learn from other people. So here there is no that like uuh ... inter ... like racial interaction with like other races interacting with other races. As we've already said, that there is that kind of ... whereby other races ... they group themselves, things like that. [...]in my first year, I used to always go to where there are other races like when we were attending in lecture halls of English, I would sit with the Whites. You'll find out that they just discrim ... they just speak among themselves, like excluding you [...].*

The above-mentioned authors' observations also raise questions regarding the actual motivation behind pervasive ingroup preference, as observed in the current study. Accounts regarding ingroup preference coincided with tendencies to self-correct among White participants in the White-only HBHEI focus group discussion, with reference to race, and among some participants in the second Black-only focus group discussion at the same institution (Table 5.1), with reference to ethnicity. Ployhart et al. (2003) have referred to stigma consciousness as "the extent to which a person expects to be stereotyped by others" (p. 238), particularly in instances of wide discrepancies in social groups' majority and minority statuses. In line with Ployhart et al.'s (2003) observation that "highlighting a negative stereotype of a traditionally nonstigmatized group" (p. 234) can also have negative

effects on members of such groups, stigma consciousness in the above-mentioned White and Black participants in relation to race and ethnicity, respectively, might be manifesting as the fear of being construed as racially or ethnically prejudiced. This fear would be drawing from supposed inclinations of members of these groups, and expectations of such, across contexts (e.g. Department of Higher Education and Training, 2016; Spies, 2018; "8 times racists were exposed in SA this year", 2018).

Participants in the first all-Black focus group discussion at the HBHEI (as shown in Table 5.1) attributed the lack of interpersonal racial tension at their HBHEI to the relatively higher composition of Black students at the institution, compared to White students. This alludes to the apparent anticipation of interpersonal racial prejudice, at least, even influencing individuals' life choices such as where to study. In turn, such anticipation demonstrates the perceived normalcy of racism, as posited by critical race theory (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

Somewhat similar to interracial relations, participants at the HBHEI mostly referred to diplomatic or indifferent inter-ethnic relations among student groups. As indicated above, they attributed the nature of these relations to, for the most part, the sense of comfort derived from affiliation with people of a similar background. However, this hampered inter-ethnic interactions and the possibilities of learning new languages from acquaintances of different ethnicities. Ethnic alienation has been reported as prevalent in HBHEIs (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2016). However, in the current study, the HBHEI is fairly ethnically diverse, which might presuppose a lesser likelihood of minority ethnic groups being alienated. This is especially considering the prevailing participant accounts of various ethnic groups at the HBHEI alienating themselves due to preference, regardless of minority or majority status in the university context. These trends suggest the plausibility of Verkuyten's (2009) assumption that multicultural contexts threaten individuals' self-identities, which may result in strong ethnic identification. In turn, this may coincide with

prejudices against outgroups, manifesting as simply ingroup preference, as suggested above (Greenwald & Pettigrew, 2014; Louw-Potgieter & Nunez, 2007). In turn, as alluded to above, these can hamper interracial resource sharing and result in academic disadvantage for some students.

Black HWHEI participants at the Black-only focus group discussion reported instances of interpersonal racism, which they mostly found unsettling or stoically transcended, adding that, regardless, there are White students who make an attempt to accommodate Black students. I argue that this consideration of being accommodated reflects passive interaction with one's environment and implies no sense of ownership over it, thereby suggesting a poor sense of belonging in the said context. This observation might also be applicable to Black participants' tentative approach in relation to their White fellow participants in the racially diverse focus group at the HWHEI. In this discussion, Black participants' interactions were marked by cautious negotiation of their positions within the focus group and in relation to broader institutional issues when pertaining to race, in ways that their White counterparts did not.

Nonetheless, notwithstanding HWHEI participants' above-mentioned efforts to downplay interpersonal racism, by referring to it as "*... not much of a big of a deal*", emphasising that it had happened to acquaintances or that "*everyone's here to get their degree*", scholars have found that the mere anticipation of being a target of racism tends to evoke anxiety among Black people (e.g. Inzlicht, McKay, & Aronson, 2006; Richeson & Shelton, 2003; Richeson & Shelton, 2007; Richeson, Trawalter, & Shelton, 2005). The latter might also explain the tentative approach by Black participants in a racially diverse focus group discussion, as described above. Other than its effects on victims' psychological well-being, Bair and Steele (2010) have shown that racial prejudice or the anticipation thereof negatively affects cognitive functioning which may, in turn, affect academic performance in

academic contexts and ultimately, academic success. The detrimental effects on cognitive functioning were found to be pronounced among participants with high racial centrality. In the current study, participants did not indicate their race centrality or the salience of their racial identities. However, they described their exposure or non-exposure to racial prejudice or discrimination in various ways, and their own or other people's reactions to such, which may be an indicator of race centrality, as discussed below.

Some Black study participants at the HWHEI stated that some individuals tended to misattribute neutral situations to racism, "*mak[ing] moles out of ant-hills*". Others, including Black and White HWHEI participants, added that interracial indifference was a norm at the institution, as everyone's focus was on completing their studies, effectively considering race to be an insignificant factor in the study context. Outten et al. (2009) have shown that Black Canadians with a racial identity that emphasises the Black experience as unique tend to misattribute neutral situations to racism. In contrast, those inclined to assimilate were reportedly less likely to attribute similar situations to racial discrimination. This discrepancy might suggest differences in either racial centrality or the perceived uniqueness of the Black experience, between the Black participants in the current study or the Black student body in general. Further, Coleman et al. (2012) suggest that colour-blind racial attitudes, which possibly reflect attributions regarding racial discrimination, are negatively associated with race-related stress when well-being is controlled for. This suggests that, among individuals with adequate levels of well-being, a less salient racial identity is associated with a lesser predisposition towards considering racial discrimination to be a significant stressor. Therefore, in the current study, Black participants who reported their peers' race-related misattributions or disregarded the significance or prevalence of race/racism may have adequate levels of well-being, coupled with a non-salient racial identity or one inclined

towards assimilation, that is in turn associated with the presumed non-significance of racism as a stressor.

Citing Neville et al. (2005), Coleman et al. (2012) add that, compared to those without a salient colour-blind ideology, African Americans with a salient colour-blind ideology may be less prone to reacting constructively to racial discrimination, and may hold problematic views such as blaming victims of racism for their experiences, or justifying a racist social order. This might explain a Black HWHEI participant's response to other participants' personal or second-hand accounts of racism. The participant argued that Black people were partly to blame because of their hypocritical interracial interactions, characterised by condemning White people's racist behaviour in private, yet "*grovel[ing] in their presence*".

6.5.3 Institutional racism

Black participants at the HWHEI reported that spaces at the university are implicitly, racially demarcated, evidenced by one participant's uneasy feeling when patronising 'White areas' on the university campus, which coincided with disapproving looks from other, White patrons. Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) have reported similar results, with African-American students reporting feelings of discomfort and being unwanted, and racial tension in non-classroom settings. Solórzano et al. (2000) further report that marginalised students may elect not to take up student support services, to avoid racial encounters, following their participant's account of experiencing racial microaggressions from a student counsellor, who made disparaging remarks about the participating student's academic potential. The participant in the current study reported having considered enrolling for distance or online education, as a result of the feelings of discomfort experienced at the 'White space' mentioned. This demonstrates the far-reaching extent to which racism can undermine individuals' overall experiences in higher education and one's entire academic course.

Presumably, the consideration to enrol for distance or online education is preceded by the expectation of better psychological and academic functioning, in the absence of exposure to a racially discriminatory academic context.

Sennett et al. (2003) have previously reported low levels of social adjustment among African students at UCT, also an HWHEI, an identifier that had the potential to predispose these students to poor social experiences and undermine their sense of belonging, as well as social adjustment (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009; Sakura-Lemessy et al., 2009). Such exposure to racism contained in, or enacted in relation to the physical environment, may hamper social adjustment and a sense of belonging, as shown by the above-mentioned participant's consideration of changing institutions or mode of studying. This highlights the importance of an environment that is representative of its constituents without seeking to marginalise or erase others. This notion further ties in with that of symbolic oppression used by participants in Cornell and Kessi's (2017) study, to describe what the statue of Cecil John Rhodes at UCT represented to them. The participants in that study, who protested in favour of the statue's removal, expressed a prevailing sense of alienation and symbolic oppression resulting from colonial or essentially racist features in the university environment. This perspective counters that of a Black HWHEI participant in the current study, who while condemning the violence that took place during student protests argued that "*it's a monument, it's inanimate, so let it be*". The detrimental effects of failure to adjust in an academic context and, specifically, on academic success, have been discussed in detail in Section 6.4.1.3 in this thesis.

Since being granted admission to the university in the post-apartheid era, the number of Black students at the HWHEI has substantially increased over the years. At the time of the study, White students made up 47.8% of enrolled undergraduate students, while African students made up 43.9%, Coloured students, 2.8% and Indian students, 5.5%. Thus, Black

undergraduate students made up a total of 52.2% at the institution. As evidenced earlier in this sub-section and in reference to their experiences of interpersonal racism, the increase in the enrolment of Black students to the point of exceeding the number of White students has done nothing to improve Black students' sense of belonging in this context. This alludes to more entrenched factors at play, such as an untransformed, racist institutional culture—as informed by the institution's historical racial identity—a phenomenon against which several campaigns have been launched by student activists across South African HEIs over the past few years (Essop, 2015; Gwangwa, 2016; Indrajith, 2015; RDM Newswire, 2015). I argue that institutional racism could also lead to a sense of helplessness among targets thereof, as it may be difficult for individuals to challenge, due to its covert, impersonal or practically 'faceless' nature. This feature might have necessitated the need for protesters at the HWHEI and others around the country to organise themselves and challenge the status quo, upon realising the futility, or even unfeasibility, of individual efforts.

6.5.3.1 Racial discrimination by university staff

The notion of the permanence of racism was palpable in the participants' resignation to its inevitability either in the university context or other contexts. This was demonstrated on the one hand by HBHEI participants' current or ideal choice of institution on this basis, as well as Black HWHEI students' seemingly indifferent reactions to university staff's racial microaggressions. Participants at this institution gave accounts of racial discrimination by lecturers, tutors and library staff. Library staff reportedly hushed Black students who spoke inside the library, but not White students, and allowed the latter to enter the library with food, while not allowing Black students to do the same. Critical race researchers have described such double standards as examples of racial microaggressions (e.g. Harwood, Browne Huntt, Mendenhall, & Lewis, 2012). Solórzano et al. (2000) have found that racial microaggressions

result in, among others, self-doubt and frustration among marginalised students, and a negative racial climate in HEIs. In addition to these, I argue that this unequal treatment also undermines Black students' sense of belonging at the HWHEI.

Although some experiences may negatively affect students' sense of belonging and broadly, experiences at a given HEI, and in turn, adjustment and marginalised students' sense of thriving as discussed in Section 6.5.3, others could have directly negative implications for the students' academic success. For example, some participants described instances of tutors' unhelpful attitudes towards Black students, sharply contrasting with the former's interactions with White students, and lecturers ignoring Black students waiting to ask questions in class. The latter point regarding lecturers was reiterated by Black HBHEI students, adding that this particular treatment of Black students was indiscriminately attributable to both Black and White lecturers. This unequal treatment, as witnessed by all students attending such lectures, reinforces the perception of Black inferiority and White superiority, with one identity rendered invisible, and the other, worthy of regard. The treatment also subscribes to Gibbon and Kabaki's (2002) observation regarding the higher education system simply reproducing and maintaining structural, apartheid-era social inequalities.

At an individual level, in addition to Solórzano et al.'s (2000) reference to self-doubt as a consequence of racial microaggressions, Black students at the two institutions may experience anxiety and distress, particularly as a result of the sources of discrimination in these instances, and their significance to these students' academic prospects and careers. This is based on Umaña-Taylor et al.'s (2015) finding that exposure to discrimination from an authority figure in a developmentally salient environment—referring to an environment that contributes substantially to an individual's development—such as a school poses a significant, perceived threat to learners at the receiving end of it. An HEI could arguably be considered developmentally salient, as it facilitates students' transition from one life stage to

another, post-secondary education and post-graduation. Thus, racial discrimination in this context may hamper cognitive functioning, possibly manifesting in poor academic performance (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012) and poor performance of certain cognitive tasks. More specifically, racial discrimination or perceptions thereof has been shown to negatively affect academic performance or experiences (Barrett et al., 2012; Woldoff et al., 2011), and to hamper cognitive functioning via stereotype threat (Bair & Steele, 2010; Carr & Steele, 2009; Fischer & Massey, 2007; McGlone & Aronson, 2006; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Stereotype threat refers to poor performance of a task, as a result of the fear of confirming a stereotype about the incompetence of one's social group in performing that particular task (Aronson, 2002).

The racially discriminatory treatment received by Black students at the HBHEI from lecturers was considerably more overt, compared to that at the HWHEI. Lecturers at the former institution sometimes "politicised"—as described by a participant—discussions during lectures and made disparaging remarks to Black students, such as likening them to Black political leaders; such an instance is encapsulated in the following statement: "*Even your leaders are like this. We know that this kind of thing is expected from people such as you*". The veracity of the racist nature of this statement is evidenced by that in its common, colloquial equivalent, "*You people are all the same*". Both statements actively erase individual Black social actors' individuality and constitute sweeping, negative, stereotypical assumptions about members of a particular race. The possible, detrimental implications of the former statement and sentiments similar to these during lectures or in interactions between Black students and lecturers, on Black students' self-regard in the immediate academic context (e.g. a negative effect on these students' academic self-efficacy, which may in turn negatively affect academic success, as shown by Cătălina et al., 2012; Di Giunta et al., 2013; Meral et al., 2012; Narasimha & Reddy, 2017) and beyond, are self-evident.

Black participants at the HWHEI also reported marked differences in how lecturers addressed questions posed by Black and White students in class, providing more detailed answers to the latter and, at times, taking the liberty to respond to White, Afrikaans-speaking students in Afrikaans in a supposedly English lecture. It is perhaps fitting to add here that the HWHEI in question is also historically Afrikaans, and to briefly contextualise the pre- and post-1994 standing of historically White, Afrikaans HEIs. Afrikaans universities in the pre-democratic era are reported to have "aligned themselves closely to the Afrikaner nationalist project of apartheid state building, the enforcement of 'separate development', [and] the rising influence of Afrikaner capital" (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2016, p. 18). This presupposes deeply entrenched apartheid-era macro-political influences on structures at these institutions, as also confirmed by Booysen (1989), Hendricks (2018) and Mabokela, (2001). As some demonstration of this, the South African Human Rights' Commission's report on Transformation at Public Universities in South Africa (n.d.) notes that some HWHEIs tend to use Afrikaans to deliberately exclude non-Afrikaans-speaking students at these institutions, the majority of whom are Black. This language-based exclusion of students by lecturers during supposedly English lectures reflects disregard for, and at worst, the sabotage of English-speaking students' engagement with academic material or in academic discourse.

These various obstacles described above call into question the extent to which Black students in higher education can tap into their psychological resources and summon the resilience needed to succeed in higher education, as per Brown and Tylka's (2011) assumptions. This is especially given Nadal, Wong, Griffin, Davidoff, and Sriken's (2014) finding of a negative association between the number of racial microaggressions and self-esteem. Encounters of racial microaggressions or, broadly, racism in the academic context,

might suggest a link between the degree of exposure to these and academic self-efficacy, which might in turn have implications for actual academic performance.

The reports on differential treatment of Black and White students in this study, with Black students invariably treated unfairly and at times explicitly so on the basis of race, by both Black and White university staff, demonstrates the critical race theory principle of Whiteness as property, which extends beyond participants' broad experiences of higher education to their academic self-efficacy or success. Moreover, the discussion in this sub-section demonstrates McCoy and Rodricks's (2015) notion of Whiteness as a commodity that can be bartered in exchange for access to resources, with positive regard by academic staff also presumably constituting a valuable resource in the higher education context.

6.5.3.2 Racially discriminatory administrative processes

Participants in the second Black-only focus group at the HBHEI described discriminatory administrative processes at the institution that deliberately disadvantaged Black students. There was consensus that White students were typically admitted to highly competitive and presumably prestigious study programmes such as Medicine and Dental Surgery. In contrast, the participants argued, African students were channelled towards the less regarded BSc programme, which was often promoted as a gateway to admission in the Medicine programme. Participants further pointed out that at the time of the study, there was only one White student enrolled in the BSc programme, leading them to speculate about irredeemably low marks that he might have obtained to warrant admission in this programme. Indian students were typically channelled towards the Pharmacy programme. Black participants felt "hurt" by this unfair treatment, having acknowledged that they noticed the trends, although they could not prove the legitimacy of their assumptions. Arguably, this treatment, and even perception thereof, reinforces the perceived inferiority of members of

marginalised groups. Various studies have shown that marginalised students, particularly at HWHEIs, where they are predisposed to racial discrimination, feel compelled to excel academically to counter the stereotype that they are academically inferior (e.g. Cornell & Kessi, 2017; Davis et al., 2004; Woldoff et al., 2011). A pervasive sense of despondency regarding enrolment in the BSc programme, which was supposed to be the gateway to their preferred study programme (i.e. Medicine), was expressed by the Black participants in the third focus group discussion. This raises questions regarding the circumstances under which those experiencing marginalisation become either despondent or resilient. Various scholars (e.g. Brown & Tylka, 2011; Burt & Simons, 2015; Cunningham et al., 2018) have suggested that exposure to racial socialisation messages fosters resilience in various contexts among marginalised people. Considering that the Black participants at the HBHEI could only infer that their exclusion from the prestigious programmes were due to race, without explicit admission of racial preference by the institution, in their study, Jones, Lee, Gaskin, and Neblett (2014) found that subtle discrimination elicited tension among their study participants, which can give rise to related emotions such as anxiety. Indeed, studies (e.g. Inzlicht, McKay, & Aronson, 2006; Richeson, Trawalter, & Shelton, 2005; Richeson & Shelton, 2003; Richeson & Shelton, 2007) have shown that, in interracial situations, the anticipation of being a target of racism tends to evoke anxiety among Black people, who are often targets and, therefore, aware of this stark possibility. Such anticipation seemingly subscribes to the critical race tenets of the normalcy and permanence of racism (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2013). This calls into question the psychological well-being of Black students at both HEIs in the current study, who perceive marginalisation on the grounds of race. Acknowledgment of these study participants' apparent anticipation, at least, of racism and therefore, their poor emotional or psychological well-being on these grounds, would serve as acknowledgement or legitimisation of their experiential knowledge as

marginalised peoples (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). However, Outten et al. (2009) could argue that such participants might be misattributing neutral situations to racism, presumably due to race centrality.

6.5.3.3 Staff racial composition

The academic staff racial composition at the HWHEI was reported as predominantly White, with Black academic staff in the minority, whereas managerial staff was reported to be predominantly White at the HBHEI. Some of the Black students in the Black-only focus group at the HWHEI had not had even one Black lecturer or permanent tutor in that academic year. Arguably, a racially non-representative staff composition hampers opportunities for social modelling for Black students at the HWHEI. Social modelling, which Bandura (2012) defines as witnessing people similar to oneself succeeding at a particular task, enhances self-efficacy, which in turn ostensibly affects actual academic performance (e.g. Cătălina et al., 2012; Di Giunta et al., 2013; Meral et al., 2012; Narasimha & Reddy, 2017) or factors facilitating the latter (e.g. Bartimote-Aufflick et al., 2016; Muwonge et al., 2017). This might suggest that the relative lack of staff members with a concordant racial identity at either institution might hamper Black students' academic self-efficacy and, therefore, academic success. In the higher education context, lecturers and tutors may represent social models who have attained mastery over subject matter and, therefore, hold implications for the efficacy of students with an identity similar to their own. Bandura (2012) further refers to vicarious experiences, which refer to witnessing others engaging in a particular task, as an important aspect of efficacy. Thus, either successful or unsuccessful task engagement would influence individuals' perceptions of their own efficacy accordingly. Moreover, social models might reinforce the perception that mastery of, or efficacy in a task, is identity-congruent (Elmore & Oyserman, 2012). Therefore, a racially non-representative academic staff

composition could result in feelings of academic inferiority among student members of the under-represented race. Further, I argue that, given an inherently racist broader socio-cultural South African context, an either exclusively or predominantly White academic staff composition could reinforce assumptions of Black inferiority and White superiority, especially intellectually, among student members of different races.

Bandura (2012) further argues that a social environment over which one has no control might hamper a sense of personal agency, and therefore necessitate reliance on proxy agency, to facilitate control that is in one's interests. The unavailability of other individuals who, unlike one, have the resources and means to act on one's behalf, such as academic staff, substantially lessens one's social capital in a given context and the ability to effect proxy agency, where personal agency is lacking. Nonetheless, the majority of participants at both institutions reported that they were confident that they would complete their studies within the prescribed time. This could be considered an indicator of academic self-efficacy, whose links with academic success have been shown in various studies (e.g. Cătălina et al., 2012; Di Giunta et al., 2013; Meral et al., 2012; Narasimha & Reddy, 2017). However, the accuracy of participants' responses to the question regarding completion of their studies cannot be verified, especially considering the likelihood of social desirability bias. This scepticism regarding the likelihood of participants expressing uncertainty about chances of succeeding academically is especially considering students' previously reported tendency not to seek help (Lourens & Fourie-Malherbe, 2017), as also confirmed by HBHEI and HWHEI participants in this study.

6.5.3.4 Student racial composition

The student racial composition at the HWHEI was considered more or less even, whereas there were more African and broadly, Black students, than were those from any

other group at the HBHEI, with White students in the minority. As indicated in Section 6.5.3, the number of Black students enrolled at the HWHEI has increased substantially since the university was rendered open to all students, regardless of race, since the new dispensation, such that Black students make up the majority. Currently, White students make up 41.9% of undergraduate students enrolled at the institution; African students make up 48.7%; Coloured students, 3% and Indian students, 6.4%. A participant commended the institution's efforts in ensuring representivity in terms of student enrolment, as shown by its admission of previously disadvantaged applicants, referring to disadvantage in terms of the types of schools attended by applicants and residency in an urban or rural area. Nonetheless, it is important to note that an increase in the number of Black students does not presuppose institutional benevolence with regard to race, as evidenced by other aspects of this HEI, as discussed elsewhere in this chapter, coupled with the inextricable link between institutional and structural racism. Thus, enduring structural racism presupposes equally enduring institutional racism (see Section 6.5.6 for details), regardless of student numbers, as further demonstrated in the paragraph below.

Black HBHEI participants' conscious effort to enrol in an HEI in which they felt least likely to experience racism highlights Black South Africans' routine exposure to racism, such that they come to expect and, therefore, find means to try avoiding it. The fact that, in spite of this anticipated safety in numbers (contemporarily and historically), these students reported racism by university staff and through administrative processes, as discussed above, point to its inevitability. This is regardless of precautions taken, superficial impressions such as student composition and, as in the case of the HBHEI for Black students, an institution's historical racial identity.

White participants at the HBHEI stated that the types of social activities organised at the institution did not cater for White students. As a result, they did not partake in the social

activities at the institution, although they had the option to. The student racial composition at the HBHEI had the potential to result in White students' stark awareness of their minority status in this environment, resulting in what Ployhart et al. (2003) refer to as stigma consciousness or the anticipation of being stereotyped by others. Bair and Steele (2010) refer to the perceived stigmatisation of one's identity and accompanying symbols as "reminders of stigmatized identities" (p. 127). However, the White participants at the HBHEI did not report feelings of distress or a lesser sense of belonging at the HEI as a result of their interests being disregarded in social activities organised at the institution. Rather, these participants emphasised that they had the option to attend the activities on offer, but did not exercise it. In Glass and Westmont's (2014) study, cultural events were found to have a positive impact on HEI students' sense of belongingness, lessened the effects of racism and encouraged cross-cultural interactions. It could be argued that, in the current study, the lack of distress or feelings of not belonging among White participants is due to White students at the HBHEI generally not feeling marginalised, regardless of student composition, primarily because they are not typically subjects of racial prejudice. The latter could especially be reinforced by structural privilege. In addition, such privilege possibly bestows White social actors with social capital, which then acts as a buffer against prejudiced attitudes from others. The observation regarding not experiencing distress, due to non-exposure to racism, links up with the notion that exposure to racial prejudice or discrimination might unilaterally prime individuals' interpretation of situations, at times leading to what Outten et al. (2009) have described as the misattribution of neutral situations to racial discrimination by a Black Canadian sample. Dynamics at the HWHEI regarding stigma consciousness differ from Ployhart et al.'s (2003) prerequisite of widely discrepant minority and majority statuses between groups, for members of the minority group to expect to be stereotyped by others (a phenomenon known as stigma consciousness). At this institution, Black students are currently

in the majority, and were at the time of the study, as discussed elsewhere in this chapter. However, stigma consciousness is more likely among Black students in this context, exacerbated by awareness of their marginalisation in the broader context, regardless of majority status in this context. This might further be compounded by these students' experiences of racial prejudice and discrimination at the HWHEI, as described earlier in this sub-section. Thus, given their experiences, Black students at the HWHEI are arguably more likely to experience stigma consciousness and adjustment problems (Kellow & Jones, 2008). Similarly, Black HBHEI students are not immune from stigma consciousness, given their experiences of racial prejudice and discrimination at that institution, as also described earlier in this sub-section. These observations demonstrate that stigma consciousness, adjustment and a sense of belonging are independent of majority or minority status, but rather dependent on marginalisation which, in the South African context, is similarly not determined by numerical status.

6.5.3.5 Student protests

Experiential knowledge refers to recognition of the legitimacy of the knowledge possessed by people with marginalised identities, by virtue of their experiences (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). In this study, experiential knowledge was demonstrated by participants' accounts of their experiences at the institutions and appraisal of how these shaped their experiences therein, and affected their academic success. In addition, among the themes identified, student protests demonstrated counter storytelling about other people. Participants referred to the protesters' calls for a change in the HWHEI's medium of instruction under the auspices of the campaign, *#Afrikaans Must Fall*. Despite concerns by several participants that the protestors unreasonably "radicalised" other students and expressed racial intolerance, a Black participant acknowledged that the protests had raised her political awareness and

conscientised her to the inequalities at the institution. For this participant and, possibly other stakeholders, the protests had the potential to facilitate an understanding of racism at the HWHEI (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

On a broader scale, the *#AfrikaansMustFall* campaign formed part of a wave of protests across HEIs in South Africa against racist institutional symbols and cultures. It may seem counterintuitive for the protesters, or Black students in general, to have called for the exclusive use of English as a medium of instruction, considering that it is neither an indigenous language nor one that the bulk of this student group is indiscriminately proficient in, as argued in Section 6.5.4.3. However, the protesters' motivation may have been the dismantling of an institutional culture deeply rooted in the institution's identity as a historically White, Afrikaans HEI, in an effort to steer the institution towards the establishment of a more ahistorical identity and culture that does not symbolise allegiance to a cause rooted in apartheid South Africa (in reference to apartheid-era racial classification of HEIs). From this perspective, the protesters challenged the notions of race neutrality and colour blindness, as pertaining to the contemporary positioning of a historically White, Afrikaans HEI, especially in relation to its diverse student body (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Parker, 2003).

Moreover, incremental change, in relation to the protests, was demonstrated by calls for the scrapping of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction to be delayed, with justification that a more gradual change is reasonable. Incremental change refers to assertions that change can be attained if implemented gradually (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Critical race theorists' criticism of this approach is that delayed change perpetuates inequalities for a longer period and serves the interests of those in power.

Beyond *#AfrikaansMustFall*, the student protests at HEIs across the country have been undeniably racialised, primarily undertaken by Black student activists with concerns

ranging from mediums of instruction and racist institutional cultures and symbols, to tuition fees and insourcing of labour. The racialised nature and foci of these protests, including those at the HWHEI in this study, allude to the discontent experienced by the Black student body across South African HEIs. This racialisation illustrates McCoy and Rodricks's (2015) notion of the principle of Whiteness (or White interests) as property on the one hand, and the equation of Blackness with lack on the other hand. This, as argued by these authors, is demonstrated by, among others, White people's ability to access quality education and, specifically, higher education, which is not a given for members of marginalised groups. Thus, based on their varying causes, the protests exposed the myth of race neutrality within the higher education context. Moreover, the uniformity of the causes across HEIs illustrated that inequalities in these contexts are essentially informed by broader societal structures.

In some instances, institutional racism was embodied in what a participant described as the HWHEI's failure to address students' concerns, particularly those pertaining to the protests that had recently taken place at the institution. This participant, lending legitimacy to protesting students' accounts as a counter story, argued that, despite the latter's construal as "instigators" pushing a radical political agenda, theirs were long-standing racial and political causes that the institution had consistently failed to address. The above-mentioned participant's account of the institution having previously ignored the concerns raised by protesters further demonstrates an attempt by the latter to disrupt the status quo at the institution, despite previous delegitimisation of their concerns by the institution. This apparent trivialisation of protesting students' concerns is similar to Harwood et al.'s (2012) reference to "microinvalidations" (p. 162), which refer to the minimising or denial of the essentially racialised experiences of marginalised people. Arguably, such neglect perpetuates racial inequalities and can be construed as a passive form of racial discrimination. Moreover, this inclination by the institution towards neglecting previously raised issues affecting

marginalised students may illustrate the lack of interest convergence. Interest convergence refers to when marginalised groups' interests are superficially taken into account only because these incidentally converge with the interests of groups that are in power (Bell, 1980; Brown & Jackson, 2013; Taylor, 2009)—in this instance, the institution.

The superficial appeasement of marginalised students by the institution is further demonstrated by an HWHEI participant's observation that the university superficially advocates for racial equality, yet fails to implement this principle. This discrepancy in the HWHEI's professed values and practice was also observed by a White, male participant at the same institution, referring to the institution's seemingly undocumented policy not to accommodate a White and a Black student in the same room in a student residence, despite the institution's professed support for racial integration.

6.5.4 Structural inequalities

In the sub-sections below, I discuss the statuses of the HBHEI and the HWHEI in this study, apparent complacency in challenging racism and the issue of language use in education as aspects or demonstrations of structural inequalities.

6.5.4.1 The distinct statuses of the HBHEI and the HWHEI

The study showed major infrastructural differences between the HBHEI and the HWHEI, with regard to availability and quality. With few exceptions (i.e. highly knowledgeable and competent academic staff, a well-stocked bookstore, electronic lectures and electronically available lecture notes), participants at the HBHEI reported the scarcity, insufficiency or inefficiency of infrastructure, including the lack of sports facilities, with available amenities having to be shared across sporting codes, in addition to their use for academic activities. In some instances, the lack of facilities directly determined students'

academic progression at the HBHEI. For instance, Dentistry students were reported to be at risk of failing modules simply on the grounds of the availability of cubicles in the next study-year level. The fact that this particular HBHEI is relatively better resourced and highly regarded, as also elucidated by the study participants, compared to others around the country, demonstrates the extent to which enrolment in an HBHEI can, nonetheless, directly and indirectly shape students' experiences and academic course.

Other reportedly lacking amenities at the HBHEI, especially when compared to other institutions, particularly HWHEIs, were the fact that the institution had only one library, which limited opportunities to use library resources and study; the unavailability of online registration services and one-stop shops for services such as document copying, printing and scanning. Students' limited access to the only library for study purposes affected their preparations for assessments, thereby holding negative implications for their academic success. Moreover, lax security and safety measures at the institution were also reported. These included CCTV cameras that were not working, as well as easy access for outsiders into the university campus. This inefficiency was extended to the surroundings of the university premises. At the time of the study, the student community at the HBHEI had been protesting and petitioning for a long period to have a robot installed near the university entrance, which is located alongside a busy main road. At the last focus group discussion at the HBHEI, it emerged that a student had died after being knocked down by a bus on the main road in a hit-and-run incident. The necessity for installation of a traffic light near the university entrance had been highlighted even during the first focus group discussion, which had taken place several weeks prior to the hit-and-run incident.

The above findings are compatible with apartheid-era under-resourcing of HBHEIs, which was essentially based on institutional racial identity (Kujeke, n.d.). The sentiments of HBHEI participants in the current study have been echoed by students at other HBHEIs. For

example, students at Walter Sisulu University have reported limited computer and library

facilities, inadequate teaching and learning facilities, poor student accommodation, staff

shortages, and inefficient technological, transport and student services (Sonn, 2016). In the

current study, reference to the inefficiency of student services was made by a Black

participant at the HBHEI, who reported that nursing staff at the student clinic was rude and

inefficient, such that, at a point, he spent several days without having his medical problem

attended to, as the nurses kept postponing attendance to him. Similar to participants in Sonn's

(2016) study, HBHEI participants in the current study reported the lack or inefficiency of

technological facilities at the institution, which hampered conveniences such as online

registration. If introduced, online registration at the institution would resolve long registration

queues, as well as problems with registration, that often meant that students not yet registered

could not be allocated accommodation, despite having travelled long distances from home.

Institutional inefficiency meant that students' safety was put at risk, as unregistered students

would have to make alternative accommodation arrangements while awaiting to finalise

registration, however long that took.

The above-mentioned issues at the HBHEI severely hamper students' academic

prospects and quality of life, at times even proving to be fatal, as detailed above. The factors

mentioned reflect the systematised inequalities between HBHEIs and HWHEIs primarily in

the form of resource allocation, demonstrating that apartheid-era institutional inequalities

persist to date (Africa & Mutizwa-Mangiza, 2018; Bunting, 2006; McGhie, 2017; Zulu,

2008). In view of this, a funding model taking into account historical inequalities between

HBHEIs and HWHEIs has been proposed (Department of Higher Education and Training,

2016).

Some HBHEI participants commended their institution for not having experienced

protracted, violent protests, unlike many institutions around the country. They attributed this

to the fact that English is the only medium of instruction at the institution, that the majority of students received funding for their studies and that there was no labour outsourcing at the institution. These were the issues of contention at many of the protests at other institutions at the time. The HBHEI's covering of these bases in this regard evidently insulated the institution from the disruption of academic activities as a result of prolonged protests, as observed at affected institutions (e.g. Tekane, Louw, & Potgieter, 2018).

There have been reports of the media's unequal treatment of South African HEIs on the basis of historical institutional racial identity (e.g. Glenn, 2016). Participants at the HBHEI noted that key events at their institution, including the fatal traffic incident mentioned above, did not receive news coverage, contrary to if the events had happened at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), an HWHEI. Similar to the above-mentioned report, these participants added that the *#FeesMustFall* movement gained popularity once Wits students began protesting. This was reiterated by Glenn (2016), stating that students at poorer HEIs have long been protesting prior to "the wealthier universities" (p. 88), and that those protests largely went "unnoticed in national media" (p. 88). As a student at what she refers to as "the most disadvantaged university campus in South Africa" (p. 5), TUT, Soshanguve campus, Mavuso (2017) has recounted the various disadvantages suffered by students at the institution, which have long been subjects of protests at the institution. Mavuso's (2017) examples of the dire state of the university campus and the disadvantages faced by its student body, include the poor state of university accommodation, a grossly under-resourced i-centre at the institution, with 70 computers supposedly servicing more than 15 000 students, and a relatively meagre registration fee of R1500 that the majority of students could not afford, nonetheless. Further, the majority of the students at the institution relied on the National Students' Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) to cover their tuition fees, due to unaffordability, despite this being the cheapest TUT campus. Also lamenting the media's poor coverage of

TUT's protests, pre-dating those associated with the Fallist Movement, Vilakazi (n.d.) posits that protests against academic and financial exclusion, and poor basic services and facilities at TUT date as far back as 2004.

The above discussion illustrates critical race theory's equation of Whiteness with property, as indicated by the various conveniences associated with it, sharply contrasting with the experiences of Black students or macro-structural attitudes towards historically 'Black' facilities or more aptly put, those historically—and contemporarily, to a large extent—intended for use by the Black population. Oversights such as the above-mentioned traffic incident also highlight the lackadaisical management of infrastructure development in predominantly Black areas (Turok, 1994), in pre- and post-democratic South Africa. Evidently, apartheid spatial planning continues to, on a broad scale, affect the quality of life of users of apartheid-era Black-only amenities and constituents of corresponding areas in many ways. Disparities between HBHEIs and HWHEIs are further demonstrated by access to amenities, as indicated by the long distance between the HBHEI in this study and the city centre (Digby, 2013), where some student residences are located. The university's transport service also transports students in on-campus university residences to the city centre on a weekly basis, where they do their shopping, given the limited amenities in the surrounding township. For effectiveness, apartheid-era social marginalisation was supplemented by spatial marginalisation (Turok, 1994), the effects of which evidently persist to date, with various consequences for students and HEIs, depending on their positioning on the apartheid-era racial spectrum, with accompanying structural privileges on the one hand, and disadvantages on the other.

Also due to distance, HBHEI students residing in university residences in the CBD relied on the university's transportation services for daily commute, which were not always efficient. Missing the morning bus meant that students could miss lectures or tests, thereby

directly affecting their academic prospects. The transportation service also posed a security

risk to students who were left behind on the university campus when the last bus is too full,

who would be compelled to make alternative overnight accommodation arrangements with

acquaintances residing on campus in such instances. This evidently poses safety risks and

other inconveniences to the left-behind students. Commuting participants who resided with

parents or relatives also felt unsafe, especially when driving home at night, due to the

institution's (and surrounding community's) secluded location and the long distance from the

nearest town, once again reflecting the legacy of apartheid-era spatial planning (Turok,

1994).

The significance of the HBHEI's standing as historically Black was further illustrated

by the fact that HBHEI participants often compared it with HWHEIs, as opposed to other

HBHEIs. This might suggest that HWHEIs are recognised as a general standard to aspire

towards. Possibly due to its standing as a specialist university, some of the favourable

comparisons drawn between the institution and others was the high quality of the teaching

that participants reported receiving, and of the graduates produced by the institution.

Participants unanimously felt that the quality of the training that they received surpassed that

of other medical schools, due to its intensity and practical work. Indeed, Jansen (2003) posits

that the standard of education at HBHEIs is perceived to be lower than that at HWHEIs. This

perception is further demonstrated in Lourens and Fourie-Malherbe's (2017) finding that

employers typically prefer graduates from HWHEIs over those from HBHEIs, which

minimises employment opportunities for the latter. Thus, it would seem that graduates of the

HBHEI in this study are the exception among HBHEIs, in terms of perceived employability.

The above discussion indicates that some conditions at the HBHEI challenged the

concept of meritocracy, thereby suggesting that student throughput and academic success

were determined by the limited resources at the institution, whose roots are structural, especially considering that the amenities were largely not comparable to those of HWHEIs.

6.5.4.2 *"Grovelling" in the face of racism?*

Managerial staff at the HBHEI was reported to be predominantly White. A participant pointed out that the racially non-representative managerial staff composition negatively affected Black students' ability to approach management and raise their concerns. This is compatible with findings by Watson and Siler (1984) that Black students at a predominantly White university found communication with university officials anxiety-provoking. These concerns may be explained by Cross and Carpentier's (2009) finding that students considered their interactions with officials at a South African university to be marked by racism, which is a possibility that these students might want to avoid. Indeed, participants at the HBHEI in the current study stated that the predominantly White senior managerial staff and clinical supervisors treated them in a racially condescending manner, and regarding the latter, they reported resigning themselves to the ideal that perhaps Black supervisors would treat them more empathetically. The reported racially condescending attitude by clinical supervisors might affect Black students' self-regard, efficacy and/or academic performance and success. This conjecture is compatible with Nadal et al.'s (2014) finding of a negative association between the frequency of racial microaggressions and self-esteem, and with previous findings on the negative association between academic self-efficacy and academic performance (e.g. Cătălina et al., 2012; Di Giunta et al., 2013; Meral et al., 2012; Narasimha & Reddy, 2017). Furthermore, similar to the lack of proxy agency associated with a non-representative staff composition, a racially non-representative managerial staff composition might translate into lack of proxy agency for Black students at the HBHEI (Bandura, 2012). Other than their negative experiences and impressions of racially prejudiced and/or discriminatory

management, Black HBHEI students' difficulties in approaching and establishing rapport with managerial staff might also be based on the assumption that the former are unlikely to use their influence to act on their behalf or in their interests (Bandura, 2012).

The dynamics informing the above-mentioned accounts of Black students' difficulties with raising concerns with White university management and, broadly, to challenge racism when experiencing it at the institutions, as also indicated elsewhere in this chapter, are arguably similar to those underlying a Black, HWHEI participant's argument that Black people "*grovel in [White people's] presence*", and instead resort to condemning them in private. I argue that this tentative approach towards Whiteness throughout the accounts given in this study might be informed by a subjective sense of unequal power relations in the macro context and illustrative of timeless, acontextual structural inequalities that render Whiteness, or more broadly, racism, powerful and unchallengeable. The latter is aptly illustrated in the following quote by an HBHEI participant: "*... there is that thing within them that 'we are still [...] people with power', however, they ... they still have power over the Black population*". The above observations point to the predominant influence of structural racism on racially marginalised people's experiences across various contexts, as argued by critical race theorists.

6.5.4.3 Language in education

Participants at both HEIs were aware of the disadvantages of not being a first-language speaker of the medium of instruction. They also unanimously acknowledged that non-proficiency in the medium of instruction hampered students' academic success. English and Afrikaans were mediums of instruction at the HWHEI, whereas only English was used as a medium of instruction at the HBHEI. The two languages are the only mediums of instruction used across South African HEIs.

White, Afrikaans-speaking students at the HBHEI reported being academically disadvantaged by instruction in a language with which they are unfamiliar, considering their use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in basic education. Black students' preferences in this regard are limited to English and Afrikaans as early as Grade 4 in basic education (Pare & Webb, 2007), neither of which are first languages for the majority of Black South Africans. Confirming participants' reports of the disadvantages that they are facing in relation to mediums of instruction in which they are not proficient, previous studies have indeed shown the various benefits of proficiency in the medium of instruction (e.g. Barrett et al., 2012; Posel & Casale, 2011). This suggests even more negative implications for the academic success of students whose home language is neither a medium of instruction in higher education nor a LOLT in basic education. These observations highlight the education system as a vehicle of racial inequalities, as suggested by Zamudio et al. (2011), considering the inextricable link between race and language use in education, as illustrated by the apparent commodification of English and Afrikaans, as in turn shown by the privileges accorded to these languages, to the exclusion of indigenous languages (Tshotsho, 2013).

Other than the poor academic implications of non-mother-tongue instruction, I argue that exclusive use of English and/or Afrikaans as mediums of instruction demonstrates the Othering of Black students in the South African basic and higher education systems, and beyond. This observation subscribes to DeCuir and Dixson's (2004) notion that similar to various political, economic and social domains, the education domain is governed by racist hierarchical structures. Moreover, I argue that the use of non-mother-tongue instruction throughout the education system sets African students up for failure and normalises under-achievement by this population early in the academic career trajectory.

The HBHEI offered compulsory English modules for all students, presumably in recognition of the varying linguistic backgrounds of its student body, and thus, the academic

benefits to be reaped from gaining competence in the medium of instruction. Though some acknowledged either the unfairness or general disadvantage of studying in English (Black participants at the HWHEI and both Black and White, Afrikaans-speaking participants at the HBHEI), especially when compared to first-language speakers of the medium of instruction, others appreciated the benefits of studying in English, which they considered a universal, internationally recognised language that would enable them to compete in the international job market, should they wish to. As indicated by Alexander (2003), the apparent benefits of English have been touted since the colonial era. These persist to date, as shown by the fact that English proficiency has been identified as a determinant of social class (Posel & Casale, 2011). This might explain the study participants' favourable views regarding studying in a language that they admit to not being necessarily proficient in, in consideration of future economic prospects. Based on the assumption of language being an integral aspect of identity (Bazana & Mogotsi, 2017), such sentiments could be likened to the self-alienation described in Nomdo's (2017) study, wherein Black students are expected to distance themselves from their Blackness, for ease of assimilation (Bazana & Mogotsi, 2017). In relation to this, Mkhize's (2016) argument that the exclusion of learners' everyday linguistic practices hampers epistemic access goes beyond the students' engagement with course material. Rather, the argument suggests far-reaching implications for non-English and/or non-Afrikaans higher education students, implying effects not only on their academic success and long-term academic prospects, but their ability in their monolingual academic contexts to construct knowledge of their life worlds, in tandem with their cognitive or intellectual development.

One bilingual participant at the HBHEI had Afrikaans as a home language and had had English as a medium of instruction throughout his basic education career, which he found beneficial in this context. His experience at the institution sharply contrasted with those of his

Afrikaans-speaking peers, who had had Afrikaans as a medium of instruction throughout basic education and acknowledged that they might have fared better at institutions with Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. It is important to note that the historical legitimacy accorded to White South Africans above other social groups, and in various social structures in contemporary South Africa as a result of this historical privilege, suggests their potential to thrive across contexts. This possibly explains the conviction among some of the Afrikaans participants at the HBHEI that, despite their challenges within the first few months at the institution, they would soon acclimatise to an English medium of instruction. Thus, the experiences of White, Afrikaans-speaking students at the HBHEI may not be similar to those of Black students at either an HBHEI or an HWHEI due to the dearth of options for the latter and marginalisation in the broader socio-cultural context historically and across contemporary structures.

Some Black participants at the HBHEI had had the benefits of code-switching in basic education, which complicated transition into higher education, wherein lectures are strictly delivered in English. This possibility has been confirmed in previous studies (Chikiwa & Schäfer, 2016; Doidge & Lelliott, 2017), supporting a teacher in Probyn's (2009) study, who pointed out that, although code-switching facilitates understanding of course material, it "kills [the learners'] English" (p. 128). The latter assumption regarding code-switching's effects on English proficiency is based on an untested assumption that, with continued use of an unfamiliar LOLT, namely, English, the learners would ultimately acquire proficiency in the language and not be academically disadvantaged. However, this possibility has been disputed by Halle et al. (2012), pointing out discrepancies in reading and Mathematics, depending on whether learners were first-language English speakers or had attained proficiency by kindergarten, first grade or later in life. These authors found that learners who attained proficiency in English by the first grade fared only nearly as well as did first-

language speakers over time, and that the discrepancies either persisted or only narrowed down. The complication in the transition into higher education as a result of code-switching is largely due to the absence of a similar structure to that in basic education, supporting learners in the absence of mother-tongue instruction.

While Black participants at the HWHEI did not report the use of code-switching in basic education, some lamented the extra measures that they had to take to understand English course material, which their Afrikaans-speaking peers did not have to contend with. This observation was against the backdrop of recent protests at the HWHEI against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction at the institution. Some participants saw merits in the scrapping of Afrikaans, arguing that "*it's best if we all actually suffer inconvenience*", while others thought that this would unfairly disadvantage students who had Afrikaans as a medium of instruction because the basic and higher education systems had initially presented this option to them. Instead, the latter set of participants argued for the gradual scrapping of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. Reasons for the proposed scrapping of Afrikaans are unclear, especially considering that although this move would clearly disadvantage Afrikaans students, it would not necessarily render Black students who are not proficient in English better off. Moreover, first-language English speakers across South African HEIs would continue to reap the benefits of mother-tongue instruction, therefore refuting the assumption of collective "suffering". Perhaps, in realisation of the commodification of English and Afrikaans, protesters consider this one less privilege associated with Whiteness. Alternatively, those supporting the scrapping of Afrikaans might be doing so due to the language's age-old association with Afrikaner nationalism, as espoused in apartheid South Africa and, therefore, its notoriety as "the language of the oppressor" (Wicomb, 1998, p. 97). Similar to the participants in Cornell and Kessi's (2017) study, Black students' protests

against the continued use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction might be due to its perception as symbolically oppressive.

With regard to the possible use of African languages as mediums of instruction, participants at the HWHEI argued that African languages are difficult and that they (African students) would fare worse in this regard, adding that these languages are not appropriate for use in academic instruction due to their limited vocabulary. Participants also argued that the use of African languages would be a costly and chaotic exercise, referring to the resources needed to facilitate this, and the fact that concession for one African language at a given institution would necessitate concession for all the others. Some of the participants made recommendations for the incorporation of African languages into higher education, such as supplementary material in the form of tutorials, to facilitate better understanding of course material for African students.

Despite the negative implications that the exclusion of African languages have presumably had on their academic prospects virtually throughout their academic careers, Black participants' suggested ways regarding how indigenous languages could be integrated into higher education were surprisingly marginal. I argue that this inclination towards assimilation, if not advocacy for the continued exclusion of these languages altogether, illustrates these students' resignation to being Othered, and to the delegitimisation of indigenous languages, considering their neglect in respect of academic instruction as far back as the intermediate phase of basic education. This seemingly unconscious resignation, coupled with protests against the use of indigenous languages in academic instruction (e.g. Foley, 2004), may be demonstration of the normality of racism (Ladson-Billings, 2013). These sentiments presumably draw from a long-standing socio-political and socio-historical context that systematically devalued indigenous languages. Moreover, HWHEI participants' arguments against the use of indigenous languages on the grounds that they lack the

vocabulary needed for academic instruction can be equated to unwitting acknowledgement of the epistemic access (Mkhize, 2016) denied speakers of these languages, due to their non-use and evidently limited efforts towards their development. Similar to, or rather, coinciding with epistemicide, as demonstrated by HEIs' continued reluctance to incorporate African epistemologies into curricula (Hendricks, 2018; Lebakeng et al., 2006; Mwaniki et al., 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017), the non-recognition of African languages in the educational context may undermine African students' sense of belonging in these contexts and beyond, serving as a constant, naturalised reminder of their marginalisation (Bair & Steele, 2010). This might be especially true for students who are not proficient in the (English or Afrikaans) medium of instruction. I also argue that this perceived marginalisation of their languages and, by extension, their identities, might negatively affect the self-concepts and socio-psychological functioning of African students in these contexts. This is especially considering Bazana and Mogotsi's (2017) account of the various challenges faced by African students upon entry into HWHEIs and the broad implications thereof, including adjustment problems, the pressure to assimilate, and identity negotiation. Beyond implications on the self-concepts—academic and otherwise—of the speakers of these languages, the omission of African languages throughout higher education and the bulk of basic education hamper their development and, therefore, capacity as vehicles and co-creators of knowledge production.

6.5.4.4 Socio-economic conditions

The South African government's resolution to finance the higher education of undergraduate students from relatively poor households, as of 2018, undoubtedly came as a relief to many aspiring students. It is therefore not surprising that participants at the HBHEI valued the comprehensive financial support that they received from the institution, covering needs ranging from tuition and registration fees to food. In fact, participants at the HBHEI

mentioned food insecurity as a factor affecting focus on one's studies and therefore, chances of succeeding. Further, access to good-quality food at the HBHEI was reportedly determined by financial means. Van den Berg and Raubenheimer (2015) have reported on the high prevalence of food insecurity among South African students, adding that it is highest among the following student demographics: African and Coloured, undergraduate, first-generation, male, unmarried, unemployed and students reliant on bursaries or student loans. In fact, some participants at the HBHEI knew of another student who had dropped out due to not having the financial means to study, without having sought advice regarding possible avenues of help, considering that many of the HBHEI students received financial assistance from the institution. Lourens and Fourie-Malherbe (2017) have alluded to this tendency by students to not seek information. In relation to the above, using Statistics South Africa's General Household Survey data, Matsolo et al. (2018) also found that 94.8% of Africans in Gauteng cited financial constraints as a reason for not enrolling in an HEI, whereas 1.3%, 0.6% and 3.4% of Coloured, Indian/Asian and White participants, respectively, cited this as a reason. For those enrolled, limited financial resources could result in these students seeking employment to either finance their studies or for subsistence. Letseka et al. (2010) have, in fact, found that African and Coloured students cite financial constraints as the primary reason for dropping out. This is compatible with Van den Berg and Raubenheimer's (2015) above-mentioned study regarding food insecurity being highest among these student groups.

In Dass-Brailsford's (2005) study, not only did the Black participants experience financial difficulties, but they also had no access to a library in the township, where they were residing while studying, did not have separate study areas in their homes, and could not meet other study-related expenses. These directly affected their chances of succeeding in their studies. The current findings affirm that a low socio-economic status, particularly given South Africa's racialised socio-economic disparities, means that, without financial support,

chances of succeeding and/or retention in higher education are severely limited for Black

students of a low socio-economic status. This is in consideration of the multiple stressors that

students from low socio-economic backgrounds contend with, which may in turn affect focus

on their studies and success in this context. This reality was illustrated by Thabo, a Black

HBHEI student, in the following excerpt: "*So when you get here, you find out that you don't

have ... like financially, your family does not support you financially. And then you have to ...

to be thinking about food while you have to read*." He added, "*If something is happening at

home, there is no way that you can concentrate while you are at varsity*".

       Although Black participants at the HBHEI noted a family's financial situation as a

significant stressor that could also affect focus on one's studies, interestingly, participants at

the HWHEI did not cite lack of access to funding as an affecting factor. This is despite the

fact that funding towards tuition was not indiscriminately provided to students at this

institution, unlike at the HBHEI. One could argue that the pressure to come across as well off

might be higher at the HWHEI, compared to the HBHEI. This could be because, at the

HBHEI, the majority of the students both historically and contemporarily, are Black and

expectedly (as also informed by the historical student racial make-up at the institution) of a

low socio-economic status, due to known structural inequalities. Greater socio-economic

disparities across the Black student population can reasonably be expected at the HWHEI,

compared to the HBHEI, because of the economically privileged market that this institution

historically catered for. This could mean that after the declassification of the HWHEI as a

White, Afrikaans university, the institution might have initially attracted Black students from

relatively high socio-economic backgrounds, who could afford tuition at the institution, and

that the socio-economic make-up of this population became gradually more diverse as the

composition of Black students at the institution increased. Drawing from this possibility of

the Black student base's socio-economic make-up at the HWHEI, the assumed pressure

among this group to come across as well off is in consideration of the various studies that have shown the stigmatisation of poverty, and associations between poverty—or markers thereof—and shame or low self-esteem (Contini & Richiardi, 2012; Kelly, 1996; Li & Walker, 2017; Reutter et al., 2009; Simons et al., 2018; Stuber & Schlesinger, 2006).

Sacker et al. (2002) state that constituents of a materially deprived household are likely to associate with equally deprived peers. I argue that such an association might be a means to avoid the poverty stigma and to buffer the possibly negative effects of a low socio-economic status on individuals' self-esteem and, in the context of this study, the self-esteem of Black students at the HWHEI. This is especially given the fact that Black participants at the HWHEI stated that low self-esteem could result from economic disparities, demonstrated by possession of the latest technological gadgets, such as trendy, expensive cellphones. This, coupled with an implicit awareness of vast socio-economic disparities across the student population, as also conjectured above, might possibly coincide with the HWHEI participants' reluctance to discuss any financial difficulties pertaining to their studies. Another possible explanation for these participants' failure to mention finances as a concern is that the scarcity of funding at the HWHEI might have reduced participants' expectations about chances of receiving funding, rendering it futile for them to cite financial constraints as a factor affecting their academic success.

As further demonstration of the sense of shame associated with poverty, some HBHEI participants reported knowing of a former fellow student who dropped out presumably due to finances, without having explicitly stated reasons for considering dropping out or seeking help. This is compatible with Fernqvist's (2013) observation that learners from low socio-economic backgrounds tend to exclude themselves from participation in activities, presumably due to stigma avoidance as elucidated above, and become alienated from peers. This might have contributed to this student's and similar others' failure to open up to an

immediate social support network and be receptive to help or advice. The latter further supports Lourens and Fourie-Malherbe's (2017) observation that students tend not to seek information. However, the current study illustrates that failure to seek information could be tied to feelings of shame regarding one's financial situation, or more enduringly, socio-economic background. Financial constraints or a low socio-economic status among students who continue with their studies, regardless, could result in poor social and academic adjustment, due to the above-mentioned alienation from peers and the inability to access or acquire the resources needed for one's studies. The inability to acquire resources needed for one's studies could directly hamper academic success. Poor adjustment in this regard might be compounded by predisposition to interpersonal, institutional or structural racism. This is especially taking into account Assari, Preiser, and Kelly's (2018) finding in their longitudinal study that, in contrast with White participants, even a high socio-economic status did not protect the emotional well-being of Black participants, therefore suggesting that structural racism in the USA impeded the mental health gains expected to be derived from a high socio-economic status. Similarly, Assari, Gibbons, and Simons (2018) found Black participants' high socio-economic status to be associated with depressive symptoms, due to prolonged exposure to racial discrimination in predominantly White neighbourhoods. Thus, the exposure and predisposition to racism discussed throughout Section 6.5 might especially be detrimental to the psychological well-being of Black students in general, regardless of socio-economic status, in South African HEIs.

6.5.5 Intersectionality

The primary intersections observed in the current study were race and socio-economic status/class, as discussed in detail from Sections 6.5.1 through 6.5.4. The intersection between race and gender in this study was demonstrated in Black, female participants'

tentative approach towards navigating topics that could be deemed as sensitive (i.e. race) in the presence of White and male participants only. In contrast, male participants employed a more direct approach towards expressing dissent. These dynamics are likely reflective of unequal race and power relations beyond the context of the focus group discussions in this study. The intersectionality principle in critical race theory acknowledges intersections between multiple marginalised identities, and that these cumulatively influence individuals' experiences (Bartlett & Brayboy, 2005; Brayboy, 2005; Gillborn, 2015; Kumasi, 2011; Lynn & Adams, 2002; McCabe, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Consideration of intersectionality between student variables is particularly important, taking into account Nurius, Prince, and Rocha's (2015) argument that "the accumulation of disadvantage" (p. 567) increases psychological stressors, which in turn negatively affect well-being over one's life course, in the form of poor physical and emotional health. These authors further argue that cumulative disadvantages impair health by preventing access to or the utilisation of social resources, including family, peers and academics, which would ordinarily serve as a buffer against the effects of stress. The effects of race and socio-economic status on various aspects of individuals' functioning are discussed comprehensively throughout Section 6.5.

The discussion in Section 6.5 illustrates that the notion of equal opportunity to access and succeed in higher education is highly contestable, if not mythological. This is considering the various reports of obstacles to access, success and retention in higher education in this and other studies. Illustrating the principle of intersectionality in this study, these obstacles include: financial constraints or socio-economic status, which are structurally racialised—with structural racism in turn affecting various psychological and psychosocial factors and functioning, as well as academic success, thus hampering racially marginalised students' ability to thrive in this context—and various experiences of, or predisposition to racism

(accompanied by their various effects on individual functioning) in interpersonal and institutional contexts.

6.5.6 Theoretical links between interpersonal, institutional and structural racism

The power and means held by individual members of a given group to enact racial discrimination are arguably only partly determined by each (dominant) group member's position in a given context—the remainder is arguably facilitated by structural influences. This constitutes interpersonal racism, primarily drawing from structural racism, preceded and demonstrated by one group's systematic oppression or exploitation of other groups for economic gains, as posited by Fanon (1963; 1988). Arguably, the exploitative group's attainment of power at the macro level, economically, politically or otherwise, results in the establishment of oppressive structures that filter down to subordinate levels (e.g. institutions and interpersonal settings), systematically privileging members of the oppressor group and disadvantaging the oppressed groups across various strata.

Bailey et al. (2017) define structural racism as "the totality of ways in which societies foster racial discrimination through mutually reinforcing [inequitable] systems [...] that in turn reinforce discriminatory beliefs, values, and distribution of resources" (p. 1455). In the current study, structural racism was demonstrated by factors such as: i) the privileging of English and Afrikaans as mediums of instruction throughout the basic and higher education systems above African languages, with no consideration of the academic success and broad academic prospects of Black learners and students—the majority of whom are not first-language speakers of these languages (Pare & Webb, 2007; Webb et al., 2010); ii) the distinct statuses of, and conditions at the HWHEI and the HBHEI, as machinated by apartheid-era racial classification of HEIs, accompanied by race-based resource allocation to these

institutions (Kujeke, n.d.); and iii) racialised socio-economic conditions. These were shown to affect access to higher education, success and retention in various ways.

At the institutional level, institutional racism is characterised by racist policies and practices within a particular institution that disadvantage a particular group (Gillborn, 2006; Jones, 1997). Institutional racism in the current study was demonstrated by factors such as racial discrimination by university staff, including lecturers, tutors and library staff, as well as racist admission processes and a racially non-representative staff composition. These constitute institutional racism primarily because they pertain to prejudiced or discriminatory actions either informed by institutional policies and practices or via university staff, who serve as agents of, and are accountable to the institution. As demonstration of pervasive White-on-Black institutional racism in the current study, none of the White participants complained of exclusionary institutional policies and practices targeting the group, or being racially or otherwise victimised by university staff. Instead, concerns regarding racial intolerance within this group were confined to racially intolerant sentiments expressed during seasonal student protests, which are not institution-endorsed. This is in contrast to Black participants in the study, who reported various circumstances during which they presumed the treatment that they received at the institutions under study to be directly due to their race, to which White participants could not relate.

The fact that the historical racial identity and even racial composition of the student body at the HBHEI do not curb institutional racism (occurring through institutional processes or staff), as per the current study findings, points to larger, overriding structures at play. This suggests that at the core of these dynamics within HEIs, regardless of institutional historical racial identity or a Black-majority student composition (historically and contemporarily), is structural racism and its corresponding networks, which along with racist institutional

policies and practices, continue to undermine the experiences and success of Black students in these contexts.

Interpersonal racism in this study was demonstrated by Black students' experiences of racial microaggressions and other subtle, racially discriminatory behaviours in the university context. Illustrating the link between interpersonal racism and structural racism, just as members of marginalised groups are presumed to carry schemas of discrimination into various contexts (Crocker, 1999), based on previous experiences and known predisposition to discrimination in the broader context, so do individual members of privileged groups carry schemas of assumed superiority into various micro contexts. The manifestation of interpersonal racism is presumably compounded by institutional culture in the context of this study, and tangible, persisting socio-historical and economic privileges, as discussed extensively in Chapter 2 and elsewhere in this chapter. The historical aspect subscribes to the concept of the chronosystem in the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

In the current study, institutional racism was reported to a much larger extent, compared to interpersonal racism. Even then, the interpersonal racism reported was covert, rather than overt. This could be due to the strengthening of the democratic order, to some degree, *somewhat* seeming to render the structural realm contested terrain, in spite of the persistence of racial inequalities and the superseding, inherently racialised South African economy. This might be especially considering the harsher measures recently introduced to address overt racism. A notable example of this is the conviction of a White South African woman for racism in 2018—a South African first—following a racist tirade (Shange, 2018).

The relative predominance of institutional racism, as shown in this study, could also be due to its covert nature, rendering it virtually undetectable, as well as the equally covert manner in which it is informed by structural dynamics. These observations of largely covert manifestations of racism subscribe to Fanon's (1988) argument that racism is primarily a

consequence of economic and/or political exploitation by a legitimate institution, such as a colonising country. Thus, the evolution of the institution's (as conceptualised by Fanon, 1988) culture—from overt to covert in this instance, as determined by the pre-1994 entrenchment of a racialised social and economic order— results in the evolution of how institutional and interpersonal racism are expressed. These observations demonstrate the theoretical links outlined earlier in this sub-section between interpersonal, institutional and structural racism. Notably, although the institutional racism experienced was largely covert, Black participants at the HBHEI reported instances of overt racism by lecturers. Similar to instances of interpersonal racism, as explained above, this could be due to perpetrators' implicit awareness of the (historically, and) essentially unequal power relations between racial groups across various strata, including the university context, which is compounded by awareness of their position of authority in this context and the institution's lack of accountability to students, especially Black students, as demonstrated by the latter's self-reported inability to approach the institution's White management with their grievances. This conjecture illustrates the multiple structures at institutional and structural levels, compounded by the socio-historical context, in interaction with the interpersonal context, that inform the treatment of Black students at the HBHEI at various levels.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I first presented the study's research questions to guide the discussion. This was followed by an overview of the approach to be applied to discuss the study findings. Then, I interpreted the findings relating to the first research question, followed by a discussion of the underlying systemic links between the identified factors, from the systems theory perspective. Lastly, I interpreted study findings relating to the second (primary) research question and its secondary research question, coupled with some aspects of the first

research question from a critical race theory perspective, with reference to factors pertaining to race and subscribing to the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and chronosystems of the ecological systems theory.

The following chapter entails a presentation of the conclusions reached in this study, based on the discussion in this chapter, as well as the study's limitations and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

This study identified factors considered by undergraduate students in an HBHEI and an HWHEI to affect academic success in higher education; determined how race shapes students' experiences at these institutions; and identified intersections among various levels of racial discrimination, and intersections between these and other factors, in influencing academic success. The current study is unique in that, its use of the systemic theory to interpret the links between the various factors found to affect academic success, highlights the importance of contextualising students' experiences of higher education and success in this context, within various systems and subsystems. Moreover, in addition to its exploration of conventional factors affecting academic success, such as individual (including psychological and psychosocial) and environmental factors, it comprehensively considers these within interpersonal, institutional and structural racial contexts. The current study explored the role played by racial discrimination in students' academic success and experiences at multiple levels (interpersonal, institutional and structural) and in terms of intersections among these levels, as well as between these and other factors, to cumulatively influence students' experiences of higher education and academic success.

This chapter primarily presents the conclusions of the current study. First, I give an overview of the study aim, research questions and approach towards the study. This is followed by a presentation of the conclusions reached, based on the findings as discussed in Chapter 6. In this regard, I present the various factors found to affect academic success and the ways in which race shapes students' experiences of, and success in higher education, based on the systemic and critical race theory perspectives. Thereafter, I present the

limitations of the study, particularly with regard to methodological aspects of the current study. I also present recommendations for future studies, based on the current study findings and the gaps identified as a result of this study, and to spur investigation into the implications that recent developments in the South African higher education sector have had especially on marginalised students' experiences in these contexts. Lastly, I present the researcher positionality statement, which entails an overview of the ways in which my identity and experiences have contributed towards my conceptualisation of, and approach towards the study, and in turn, how these might have affected my interpretation of the findings and possibly, my foregrounding of some data or findings above others.

7.2 Overview of the Study Aim and Approach

The aim of this study was to identify factors affecting academic success among students at an HBHEI and an HWHEI, based on the assumption of distinct student experiences, due to institutional historical racial identity and personal racial identity. Three focus group discussions at an HBHEI and two at an HWHEI were conducted, comprising a total of 31 participants of different races. The systemic theory and critical race theory were used to interpret the themes obtained using thematic analysis of the focus group data and the observational data, specifically to answer the following research questions:

1. What factors do undergraduate students in a historically Black and a historically White higher education institution consider to affect their academic success?
2. How does race shape undergraduate students' experiences in a historically Black and a historically White higher education institution?

In addition, the following research question, secondary to Research Question 2, was posed:

2.1 How do various levels (interpersonal, institutional and structural) of racial

discrimination intersect with each other and with other factors to influence academic

success?

7.3 Conclusions

Various factors were identified as affecting academic success and, broadly, students'

experiences in higher education, including individual, institutional and broader socio-cultural

and structural factors. From the systemic perspective, individual and micro-, meso-, exo-,

macro- and chronosystemic factors were found to interact in various ways to affect academic

success and experiences.

7.3.1 Individual factors

Individual factors identified as affecting academic success were self-regulation, self-

efficacy, adjustment, motivation, personal circumstances and help-seeking behaviour.

However, these were not wholly individually determined, considering their interactions with

other factors encompassed in various systems external to the individual. An especially

notable individual factor relating to the superordinate system was adjustment, which was

identified as an important aspect of students' transition to higher education, which constituted

the chronosystem.

7.3.2 Institutional factors

Several factors within the institution (constituting the university microsystem, from a

systemic perspective) were found to affect academic success. These were institutional

structures (including university management, the SRC, university staff, infrastructure, and

administrative, academic, financial and psychosocial support structures in place at the

institutions), social networks within the institutions, inter-ethnic and interracial student relations at the institutions, and university facilities and services. An overview of these is given below.

With regard to university staff, participants at the HBHEI expressed concern with unprofessional conduct by lecturers that discouraged, undermined and academically disadvantaged students to, at times, the point of dropping out—or at least, considering it. Nonetheless, participants at this institution lauded academic staff for their competence and expertise in their subject areas. Black participants at both the HBHEI and the HWHEI complained of racial discrimination by lecturing staff, with this extending to tutoring and library staff at the HWHEI. These experiences undermined their overall experiences and, in a number of ways, academic success in the higher education context. Interestingly, Black HWHEI participants gave accounts of covert racial discrimination, whereas Black HBHEI participants recounted, among others, overt, verbalised racist sentiments by lecturing staff. Moreover, for these students, palpable racial barriers in relation to the institution were in their reluctance to approach the White managerial staff with their concerns.

For the most part, HBHEI participants expressed a need for accountability by various parties at the institution, including lecturers, SRC members and student mentors. While HBHEI participants emphasised funding as an important contributor towards student retention and wellbeing, HWHEI participants referred to the student counselling services provided at the institution and workshops aimed at equipping students with various skills, coupled with lecturers' reference to these during lectures, as sufficient institutional measures taken to facilitate student wellbeing. Participants at both institutions indicated that their institutions provided sufficient support services aimed at facilitating student well-being and retention. Furthermore, Black participants at the HBHEI referred to what they construed as racially discriminatory admission of students into different study programmes, with highly

regarded programmes such as Medicine and Dental Surgery mainly comprising White students; Pharmacy comprising Indian students; and BSc almost exclusively comprising Black students. Notably, many of the BSc students at the HBHEI had enrolled into this programme in the hopes of being subsequently admitted into Medicine.

Social networks within the institution were identified as a factor affecting academic success, with the support structure provided by peers deemed particularly important. However, peer pressure was also identified as a negative contributor towards academic success, stemming from students' failure to self-regulate and, therefore, less focus on their studies.

Students at both institutions described mainly diplomatic, indifferent interracial relations among students, whereas HBHEI students reported the same for inter-ethnic relations. Participants attributed these to preference. However, instances of covert interpersonal racism were reported, and so were their implications for information sharing among students and prospects to learn from each other and, broadly, their accompanying academic disadvantages for ethnically or racially excluded peers. Moreover, implicit awareness of the racial demarcation of the physical and social environment at the HWHEI deterred interracial socialising at the institution, particularly the participation of Black students in traditionally White spaces at the institution, which undermined affected students' sense of belonging and self-perceived academic prospects at the institution.

Moreover, university facilities were identified as an affecting factor, specifically with HBHEI participants expressing considerably more concerns regarding these, compared to HWHEI participants; this gross disparity was presumed to be directly tied to historical institutional racial identity and the subsequent allocation of resources to institutions on this basis. At the HBHEI, concerns were expressed regarding the university's transportation service, an inefficient student registration system coupled with the lack of online registration

facilities, the location and state of student residences, the lack of amenities such as a one-stop

shop providing document services such as scanning, printing and copying; the dire shortage

of academic and sports facilities; library closing hours; and the poor state of the student

cafeteria. These findings illustrated the ways in which students' overall experiences and,

specifically, academic success, were undermined by these factors. At the HWHEI, complaints

regarding campus facilities were limited to insufficient computers at the university's main

library and an on-campus dining hall that could hardly meet demand, both of which

invariably resulted in long queues. In addition to insufficient sporting facilities, participants at

the HBHEI expressed concern with an extracurricular timetable that typically clashed with

the academic timetable. Both these factors effectively limited HBHEI students' participation

in extracurricular activities at the institution and, therefore, hampered recreation and the

potential to establish networks with peers.

7.3.3 External factors

Factors that were external to the university environment, identified as affecting

academic success, were parental support and conflict; family financial constraints; problems

in, or the maintenance of intimate relationships; pregnancy and daily commute. From the

systemic perspective, these were considered to represent the mesosystem, as they constituted

microsystems that students participated in, in addition to the university microsystem.

Exosystemic factors included career guidance, to which attrition was attributed;

employment prospects, which played a role in motivation; and media coverage of the

HBHEI, in contrast to that of HWHEIs. In turn, media coverage could be conceptually linked

to the macrosystem, as an aspect of structural racism.

7.3.4 Interrelated individual, interpersonal, institutional and structural factors pertaining to race and racism

Macrosystemic factors affecting academic success were primarily a racist social order and structural racism, as informed by a racist socio-historical, socio-political order (constituting the chronosystem). In the higher education context, the latter was specifically embodied in the racial classification of HEIs and the corresponding perceived standing and management of these, whose legacy persists to date, as shown in the current study. Bronfenbrenner (1979) posited that the macrosystem entails consistent, uniform observations or ideologies within a given culture or subculture, reflected across the micro-, meso- and exosystems. Similarly, in the current study, racist ideology was found to underlie trends across these three systems and beyond, and ultimately, students' higher education experiences and academic success. This was demonstrated through analysis using critical race theory, which emphasises the inherence of racism in societal structures.

Supporting tenets of the critical race theory, in the current study, the following factors pertaining to racism and either personal or historical institutional racial identity, were found to be interrelated in their effects on students' academic success and experiences in higher education: i) structural, racialised inequalities (i.e. the distinct statures and states of the HBHEI and the HWHEI, socio-economic status, language in education/medium of instruction and reactions to racism based on experiences thereof or known predisposition thereto), ii) institutional racism (demonstrated by: racially demarcated social spaces at the HWHEI; racial discrimination by library, lecturing and tutoring staff at the two institutions; student protests; racially discriminatory administrative processes at the HBHEI; a racially non-representative staff composition and experiences of racial discrimination despite a Black-majority student body at both institutions), and to a lesser extent, iii) covert interpersonal racism among students. As shown in this study, racial discrimination results in a complex set of power

relations that severely disadvantage Black students, whose success in the higher education context is measured not by their relational experiences but, simply, academic performance.

7.4 Limitations

Several limitations were identified in the current study. First, despite this being a qualitative study, more comprehensive accounts of students' experiences at their HEIs and factors affecting their academic success, could have been obtained by conducting more focus group discussions until saturation was reached. The conduct of only five focus group discussions—three at the HBHEI and only two at the HWHEI—limits transferability, which refers to the extent to which qualitative research findings can be transferred to contexts with different participants (Bitsch, 2005; Tobin & Begley, 2004).

Second, no focus group discussion was conducted on a White-only group at the HWHEI. Insight into White HWHEI students' experiences would have enabled distinctions and similarities, where any, to be drawn between this group and students of other races at the institution. Ideally, such a focus group discussion would have been conducted by a White facilitator, to better enable rapport and encourage an environment in which participants could speak freely (Berg & Lune, 2012). In relation to this, the third possible limitation of this study was conducting the all-White focus group discussion at the HBHEI, accompanied by a White, male research assistant. Participants in this focus group may have been more reserved than they otherwise would have been, if the facilitator had been White, especially with regard to views pertaining to race or the institution's historical racial identity. Lastly, the inclusion of Humanities students at the HWHEI, contrasting with that of Health Sciences students at the HBHEI might mean that, by virtue of the respective demands and content of their degree programmes, these students' experiences were not comparable. This could have been mitigated by including only students enrolled for Health Sciences degree programmes at the

HWHEI. However, the variety in the major subjects of participants at the HBHEI suggests that varying experiences can be found, even in seemingly homogenous participant groups. In this study, this was demonstrated by participants' accounts of experiences that they reported to be directly tied to their fields of study, presumed as different from those of students enrolled for certain study programmes.

7.5 Recommendations

Future studies could investigate students' perceived uses and effectiveness of student counselling services, and perceptions regarding how psychological wellbeing could enhance their academic experiences. This is especially considering some students' apparent reluctance to seek the service, despite needing it, as revealed in the current study. Understanding the motivation behind students' reluctance to take up the service could inform initiatives to raise awareness about the service. In relation to this, future studies could explore psychosocial factors that influence help-seeking behaviour in higher education, considering some students' propensity not to seek help, despite their obvious needs.

Given the many factors and interactions between these, shown to affect academic success in the current study, future studies could employ a quantitative approach to determine the relative strength with which the identified factors predict academic success. This would be so as to enable stakeholders in higher education to put measures into place to mitigate the strongest predictors.

Moreover, Black men and Black women across contexts are expected to have both racialised and gendered experiences at any given time, due to the significance socially accorded to these distinct identities and varying combinations thereof, as well as the different sets of marginalisation based on these identities. Thus, future studies could investigate factors

affecting the academic success, or broadly, distinct experiences of Black male and Black female students in higher education.

Further, given the recent pronouncement of free undergraduate education in public South African HEIs, research could be conducted specifically on the experiences of students from low socio-economic backgrounds, who are benefitting from the free education initiative. Based on the assumption that financial constraints would affect other aspects of these students' lives, other than tuition, such a study would help identify ways in which the students' higher education experiences and prospects for academic success can be enhanced.

Finally, given the pervasiveness and reach of the Fallist Movement since its establishment, in terms of drawing attention to various social injustices in South African HEIs, future studies could investigate whether the experiences of marginalised students— racially and otherwise—across South African HEIs are changing for the better. For instance, since the data for the current study were collected, attempts have been made at the HWHEI to establish a more racially inclusive identity for the institution, as shown by the assignment of African names to campus buildings, student residences and campaigns. Thus, studies could investigate whether new Black student cohorts experience the university campus differently, compared to older Black students.

7.6 Researcher Positionality

My identification as a Black South African woman who has experienced apartheid- and post-apartheid South Africa, having spent my formative years on a White-owned farm, a village, then a township, enables me to assume a particular lens in interpreting Black and White South Africans' experiences and, particularly, issues facing Black South Africans.

In relation to the context of the study, I have been a Black student from a low socio-economic background at two previously Afrikaans-medium HWHEIs; enrolling at the first

less than five years into South Africa's transition into a democratic dispensation, in a context in which the institution demonstrated in many ways its strong allegiance to its apartheid-era identity as a White, Afrikaans, Christian institution.

In the broader context, my understanding particularly of apartheid South Africa has been largely shaped by my exposure to various narratives of being Black in apartheid South Africa and my retrospective consideration of that period, based on my recollection of Black life at the time, especially as determined by, and in relation to what I have come to understand as having been an essentially White-supremacist socio-political order, characterised by its bestowal of systematic privileges on one group, and its disenfranchisement of Black South Africans, economically, politically and in various other respects. My being Black also in contemporary South Africa shapes many of my experiences and assumptions of how I and Black people in general are perceived and related to on a broad scale.

The above, along with my previous research on ethnic/race identity in relation to aspects of psychological and psychosocial functioning among higher education students at an HWHEI, led to my assumption of the critical race theory perspective in this study to interrogate the effects of broader socio-cultural and socio-political systems on students' functioning and prospects in higher education, and to give historically marginalised students a voice.

On the bases specified above, this study is of great personal significance to me. This likely influenced various aspects of my conduct of this study. These include the nature and depth of my interactions with the study participants; the significance attached to different data items, based on their resonance with my assumptions and experiences; and my understanding, interpretation and positioning of participants' accounts and broadly, presentation of the study findings. In turn, various aspects of my identity and related

approach towards the study and the participants may have influenced the participants' receptiveness towards me, their ability to trust me with their experiences, and their openness towards, and candidness during the research process.

My study findings provide ample justification for better, targeted efforts towards transformation in higher education and could inform the development of effective measures to facilitate the transition, adjustment and retention of students, especially those with marginalised identities, in higher education, so as to enhance their overall experiences in the higher education context and, specifically, their academic success.

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APPENDICES

A. Permission Request to Sefako Makgatho University Research Ethics Committee

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

12-9 Human Sciences Building
Department of Psychology
University of Pretoria
Lynwood Road
Pretoria
0002

15 October 2015

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR INSTITUTION

To whom it may concern,

I am a PhD student in the Department of Psychology, at the University of Pretoria. I hereby request permission to recruit subjects at your institution, to collect data for my study on *Predictors of success among students in higher education*. The study is being carried out under the supervision of Prof. David Maree, in the Department of Psychology, at the University of Pretoria.

The aim of the study is to identify factors that contribute towards the academic performance of first-, second- and third-year students registered for three-year undergraduate degrees. The data will be collected through focus group discussions with 18 undergraduate students (6 students in 3 focus group discussion), and online questionnaires and the academic transcripts of participating 600 students (200 first-, second- and third-year students, respectively). If permission is granted to conduct this study at your institution, I would also require permission to access your institutional database, so as to randomly select potential participants; to contact them, requesting them to volunteer to participate in the study by either participating in focus group discussions or completing online questionnaires; and to acquire information on their academic performance for a given study year.

For your reference, I attach a conditional approval letter of my research proposal by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria, and a full proposal, along with accompanying documents (e.g., consent form, information sheet, focus group guide and questionnaires), as approved by that committee. For details regarding the research procedures, please refer to the methodology section (Section 15) of the attached proposal. Should you require any other further details regarding the study, please contact me at angela.thomas@up.ac.za / tsholo.t@gmail.com or by telephone at 012 420 2923 / 079 881 1272. For your reference, my supervisor can be contacted at david.maree@up.ac.za or by telephone at 012 420 2329.

Yours sincerely,

Tsholofelo Angela Thomas
Telephone: 012 420 2923 / 079 881 1272

12-9 Human Sciences Building   Tel: (012) 420 2923 / 079 881 1272   angela.thomas@up.ac.za
University of Pretoria   www.up.ac.za
Private bag X20, Hatfield 0028
Republic of South Africa

B. Permission from Sefako Makgatho University Research Ethics Committee

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University
Research & Postgraduate Studies Directorate
Sefako Makgatho University Research Ethics Committee
(SMUREC)

Molotlegi Street, Ga-Rankuwa 0208
Tel: (012) 521 5617/3698 | fax: (012) 521 3749
Email: lorato.phiri@smu.ac.za
P.O. Box 163 Medunsa 0204

TA Thomas
12-9 Human Sciences Buiding
Department of Psychology
University of Pretoria
Lynwood Road
0002

Dear TA Thomas

RE: REQUEST PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY AT SMU

SMUREC **NOTED** a letter dated 15 October requesting permission to conduct a research study at SMU

Study Title:	Predictors of academic success amongst students in higher education
Researcher:	TA Thomas
University:	UP, Faculty of Humanities, Psychology department
Qualification	PhD / DPhil Psychology
Supervisor:	Prof D Maree
Ethics Reference No:	04192893 (GW20150823HS)
Approval letter date:	18 September 2015

SMUREC **APPROVED** and **GRANTED** the researcher permission to conduct the above mentioned study at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University

Yours Sincerely,

pp.

PROF GA OGUNBANJO
CHAIRPERSON SMUREC

SEFAKO MAKGATHO
HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY
SMU Research Ethics Committee
Chairperson
Date: 05/11/2015

05 November 2015

C. Permission Request to University of Pretoria, Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

12-9 Human Sciences Building
Department of Psychology
University of Pretoria
Lynwood Road
Pretoria
0002

25 January 2016

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Dear Prof. Stander,

I am a PhD student and staff member in the Department of Psychology, University of Pretoria. I hereby request permission to recruit subjects in the Faculty of Humanities, to collect data for my study on *Predictors of success among students in higher education*. The study is being carried out under the supervision of Prof. David Maree, in the Department of Psychology, University of Pretoria.

The aim of the study is to identify factors that contribute towards the academic performance of first-, second- and third-year students registered for three-year undergraduate degrees. The data will be collected through focus group discussions with 18 undergraduate students (6 students in 3 focus group discussion), and online questionnaires and the academic transcripts of participating 600 students (200 first-, second- and third-year students, respectively). If permission is granted to conduct this study in your faculty, I would also require permission to access the institutional database, so as to randomly select potential participants; to contact them, requesting them to volunteer for completion of online questionnaires; and to acquire information on their academic performance for a given study year.

For your reference, I attach a conditional approval letter of my research proposal by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria, and a full proposal, along with accompanying documents (e.g. consent form, information sheet, focus group guide and questionnaires), as approved by that committee. For details regarding the research procedures, you may refer to the methodology section (Section 15) of the attached proposal. Should you require any other further details regarding the study, please contact me at angela.thomas@up.ac.za or by telephone at 012 420 2923 / 079 881 1272. For your reference, my supervisor can be contacted at david.maree@up.ac.za or by telephone at 012 420 2329.

Yours sincerely,

Tsholofelo Angela Thomas
Telephone: 012 420 2923 / 079 881 1272

12-9 Human Sciences Building   Tel: (012) 420 2923 / 079 881 1272   angela.thomas@up.ac.za
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Republic of South Africa

D. Permission from University of Pretoria, Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics

Committee

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Research Ethics Committee

5 February 2015

Dear Prof Maree

Project: **Predictors of academic success amongst students in higher education**
Researcher: **TA Thomas**
Supervisor: **Prof D Maree**
Department: **Psychology**
Reference number: **04192893 (GW20150823HS)**

Thank you for your response to the Committee's correspondence of 1 September 2015.

I have pleasure in informing you that the above application was **approved** by the **Research Ethics Committee** at an ad hoc meeting held on 4 February 2015. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

The Committee requests you to convey this approval to the researcher.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

Prof Karen Harris
Acting Chair: Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail:karen.harris@up.ac.za

E. Invitation to Participate in Research

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Are you in your 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or final year of undergraduate studies?

You are invited to participate in a study on "Predictors of academic success in higher education". You will be required to share your experiences as a student in a group discussion.

Refreshments will be served, and you will be compensated with an airtime voucher to thank you for your participation.

If you are interested in participating, then e-mail the researcher by [date], with your details at: tsholo.t@gmail.com

F. Consent Form

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: Predictors of academic success among students in higher education
Researcher: Tsholofelo Angela Thomas

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify factors that play a role in academic success at your higher education institution.

Research Procedures

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to participate in a focus group discussion on the topic, along with other students. The information that you provide will be used to identify the appropriate measures to use in determining which factors predict academic success, in a later quantitative study involving a larger sample.

Risks to Participants

Your participation in this study is not expected to pose any risks or harm to you. However, should you feel that you could benefit from psychological counselling, you are encouraged to contact your institution's Student Services office at [details to be provided once data collection site is confirmed], to receive counselling services, at no cost.

Confidentiality

All the information that you provide will be treated with confidentiality.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. Completion of this form shows voluntary participation in the study.

Dissemination of Results

The results of this study will be disseminated in the form of a thesis, conference papers, and articles in academic journals, and on popular media. In addition, the information gathered from you will be stored for 15 years for the purposes of archiving and any future research.

Contacts and Questions

If you have any further questions about this study, please feel free to contact Tsholofelo Angela Thomas at angela.thomas@up.ac.za / (012) 420 2923

Statement of Consent

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study.

12-9 Humanities Building   Tel: (012) 420 2923   angela.thomas@up.ac.za
University of Pretoria   www.up.ac.za
Private bag X20, Hatfield 0028
Republic of South Africa

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

_____   _____   _____

Participant's Signature   *Place*   *Date*

_____   _____   _____

Researcher's Signature   *Place*   *Date*

G. Focus Group Guide

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Focus group guide – Factors contributing towards academic success in higher education

1. Why did you choose to study at this institution?

2. What do you think are the advantages of studying at this institution?

3. What do you think are the disadvantages of studying at this institution?

4. What have your experiences at this institution been since you enrolled?

5. How do you think your institution could enhance students' academic experiences?

6. Do you personally know anyone who has dropped out or considered dropping out of this institution over the past year or two? If so, what were their reasons?

7. In your opinion, what do you think are reasons for consistently poor academic performance by some students?

8. How do you think the institution could help/support such students or those at risk of dropping out?

9. How confident are you and your close friends that you will obtain your degree within the prescribed time frame? What are the reasons for this confidence or lack thereof?

10. What challenges do students come across in their first couple of years of studying at this institution? You may refer to academic, social, or psychological challenges, if applicable.

11. Do you think that any of these challenges can, in any way, affect one's studies? If so, how?

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UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

12. Given this institution's historical background as specifically catering for [insert applicable race] students, would you say there is currently an equal representation of members of different races at this institution?

13. What do you think of current racial integration (or race relations) at the institution?

14. How do you think racial integration patterns (or race relations) at the institution affect the experiences of students from different racial backgrounds, if at all?

15. What do you think the institution could do to enhance students' overall experiences during the course of their studies at this institution?

H. Focus Group Transcripts

Transcript 1: SMU Focus Group Discussion 1

Moderator: OK, welcome once again. Um ... like I said, my name is Tsholofelo and I've explained to you the st ... purpose of the study and the purpose of this focus group discussion. Umm ... I will be recording the ... the discussion and if anybody has a problem with that, please say? *(Silence)* You don't*? (Participant raises hand)* Yes?

Sne: When we are discussing, is it necessary for me to instead of saying like ... notice ... to say my name?

Moderator: Yes yes yes. Um ... this is Zama, she'll be taking down notes just for back-up umm ... purposes, in case we miss something. I'm going to ask you to introduce yourself with the name that you choose to use in the focus group. It may or may not be your name, and when you talk, please say your name first so that when ... yah ... when we're listening to the tape, we know who was saying what. Ok, let's start with you *(gesturing towards a participant)*.

Thabo: I'm [surname] Thabo, doing B. Pharm II.

Moderator: OK. You don't have to say your surname at all, please just use your first name, and speak a bit loud for ... this *(gesturing at recorder)*.

Katlego: OK. I'm Katlego. I'm doing Oral Hygiene III.

Moderator: OK.

Lonwabo: I'm Lonwabo, I'm also doing Oral Hygiene III.

Moderator: Lonwabo?

Lonwabo: Yes

Moderator: OK

Sne: I'm Sne, I'm doing Oral Hygiene III.

Maningi: I'm Maningi, doing BSc Physics II.

Moderator: Your name is ...?

Maningi: Maningi

Moderator: Maningi

Zinhle: I'm Zinhle, I'm doing BSc Mathematics II

Moderator: *(reiterates participants' names as a reminder)* Lonwabo and Zinhle ... OK ... OK! Umm, this is going to be an informal discussion just to ... for you to state your opinions as honest as possible, and so forth. Firstly, can some of you or all of you just say why you chose to study at this institution?

(Giggling by some participants)

Moderator: *(laughing)* Why are you laughing, Sne?

(A participant clears his throat)

Katlego: OK, with me, I ... I ... Som... some people told me that *(laughs; other participants laugh)* ... it was the best ... you know ... produces Black doctors. I didn't want any trouble, any ... (Another participant: Racism) racisms and everything! With that information, I just felt that that is the right place for me. Yeah.

Moderator: And ... is there anything you'd like to add, Maningi?

Maningi: With why I've chosen BSc? (Moderator: Yes, yes) Ooh I wanted to do ... I wanted to do BSc as a course because at the end I want to do Analytical Chemistry.

Moderator: OK. Why at this institution? (Maningi: Why here?) Why specifically here?

Maningi: I didn't want to study here, it's just because I didn't get space at other institutions. (Moderator: Oh I see, OK.).

Thabo: Yes, with me, the ... the ... the reason that I came here is that when I was in matric, like, people were speaking of how Medunsa is a university that produces quality healthcare professionals. So, when I was in matric, I just thought that the best thing to do is to come to

Medunsa because it's the only university in South Africa which was specialising in health sciences. So, I thought if I come here, that's where I'm going to gain more experience.

Moderator: OK. *(Silence)* And you guys?

Lonwabo: Eeh ... my decision ... (Moderator: Katlego; Lonwabo: Lonwabo; Moderator: Lonwabo; Lonwabo: Yah, Lonwabo) ... eeh ... my decision for ... for coming here it's eeh ... it's similar to ... it's similar to that one of (Moderator: Maningi) ... Maningi ... yah, it's most similar to that one of Maningi (Moderator: OK, OK). Yah.

(Silence)

Moderator: And Snenhlanhla, what's your reason?

Sne: Eeh ... What happened is that ... Isn't it, I'm from KZN ... in KZN, we have CAO (Moderator: What's CAO?; Sne and another participant: Central Application Office; Moderator: Ooh). It's one form where you apply to all the varsities and technikons in KZN. So, with that one, the choices I have chosen, they never took me, so it's like the same thing. So, this other guy from my class gave me a Medunsa form, and then I filled in. I didn't even know Medunsa at that time. I just came here not knowing ... like, anything about it, yah ... I just came.

Zinhle: *(Laughs)* No, it also wasn't my choice (Moderator: Zinhle; Zinhle: Oh yes, Zinhle, sorry). It wasn't really a choice. It happened that when I was looking for a university ... ah ... I don't know, my sister just happened to know Medunsa. I didn't know Medunsa because I'm from KZN also. I just didn't like the universities in KZN. I don't know the reason ... alright, but maybe I was ... I was ... OK, I don't like the home thing ... yah. I wanted to be far and independent, you see? Not meaning to ... to do things in a haphazard way, you know, but I just wanted to feel that independency. So umm ... choosing ... OK, being here ... being here in this [inaudible] university ... it's ... OK yah ... firstly, for that purpose of being racial-free, that's one of my, uh ... my good objectives for being here and also just to, to communicate,

the way of communication and the variety of languages in this area, it took me in a ... I don't know, in ... in a bosom manner (Moderator: You like that?) Yes, yhuu ... I like it (Moderator: OK).

Moderator: Uh, some of you mentioned um, that it's free of racism and so on or that's the impression that you have, that you had, when you first applied (Some participants: Yah). Um, um, can you elaborate further on that?

Katlego: OK wi ... with the issue of racism? (Moderator: Mhmm). Uh ... I think here it's, it's less, if it's there, but uh, with ... most of the people are Black people; so it would, like, you see ... Black people are not actually ... not that I'm saying White people are troublesome *(laughs)*, but Black people are not actually eh ... the one who started with this thing of racism and everything, they are doing ... especially at our age, we don't really care about racism. So, and then, White people, the few Whites that are here, most of them also, they do come and do ... like, they do come to us sometimes, because if they don't come, they'll just feel ... uh, for example, left out because they are just a small number. In a way, they don't have a choice; they can't start anything. So you might find that it's only in rare cases where you find that somebody did something because of racial, maybe of the colour or something, so I don't think that it's that much. Yah.

Moderator: And the other people, what are your experiences regarding that? Um, do you agree or do you differ slightly? *(Zinhle shakes head)* Moderator: With what? With what Katlego was saying?

Zinhle: *(Nods)* OK, based on that information, we are not denying the fact that uh, our university is Black-populated, rather than uh, with a bit of White association, right? But, OK, in the management offices, in higher ranks, you'll ... you'll not find a Black person, or even our Vice-Chancellor currently, that person is not ... is not Black, he's ... White, you see, I don't want to be racist *(laughs)*, right. Mm ... yes, um ... in terms of, when we want umm ...

to raise our views on the university, we find it difficult to approach the management, though we have SRCs, right? But, you as an individual, may, you may want to contact them personally, but however, they're just going to show you that ... "go down there, you don't qualify to talk to me". Do you get what I mean? OK, I ... I'm talking on a personal level because I ... I've been interacting with them, you see. It's ... it's like, there is that thing within them that we are still uhm ... we ... we are still uuh ... people with power, however, they ... they still have power over the Black population ... what what ... you see. But, yah ... among students, I can say that there's still a lot of freedom in terms of us because we are Black, most of ... yes, we are just ... most of us are Black, so uh ... there is that mutual communication amongst us, you see. So ... (Moderator: When you say "amongst us", are you saying among you or students from different races?). Mm ... OK, because I don't have an experience o ... of having a White friend, or a C ... or ... no no, Coloured, or an Indian friend, you see, so like, I'm talking in terms of Blacks only.

Thabo: With me, what I think is that, you see ... there ... these White people, I'm talking according to how I've observed since I got here. Mm ... I realised that the other races group themselves together, like, they live in groups *(Another participant agreeing)*, they don't want to interact with us *(Another participant agreeing)*. Even though we are within a Black institution, they feel like, it is as if they are forced, because most of the ... the people at this varsity are Blacks, as they *(gesturing towards other participants)* have said that they are dominant. So, with them, they are just forced. But if you can look, in classes; when they sit, they sit two-two-two. So, with us ... with me, I can say that, you see, the ... the ... the issue of racism ... it is existing, but indirectly ... *[interruption]* ...

Discussion resumes.

Katlego: OK, just to ... just to support that thing ... yah, on the management level, yah ... everyb ... I think ... *(Other participants: Most)* yah ... most of the people feel that ... feel ...

no, we have that feeling. They show us that ... that face, that ... we are Whites and they still do it, in terms of [inaudible] We had an experience whereby a l ... uh ... these White, uh, uh ... supervisors, if you do mistakes, some of the mistakes will be judged just because of your course, such things. And when you look at the person who's judging you, it's a White person. Rather, if it was somebody who's Black ... like, even the way ... even the way they correct you, you'll feel that, you know, in a way they have sympathy for you, they explain things better, they are not in a rush for you. So, on the management level, yah, she ... she's right.

Maningi: The problem for me is that ... here, nothing is affecting me, but the one thing that affects me is the course that I'm doing. Always people ... I'm doing BSc ... "What are you going to do with BSc? You won't get a job, you won't get anything. The thing that you have to do is Medicine". Like, even if I'm explaining what I'm going to do, they're always discouraging me. If they're discouraging me, it ends up affecting my academics. Even if ... uh ... there's a subject that is difficult. I just think, "Oh, BSc, what am I going to do with it?" I'm ... I'm starting to confuse myself, but it's really affecting me ... the course that I'm doing here ... I wanted to ... even to change.

Moderator: When you say people discourage you, are you talking about people at the university or people elsewhere?

Maningi: I'm talking about the people around here in Medunsa.

Moderator: OK, umm ... other students?

Maningi: Yah, the students, most of the students. Even ... they look at you like if you're doing BSc, they think that from matric, you got lower marks

This is the reason why you're doing BSc. You didn't qualify for Medicine just because of your marks.

Moderator: OK.

Thabo: Just to add, just to add on what they ... they ... they've all said ... mm ... I ... When I'm looking at the management point of view, also in classes, we do experience such kinds of racism. Like, I remember, in my class, like, we ... we ... we're most often faced ... whereby lecturers, even the Black lecturers, they tend to favour other races, like, races than us. Like, you'll find that when a Black person is asking something, they don't really pay attention, but when it turns out to be another race, mostly White people, they give them more attention than us. Even the lecturers like, when they respond to us. Like, the way they respond to us. Like, let's say you are asking a question and it's a silly question, yah ... they will ... they will tend to take it into a political view and say that "Even your leaders are like this. We know that this kind of thing is expected from people such as you". So, that is what we experience in terms of [inaudible] lecturers.

Moderator: Um and ... any ... any other thing that you'd like to add, maybe you, Lonwabo?

Lonwabo: OK eh ... in terms of eeh ... race, I can say eeh ... it's because of ignorance or pride or something. Yah (Another participant: Yah, pride) I don't know if it's pride because us, as Black eeh ... people, like, I've never seen anyone trying to associate themselves with the Whites. I've never. So, in terms of race, yah, I'm not sure if that's the case.

Zinhle: It's about approaching, isn't it? (Lonwabo: because we are also not trying to associate with them) Yah, to be honest, I also don't approach them.

Sne: Because, can I make a point again? Even with us; we have tribes, isn't it? Have you noticed that in first year, you go with the Sothos (Other participant: Yah), if you are Venda, it's Vendas. Even with us, we segregate ourselves, based on like, opposites ... If they are not with you, you won't befriend them, or something like that. Even with us, I think, what he's saying ... even us, we have a problem, ourselves. We don't approach people, we want them to come to us every time (Other participant: exactly).

Moderator: So, you're basically saying ... um... on campus, that people are more likely to associate with people from their own races (Sne: Culture) and also language groups, and so.

Sne: Because if I can ask, how many people have Venda friends here? *(Gesturing at other participants, who in turn laugh, shake their heads)*. You see such things. You think their language is so hard. It's not that we hate those people, but in terms of like ... you know you have those ... your gang, you get me? Yah.

Katlego: Just to touch on her *(pointing at Maningi)* point, I also felt that way in my first year because, you know, people say, especially the [inaudible] students ... They say uh ... start talking about salary now. (Other participants laugh) When somebody's [inaudible], they start talking about salary. You never thought about the salary. I never thought about the salary and then I only think about it when somebody is bringing it up *(Other participants laugh)*, "Do you realise how much are you gonna earn when you ...?" (Sne: I forgot I'm gonna earn. *(laughs)*). And then he goes to Google, and they will show you, the Google, you see this ... Google, they lie a lot. They'll show you the minimum amount ...You still have to pay tithe. You realise, I still have to pay tithe, I'm still gonna ... the tax and everything, the deduction and everything. It ... it happens. I also felt that. But uh ... I ... I ... we ... we discussed it with my friends and felt that, we were just like, it's not about the money, it's not about what somebody wants. You know, it's not about what Medical students want ... Some of them, they didn't even pass, some bribed, some did so many things. But you came here because you wanted to do something that you think you love and you know that you love. So, I also ... that motivates me a lot. I did my research, I don't even have to hear somebody else, think about whatever you want to do ... then, an achievement is what you planned and accomplished, you know, that's achievement. So, if they [inaudible] Medicine, and they just did Medicine because somebody did, it's not an achievement, actually. So, achievement is your ... it's your

thing, the one that you ... you wanted to do from the [inaudible] and then you end up on top of whatever that you just planned. (Other participant: Yah).

Zinhle: Can I just add? Um ... I think the best way of describing uh ... the segregational part of courses that are here at the University of Sefako, right ... I can just say that lack of knowledge kills people, it destroys people. If you don't know you are done, right? (Another participant: You are done) BSc ... OK, because uh ... during my first year (Other participant: Yes), I also had those things. "If you are doing a BSc, ah ... what are you gonna do? Is it a bridging course?" They're making it like some bridging course thing, you see. Of which I don't agree. What I've got ... I did my research on BSc and especially what I'm doing, BSc in Mathematics. We have a lot of things to do. OK, I ... I don't want to discriminate Medicine. Medicine you take 6 years of studying; you have less of an opportunity of ... of ... of ... of doing Honours or of getting a Doctorate, or a Master's. It takes you years to get that. I'm not saying it's impossible, you see. And also ... um ... Medicine, it's ... it's just theoretical; like, you are given a book, you read a book and then you must do what's in the book. But when it comes to Mathematics, you become innovative, you ... you become ... you, like ... OK, you come with a solution, like ... everything that affects the whole country, the nation as a whole ... you become a solution towards that. You are not only doing one thing as a doctor. Only helping ... I'm not saying they are not coming with different solutions when it comes to uh ... diseases and whatever, sort of, you see ... But what I'm saying is that BSc is one of the greatest courses you can ever choose for yourself.

Moderator: OK, OK, um ... um ... can we move on to maybe the dis ... advantages and disadvantages that you're aware of ... um ... in terms of studying at this institution? What do you think are the advantages, what do you think are the disadvantages, as opposed to studying at any other institution?

Thabo: With me, I ... I ... I ... I like ... I like the advantages part because, like, when I came here, I came with a good [inaudible], knowing that SMU is the only ... is the only university in South Africa that deals with health sciences, meaning that here they have more knowledge, as compared to other institutions. Like, other institutions, they might know, but here, that's their specialisation. You know, if you are specialising in something, this means that you know it. So, what I've realised about Medunsa is that they know their things, even our lecturers in the Department of Pharmacy, they know their things. Each and every year, like, they ... they ... they... they try to modify things, meaning, to update whatever information they have to what is currently happening. So, I can say that it has a lot of advantages when it comes to experience.

Moderator: Sne

Sne: In terms of advantages, right ... I agree with Thabo. And another thing is that the environment that we have ... it ... it doesn't force you, but then it makes you study. When you are here, the only thing you think about is studying, because you know like ... I always make this example of KZN, right ... you see that next to the ... to the res, there is a club or something, so you know if you are bored that you can go there. Here, there's no club ... it's like we ... the environment itself makes you think about studying. And then, in terms of disadvantages, infrastructure ... in terms of your hobbies... infrastructure, we are very ... we are lacking. You find that they are playing rugby in the same field that they are playing soccer. When they are practising, they are halving the field; it's rugby this side, it's soccer that side *(Participants laugh)*. Inside sportcom [referring to a building], we write exams, we play tennis, we play volleyball, we do everything. It's like infrastructure ... I think they focus more on the academics, which is not wrong, but again, like our personal things, hobbies and what-so-not there, we find that we are lacking also. W... we ma ... may even say studying is

boring because of this, because of this, because you do not do your hobbies. You are studying.

Moderator: OK. Yes, Katlego.

Katlego: Uh ... on the advantage part, especially with my course, Oral Hygiene ... we practise [interruption] ... As I was saying, like, with my course, we do a lot of practice here in Medunsa and we are exposed to different cases, so, it's ... it's interesting, actually [inaudible] we're assisting the clinics and everything, so we actually make you feel like a doctor, if you are doing that, if you're in Oral ..., you feel like a qualified one ... the work that we are doing here. And another thing, uh ... with the advantage part, in 2013, when I came here, I ... I ... I just came here, it was something else. I came here; and I was alone, nobody was supporting me, no parent, anyone, I was just alone. I came all the way from Limpopo, with a big bag, a big one like this *(Participants laugh)*. I didn't have anything, by anything, I mean anything, I only had [inaudible]. Somebody just gave me money to come here. And when I got to Sports Com, they welcomed me, those guys, this other ... was it [Person's name], this other guy. Yah, they welcomed me. I came late. They gave me ... I didn't have a place to stay, they gave me everything that day, so for me, they care about people, the Black people who are in Res Management (Moderator Oh, I see); they gave me that comfort. And, this other ... when I ... I didn't have money to register, and then I spoke to them, they registered me, you see. And then I didn't have money to ... I didn't have anything to eat and everything; I went to Financial Aid. I went to see some of the psychologists because I had some problems, for free ... I also went to Financial Management, they gave me money for caf [cafeteria] and everything, so ... for the whole year, you see. So, uh ... in a way, they understand when somebody is really in need and wants to study.

Moderator: OK. Umm ... When you say someb ... somebody registered you when you had to register, are you still talking about residence management or ...

Katlego: Yah ... I went to management

Moderator: Residence Management?

Katlego: No ...

Moderator: Oh, university management?

Katlego: Yah, university management. Yah, I just spoke to them and they registered me.

Maningi: In advantages ... I also like it. Like ... they care. First time when I came here from KZN, I didn't have a room, they welcomed me, they then gave me a room. But this year, I didn't have the money to register; I went to Finance and then they registered me (Moderator: OK).

Thabo: Just to add on what she was saying. The other part that I like ... the other part that I like about SMU is that ... they give you, like, residence. When you are a Medunsa student, you are sure that you have res, yah, and then the other one is that is that most of the Medunsa students ... they don't face financial exclusions. They make sure that they provide something for you, so that you register and then, during the course of the year, that's when you can [inaudible] ... and even if you don't have money, NSFAS tries by all means to accommodate all the students and also, they make bursaries available. So, we don't get time to stress about finances.

Moderator: OK. And Sne, do you have a different experience?

Sne: *(Laughs)* I think from the angle that I'm in, it's different ... Because I think they have this thing, the management ... Once you are able to pay for your fees, maybe like in my first year I was able to pay for my fees, then everything was ... but in second year when I wasn't able, that's when the problem arose. That's why I'm saying it depends on the situation. Because I remember I went to the financial office and they said "because your parents paid for you, not NSFAS or any bursary, we cannot help you". I'm not saying ... the school, I ... I agree, they do this ... it helps. IF they know that you are ... because with us they are like

maybe you are lying because ... (Moderator: Because you were able to in the first place?) Yah ... yah.

Zinhle: Alright ... I'm just gonna come from a different angle. OK, the disadvantages of being here ...

Moderator: Disadvantages?

Zinhle: Yes, disadvantages

Moderator: C ... can we ... can we wrap up on the advantages and then move to a new venue and then start with the disadvantages?

[Interruption]

Moderator: OK, can we talk about the disadvantages?

Zinhle: OK, I was still on the disadvantage, right? I was still on the disadvantages. If you go out ... OK, we're doing a BSc here. If you go out and you're looking for a job. We know that in the streets or in companies, the first thing they look at is your ... is the name of the university that you are coming from. Ha ... Medunsa or Sefako ... there's no ... there's only "Health" ... thingie ... health courses in Sefako or Medunsa, how can you do BSc? We don't know anything about BSc courses there? You see, they have that on you, towards you. So there are lesser chances of getting employed.

Moderator: You mean specifically for your course?

Zinhle: Yes, specifically for BSc. So for that it's kind of an advantage to us (Moderator: You mean a "disadvantage"?). Yes, a disadvantage to us.

Moderator: And the other people who don't have that challenge, what are the disadvantages of studying at this institution, if there are any.

Thabo: With me, I can say ... with me, you see, I'm a person who likes to learn from other people. So here there is no that like uuh ... inter ... like racial interaction with like other races interacting with other races. As we've already said, that there is that kind of ... whereby other

races ... they group themselves, things like that. So we don't get time to communicate with others ... even though we may say some times we [inaudible] but it is not always the case like that because I realise like in my first year, I used to always go to where there are other races like when we were attending in lecture halls of English, I would sit with the Whites. You'll find out that they just discrim ... they just speak among themselves, like excluding you, when they ... *(Other participants laugh)*. So I can say that is another disadvantage because when we get to the workplace, you'll find that I'm only used to speaking to Blacks and when I see a White person, it's becoming like a different thing to me.

Katlego: With me ... these political structures ... these political structures, they take these eeh ... these structures ... the politics, focus more on them. Last year, we were embarking in a cert ... in a strike that was not even benefitting us. Remember that strike? *(Turning to other participants)* So in a way, people can just decide on something because *they* want something. For example, Medunsa students people have this tendency of saying this university is, you know, for Medicine people ... and everything. So, we striked several times eh ... here at that time, only that time. We wanted a certain Dr ... Professor, (Sne: HOD) HOD, to be removed because he was not ... she was not doing her job very well. So we striked, we wanted eh ... the ... the students to help us. So, the Medical students refused, they actually said they wouldn't help us, they wouldn't strike with us, you know. So they have that power to can even eeh ... refuse, you know, to help us. Then they were having problems with their HODs last year; so, they forced everyone to participate in the strike ... Yah, everybody now participated ... even th ... if ... some of us will remember ... at Dental, we had a meeting, we didn't want to participate, because those issues didn't affect us. Then they also refused then to help us when we had problems, you know. But because, I don't know, these political structures and everything, they said if we don't participate, there'll be penalties, they will abandon you and

everything, so we are afraid to [inaudible] ... It's one of the disadvantages. People are more political than they are here to study.

Moderator: I see. OK, OK. Yes, Sne?

Sne: With what they said neh, it also goes to the management *(Repeats)*. The disadvantage neh ... the management. The management on its own ... there are some courses that they are taking for granted. Like when I was once in a meeting last year, there was a certain person in higher authority who said that a BSc is not a professional degree. I don't remember. It was a student body meeting, he was invited. Students were so angry that they wanted to beat that person. Even with us ... eeh ... Dental students... apparently there was this other lecturer, I was told, I won't mention any name. He said that they wanted a meeting with the doctors and what-so-not, people in [inaudible] there in that faculty. What happened is that someone who actually suggested that, because Bachelor of Oral Hygiene and Bachelor of Dental Therapy, if you're doing it it's like maybe you were doing BDS, we were only taken there because we didn't qualify and what so not. So, they were gonna make a decision that if you were a high performer in class, automatically you would be moved to BDS (Moderator: What's BDS?; Sne: Bachelor of Dental Surgery or Science ... Dental Science), they'll automatically put you there, meaning that they are saying, if you're doing this and this, you didn't want to do it. The management themselves, they they ... think other ... other courses are brid ... you are bridging course, you didn't want to do it, you were forced, circumstances and what so not. There are some ... he was saying about Medicine ... I'm sure if the Medicine Science students can say we want to do this, the entire school would do it. If we could come as maybe other sciences and Dental and say, "we want to do this", they're like, "did you follow proper procedures?" and what so not. Even the management themselves, they pick and choose. Again, another thing that I've seen in the management is that most of the people who are there are professors, they did Medicine and they did something else after that. You can see why they

are doing that, because it's something they also did, so they feel as if everyone ... (Moderator: It's what they want to do? *(Participant agrees)*).

Moderator: OK. Can we talk more about how you think ... you mentioned some of the things ... how do you think in other ways the institution could enhance your or students' academic experiences? Like, is there anything that you think the institution can do that can make students' experiences ... um ...better?

Thabo: By students' experiences, meaning like uh ... uh ... including the disadvantages that we have mentioned?

Moderator: Yes, it doesn't have to be any of those that you mentioned. It doesn't have to be [CONFINED] things. Just other things, what you think the institution could do for students.

Thabo: With me, I think that we ... they need to ... like ... to take more students. As ... like ... the ... now, it is part of the disadvantage, the first part that [inaudible] mentioned. It's like, we don't have infrastructure, as you can see. Other buildings, they're still building them, and then the other reason is that they're still building them. So, well based on that, they were not able to like to ... to enrol more students. So, I think if they could like take more students, then all of us would be equal, like where there's not ... there's not going to be that thing of Medicine, they are in the majority, and then they take them into consideration, forgetting other courses. So like, if we are all equal, if they take 250 BSc students, 250 Pharmacy ... all of us will feel equal and then ... like, we'll get that time to interact because this thing is also affecting us as students, because you find that they take my course for granted and then when I see a Medicine student, I'm like "they are special", things like that, so but if we are equal, such things, they cannot happen, so ...[inaudible].

Moderator: Any other things that you guys think the university could do?

Katlego: They must start by building the new ... the Department for BSc (Moderator: OK). If you check, we have Pharmacy ... Pharmacy building, we have Dental building. I don't know

where the one for BSc is (Another participant: *(laughs)* We don't have) *(Katlego also laughs)*

Yah you know, because ... I ... there's Eng ... there's English ... you understand? They should start by ... and then again, I don't know what they could do, but at least, they must try to ... if they can bring motivators, people who can motivate ... so that we can feel better about our courses. This thing of people ... because there are so many people who ... I ... I wanted to do BDS because of this thing, because of what people were saying about my course. Until I decided to, actually this year, you know what, I'm not gonna let them really disturb ... or until I did my own research and found out that "Oh these things were lies, actually, this is the truth" and then I followed my own, you know, my passion you know. So, it is the responsibility of management to make sure that everybody is feeling right about what they are here for. Yah.

Thabo: I also think that the lectures in our department, like, all the courses that are offered here. They should, they should encourage this thing of interracial interaction, whereby in classes, we sit in pairs, where they don't allow people to just sit in groups according to race. Like, when I sit next to a White person each and every single day, we get time to interact; they also get to accept that this is a multicultural, multiracial school, whereby everybody, like all the races are here, and then we have to feel free with one another. Because this thing it ... we might take it for granted, but it is also affecting us.

Moderator: OK, how do you think it affects you?

Thabo: With me, it affects me because I'm a person who wants to learn, who wants to be involved with other races. I'm not happy each and every day I'm speaking to Black people. I also want to speak to other kinds of races. So when I try to go to them to socialise, they tell me other things or ... I remember one day we were just ... we were here, last year I was a first-year student, so I just said I'm going to sit with those Whites because I see them in the lecture hall each and every day, like for English, because we are taking English all of us. So, when I

was sitting, they were busy ... like, I heard them talking about a relevant topic about the university, but when I sat, they started talking about how they developed, things that they know, they did when they were kids and then this means that I wasn't included because I couldn't interact, I couldn't act because I was not there when they developed. They also changed the language to a point whereby I don't understand anything. So, that was a disadvantage for me. Yah. So, the thing is, most of the time I don't feel free, I don't feel when I'm next to them because I'm not used to speaking to them, that's why I want to speak to them more often.

Moderator: OK, OK. Yes, Maningi?

Maningi: They should stop this thing of like, taking ... like, for BSc and other courses. If you can notice, I was doing Biology last year. And at the practicals, Monday it's MB, Medicine, Tuesday, like it's BDS or what-what, then BSc they put it on Thursday. And then I was doing a practical on Thursday, 4 o'clock, and then like, I can go out at 10 o'clock at night, because I'm doing BSc, I'll do the practicals on the last day. Last year, my practicals were ending during 9, 8, 10 at night. Even if you can check the timetable, BSc is always at the end. They can set for Medicine, for other courses, but BSc it's at the end, last priority.

Moderator: OK, and that's a disadvantage for BSc students?

Maningi: Yah, it's a disadvantage for me.

Moderator: OK, umm ... can we talk about ... um ... dropping out. Do you ... do you guys personally know someone who has dropped out ... umm ... of this specific institution over the past year or two? And if so, what were their reasons?

Katlego: I ... I know ... I know one ... (Moderator: M-hhm) This guy was admitted in Medicine, he was admitted in Medicine. I actually didn't kn ... I think he was not informed. He ... he didn't know ... like, he didn't know the revl ... relevant people to ... I think it was financial, actually, so I didn't even hear. If you don't know, then that's why you don ... I

think that was the reason, lack of information. 'Cause I ... I tried to sp ... I was trying to speak with them, they just told me no, it's family problem. So, but I think it was financial because I was with that person. He didn't know who was gonna pay the ... the fees. And he's from ... he's fresh from matric. When you tell him that, you know, like me, I don't ... nobody is working at home, nothing. I don't get any money. So it's like he didn't trust me enough. (Moderator: OK, m-hhm) So, I think that was lack of information.

Moderator: OK, and the others?

Sne: I ... I... I... I do. The ... the reason was academical exclusion and what I've noticed is that, in terms of exclusion cases, this thing it's, it's ... I think there's too much corruption in this, 'cause some people there are cases ... One person can repeat four times, one year, and then they'll still ... but then, isn't it they say I think after two times you're ... you're excluded? But that person will be repeating after four years, they can appeal and then you see them in the following class or what so not, they're back. But then there's someone who only repeated once, they're not back. I think there's corruption, in terms of the exclusion cases. Som ... they're being won, I agree. But some ... some ... sometimes like, it's, it's ... only if you ... there's this term, only if you know people in the SRC, your things will succeed. If you don't, no ... sorry. 'Cause there are ... there was someone I know.

Moderator: OK. Are there other people that you might know?

Thabo: Yes, we ... in m ... like, in my department, there are other [inaudible] that were doing B.Pharm III last year. They left, they went to another institutions. Even though I can't call it a drop-out, or such, but it was because of the victimisation that they experienced in our department. As you know that, in our department, some of the things that you do outside, they might come and impact on you ... directly or indirectly, since we are taught by one lecturer. You'll find out that they ... [inaudible] *(laughs)* things happen, the lecturer might be jealous of you, and you are stuck with that person for the whole year. So, that person might

do whatever they want to do. So you'll find out that I passed ... the people ... those people that I'm talking about, they've passed very very well, yah, but because of the ... of the ... their manners, the way they interacted with lecturers, yah, they got victimised and then they dropped out. [inaudible].

Moderator: OK. OK. Umm ... in your opinion, what do you think are reasons for consistently poor performance by some students. Are there ... are you aware of students who consistently, you know, perform poorly. And if so, what do you think are the reasons for that?

Sne: I personally ... this I know. Uh ... it's not to ... to undermine certain things and what so not. People who are pol ... who are in the political parties, they have this thing; they can drop out and do whatever. They know, I'm gonna go to SRC, they're gonna fight for me, anyway. So I think it's ignorance, people are just being ignorant. There are people I know. There's this ... I almost said his name *(laughs and so do other participants)* then that person neh ... he's been repeating first year maybe for three years now. And he only passed ... I think he was doing only six subjects, I'm not sure; he only passed one. You can see it's not because he's dumb. If he was dumb, he was not even gonna go to school at all. No, sorry for using the word, "dumb"; it's actually offensive. But if he was mentally retarded, he was not even gonna go to school in the first place. No, it's a condition, mental retardation; it's a condition (*explaining 'mental retardation'*). Yah, but then you see that some people, they do it because they know, there's a b ... it's like they don't have a focus in life. 'Cause I ... I ... I was told by a very trusted source that there are certain people who don't think they can fail. You can go to this other political structure, they will give you a position, you'll have a position. You'll have a position anyway, so you actually, you don't actually ... you don't need that degree. Anyway, you're getting [inaudible], just being ignorant.

Moderator: And others? What do you think, Zinhle?

Zinhle: OK um ... I think time management from our side, as ... as students. OK, let me just make an example of what I'm saying. Um ... as ... as ... we have elaborated already that ... um ... we don't have ... umm... an ... an appealing infrastructure around us, you see. The most thing ... OK, most of the times, what we do as students of Sefako, we sleep! *(Participants laugh)* And we know of course that sleeping, it results, like the body itself, it gets tired and what not ... like you don't ... you don't become productive, you see. Sometimes you miss class because you are sleeping *(Participants laugh)*. (Moderator: Why are you sleeping?). Like okay uh ... yah, maybe the lecturer is boring, or maybe you're choosing classes, you see those type of things, and you end up failing. (Moderator: OK). Yah. I think, for me personally *(laugh)* 'cause I know it to be true.

Lonwabo: Eeh ... personally, I think it's peer pressure. Yes, peer pressure. People that you ... the friends ... they group that you are involved with ... like, for example, I'm staying in town. Actually, also the environment; like where we're staying, like shops, yah, there are many clubs (Moderator: Where *you* are staying?) Yes; I'm staying in town, in res in town, that side. Yah, even the environment can play a role. (Moderator: OK). [inaudible].

Thabo: With me, things that I realise that they affect most of the students' performance, including myself in there, first of all, I'd say it's financial. Most of the Blacks ... even if we are saying this, but it's what is a fact, most of the Blacks, we come from disadvantaged backgrounds whereby, when you get to ... like, to varsity, when you get here, like you are independent. It's not like secondary, whereby they cook for you during lunch *(Some participants laugh)*. So here you have ... everything is dependent on you, like, you have to do it. So when you get here, you find out that you don't have ... like financially, your family does not support you financially. And then you have to ... to be studying about food while you have to read. You have to be thinking of "what am I going to eat tomorrow?" And then, the other thing as he has mentioned that a student ... one student dropped, but he thought that

he w... he thinks that it was financial, yah you out find that, lacking information ... You don't ... You come from a disadvantaged family, you come you , you don't ask; you don't go to CP and ask as to whether wha ... how it's happening, how are the fees paid here and then you get yourself stressed about things that are irrelevant, more than focusing on your education. And then the other thing that I can say it can affect like the ... our performance is that, you see, we don't ... we don't engage in more activities, like debate, there's no such things of debating *(Another participant agrees)*, whereby when we debate, we gain more experience and then we learn to ... the English... like the English w [inaudible] ... As we know that nobody here, like most of the people, English they did it as their second additional language or ... yah, first additional language, meaning that they are not familiar. You'll find out, in a lecture, that is what I experienced in my first year. I had to be struggling with the ... like the ... those lectures, the Afrikaner lecturers, they speak very fast and their English is just ... it just ... they just get it out *(Another participant laughs)* I don't [inaudible] So that thing comes to affect my performance because when I go to read, I see the slides but I didn't hear anything. *(Participants laugh)* Yah, it affected me a lot to a point whereby I saw that yah, now I'm struggling. I had to ta ... to take extra lessons for English, even though we were attending English, but I had to take another extra lesson. And then the other one is that, we don't have sports whereby like, you see when we ... we have hobbies, when we have sports, rugby and things like that, when we have fields to practise those things, we interact with one another and then we get a chance to know one another and develop and feel free. So such things, they are not happening here; you'll find that I'm an introvert; I don't have somebody to speak to, that I'm jus ... I'm just a person who is always alone. So, when go to fields to play soccer, things like that, even if I'm an introvert, but I'll find Katlego whereby I'll feel comfortable when I speak to him and then that's where like, I will pour out my heart [inaudible] like the problems that I have. So, not having sports is always ... it ... it also comes to count against us.

Moderator: OK, umm ... what are your ... um ... you, the others *(laughs)* Now I'm also struggling with language. What are your experiences with language, what do you think, do you share what Thabo umm ... said that it can also be a disadvantage?

Katlego: Yah. In my first year, aah I struggled a lot because, you know, at ... they spoon-feed ... they spoon-feed you there at high school. So you just come here as just somebody ... a White person, with white beards there and then he's busy speaking fast and everything. *(Participants laugh)* So, he's right. I could ... end up like, bunking some of the lectures or sleeping in class, you see. So yah, I ... I share the same thing that he said.

Moderator: OK, OK.

Thabo: Just to add, one thing that can also count against ... the ... the company that we keep, it is also something that comes to ... come to count against our performance because you find that at primary and secondary level, I was keeping good friends, when I get here, I'm independent, I'm free, I do whatever I want. You'll find out that I get those bad friends, who are going to influence me. We start clubbing, going to clubs, going to taverns (Another participant: Yah), and then that comes to count against me, and also in relationships. We involve ourselves in relationships whereby we have problems in them, and then when you are stressed, I'm thinking about that *(A participant laughs)* boy ... When she's in my heart, I can't think about anything (Another participant: Yah). Even when they are teaching, even when I'm writing exams, I think about her *(Participants laugh)*, I think about how is she going to look at me. Things like that, they come to count against us.

Katlego: Can I just say something about relationships? *(Laughs)* Yah, this guy is telling the truth. You know I'm ... I was surprised ... My friend *(gesturing towards Lonwabo)* can be a witness here. There's a lot more of complication to this relationship thing than other problems. I can have any problems, I can handle them *(Participants laugh)*, but now when it comes to emotionally, I'm telling you the truth, you wouldn't even be interested in doing

anything. So, this thing of people st ... experiencing new things, engaging in things that you didn't eng ... Most of the people, especially girls, no ... I mean not girls, especially boys, they come, they start dating here, here in varsity. Fresh from [inaudible] focusing. Now when they come here, they now start developing feelings for people *(Participants laugh)*. Now when they dump you now, you understand, [inaudible] you can't study. I once had a ... a s ... problem like this, whereby I was so stuck in somebody's mind, in this other girl, and you know for like ... two months, I was just that person, and I changed; from that time then I hated ... I started hating this dating. And I never dated again. *(Participants laugh)* So, there's more to that then feelings.

Thabo: Yah just to add, I like the part that [inaudible]. You see, this thing of family ... family problems, where the ... the capacity, like the ... the amount, the family size, your family size comes to affect you when you're at varsity. Let's say that at home you're five, and then you find out that my parents, both of my parents are not working. And then both of like ... three of my siblings, they are at secondary level, and then I'm at varsity, the other ones, they are at primary level, they need to provide for all of us, and then you'll find out that at ... those who are at secondary, they need their ... their uniforms, things like that, they go to trips, and then I also need food here, I don't have food. So you find out that the parents cannot balance. So really, when you are here you are supposed to think about education, and you're thinking about ... I'm consuming, like ... I'm using money meant for use at home (*apologises for switching to Sepedi;* Moderator: No, it's OK), I'm using the money meant for my siblings; they don't get that freedom. Like now it is bad with them, with me [inaudible]. So that thing can come to affect you, and even if like, when your siblings have problems, those problems, when your parents tell you, they come to affect you. If something is happening at home, there is no way that you can concentrate while you are at varsity.

Moderator: OK.

Maningi: I also agree with that.

Moderator: OK. So we all agree on that? Umm ... umm ... are there any ways that you think the institution ... or are there any things that you think the institution could umm ... help or support students who are at risk of dropping out?

(Silence)

Zinhle: Umm ... I don't know if it's happening, because I've never heard of it before ... like, I think for lecturers, it's their responsibility to ... to k ... to ... to keep the records of ... of students, isn't it? Like, if you see that this student is not performing well (Moderator: M-hhm), you can maybe ... 'cause I've never had that interaction before, you see, that the lecturer is concerned about how you are ... how you are performing, you see. They don't give us that little bit of love, you see, you know what, you must ... you ... "what are you struggling with, how can I help you?", you see, you see. Like, I think okay fine, like they taught us just strictly, when I came here in 2014, they were like, "This is not high school; we're not going to follow you. If you ... if you stay in your room, sleep the whole day, we're not going to ask you where you are. We're not going to even care". Our English lecturer, my goodness ... she told us that and, of course, from that day, I knew that at varsity, they don't care. They don't care about you; the only thing that they care about is money. "You must pay us!" *(Another participant laughs)* You see, so like, I think they must improve more on ... on the interaction with students.

Moderator: OK.

Thabo: In my department, I think what they can do to ... to ... to prevent this thing of dropping out, because most of the students who drop out, it's because of victimisation. I think they can hire more lecturers; like, they can try to get more lecturers, so that we don't have to be stuck with one lecturer for the rest of the year. Because if we have many lecturers, there

won't be a chance whereby, all of them have like, something against you. Even if y ... one lecturer might be against you, that cannot come to impact on how you are going to pass.

Moderator: Sne?

Sne: OK, another thing they should start with the ... it's already in place, strengthen the mentorship programme, because you find that we do have a mentorship programme, but we are dodging it. Because in mentorship, in the mentorship eh ... thing, they tell you that you meet with your mentees and you should sign. So what is happening is that, maybe I'm a mentor, they are ... two of them are my mentees, I won't have any meeting with them, I'll only go to them to ask for signatures, as if I did the work, while I didn't. I think they should supervise that, they should check into that, if mentors are doing their jobs.

Thabo: Just add on what she was saying, this mentorship programme, most of all, like mostly it's not compulsory in all the courses. Like, some of the courses, you'll find out that [inaudible], you'll just have to choose. So, I think that they can also make the mentorship programme compulsory, whereby if you are a second-year student, you are forced to have a mentor, because just by doing so, I'll be able to like ... to pour out to, inform the first-year students on whatever that is going on campus (Moderator: m-hhm) and that will improve the performance of that student.

Moderator: Umm ... we're almost done ... How confident are you and maybe your close friends that you'll get your degree within the prescribed time? And if you're confident or not, what are the reasons?

Sne: With this, me and my classmates, I think they'll agree, we are very confident that we're gonna get our degrees in time. Why? One of the reasons being that, I think like, it also goes with the attitude that you have; we have this attitude of ... of ... it's not that we wanna ... we wanna go from this place, but then we wanna get our degrees and work. We are following that money (Moderator: M-hhm). Yah, we're following that thing, we wanna be independent,

we wanna work; I think it's with attitude isn't it? We should change our attitude also; I should have this attitude that, I should study now, I should go to church now, I should go to town now, I should go where where where ... We should be able to plan our lives (Moderator: M-hhm) and then change our attitude again (Moderator: OK). Yah.

Moderator: And Lonwabo?

Lonwabo: Me, I disagree with them. Like the experience that I had like, from January, from January... starting from January (Moderator: Can you speak a little bit loud? Lonwabo: OK) ... eeh, starting from January, we didn't have classes, like, there was a bit of confusion ... I don't know ... because even now, they're still fixing that part of the confusion, but I haven't seen any progress, I'm just attending, for the sake of coming here. Yah. I think that's the ... that can be the problem (Moderator: OK). Yah.

Katlego: Yah, just to add, yah you know ... sometimes I hear people complaining and everything or maybe it's because eeh... maybe some of them, they don't know. You see, with our course, we feel, sometimes we feel like these people, they don't take us seriously. You know, this other lecturer will just come and tell us that aah ... this year we're intro ... we're introducing a new thing *(Participants laugh)*. And [inaudible] aah that particular thing that she ... he or she's interested in, you see. And then for example, my friend is ... is right, we were ... we didn't do anything from January because we didn't know, they didn't, nobody knew what we were gonna do, what we were supposed to do. We do this thing, they tell us no, this is not for you, it's for BDS. You see? That particular ... in a way, it will discourage you; my friend *(referring to Lonwabo)* wanted to go into BSc. He always wanted to do BSc, you see. It's just that already now it's late, you'll do it after ... maybe, probably after the degree *(Lonwabo agrees)*. So yah, that's the w ... that's the thing that ... it ... it actually discourages you, you know, because now we feel as if, OK it's fine now, you don't have anything on paper. You just tell us we're gonna do [inaudible] today. And then the next thing,

you say we're gonna present, we're gonna write a test; we asked them to give us eeh ...

something to ... to show if whether we're doing this thing, she doesn't have that. So then, we

wrote letters to ... to the department, you see, and until ... now at least, they're now looking at

that thing, currently.

Moderator: OK.

Thabo: Yah, with me, I can say that I'm confident. The thing is, my confidence lies between

the interval of 70 or 80%, because one of the things that discouraged me, when I'm confident

enough that I'm going to finish within the interval, that thing of victimisation, it doesn't

matter as to whether you pass very well or not. They just victimise you, even if you've got

good marks. So, it might happen, it might not happen. So, I can't say that I'm too confident.

Moderator: OK. Umm... Maningi? Yes.

Maningi: I was confident, but then for first year, I was confident that I'll complete it, but

when I come to second year, they are introducing that ... aah, you won't pass in Organic

Chemistry *(Another participant laughs)* ... you won't. And then now, the [inaudible] starts to

challenge me, and then I'm starting to be a little bit ... eish, I think I'm not confident.

Moderator: M-hhm. OK. And umm... Zinhle?

Zinhle: Oh yah, for me, I think self-motivation ... I think self-motivation is core for one

person, you see, for yourself, just to have the self-motivation thing, you see. You are focusing

on getting ... but however, yes, they are ... there are influences that can ... that can increase

your ... your ... your days in university, you see. Like the influences o ... of ... of failing

maybe one subject and then, of course, you're gonna carry things, carry things forward

because we're doing a semester course, not a year course, you see. So, of course you are

going to carry those subjects. However, it's ... it's ... it's ... it influences with your ... with

your time interval, so you end up losing your focus.

Moderator: OK. Umm ... if there anything that you'd like to add maybe ... umm... feel free to do so, that you feel I might not have specifically asked about because my questions are done. Umm ... in the meantime, while you're thinking, if you're thinking, thank you very much for your participation; I really appreciate it.

Sne: Did you get anything from it?

Moderator: I got a lot. Some of the things, I could, I might have expected, umm... yah, I got a lot of what I expected and what I didn't expect also, yah, so thank you a lot, I appreciate it.

Katlego: I think ... It ... it is my wish that uh ... Medunsa ... For example, I ... I always wanted Medunsa to build a certain department and say this one's for BSc, that one I've always ... I ... I never understood it. [inaudible] These people are ... are not taking us seriously. I wish they would do that, you know, and another thing, other departments are functioning; like my department, in our class, we never really ... I mean ... in our class, nobody ever was excluded, even ... *(Another participant agrees)* Even ... yah, like we all graduate after, and everything. For example, currently we have ... they took two students from my class, they went to Sweden, you know, and then [inaudible] the other two students from Sweden, they are here. So, in a way, uuh ... that relationship is good for us. So I just hope they can do ... or they can establish that relationship for every department. For example, take two BSc students, take them to another ... to ... to study overseas just like we do. 'Cause now those ones they're gonna have another experience [inaudible], a Swedish experience, we can do that for every course. Just to see ... or just to gain more experience (Moderator: OK).

Thabo: What I wanted to just add, it was ... uuh ... I'm concerned ... like, each time I'm concerned about the security measures here at SMU. We have the CCTVs, but like, they cover us, but like, they're not working *(Participants laugh)* And even if you can look at the gate, people can just access the gate. You can just jump over the fence there, it is not that electrified. Like, we are not secure; I can't say I'm 100% secured when I'm in this like, in

this varsity. Even though you are staying at res, like one day I was ... we have monkeys there *(Participants laugh)*. Seriously; those things are ... the things that they should be controlling. Even the ... the ... I heard somebody saying that there are snakes. So such things, they can come to impact on you. Because if you think, you're studying and then you think maybe a snake just went through the [inaudible]. So, such things, the security measures ... I don't feel like that they are good. And the second thing is that they should introduce online systems. Here, at SMU, when you have to register, you have to be like in a queue. Like, I remember, this year I was in a queue from 8 o'clock until 7. Just think, the whole day I didn't eat, things like that. So, I think they should also include like eeh ... introduce the online systems here at SMU. And also the health awareness, like the clinic, this clinic ... most of the people don't know that they have like, a clinic here at SMU. And even if you can go there, you'll just find two nurses. You'll find they have like, many tea breaks, they are very rude; when you go there, they'll be saying, "you know what, we are on a tea break" *(Participants laugh)*. "We are busy". I'm telling you, I once had an infection of antifung ... like a fungus here, and they were small. And then I went there, they said "Come the next day", I went the next day, and then they say ... I went after ... like, it was 1; 1, 2, 3, 4 ... they told me that, "no, we are leaving ... we're having a dressing, we are dressing somebody; come the next day". I spent three days; on the fourth day, like, they were worse on me; so, I think they should also try to improve that.

Katlego: OK, the last thing ... they must put a robot there, at the main gate. Yah. *(Participants agree)* Serious, it's like we are not students, it's like we are not brilliant or intellectual, and ... you know. 'Cause like we are ... we cannot be always ... I think Sne and the others, they'll tell you ... they'll understand too. If you are staying here, you can take ... stand maybe 10 or even 20 minutes there, waiting there so that cars can pass. (Moderator: Oh, to cross to the other side?) To cross to the other side (Moderator: My goodness ... OK). I'm sure they're waiting

for somebody to ... to get hit by a car, then they'll put a robot. That thing, according to ... according to my understanding, they could have just put it a long time ago (Sne: Mm, you're right. *Other participants agree*). Mm, it's a university (Moderator: M-hhm. OK).

Sne: In terms of ... of ... the ... the [inaudible], I ... I don't personally have a problem with the SRC, but the way things are run there, it's like people are doing as they wish. The school is not ... 'cause the SRC, they have a constitution. The school is not making sure that those people are following whatever is ... whatever they stand for. And even then, the school themselves ... the management per se ... I think sometimes they feel as if they own us, not that they're leading us (Moderator: M-hhm). They're actually leading us, not owning us. Sometimes it's like they do as they feel, not according to paper because rules were made to be followed. Like, I feel that the school rules, they are there for just being there. They are not be ... actually being followed. People do as they wish.

Moderator: Are you talking about the SRC now?

Sne: No, the management. [Inaudible]. Because they are the ones on top. SRC, they are represent ... they are supposed to represent us; it's only representing. They don't make rules for the school and what so not. Yah, that one we can sort out with them, as students. We can fix them and yah. But then the management per se, they should make sure ... if they write a rule ... 'Cause there ... there was ... in the schoolbook, there's a rule which says, if a lecturer is not in class, eeh ... uuh ... maybe she's 15 minutes late; maybe the lecture starts at 11 and then it's 11:20, already 15 minutes have elapsed, students are supposed to go out because it means the lecture is not going to happen that day. But you find that the lecturer comes to class an hour late; and we have been waiting there because we don't know that the thing is written ... and us again, we are lazy to read. That book is so small, hundred and something pages, it's not that much; it's so small, that book. We are lazy to read. You ... there ... I'm sure there are people who have never seen that rule in that school ... in the school ... is it the

rule book or what? *(Other participant say what the book is called)*. Yah, it's written there. I think, they should make sure people are doing whatever they are supposed to do. Lecturers are lecturing during the time they are supposed to lecture. Not a lecturer who will tell us, "come at lunch". And that this is self-study, but then there are [inaudible] pages for that; it's self-study. Five chapters, self-study *(Another participant laughs, Sne laughs [inaudible])*.

Moderator: Is there anything that you three would like to add? *(Gesturing towards three of the participants)*

Lonwabo: On my part, no. There's nothing I want to add.

Moderator: You guys?

(Participants state they have nothing to add)

Moderator: OK, thank you very much. Uuh ... yah, that's it.

Focus group discussion concludes.

Transcript 2: SMU Focus Group Discussion 2

Moderator: Hello everyone. Thank you so much again for agreeing to participate. I take it you've read through the consent form? I'll give you the details ... I don't have them—so if anybody has them...— of your student services, you can give me, and then I'll give you guys afterwards, just to formally ensure that you know who to access. Please take down my details, if you need any clarification, enquiries or whatever at a later stage, so that you can contact me. OK, as I've said to some of you before, my study is on factors that predict academic success, as you'll see there *(gesturing towards consent form)*. So, we're going to take about 45 minutes, depending ... just to talk about your experiences, yeah. I've actually forgotten, on that list where you wrote down your names, would you please also write down what you're studying and your study year, you don't have to write down your surname. You can delete it if you've written it before; we're not gonna need that much detailed information. So, I'm Tsholofelo and I'm a student at UP, and this is Devon, he'll be helping with the recording and taking notes. And would you guys please introduce yourselves?

[Participants introduce themselves]

Okay, please participate as much as possible, give honest opinions, and so on, and oh, you don't have to use your real name, whatever your preference is *(Participants laugh)*

Jaco: You could have mentioned that one! *(Participants laugh)*

Moderator: [inaudible] So when you respond, because we have to know who said what, when you respond, please say your name first, so that we can link an opinion with a name. Firstly, I'm gonna start with why you chose to study here. *(Participants laugh)*

Ilska: I didn't *(laughs)*

Moderator: What happened?

Ilska: It was chosen for me. In our course, you go where you get accepted, pretty much. So, most of us got accepted for BSc, but at UP or at another university, but then you got accepted

here in MBChB or BDS, then you get an opportunity to study what you want to, then you get accepted. So it could have been here or UCT or ... or Wits. For me, I would've ... I went where I got accepted.

Moderator: OK.

Esmarie: I think that's actually the case for all of us. (Another participant: Yah).

Lisa: Although it's the case ... (Moderator: Please remember to say your names *[verifies names of participants who have just spoken]*), our university is one of the best in the country. So, whether we got accepted here and under which circumstances, yah, it's still a good university. So, you just have to jump at the opportunity.

Moderator: But are you happy with the choice that was made for you?

(Participants agree)

Moderator: OK. What are you guys studying; are you all studying the same thing?

Unidentified participant: Basically, but no *(laughs)*.

Ilska: We're doing Dentistry. Ilska and Lisa are doing Dentistry.

Jaco: Esmarie and Hesmari and Jaco are doing BD ... eeh ... MBChB.

Moderator: So, what do you think ... you mentioned that it's the best university in the country. What do you think are the advantages of studying here?

Esmarie: I think we're doing a lot of practicals, so that's good. Because we get a lot of hands-on experience that you don't necessarily get at all the other universities in your first year. [inaudible] and I've talked to my friends at other universities, who study also Medicine, but they haven't done that. So I think that's good.

Moderator: What year level are you? (Jaco: first year). Are you all first-years? (Participant: We're all first years). And other people?

Jaco: I personally am enjoying this university because it's situated ins ... in the community. It's really an eye opener to see what is out there and what is going on in our healthcare system and our society as a whole. So really, it's a big eye opener.

Moderator: OK. So you get to engage with community members and ... (Jaco: Yah). OK. Hesmari?

Hesmari: I feel like you're a lot less sheltered, so I think if you get thrown into everything so quickly, the practicals, you know what's really going on out there, the training and everything, it won't be such a shock if you finally have to do it. So, it's also about the practical experience and about seeing what it's really gonna be about, so that you don't have this idolised perspective and then when you get there, it's not what you wanted.

Moderator: And umm...the disadvantages?

Ilska: The area, I'll say it's for me, a disadvantage. You must drive very far. Not one of us are living on campus; we don't live ... like I only live in Centurion which is really far from here. And even though they live in Pretoria North, it's still not close enough, so we can't walk or stay here, and work on something until 10 o'clock. You can, but you have to drive far and it's not a safe road to drive; so I'll say for safety, it's the most disadvantaged, but not in the university, just where it's situated, in the community, quite far out of the ... out of everything else. But inside the university, it's very safe. I haven't felt ... unsafe. (Moderator: OK).

Esmarie: I think we miss out on a lot of social events, we must organise our own social events. Like, at Tuks, for instance, the residences have their own socials; we don't have any here.

Lisa: Also like Ilska said, it's just eeh ... the situation of the campus because sometimes we do get held up late in class, and then we have to drive all the way back home and the roads coming here is not that safe. It's just the safety that's the issue for me.

Jaco: I personally feel that the sport at this university is underdeveloped, and compared to other universities all over South Africa. So, that's a disadvantage for me and then also, the whole thing of ... this university has a lot to grow still and it's got a large piece of land and can develop. It just ... it needs to get that. So, I think this university is gonna get better and better and as the years progress, they just need to get that.

Moderator: OK.

Hesmari: OK. For me, it's also the fact that you don't have much to do except for academics on campus; sometimes it's not as nice, if you think about it, because you just come here actually for one thing and you go home. But what's also a disadvantage for me personally is that, there is only the option to study in English. There is a lot of people struggling in other languages, like me, in Afrikaans, for instance. When you're used to going to school in this language, and suddenly you have to switch so quickly, where I think if you had that perspective of going to Tuks or somewhere, where you have more options, it's a bit of a disadvantage.

Moderator: OK and how do you think that in any way affects your academic performance or your overall experience?

Ilska: For me, because you've studied so long in Afrikaans and you sort of have this big background, when you suddenly have to do it in English now, it's not the same. You have to study everything and link every Afrikaans thing you learn to another language, so that you can actually remember it, a lot of times, you come to tests and you remember what you're supposed to write [inaudible] in the correct language. So, that sometimes can be hard.

Moderator: Just personally, do you translate things to Afr ... do you find yourself back-translating and so on, or you just study in the language you're supposed to be studying in?

Ilska: I try to ... when I know I know something really well from school, I try to translate from English to Afrikaans.

Moderator: OK. OK. And the others?

Esmarie: The language is a problem for me right now, because I study also in Afrikaans. But they say you adjust in about six months, so it's OK.

Moderator: So you haven't gotten there yet?

Esmarie: No I haven't gotten there yet, but I believe I will. But it's difficult, and I can see in my marks as well sometimes, but it's OK.

Moderator: OK.

Lisa: Sometimes, a lot of the things, you can get that connection between the ... even Afrikaans and English. Because the terms stay the same. They just change a little bit because of the pronunciation and so on. But if you just go and sit and read, just look at the stuff that we study, you see that even though you studied in Afrikaans, you still know, even though you have to say it in English. So ...

Moderator: OK

Ilska: I won't translate like my textbook or make a summary in Afrikaans, but when I study out loud, I will explain it for myself in Afrikaans, if I don't understand. But a lot of times, like the Biology or ... especially in Biology, the terms are mostly Latin. So, you can ... you still have that connotation that you had when you were in school. Afrikaans and English is a big adaptation; like, we haven't adapted yet. So, but we'll get there, it's not that difficult. We still had English in school, so it's OK.

Moderator: And Jaco?

Jaco: I personally went to school ... my home language is Afrikaans, but I spent my entire school career in an English school. So, I'm fully adapted to the English system. I'm happy, I'm really happy here; I'm glad that I ended up here, even with its disadvantages, I feel like they are not too big to overcome. (Moderator: Mm-hm)

Ilska: Even though at Tuks or Stellenbosch, you had that option to study in Afrikaans, if I look back now, I wouldn't have taken that opportunity because in the long run, and one day when you are in the professional field, you're going to have to work in English, and communicate in English, and that's why ... and even though the textbooks are still in English, so to go to a lecture, to write everything in Afrikaans is still confusing. So, I think we're getting a big advantage in the long run.

Moderator: You guys have mentioned adjustment with regard to language; what do you think about social adjustment? Are you adjusting well to social interactions on campus and so on?

Participant: We don't have much of all the other stuff, we don't have that much social interaction on campus; like we said, we don't have much of a student life here. So, it's mostly like at school, so there's not a big difference; just new people and new faces and that's it.

Esmarie: We have to make new friends, but I think we got that right. We are friends, all of us, but I saw some of the people ... they struggle to make friends because most of them come from Limpopo; so it's far away from home. So, they struggle, being far away from home, that's also a struggle for them, living on their own. But I think it's later in the year now, so, it's better for everyone. 'Cause I don't like group tasks at all, but it really helps to make friends, especially in the first year. You, then, you get to know more people or few people or people of other cultures that you wouldn't necessarily interact with, you're forced to. So, I don't like it, but it eeh ... I like the advantages of it.

Ilska: I have to be really honest, there is social activities—a lot. But, the White people and the Black people ... it's not because it's a separate thing or they don't speak to each other, it's just like a natural ... it was a natural effect, like, all the White people met each other and they became friends and the Black people ... that's just how it is. It's not that there's a war or like we don't communicate or get along well; it's quite the same; there's also Indians ... So, it's not that ... the Indians are together with their groups. So, there's a lot of social events, we

don't ... we just don't attend them. They're especially for the people in residence, and no there are no White people in the residence, and the [inaudible] group *(referring to event-organising group)*, their focus point is on the Black people. But it's not about ... like *that*, I don't wanna make it sound like that. (Another participant: We *can* attend if we want) Yes! They don't limit you, it's just a normal... it's the natural instinct of man. You're attracted to different ... (Moderator: No, I understand.).

Jaco: You go to what you're comfortable with (Other participants: Yes), and once you're comfortable, you can explore and divert into what you're uncomfortable with. But because you ... we all come from different places to a brand new spot and we're uncomfortable, you go to what you know there, and then once you feel like, OK, this is where I belong, you go further out to meet other people and make friends. And also the group tasks also come in and ... ja.

Moderator: OK

Ilska: Even in our big group of first-years are the White people ... even in there, there's still groups, that's just ... like, if you were at school or you were in an Afrikaans school, everybody would be friends and, exactly here: everybody's friends, you get along; everybody knows everybody, but you're not friends, but socially, a lot of people haven't made that social ... crossed that social barrier about friends at the university and also friends after hours, and some people have. So, some people take longer than others (Moderator: to adjust?) Yes.

Moderator: And with regard to racial integration, you mentioned a bit about that, and you Jaco, is there anything that can add to that, in terms of racial integration patterns on campus?

Esmarie: There's no tension between any of the races, that's not my experience at all. So I really like that it's peaceful, everybody's fine, everybody ... so that's very nice. The White people, we are less than others, but it's really OK because there's no tension, so that's good.

Lisa: Like Esmari said, there's no tension, and if you treat ... whether it's an Indian person or a Black person, or if it's even the White people ... if you treat each other with respect and you're really friendly, then that's how you're gonna treat the person in return. So, we can't really say that we have problems with that.

Hesmari: I think on our campus, it's actually pretty good because we start out and everyone comes from different places and we're all sort of scared in the beginning as first-years and then stuff like that doesn't matter. I think that's why there isn't really conflict or anything because being here is not like the world makes it seem. Everyone gets along, even though you're not friends with everyone, but still, you get along with everyone just fine and I think that's an advantage that we have here; to see that what the expectation is isn't really the reality, makes me sort of more comfortable (Moderator: OK, OK).

Ilska: We all know what happened at the other university a month ago, at Tuks or Stellenbosch, we can ... we all know; across the country, there were a lot of violent acts. And while this was going on, I wanted to like take photos and "meanwhile, at Medunsa", because everything was so quiet and so little people actually knew what was going on. A lot of people thought, "Why are they fighting? Why are they causing this?" and for me, we always spoke about this and we all agreed ... like, we're literally in the safest university at this moment in this country. So the other thing ... anything, like that sort of violence or protest action going on around here ... like, we haven't witnessed anything like that.

Lisa: The worst we've experienced is, I know about demonstrations for some subjects. They were on a strike, but nobody knew about it (Another participant: They just stopped going). Ja, they didn't do it in a ... in a manner that was, you know, destructive. They just ... it was a strike, but nobody knew because it was so quiet, it was just... So, that's the worst we've had, so far.

Jaco: Recently. With the name change, there was a bit of dispute and violence, (Another participant: but we weren't here) but we weren't here yet (Moderator: Oh, you were not here yet?). And after that, ever since that, it's been completely peaceful and all disputes were handled professionally.

Moderator: OK.

Ilska: Out of my personal story, I was with other friends at that place and there were a lot of other Coloured people, and they were like oh they saw other Coloureds, so many other Coloured people and I realised ... I was like ... I didn't even see it anymore and you've heard of that term, "colour-blind", that's like, I think how longer you are here, the progress you have, you get used to it, but it's really the effect of, you get, you become colour-blind; you don't see it as different ... umm colours, but there are different cultures.

Moderator: OK. So, what do you think is the difference between your university and the other universities that have been on the news for protests and racial tensions, and so on?

Participant: Are you asking why?

Moderator: What do you think the difference is? Why do you think here, if ... if ... yah...

Participant: In my opinion, I don't think that there's anything to complain about because they give out very nice bursaries at the university, and if you do well, like if you get 75% and more in a year, then you get all your tuition fees off. So, if you prove to do well, then you get rewarded. And the other universities have this big thing about "Afrikaans must fall" and we are an English university; so, there was no such thing as that; so, they have nothing to complain about; good fees.

Jaco: Everyone is content, I feel, personally. Everyone is equal; everyone is content, and for the moment, everything is [inaudible] going fine.

Moderator: Hesmari?

Hesmari: I also think it's because everything here ... there's not something specific to complain about. It's ... everybody gets basically the same; we all study in English; we all qualify for the same bursaries. The fees are really good here, I think. So I think that's why there's sort of ... there's no protests or anything.

Jaco: And all the labour has already been insourced and all that (Moderator: "all the ...?"), the security, the cleaning (Moderator: They've already ... oh so there's no outsourcing?); as like they demonstrated *(possibly referring to demonstrations at other universities)*, they live on campus, as well; so there's not even that to be fought about.

Moderator: Alright. You've mentioned quite a number of positive things about your university; what do you think the university could do to enhance students' experiences, specifically, academic experiences?

(Silence)

Ilska: They do quite a lot. They have mentorship ... mentorship programs, and they assign a mentor for you. You can ask [inaudible] They e-mail you the slides; OK, they probably do it at any university, but they do ... they really go to the next level to ... how you... understand the work. And if you don't understand, you have the freedom to ask. So, there's no ... you don't have to hesitate, you don't have to be scared about that. But they do quite a lot. The bursary is a big motivation for all of us. Is there more? *(asking other participants)*

Hesmari: I really think that they're doing all that they can.

Jaco: We have a good library. We ... academically, progress is ... we are up to standard and up to date and with all the other universities there are because all of our lectures are electronic. All our notes are also posted to us within time. All our textbooks are up to date. We have a good bookstore; it's not like we're lacking books. So I feel really, we are, if not one of the forerunners with academics, we're at least tied with everyone else. It's not like we're lagging behind and everyone's ahead.

Ilska: We have free WiFi *(Other participants laugh)* (Jaco: So ja, just like ...). Our lecturers are also very up to date with what we have to do and they um ... I'm not sure if it's the same at other universities, but we do have different lecturers for certain topics, you know, subjects, so that they can explain it best. So, they really try to make an effort to help you understand [inaudible].

Jaco: The lecturers that give you certain chapters of that subject have specialised in that subject, so they really know what they are talking about. So, that's really helpful because you can und ... you ... as the lecturer's giving class, you can see that this person have a huge background of the information that they are trying to present to you.

Moderator: And do you personally know anyone who's dropped out or who's considering dropping out?

Ilska: Well, we haven't been here for long, but we know a girl ... she doesn't ... it's not about the university, she doesn't wanna ... she doesn't know if she still wants to study Medicine. So, it's more about the course than the university, but of the older people, they've told [that] a lot of people have dropped out (Moderator: That you know of) No, no. Our year group, not ... no one yet.

Jaco: Well, it's still pretty early in the year. So, we're all hopeful and determined and going strong. We'll probably see after the big exams what's ... how it's looking. 'Cause I feel very few people actually want to drop out, want to fail, but usually that they cannot continue for all either reasons of finances or repeating another year just to do over what you've done because of re-dos and stuff. So, I feel it's more like you are stopped than you ... because of your efforts, you did not succeed than rather that, "I just don't want to do it anymore; I'm done".

Moderator: Is there anything you wanted to add, Lisa?

Lisa: Like, I've heard like, a few people make like ... they just say ja they feel like dropping out, but it's never really that they want to drop out; it's just because they maybe have an 'off' day or something like that, but ja, nobody has gone through with it yet *(Participants laugh)*, but a few people have said before, "Ugh I feel like dropping out".

Moderator: What are their reasons when they do say that?

Lisa: Just sometimes it's just something that happened in class, like they did very badly in a test (Other participant: They're very emotional), in a practical; they're just emotional. They have the off day, a bit of a depressed day, so they don't wanna go through with it.

Hesmari: I think mostly people feel like that. And I think few of us have felt like that from time to time. I think it's more when you're overwhelmed because it's a big step from school to here. No one's pushing you to do anything; you really were ... there, they were checking up on you, you actually now have to care about yourself and make sure that you stay, and I think that's the biggest obstacle to overcome. So, I think mostly, people just feel overwhelmed, but no one's really gone through with it because I think you recover very quickly from that.

Moderator: OK. For those ... for students who perform poorly, what do you think would be reasons for consistent poor academic performance?

Jaco: They can't keep up with the workload, personally. Either they ... when the work was easy in the beginning, and we were doing basics, they just felt like, "it's fine, I don't need to study this", and then when it started getting high and piling up, they couldn't deal with the workload and then, they started performing poorly and because you're already behind and have this bad year mark, you never ever catch up to the workload, so you consistently stay behind.

Moderator: Oh I see.

Lisa: I also think that uuh ... sometimes, people ... it can be early in the year, or even later in the year. But sometimes, you don't understand the basics of some of the work that you're

starting with. And then you don't go and find out, you know, you don't go ask someone to help you understand, whatever, and then you get behind, and then when new work starts, you also get behind, and then eventually, you have no clue what's going on there because you already got lost in the beginning of the year with some of the easy stuff. So, I think that's [inaudible].

Esmarie: And I think also being away from home is a big adaptation because, I think emotionally, it's very hard for some of the people, as well as sometimes you have too much freedom, now; you go out, you don't study. I think that's a big problem.

Moderator: OK.

Ilska: I'll just say the obvious reason is the student life; you enjoy too much of it, especially if you live on campus or in residence. You tend to go out, you party. If you don't wanna study, you can chill with your friends; then, when you're at your parents', a lot of parents will be like, you need to study especially, ja ... Compared to school, a lot of friends I know, who had, who have strict parents and now have this freedom in residence life, student life, they don't go to class or it's OK if they skip, skip another class or another day; they don't have that self-discipline yet. So, I'll say, overall it's a self-discipline thing.

Moderator: So, how confident are you guys about completing your degrees within the specified time?

Jaco: Right now, I feel 95% sure of that; I'm going to do it. I have no idea what's lying next year because apparently the workload is the same for next year, but right now, how I feel right now, I feel like I will definitely finish my course in the six years of study.

Ilska: Well, for Dentistry, it is very hard to get in; whether it's at Medunsa, or Tuks or Wits, or wherever; it's very difficult to get in. So, when you do get in, I feel you have that obligation to finish. So, you're not gonna get a second chance, so you have to do it. And my motivation personally is to complete my course without paying the university a cent *(laughs;*

other participants laugh). I wanna get a bursary every year. That's my motivation, but I can't promise anything.

Esmarie: I think six years of studies is a really long time. I don't want to do it for more than that. So, I think that's my motivation; also, I want to start working. So I think ... I really want to finish it, so I want to ... I'll work hard.

Moderator: So, you're all quite confident that you'll finish in record time? *(Participants agree)* And quickly going back to dropping out, for those students who do drop out, what do you think the university could do to help or support students them, if, you know, if they are at risk of dropping out, like, haven't dropped out yet.

Ilska: A more intense tutorship or tutor–student relationship; more than ... not only assigning a mentor for a group of people, but a personal mentor or a tutor. I can only think of my extra classes, with lecturers making appointments with them to personally explain the work for you. Maybe give extra work they could do, that could help; exercises for the specific work; but from the students' side, you need to do your own part, otherwise, the lecturers can't get ... help ... get you through university. You need to do that yourself, but they can help.

Lisa: I personally feel that if you drop out, it's not that much of the university's fault because they give you everything you need to pass well. So, you can't really say you're gonna drop out because of finances because if you really want something and you work hard for it; you will get a bursary. So, the university really gives you everything you need *not* to drop out. So, if you drop out, it is really a matter of, you didn't work hard enough and because ... I mean, you can always go to the lecturers, they can help you, like you can ask to be given extra work. So, it's really up to you.

Moderator: OK. Umm ... you guys might have touched on this, but if you'd like to expand on it ... what challenges do you think students come across in the first couple of years of study? You've mentioned adjustment do the workload, umm ... you've also mentioned emotional

issues, getting overwhelmed and so on ... are the any issues or challenges that you think they experience that could probably ultimately lead to them dropping out at some point?

Esmarie: Social life ... that's the thing. Priorities are not ... are not correct right now. To them, they don't view ... if the work is not that much, or not that difficult, it's OK, I'll just sit it out for the week, I'll just wing the test because it's not that difficult yet. We underestimate the work most ... a lot of the times, and underestimate the tests because the last ... I think, especially still even though we've written a few tests, we still don't know what to expect, how they're gonna ask it; and at school, you were used to your teachers' tests or how they ... they'll just ask it like this, you know the setup of the test, and now you don't know what to expect, you're writing a lot of subjects on computers. So you don't ... I think just the uncertainty, the unpredictable ... it's the unpredictable tests, what they may ask, what they did.

Moderator: OK. Anything else that anyone would like to mention?

Jaco: Umm ... No I lost it now. Sorry.

Moderator: OK, it's fine.

Moderator: Umm ... and we're almost done. It's probably the second-last or last question. Overall, what have your experiences been since enrolling on this campus?

Ilska: For me, people are everything; life is meant to be shared and when I ... before I came here, I knew there's a course, that I'm going to make friends; but, how many people ... how many we were going to be in my course, or in the Medicine course, or whoever that I've now become friends with. But we've made pretty good friends, and not only campus friends, after-hours friends and, we have a great group of friends. So, for me, it wouldn't have been the same, not one thing would have been the same if it weren't for those people and even though it's very early, I can say, you can't do this on your own; and you need study buddies or not-study buddies to chill with. So, people are the most important thing at this time of your life

and any time of your life. So, it's been a great experience; we study together and we party together. So, I'm very excited; I'm still ... we motivate each other. So, for me this couple of ... three months have been great; I'm really excited for what's lying ahead.

Hesmari: The first two weeks—OK well, the first week—was quite strange for me was, I would say because of the racial thing, but the ratio of the races, but I mean, I've overcome it and I'm fine with it and I really ... I like it like that, actually ... I like the cultural ... many cultures, all the cultures.

Moderator: OK. So you were a bit intimidated by ...

Hesmarie: Yes! It was quite a big adjustment (Moderator: OK). It was quite a shock on the system (Moderator: OK), but you get over it and then it's fine. And now I really enjoy it; I've got great friends. So, that's ... it's been a really great experience.

Lisa: I also agree that the experience has been great so far. Like, before ... a week before I came here, I didn't know what to expect and I was very nervous about it and umm ... the day when I got here, it was ... I expected it much different, and as soon as we walked out of the hall where we all got together for our first assembly, everybody ... people would just come up to you and they would introduce themselves and they'll tell you this is what they're studying and I was ... I was really shocked by it because I didn't think that people were gonna be so ... how can I put it ... so friendly about things. I really thought things were going to be different (Moderator: OK), so in that way, things were really great.

Jaco: Sorry uh ... I found my train of thought (Moderator: OK). One of the reasons ... things that I think people have trouble adapting to at this university or Health Sciences university in particular is, in the first two years is whether or not they're actually capable of doing it because we're getting uuh ... we're studying dissections next year on cadavers, and that can be a huge, huge problem if you just cannot deal with the fact that you're slicing other human beings open, and if you can't deal with that, you literally just cannot become ... you can

probably still carry on and if you have the determination to push through that year, it will be OK, I guess, but I feel if you cannot deal with that, then you can't become a doctor. If you like ... if you faint at the sight of blood, unless you personally work through that problem, you might drop out. (Moderator: OK) And then from my personal experiences of those first two weeks (Moderator: "two weeks"?) Oh "first few weeks", sorry, sorry. For me personally, it was all a giant bombshell because I was literally phoned a week before registration started to say, "Please come, you're accepted", so I was like one of those last five people that they squashed in. So, it was just completely ... I was scared and nervous and I didn't know what to expect, but then when I checked into the sports centre before the registration, and I saw how orderly everything was organised: this is where this is, that's where that is; there were people directing you and that really made me feel "OK now, these people ... this university knows what it's doing; it's effective, it's organised, I'm gonna be fine" and, after that, everything just went perfect. I really enjoyed it from that moment onwards.

Lisa: Can I add onto that? I came through one day just before they announced who got accepted or not and I had to come in and leave forms, and the first- and fourth-year students of Wits were registering, and before we went in, a lady started talking to us and she told us that we must excuse the university because registration is usually very unorganised. And then we were expecting this huge ... you know, I don't m ... ja, chaotic, these people running and you don't know where to go, and then we got in there and everything was organised! And then, and then they told us "but this is the most unorganised thing that happens at a university" and still it was organised. So that really, ja ... that impressed me—a lot (Other participants: Yes).

Hesmari: And then for me in the beginning, I was very negative about coming here, just because I didn't know anyone and I was particularly bad at making friends. But after you're sort of settled and met people, and you feel like you have somewhere to go, I think then it

was mostly positive. Sometimes there were really scary things, especially with the practical stuff, when you feel like you don't completely know what to do, and now you actually have to do it, but except for that, I think everything went well and you adjust well, and you actually learn a lot [inaudible].

Moderator: Are you all staying with parents or ...? OK, you're just not staying in res, but you're not necessarily staying with parents?

Hesmari: I'm staying with my parents.

Ilska: Hesmari and Ilska are staying with their parents, and Jaco also, and Esmari; we're all staying with our parents.

Lisa: I do live with my aunt, so that is some form of family, but it's still not your parents and it's still not your own house, so it comes with the advantages and disadvantages of its own.

Moderator: OK, OK. Is there anything that anybody would like to add? *(Silence)* Issues that you'd like to raise? *(Silence)* OK. That's it, then; we're done. (Jaco: Thank you) Thank you so much; I appreciate your help and time (Participant: It was fun). I'm glad you enjoyed it.

Focus group discussion concludes.

Transcript 3: SMU Focus Group Discussion 3

Moderator: We are not expecting this to pose any risks or harm to you and your information will be confidential. Nobody who's not part of this research will know what ... uh ... will have access to the information that you provided, and it will be stored for 15 years for archiving and ... uh... when we do report it, you will not be identified. And please don't use your ... uh ... don't use your surname ... uh. .. you can choose any random name to use during the focus group. We don't need your real name ... uh... so you will not be directly identifiable ... uh ... and the results will be disseminated in the form of a thesis and conference papers and articles and journals and maybe in popular sources and so on. If you have any questions ... oh, and we will be recording the discussion. If you have any questions, please ask. *(Silence)* Comments? Do you ...? OK.

Dembe: The recording, how will it be? You do video or...?

Moderator: No, not. It will be an audio recording *(laughs)*. Yes. Uhh ... yah. Any other questions? Okay, if you agree to participate, please sign [the consent form] and pass it on because we can't continue until, unless you guys have indicated that you do agree.

Participant: She doesn't have a consent form.

Moderator: Doesn't she have a consent form? OK, have this one. It's OK.

Participant: I need one, as well.

Moderator: OK, and before you go, can you please give Zama ... she has your ... OK, can you please write down on a piece of paper that she will pass on, write down your name, just your first name and your cell phone number and your cell phone network and if it's a contract, then we will figure out what to do. Is anybody, somebody on contract? OK.

Participant: Yes.

Moderator: OK, we will figure out what to do with you afterwards. OK, firstly can you guys just introduce yourselves using your first name or the name that you choose for this and ...

uhh ... say what you're studying and study year. We're expecting this to end at 2. We can start with you over there *(gesturing towards participant)*.

Participant: Do I say my real name?

Moderator: No, just any name that you choose or your real name.

Participant: You may use your real name?

Moderator: Yes, you can. Just ... if you would want to be really, seriously anonymous, you can use not your real name.

Participant: I will just not disclose if it's my real name.

Moderator: *(Laughs)* It doesn't matter, we're not interested. We're more interested in your views than your name (Participant: Oh). Yes.

Participant: Hi everyone, I'm Dembe.

Moderator: Dembe?

Dembe: Yes, Dembe.

Moderator: What are you studying, your study year?

Dembe: I'm studying Medicine and it's my 4th year.

Moderator: OK.

Participant: I'm Tsholo ... uh ... doing Occupational Therapy. I'm a first year.

Moderator: OK.

Participant: I'm Anele, studying BSc in Physics; it's my 2nd year.

Moderator: OK.

Participant: I'm Dzanga and I'm studying BSc II.

Moderator: BSc II? You are ...?

Dzanga: Dzanga.

Moderator: OK.

Participant: I'm Lerato and I'm studying Oral Hygiene.

Moderator: OK.

Participant: I'm Phuti; I'm studying BSc II.

Moderator: You're studying ...?

Phuti: BSc II.

Moderator: BSc II... OK. You are...?

Phuti: Phuti.

Moderator: Phuti, OK.

Participant: I'm Sonto. I'm studying Occupational Therapy II.

Participant: I'm Kholofelo. I'm studying BSc II.

Moderator: OK. Uh ... What's your name again?

Anele: Anele.

Moderator: OK. Why did you choose to study here? Any ... Any of you? *(Laughs)*

Phuti: I chose it because ... (Moderator: Phuti. Please mention your name so that we know who said what, before you ...) I chose it because it was closer to home; it's affordable and ... yah.

Moderator: OK, and other people?

Kholofelo: I chose it because I wanted to enrol in Medical school. So, I was lucky enough to get accepted here.

Moderator: OK. And others? Dzanga, why did you choose to study here?

Dzanga: I don't know. (Moderator: You don't know? *Laughs*).

Participant mutters

Moderator: Can you please speak a bit louder?

Participant: Ohh! I'm sorry (Moderator: It's for the recording), I'm sorry. I never actually thought about it.

Moderator: Ok, you just applied here? And others? Don't you also know or were there any compelling reasons why you chose to study here? Yes?

Sonto: I chose it because it's closer to home (Moderator: OK). I can't be too far from home (Moderator: OK). And they accepted me for what I wanted to do.

Moderator: OK. Anybody with different reasons from the ones that they've mentioned? Not?

Lerato: I chose it because I didn't get accepted at UP (Moderator: OK; *Participants laugh*).

Moderator: And having studied here up to now, what do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of studying at this institution? *Participants laugh.*

Lerato: Oh OK! I'm not gonna say my name. The thing with Dental ... (Moderator: Would you like to change it?) Yes. The thing with Dental is ... uhh ... it's a disadvantage, though (Moderator: Uh-huh). If you have maybe the lowest mark on one of your modules, they fail you because the cubicles in the clinic are not enough, and the dental chairs as well, that is the disadvantage (Moderator: OK; if you have the lowest mark?) In any of your modules, they just fail you, even if you pass the exam, they fail you because the cubicles are not enough. So, you must make sure that you maintain a certain standard (Moderator: You mean the lowest on the list of students?) On the list of your modules; they check your modules, right? (Moderator: Ohh on your modules? OK).

Tsholo: Is that an advantage? In terms of bursaries, I know that my sister got the government ... Gauteng bursary. Out of everyone who got it, I think there were three people who weren't on the bursary. So, in terms of funding, you will get funding definitely because you're from the school [SMU]. So yah!

Kholo: Can I just add on what she said?

Moderator: Yes, Kholofelo?

Kholofelo: I'm not sure... OK, maybe the other courses, but I'm more sure about BSc (Moderator: Yah). With BSc, there is a bit of disadvantages, that it does not really fall under

Health Sciences, so applying for a bursary is much more challenging, than someone who does straight ... uhh ... who's in like ... the Faculty of Health, like your OTs, your Medicine, because we don't fall under that.

Moderator: OK, OK. And other people?

Participant: Advantages?

Moderator: Either advantages or disadvantages.

Dembe: Advantages for me are that, compared to other universities, here we have more practicals, in terms of exposure in the hospital, because you find that people from other universities ... they do not have as much exposure as we are given here, to be on the field. So, when they go to the hospitals, they don't know what to do. So, that is what I love about here.

Moderator: OK. And others?

Phuti: What was the question again? *Participants laugh.* (Moderator: The disadvantages and advantages of studying here.) The disadvantage is that they are picky. There are certain courses that matter to them and some ... they just don't care (Moderator: OK; who's "they"?; Other participants: The school.). The school. The school can just forget about everyone and focus on people who are doing a certain course *(Other participants agree)* (Another participant: Especially Pharmacy). Yah; Pharmacy students and Medicine (Moderator: They focus on those students?) Yes, they focus on those students; they can make sure that the labs that they are using are proper, everything for them is scheduled, their schedules are very well prepared, the Sportscom when they are writing exams ... Everything is done for them, and we get the left-over dates, then you find out that you are writing Physics on Monday, Tuesday, same thing, they are going on on the same week and these are your exams, and you find that another person is writing every Monday; so, for the whole week, he or she can study the whole week. Other than that, I don't think they ... and really ... it also brings to the fact that now, if the people who are up in the university are like ... they discriminate against courses, it

means that your kids will end up as well ... everyone looking down on people who are doing certain courses. Do you understand?

Moderator: Uh-huh, OK. And others with different experiences?

Sonto: Mine, the OT Department is just ... it's very disorganised about everything. I don't understand how test dates ... they will give us wrong test dates, they will give us a booklet ... like, they just gave us a booklet now with books that we were supposed to buy in January. I mean, everything is disorganised and nothing is their fault, so, everything ... the students have to take the fall for it and it makes no sense to me how you are the Department and you are the lecturers again and you do absolutely nothing for us, except stand there and preach—which doesn't help at all.

Moderator: OK. You mentioned quite a number of disadvantages. If anybody feels that what they think of as a disadvantage has not been covered, could you please say, or if you can think of more advantages, could you also add to that?

Lerato: Is entertainment included? (Moderator: Whatever rocks your boat. Yes, go ahead). They fail to deliver on time (Moderator: To deliver entertainment?) On time! *(Participants laugh).* We were supposed to have three bashes by now *(Participants laugh)* We haven't had any!

Moderator: OK. So, you feel like the social life is ...

Phuti and Lerato agree that the social life sucks.

Moderator: What, not enough social activities are being organised?

Participants: Yah *(Participants agree)*, and made possible.

Kholo: We need ... we need to ease our minds, at times. It really gets hectic as time goes on, and I think for them, the SRC needs to be specific. They also need to understand that, if they keep on delaying such processes, the day they really need us to support them, we won't be

there because we won't care ... OK like, I mean ... we won't care what they want because they don't care how we feel, so that's just my addition to ...

Participant: And another thing, they will bring bashes when exams are just written soon ...

Tsholo: Or long weekends; long weekends, we have to go home! (Moderator: OK).We have to go home.

Lerato: We have to go to Moria (Moderator OK).

Tsholofelo: Oh I have another disadvantage.

Moderator: Tsholofelo?

Tsholo: OK, so I don't know if comparing is bad, but with other varsities, especially the Health Science Faculty, their cafeterias should be on point, especially the food. We eat very badly, very bad food. I mean, we don't ... it's just horrible, the state of the cafeterias are terrible. The food that is served is terrible. Actually, students' caf ... you can't even sit there because it's disgusting. I don't know where they expect us to sit.

Phuti: Another disadvantage: the library. Which university in the world allows their library to close? On what earth? Well-knowing that Physiology is this big? If you give me a certain amount of time to study that book, or I have a certain amount of time in the library, for research ... some of us, we don't have laptops; I need the computer in the library, but then ... ey ..., they're not gonna allow you there, and then we live off-campus, far ... in like ... in town. And I'm given a limited amount of time here on campus, like the last time that they can see me here on campus is like, at 10. If I don't climb the bus at 10, that's it, I have to sleep over, rather if they allow me to sleep here or not. [inaudible] If I don't have a friend, then what?

Moderator: OK. Is the library closed for studying or just for computers?

Participants: Completely closed *(All participants agree)*.

Phuti: The main door is shut down.

Tsholo: They have a study hall, which closes, they say it opens 24 hours, right, but the facilities ... There is places ... like, it's divided into the computers right, and then the cubicles to study? So now those cubicles to study ... they don't have computers, are open for 24 hours, but the side of the computers, which is where everybody goes, closes at 12. So, if I like to study at 2 o'clock, I can't do anything.

Moderator: OK. Is there anybody else who's not staying on campus like you, Phuti? And do you have similar experiences to him that ...

Kholo: Yeah, absolutely.

Moderator: Can you elaborate?

Kholo: Number 1, like he said, OK, you depend on the school for everything, as we are entitled to. When we get to res, it's something else, because the WiFi gives you problems, one. Two, we're in the CBD and the environment, OK for me personally, I don't mind noise when studying, but other people can't stand noise. CBD it's like ... it's too loud (Moderator: What's CBD?; Participants: Central Business District; Moderator: Ohh in town?) Yes.

Kholo: That's why they prefer studying here at school, so having to rush at 9 o'clock, you need to stop everything you have to do and rush to the bus, where you find there is only one bus, it's gonna get full, you need to get there early and you have to stop whatever you're doing at the library. Yah, that's the problem with me.

Moderator: OK.

Sonto: The bus thing is also a big problem, especially for us who live off campus because some days you are just late and you just oversleep and you get there, there is no bus. They tell you: "Well, there is nothing we can do about it. The last and only 9 o'clock bus has left; you have to take a taxi". I can't; I don't even know where taxis are in town. So, if something like that were to happen to me, I would have to skip school because I don't even know where to begin to take a taxi to school (Moderator: OK.). And to go back at night, like she said, it's a

warzone to get into the bus at night (Moderator: What do you mean a "warzone"?) Everyone tries to get onto the bus (Moderator: What happens to the people who stay behind?; Participants: They stay behind; Moderator: And they do what?; Participant: It's up to them! Participants: Some of them stand on the bus, right? Yah, some of them stand. They make sure that they stand).

Kholo: If the bus leaves you, there is nothing you can do.

Phuti: It's over; there is nothing you can do.

Participant: No one will help you.

Moderator: Like ... can the bus leave you because there are too many people?

Participants: Yah, yah *(All participants agree)*.

Moderator: OK.

Participant: And there is nothing they will do.

Moderator: OK, and the bus that leaves from ... from town?

Kholo: It ends at 9?

Moderator: There is only 1?

Kholo: No, it's different ones.

Moderator: OK, but they end at 9 am?

Participant: 9 pm.

Sonto: And some of us, sometimes we have class starting at 2.

Moderator: I see. OK. Anything else that you would like to add Anele; are you also living on campus?

Anele: I only have a problem with the busses, especially now they cancelled the 10 o'clock bus. I don't know why!? (Moderator: Is it what, 10 am?) 10 am from town, and then other people do need it because they have late classes, and they cancelled it (Moderator: I see.) Beside the bus, I don't really have a problem.

Participant: [Person's name] cancelled it (Participants: [Person's name]). *Participants laugh.*

Moderator: Who's [Person's name]?

Lerato: She is part of the SRC.

Kholo: No; [Person's name] is a head of Res, Residential within the SRC.

Moderator: Oh ... I see.

Lerato: Yah. She was like "No! We're cancelling it; we're cancelling the 10 o'clock bus because here on campus, when it comes to month end, people need to go and buy groceries; so, bye-bye 10 o'clock bus".

Moderator: Who are the people who need to go buy groceries?

Lerato: Those who live on campus; they have to catch the bus. They have a special bus to go buy groceries.

Moderator: I see.

Participant: But wait, that's an advantage to them.

Participants chatter: It's only on weekend; Where is this bus? It's only on weekends. Where's the bus? Only weekends? It's on weekends only? Yho that one ... Not that one.

Kholo: That is why I was asking; now I'm about to ask, how does that have to do with anything in us travelling?

Sonto: That is what they told us.

Kholo: Because the bus for—which is an advantage by the way, to people on campus; they are far away from town. So, at least they've given them an opportunity to go buy groceries, to go to the mall for free, but it happens at specific days ... and days, so maybe it's once in two or three months, for example. So for them, it's fine (Moderator: OK), but for us, I'm not sure.

Moderator: OK. Moving on from the bus experience, what have your ... other than the ones that you've described, what have your experiences at this institution been since you enrolled? What have your experiences at this institution been since you registered?

Ndzanga: I don't understand the question.

Moderator: Since you registered as a student, what have your experiences been, just your overall experiences?

Ndzanga: OK.

Kholo: With me, personally, I've been taught so much. I've been awakened, as well, because for 21 years of my life, I've known these type of people and having to come to this varsity, you see different people; you get to meet people who are opposite from what you are, people who have different morals and values from what you've been taught. And as a person, you have to adjust to that because as, OK not as a parent, I'm not a mother. Parents don't ... don't ... Can I speak ... Do you speak isiZulu? (Moderator: Zama does) *Ukukhuliswa, asikhuliswanga ngokufana* (Translation: We did not have the same values ingrained in us). So, having to come to varsity, you see a whole lot and you also need to be emotionally stable, to accept and be able to be around those types of people. Just not, just don't conform to them 'cause then you will lose your values and morals because of how a certain mother raised their own child (Moderator: OK) Yah.

Moderator: OK. Ndzanga, what did you want to say? What have your experiences been?

Ndzanga: I'm still thinking.

Participants laugh.

Moderator: You're still thinking? Tsholofelo?

Tsholo: Uh ... well uh ... well, I don't know ... people here, like what Kholo was saying. We come from different backgrounds, more traditional backgrounds and where I grew up, you know seeing someone walking around in shorts is not a big deal, here, you get looks and stuff like that or how you do your hair or how you sound like, you know. Here, sometimes if you grow up in a certain way, especially with the fairer-skinned people, you know, "you can't talk like this because you look like this, you sound like that" and ... I don't know! I wish people ...

we could all accept ... like, if you want to wear your long skirt, wear your long skirt, but don't judge me because I'm in my shorts or I like [inaudible].

Lerato: Oh and another thing, adding on to what she said, you will find that people will judge you, "Hey ..."—'cause since this is a Health institution—"Geez! She's not professional, she's wearing shorts (Another participant: Exactly!). Look at her hair; it's green. Geez ... wow" ... you see. *Participants laugh.*

Moderator: OK, and other people? Good/bad experiences? Are you a first-year, Anele? (Anele: 2nd year) Who's a first year? Are you *(Gesturing towards a female participant)*?

Kholo: Not 'first first'; but 'first' by repeating, but not first-.

Moderator: I see. OK. Going back to, let's say the first couple of weeks, months as a first year, what were your experiences, then?

Participant: Gosh! It was horrible.

Moderator: Ndzanga, go ahead.

Ndzanga: The first experiences about, like ... when coming here, I feel like the first thing that we all get is that some people are more important than other people; that's the first thing you receive (Moderator: OK), because by just coming here already, you get the disadvantages, 'cause I remember last year, I had to write my exams in one week in like, the end of May and the entire June, I was sitting at home doing nothing. And everyone else is writing their exams, so I'm like, how is that fair and I'm like, no, it's because they're doing other courses; I don't know why they need special attention. So, what they teach us is that some people are more special than other people.

Moderator: OK, and Phuti?

Phuti: Yah ... It's the same thing. You need to know your place, doing BSc, you're at the bottom of the food chain; you gotta respect ... eish. Ask her, she wrote all her exams—5 modules—in one week. How is that possible? *(Participants laugh)* How can you write

Physics, Maths, Biology in (*In unison with other participants: one* week!?; Participant with another participant: Nigga!) *(Participants laugh)*. How can ... It's hard enough for one module to even allow me [to study for in a week] for a week and then you find out now I'm done writing, I'm going home; a person still has 3/4 more weeks to write because theirs are separated per week; they are writing one module per week (Moderator: OK.). And then when ... you know, at home ... they don't understand this at home. At home you're like but uuh ... *phanda phanda* (Translation: hustle), you'll survive, and then the next door neighbour is doing that course that they wrote over a course of weeks, whereas you wrote in one week, right? You fail; they pass. "Yah, why is Omphile passing whereas you're failing?" I'm like, it's because they never gave ... they're like "Aah ... you're making excuses, excuses and excuses". Yes! Because there is an excuse in the first place! I'm saying it because it's an excuse for real! I'm not just saying it willy nilly! There is a solid reason why we do not perform that much; they don't give us time.

Moderator: OK, do you really feel like it's affecting your performance?

Phuti: It's really affecting my performance, it is! *(Another participant agrees)*. Because when you find out that no, when they set out test dates, the first take is Dentistry and Medicine; they lay them down: OK, they have Sportscom when and when and when ... (Moderator: What's Sportscom?; Participants: It's where we write our exams. The examination centre; Moderator: OK, I see.). Yah, they're like "OK, we lay them down, they are writing when and when". They're like, "OK, let's see OT ... who's next? OK, now they are ready. I mean, how many days do we have left? Oh we have that week ... Who do we have left?? Oh BSc; let's put them in that week; all of them write in that week; let their lecturers know that they are writing in that week". Mind you, our lecturers know. How is it possible that I know that I am writing my exam [only] a month before? There is someone who goes to school at Wits; she knew that her exams ... she's writing on this date in January, then she knows that "I'm

equipped; I know that the last exam I'm writing is Accounting, or it's Physics or it's what not. So, I'm gonna have more time to cover it, or I know that I have a week between the one that I write before and the one after". You can plan these things ahead. Now, I have a month left, now they've just released the timetable now (Moderator: OK, it isn't enough notice?) It isn't even enough notice to let you know; and then you go and query about "Can I … can we appeal to change the examination date?" No, the thing is … we must have like a month, you must apply for it a month before. Mind you, last year's examination… they released it like two weeks before the exam. So, they are like, "No, you had a month", like … a month ago this thing was not [had not been] issued (Moderator: OK).

Tsholo: Can I add on to what he said; I just think that there is no admin [inaudible; *Participants buy bones at the beginning of the year, then return them for a refund when done using them*] When we go to ask for our money back because we have rights to our money back, no, every day; I think for two weeks (Sonto: I didn't even go there.). Some people didn't even get their money back. They had no … I don't know what was the issue. They have no … [inaudible] … there is no change, and the register, the cash thingy. I don't know what's wrong … *(Sighs).* Yah …

Moderator: Yes, Sonto?

Sonto: They have this thing of having their break the same time when we have our break, which is ridiculous! Have your break before ours because in our break, I know in my course, that's the only free time I have until 4! 4 you're closed. So, that's the only free time I have to speak to you about whatever it is that I need to speak to you about. And I come there and you're like "Oh I'm on a break". It makes no sense that you have the same break as I do (*Participants agree*; Another participant: Even if you just want to ask one question). That's the only time I have; when I get there, they're closed.

Phuti: And they are closed from 12:00 to 2:00. Some of them, at least if it's 12–1; they have like 2 hours in the office (Tsholo: It's the financial aid office.). The financial aid office ... literally, that person works 4 hours a day. That's 2 hours in the morning and 2 hours in the afternoon.

Tsholo: They only give ... it's the financial aid office, it's the financial aid office. [Inaudible] ... one hour. They see us twice, right, and one hour at both times, right, and the line is so long! Because people only have a very limited amount of time to see these people, to hand in the documents and even those documents ... it's a problem (Phuti: And they cut the line off.). You wait in the line for an hour or two hours, you ... then it's wrong, you need to go back, it's ... it's horrible.

Moderator: OK. Ndzanga ... Ohh I saw ... Yes, Lerato?

Lerato: And what I noticed in this school is that if you have connections or you come from a privileged family, you are safe, whether you fail, you are safe because [inaudible] you will go to the next level (Moderator: OK). Or, if maybe your brother/sister is part of the SRC and you are studying, you come from wherever and then you passed with 50% for various subjects, but you can get into Medicine. You can get into BDS because your brother is part of the SRC.

Moderator: OK, so you feel that there is favouritism?

Participants: Corruption! There is corruption!

Participant: That's what it is.

Sonto: Another thing, I don't know if it happens in other schools, but there is this thing of ... lecturers are failing you, and are failing you not because of your marks, but because she spoke to you in a certain way, but then you spoke back; she does not like you from that day and she will fail you (Another participant: Or she will kick you out of her class. *A participant laughs*). Nobody will ever be investigated. And even if your marks show that you couldn't have failed this module, how did you fail this module? This whole year, you've been passing

well and the exam comes—and there is proof—the exam comes, you fail (Phuti: Oh my god!) It's not because you fail because you did not do well in that exam, you fail because "I back-chatted that day, I spoke badly that day".

Kholo: Can I add to that? Adding to Sonto's comment, you wouldn't know if it really comes to failing exams, right? But then, we are not allowed to look at our exams, you have to pay ... sorry ... R500. I'm not gonna pay to see my exam (Moderator: Do you get it back?

Participant: No, just to see, you pay to see.). Just to see where you went wrong, especially at the end of the year. With us, BSc ... it's a semester course; you want to see where you went wrong, so ... but it's December, there is no way you're gonna pop out R500 to just check your exam.

Sonto: Just to see.

Moderator: If you find that ... can you send it for re-marking? (Participant: You pay. *All participants agree*). It will be an extra amount of money? (Participant: Yes, R2200) OK. It's R2200? (Participant: Last year, they said it's R2000?) R2000?

Participant: Yes, because ...

Phuti: Because they say that they have to ask three candidates from three different universities; they have to pay each one.

Participant: Re-marking is R500. (Moderator: Oh, they say it's R500?).

Phuti: They say they need to ask three candidates from three different universities; they have to pay each one to come and review your script, remarking it themselves and what not, and all that (Moderator: I see, I see). But the problem is, last year, we had a Physics module. How is it possible that you go into the exam, and in order for you to qualify for a re-exam, you have to get a 40, and then your total mark ... if it is not above 50, yah, go for the re-exam. If you are writing two papers and you get a 40 [on] another one, and 30 [on] another one, it's still OK then, since you got a 40 in the first paper; you qualify for a re-exam. Now, some

people end with an average of 82, 70s; all of a sudden, you are called for a re-exam. For no reason. How? How? Forty marks is 16.2%; you didn't even need a lot of, like ... to cross over and to get a 50, but yet, you qualify for the re-exam. And then you go to the HOD, you tell him, "I want to see my paper, I want for you to calculate in front of me, my true mark", he will delay 'til this day. These students who haven't seen— who are willing to pay— but they won't see their scripts because they didn't fail because they couldn't achieve, but they failed because they had to fail (Moderator: OK. So, you're saying even if a student pays ... Participant: Yah, even if you're willing to pay. Moderator: ... There'll be processes that will prevent them?). Yes; they will delay them; they will delay them. And then you find lecturers, who come to class and you catch feelings or what. They are here to lecture you, but I guess maybe they want to be your best friend; I don't know; because all of a sudden, they come here, they're telling you that, "That's why I failed you guys; because these girls talked to me in a bad way, the other day". And then you ask, like ... why do those girls ... could you at least write their names, talk to them? "I'm your lecturer; don't disrespect me"; but that's it ... but the fact that you can effect it on everyone's paper, for the fact that we ... like? How is that normal when you close your eyes at night? Like, "I'm gonna make sure all these kids fail because, you know what? They didn't say morning to me". Ohh it happened *(Participants agree)* I'm saying these things (Participant: It happened; Another participant: And it actually happened; Another participant: Two weeks ago.). I'm uttering words that a lecturer said two weeks ago.

Moderator: So, you guys feel that what, you have issues with the lecturers' attitude and transparency?

Phuti: Why is a lecturer catching feelings? "I'm not your friend, you're my lecturer".

Moderator: OK. Lerato?

Lerato: And the whole Dental [department's] behaviour have a tendency ... they have a tendency of embarrassing you in front of your patients; "Why are you doing this? Huh?" That is very unprofessional, in front of a patient! What do you expect from your patient, to say or how to take you, if they're busy yelling at you in front of your patient? (Moderator: OK). So, that's it.

Moderator: OK, I see. And how do you think, other than the things that you've mentioned, how do you think this institution could enhance students' academic experiences; like, what could they do differently?

Phuti: Change everything! *(Participants agree)*. 1. Administration. Administration; for the fact that I don't ... like now, myself right ... if my mom pays my school fees, I have to bunk class to go check if it actually appeared, because they don't send my mom bank statements (Another participant: Yes!). They've never even contacted my mom (Another participant: Yah). They've never even sent my mom my results. I have to go wait in line to get my results, fax them to my mom. (Lerato: They'll tell you through sms!).

Tsholo: Can I just ... even with the ... everyone knows, with registration. Every school in the whole country ... now even government high schools now are starting, even primary ... primary schools are starting to do online registration. We are still waiting in queues as if it's 1976 and there is no such thing as a computer; can we please do online registration? It is a mess there! Like, Medunsa is so hot in January, like ... you will die! There is no air conditioning *(Phuti agrees)*. There is ... I mean we're dying ...; if you wanna go for food, people are waiting in line. (Phuti: There is no order, there is no order). There is no order.

Moderator: OK, can we go to Phuti first?

Participant: Phuti's been talking.

Moderator: Sonto ... Sonto.

Sonto: We don't have a student portal (Phuti: A student portal; Moderator: What don't you have?). Portal, a student portal (Moderator: OK). We don't have and I don't understand this Blackboard thing, because I don't know how to access it. I can't. Som ... most of us can't. It's not a student portal; can we have a student portal, where there will be past papers, there will be online registration (Moderator: Oh ... I see; Tsholo: Your marks are in there.), your marks, your statements! For my registration this year, my dad had paid, I think about R7000, that they lost there; if I had not come with my dad here to register, they would have told me that I had not paid that R7000 and they wouldn't have let me register (Moderator: OK). He had to go down to CP, I don't know the distance from there to there. He had to go down to CP and sort it out. If my father was not there, I don't ... I would have gone back home crying (Moderator: Where are you originally from?) I'm from Jo'burg.

Moderator: OK, and Ndzanga, what did you want to add?

Ndzanga: Ohh, I was saying that about the administration, it's really bad, to the point whereby June registration, you will stand in line; you're like Number 110 there at the back; when you get to the front, they tell you, "No, where is your financial statement? We need to see if you paid?"; "But, aren't you guys supposed to know if I paid?" (Phuti: If I've paid.). So now I have come from there, walk to this building, wait in another line, where I'm like, Number 200 and something, and then it's late and then I have to come back tomorrow *(Participants agree, laugh.)*.

Phuti: Mind you, this happened. Personal story: I arrived here at 4 a.m. in the morning, joined a line, I left here at 5 p.m. in the afternoon because I don't have a boyfriend or a girlfriend working at the back of a line. I don't come with a mini-skirt and be like, "Hey, do this for me and that". *(Participants laugh).* They don't have computers, or I'm not a big number, I don't know anyone in the SRC who can give me back stuff and give me immediately. I have to wait in line like normal people. They don't have, like, stages; there's not that thing of, you

come, you get from here, you go there (Moderator: Oh yah I see, everything happens at one point? Sonto: And nobody tells you.) You go wherever you wish (Moderator: Oh?), but when you arrive where you're going, they are like, "Why did you go there?" *(Participants laugh)*. I'm like, "You didn't tell me I need that paper"; they say, "No, you need that paper", I'm like, "You didn't tell me that! No one told me that this paper is required".

Moderator: So, you guys feel that the registration process is generally disorganised?

Participants: It's horrible.

Phuti: And then ... and then you wait in line for hours: the heat, you're hungry, you didn't have lunch *(Another participant laughs)*, you get to the front; finally, they are trying to assist you. I'm sitting down; it hits, "Aah... it's 2 o'clock, sorry, lunch" (Another participant: Lunch. *Participants laugh*). (Another participant: He is assisting you. Another participant: While you're sitting there. Another participant: Mind you.). He is assisting you; mind you, all I need is his signature because I've already written down all my modules, I did everything. All I need is your signature to say that yah, we are done with this. "I can't think straight; I have to go eat lunch; I still need to check if those modules are OK, the module codes are OK. I need to go eat; see you after an hour". Then I had to sit for an hour, just doing nothing (Another participant: Meanwhile they are eating; Another participant: You're hungry). Meanwhile, you're hungry. Mind you, this is 4 a.m., I didn't even eat breakfast; 4 a.m. to 5 p.m. ... how? (Moderator: OK). And then I have to come back tomorrow; mind you, I'm not done; come back the following day to complete their process, and then you go to the computers and they're like, now they are doing online registration on a computer *(Participants laugh)* at their computers (Moderator: OK); which needs their Internet, which can shut down at any second (Another participant: Oh yah.) and everything has to freeze (Another participant: Oh, they did, actually. Another: For about an hour; it did do that; it shut

down). It did. It shut down, and then it opened at the time they were just about to close (Another participant: Or have lunch).

Anele: Imagine if you're from Limpopo; you came that day (Phuti: Thank you.), where are you gonna sleep?

Tsholo: Because at that time, because of the fact that you haven't registered, you have not ... your res (Phuti: You don't have res; Another participant: Because you're not registered).

Moderator: OK, I see.

Kholo: You can't finish your registration. I mean, you can't get a res without actually finishing your registration.

Phuti: Having your proof of registration with you.

Moderator: So, you basically don't have a place to stay at that time?

All participants: Yah.

Another participant: She went through that.

Lerato: Yah. My goodness, that was horrible. I had to come here for 3 days and I told them that I'm from Limpopo. They expect me to come attend on Monday; they expect me to come again and register on the 23rd with the first years, but they want me to attend the following Monday. I'm like, how should I come and attend the following Monday if I don't have res? Where do you expect me to stay? They're like, "Aah ... we don't know, we don't care".

Moderator: OK.

Anele: OK, my feelings are like, they take time with everything. When you apply, you have to come back and check yourself in January (Phuti: In January), because they don't ... they don't say anything, they don't send a letter (Participants agree), they don't do anything. Just like the November exams, you write your exams and then you sit at home; December, January, you don't know where you stand (Moderator: OK). (Phuti: You still need to come

here. Another participant: Yes!). You still need to come here and then you go to CP before you can go to Sportscom to register.

Moderator: What's CP again? (Participant: Chemical Pathology) Oh ... what happens there, is it an admin? (Participant: Yes, it's like admin).

Tsholo: The thing is, when I ... when we had gotten like ... (Phuti: 5000 students also need to get their results, as well.). When I had gotten my results there, I got them in December, right? But the thing is, it was by word of mouth, like, it was not even properly released. No, the school didn't tell me that results are out. Somehow by chance, I was in a group that I wasn't even participating in on Whatsapp that said, "Oh guys, check ... this is how you can check your results on some sms thing". Some people couldn't even do the sms thing.

Phuti: Yah. We did the sms, but then it gave me weird modules *(Some participants agree)*.

Kholo: By the way, when of course, they don't notify us of such things, but if they want us to attend like your Ministers ... (Participant: Thank you.) coming to school, they will send you like, 15 messages (Participant: At a time!) At once! Notifying you that, "Oh no, please attend, please attend. Oh no, Zuma is coming; please attend". We don't care about Zuma.

Participant: They will literally stop the busses; you will not go back to res (Phuti: You will not go. Politics!) until that Minister is done talking.

Kholo: But they fail to say, "This is how you can get your results". You can (Another participant: Yes.) come on this day to get your results, if you don't get them by sms. We posted or rather e-mailed—rather posted via post box your results (Moderator: OK). It literally took me ... OK, if my mom didn't decide to make me drive here ... I got the letter of my marks on January 2nd, when I ... 'cause I kept on going, literally every day, to check if that statement is there and then she got it on the 2nd. By then, your life should be sorted because we ... our registration is [on] the first week of January (Moderator: OK). So, by then you need to be sorted with everything; groceries, monies, know where you stand at school.

But they fail to do that, but ... Oh no, when Zuma comes, they will fuckin' send you 15 sms's at once, every day *(Participants agree).*

Moderator: OK guys, just to wrap up that part, can we agree that it's highly disorganised?

Participants: Yes. Highly. Disorganised is an understatement.

Moderator: I'm worried about the time. In terms of dropping out, do you know anybody who has dropped out or who's considering dropping out and, if so why?

Moderator: OK. Phuti?

Phuti: Myself *(Participants laugh)* (Moderator: Why would you drop out?). Myself. The level of efficiency ... I don't feel respected and I'm paying hundreds of thousands to pay these people. Do you know that this degree in total, I could be ending up paying like R150 000, close to R200 000? And then, for what? For disrespect every day? For disrespect, for being taken as a minor and then, you know, I don't wanna say it in front of the lecturers' faces, but they need to know it's because of me that there is bread on their table; but I don't wanna say that, I'm being polite, but they don't see. Do you know how hard it is to pay for something and then ... (Moderator: You basically feel that you're not getting value for your money?). I'm not getting value for my money, I'm not getting the respect that I deserve.

Lerato: Yah, of course, we're not being respected, especially in Dental.

We have this other lecturer, yah, last week; this week, I didn't go to his class. Last week Wednesday, he is like, "You are the reason we are ..."... what did he say? ... "the reason you study here is because of us; it's because we're paying VAT". But we also pay school fees so that can freaking pay you! (*Participants laugh.* Moderator: OK). "It's because of us that you are studying here; it's because that old woman who's sitting there and selling uuh ... yah, vendors ... it's because of hobos; every time they buy bread, they take their VAT! What what ... what what!" This person ... they don't have respect.

Phuti: The other reason ... It's because I was promised the golden goose (Tsholo: Oh yah.) and I was promised the golden egg, and I just got a normal Easter egg, a marshmallow.

Moderator: What were you promised?

Phuti: We applied for Medicine and when you get there at Sportscom there, they advise you, "Take BSc; you will do Medicine next year". Never gonna happen. They give you false hopes, like a hundr ... the majority of kids who are doing BSc ... it was with the hopes of they're gonna do Medicine (Another participant: Or something else). Now I'm doing a course that I never wanted to do in the first place (Moderator: OK). I don't love it. I would understand if I was getting chowed [Translation: getting done in] while doing something I love, because when you're doing something you love, time isn't anything, time isn't ... I can spend 100 years, for all I care, at the varsity. I could have kids and a family and everything while I'm still schooling. I don't care, just for that specific thing because I'm like OK, 'cause I love it, I'm gonna do it. When you're doing something, you're paying for something that you never wanted in the first place, 'cause right now, me, I was expecting to be doing Medicine right now. I was expecting myself to be doing Medicine I, and I was only gonna do [inaudible] and Psychology; that was the sold dream that I was given, but now, you get in here, a couple of ... it didn't even take a month. A week later, you know that you're not [inaudible] first year. 1. You need to get into politics, know members from the ANC or the SRC, or else you're going nowhere. You need to get ... you need to know people. If you don't have connections or your family makes some kind of donation to the university, there is nothing that you can do. You're going nowhere. Now, how am I supposed to manage while you're ... when the course is chowing? You're being chowed by something you never loved in the first place? (Moderator: OK, so you're feeling demotivated?). You're feeling demotivated. Mind you, if the course that I was doing was a bit highly standardised, like was very accepting, like very ... how can I put this? Very prestigious at the school, I would

understand. Now they're teaching you like, "You know what, we're just sucking off your money. Basically, we don't care about you. You don't matter to us. We only care about kids that are doing Medicine, BDS, OT. You understand? These are the kids that we see a future in, you know, but the rest ... you guys can just go to hell". How am I supposed to live? The level of depression that I am gonna always get every single day after every single test script ... It arrives, I see it, I'm like, "Still, I never wanted this course in the first place". Don't you think that will literally make me drop out? And then you ask, I ask the guy last year in January, why are they accepting a lot of BSc students when they can give thingy ... when they can accept a lot of Medicine students? "No, the government is only subsidizing 211 students to do Medicine". I tell him, "The government cannot be as dumb as you're saying it is right now. We need doctors; I'm not getting here ... I'm not coming here with 50s; I'm coming here with 80s and 90s and you're telling me (Another participant: To think we need doctors) that I won't be—I'm not saying being a doctor needs academics—but I'm coming here with the dream of doing Medicine, and you're telling me that ... you're gonna tell me that the government is willing to help, to let people do BSc when there are hundreds of thousands of people who have an Honours in BSc, who don't have jobs? But the country is willing to invest in such a course?" No! It can't be! You are specifically choosing to ... "You know what, we're not gonna take a lot of these people, we're gonna take a lot of these people" because whether we like it or not, even now, BSc is still the most expensive course in this university. It's not joke. Last year they paid R30 000, first-year Medicine. We paid R33 000, but then I thought it was more of Psychology (Another participant: It's more; 33 was only for your modules; there is res.) And then we come to res (Another participant: Oh and the SRC rubbish. You have to pay.). And the SRC, these things ... How do you expect me to come to school every day with the mental thought of, "Yah, I'm gonna kill the day!", when there is someone always push you down? Mind you, at this time, there is nothing to pick you up that,

"Yah! I'm doing the course ... I'm waking up doing the course that I love". [inaudible] This year, I'm not even attending classes anymore. I don't even see the point of living (Another participant: Yah.). I'm just waiting for the day my mom will see in my eyes that, ay ay ... "Shame ... my child, I can see ... [inaudible]. Leave it; let's not waste money, leave it as it is". Because really, I don't see my point. I'm looking at myself in class, I mean like what am I doing here, am I really here to just get **a** degree? It could be a degree I don't mind, but (Moderator: But it's not really something you wanna do?) I just want something that I wanted in the first place. If it was something that I chose for myself, I would understand. How do you accept, how do you allow me to cope, how do you expect the future of my life to just go, everyone [everyone's future]? Mind you, I'm just alone in close to 300 students (Moderator: OK).

Participant: We feel the same way.

Moderator: OK, let's go to Anele. Do you know anybody who's dropped out, who's considering dropping out and why?

Anele: I do have a friend who dropped out because in BSc, you feel trapped. OK: 1. You have to get good marks, in order to get to Medicine. We've been all sold such a dream, like he [Phuti] was saying (Moderator: Like he was saying? OK). They sold us a dream; when you get to Sportscom, they sell you a dream, and then she dropped 'cause you feel trapped. How're you gonna get straight As when you're doing something you don't love, in the first place? And then you just pass and once you're in the second level, it gets more harder and then how're you gonna get straight As? And then fine (Moderator: Oh, so you do need straight As to be kept in the course?) No, to get to Medicine (Moderator: Oh, to move to Medicine? But then you don't like the course, so you can't?) Yah. How're you gonna get straight As? (Moderator: I see.) It's really difficult.

Moderator: OK, anybody else with drop out experiences or intentions? OK. What do you think, coming to poor performance, other than what you've said: Not being motivated because of the course that you're doing, that you didn't choose ... What do you think are the reasons for consistently poor performance by some students?

Dembe: I think it's mainly about the time frame, in terms of how long are we given to study (Moderator: OK, like ...?). Like them, actually; allocation (Moderator: Yes.). We also as Medical students do have ... those are some of the challenges, where you find that maybe a student is writing Physics, they'll be writing Biology—in the same week; it also happens, especially with the first years. Even with us who are having our Chemical class, you'll find that that whole week, I have to go for chemical controlments, then I will be writing a theory test and the next thing, it's an Oskie. The time compartments, it's ... I think that's the reason why we're failing to perform; because of time.

Moderator: OK. Any other reasons? Other than time, the demotivation of other courses?

Phuti: And the abuse of lecturers.

Moderator: The abuse ...? By ... yah, abuse by lecturers (Phuti: by lecturers). Yah; you've mentioned that and that you would get failed.

Sonto: I think that also, I'm not saying that you should, they *must* give us social events or whatever. I'm saying that because we are under so much pressure and because we work so much, let us let loose, like, we hardly have any social events. I don't know half of these people in this school because there is never something like, oh let's have a social get-together, just to get our minds off things. It doesn't have to be a bash, you don't have to drink our minds out; just to sit and talk, and I get to know someone who's not doing Occupational Therapy, you know. I don't ... I don't know *any*one because we don't have *any*thing like that and I think that if you have grades like that, then it's better to just go back to balancing. Yes, you have balance.

Moderator: OK.

Dembe: Maybe another thing to add, as well as the time: I'm not necessarily saying I would like [inaudible], where we have like, lack of time, in terms of how to study and everything, but then we also have time to rest, as well (Moderator: To rest?). Because you find for example, in my case, I come to class at 7:45. I need to be in class, but class knocks off very late, maybe at around 4, class has ended. The only time I had a break was from 1 to 2; after that, they expect me tomorrow to be prepared for the next class and, mind you, it's a lecture, it's not a teaching like back in high school, then they teach me chapters in one day—about three chapters—and it's not like in one day I learn one subject. I have got a lot of subjects that I am learning in one day (Moderator: OK), and then the next thing on Friday, I'm writing. I never really had time from Monday to Tuesday; every day I was knocking off late at night (Moderator: OK. So ...).

Sonto: I remember last year, it was a Monday, we wrote four tests on Monday. The very same Friday, we wrote three tests (Dembe: And classes still continue.). Classes still continue, like they don't care.

Moderator: So you are ... Yes, Tsholofelo?

Tsholo: And the thing, what the problem is, OK fine, you wanna skip the 7:45 class, you can't keep on skipping it because you haven't attended anything on that day, you have to sign the register, and if you miss a certain amount of classes, then (Another participant: They won't let you write; Another participant: Then you have a problem.). Yah, they won't let you write. So, you can't skip classes, as well, so you have to attend at 7:45.

Moderator: OK. So, in general, you guys are feeling overwhelmed?

Tsholofelo: Yes.

Moderator: And there isn't enough non-academic activities also. Okay. You've mentioned so many things; I don't know if you have anything to add to this. How do you think the institution could help or support students who are at the risk of dropping out?

Lerato: Hmm! [inaudible].

Moderator: Like, how do you think the university could provide ... could prevent that? Do you think they could address the things that you guys have mentioned? Do you think there is a possibility?

Lerato: Even if sometimes they do address, they fail to deliver.

Phuti: Thank you. The thing is, this school has promised so much, that if now they come to you and promise you something, like you just look at them like, "Thanks for wasting your oxygen and blowing carbon dioxide in my face" *(Another participant laughs)*.

Moderator: Yes, Tsholofelo?

Tsholo: Like, there was a meeting, a school com meeting that was held last week, which I did not feel even bothered to go in the slightest. I only went because, it just happened I was in the vicinity and they were like, "let's go"—I was with my friends; but for me to sit there and hear like, these people say things like, I really ... I know that ... (Moderator: You say the meeting was by?; Participants: The SRC). The SRC; a student body meeting. When they had stopped the busses and everything and, 'cause at this point, we all know the problems, you don't have to tell me the problems, tell me what has been done (Other participants: What has been done, not what's going to be done!), not what's going to be done.

Moderator: OK; so you're saying there is awareness of the problems?

Tsholo: Yes.

Moderator: It's just that they haven't been addressed?

Tsholo: Yes.

Phuti: Can I add something? Right now, this might not be academically involved, but one biggest example that really touched me ... Three weeks ago, a girl was run over by a car (Participants: A bus! Not by a car, a bus), a bus, at the entrance (Another participant: a 'hit and run'). We do not have a robot there. How many years is that?

Moderator: To go to the other side? (Participants: Yes.) Of the street? (Participants: Yes.).

Phuti: Yes, because the taxi stops at that side (Moderator: I see.), and then you have to cross the street (Moderator: Yes, yes) and it's a freeway (Moderator: Yah. It is, yah.). They could just pass you by; they don't have to stop for you. (Another participant: It wasn't even on the news; Another participant: It's not even on the news.). Now, how many years have they been signing petitions? Last year we even signed a petition (Another participant: Signed a petition.) that a robot must be there. They said "OK, it will be there". Now, a poor child's life has been lost, a poor child. Mxm.

Kholo: And to add to ...

Phuti: And now they said they will do something about the robot, right now still, 'til this day, I don't even see holes being dug, to at least show some hope of something like, a stop sign, at least. Nothing.

Kholo: To add on to what Phuti said. It got to a point where even the mother had to speak and say, "I don't understand why my child had to die because of what you guys have been trying to petition; it's my child's life", and having to hear a mother say that and still, they don't even bother, even the—What's his name?—the president was like, "No, we will march until they do". We don't have to march for them to put a robot (Another participant: It's a necessity.). We don't have to go and march; the whole school has to be stopped now and go march at the municipality, march at the CP to get a ... for them to build a robot. Clearly, we needed a robot. We lost one life that did not really have to ... it didn't have to get to that level.

Phuti: It didn't have to get to that level. And then they will let you know that the school has money ... (Another participant: Ooh! A lot of money?).

Kholo: Oh ... not [that] it doesn't, it does have.

Phuti: Right now, I know that the school has a contract with government [Discloses the school's financial information]

Another participant: What did they do [with the money]?

Phuti: They will tell you, you see they are ... [Discloses how he happened upon this information] The school has money.

Kholo: Ohh, I think the only thing they've done with the money is to build a Pharmacy building.

Participants: No, they have money for a statue. Yes, they have money for the statue. The statue!

Kholo: They're building single resses. I don't understand why we need single rooms; there is so many of us.

Lerato: That res isn't being paid for by ... the school is not paying for it. [Participants disclose the school's financial dealings]

Moderator: OK, so you guys feel that the university is aware of your issues and they are not addressing them? They have the financial means to address your issues, but they are not doing that?

Tsholo: Even that thing with the BSc, they were even saying in that meeting that, "Ohh, the state of the BSc course is in such a bad way" and all these things. OK then, do something, anything, to show that something is gonna be changing, but nothing happens.

Sonto: Even I was at the meeting for like few seconds. I heard that ... the president was like, it had to do with the food (Moderator: The president of?; Participant: The president of the SRC.). It had to do with the food at the student caf; he said he spoke to some people in the

school, he spoke to them about the food, and this guy actually said, "I'm not going to fire those people"; he asked for them to fire those people. He said, he literally said, "I'm not going to fire the catering people and I'm not going to be dictated [to] by children" (Moderator: OK).

Kholo: Imagine having to eat rubbish. Having to eat such food, that's why ... Oh no, but go to staff caf.

Lerato: Wow.

Phuti laughs.

Kholo: It's a buffet. Literally, their food is made ... actually, that's why everyone goes to the staff caf. It becomes ... it creates queues and the ... of course, they're going to increase their prices. But now, the problem: there are people with bursaries who can't buy at the staff caf.

Phuti: Because it's cash only (Moderator: OK, I see.).

Kholo: They are forced to buy at student caf, with their rubbish food. At least we can pay, that's why we prefer going to staff caf. There are people who don't have the money (Moderator: Have no choice?; Participants: Who have no choice).

Tsholo: They even ... the guy, the SRC president at the meeting, said that they did a health inspection and it is completely disgusting. We're not supposed to be eating that food at the student caf. So, I don't under ... Yah, they said we're not supposed to be ... it's supposed ... the whole kitchen is ... (Phuti: It's a hazard). It's a health hazard. (Phuti: You can see from the back). You can see! We've just been playing games, like oh, you're gonna get sick, but the fact that there was an inspection done and it's the truth, nothing is going to be done because people don't want to answer to children. I don't know.

Phuti: But they're still gonna drive their Porsches.

Moderator: OK. We're nearly done. Given the institution's historical background as one catering for ... as a historically Black institution, what would you say in terms of ... you

know, the representation of students of different races on campus and what would you say about race relations between students or between students and staff? *(Participants laugh)*.

Phuti: In this school, if you're White, stay with people who are white. They stay in one table; we'll make sure [that] if the table fits six people and we're 10, we will fit at that table *(Another participant giggles)* because we're not gonna sit with some Black people. If you're Indian, stick with Indians.

Moderator: OK; so that is generally how it is?

Phuti: Yes *(Other participants agree)*.

Tsholo: There is no ... There is no ... like, a White person is not gonna come to you and like, swear at you. I personally have not experienced such things. They're not mean to us; there is no ... racism.

Phuti: It's not that it's racist.

Tsholo: It's not that it's racist, but there is such division! *(Phuti agrees)* Unnecessary division! We come far; we come from even White schools, Afrikaans schools, we all talked to each other: Why are you acting offish? I don't understand why you act like this (Participant: You're not special). Yah, exactly; I don't understand why they don't talk to us because I just don't get it. But I mean, in terms of racism, there really isn't racism.

Phuti: There is no racism; just the division.

Tsholo: I don't even think ... and obviously, the majority of people are Black people (Phuti: Obviously.), and there's divisions among the Black people (Phuti: Yah, yah, upper class, there.).

Moderator: OK. Would you like to say a bit more about that?

Phuti: Like, if you are hanging with a certain group of people that chill, like 'smarties', you don't wanna exactly be friends with that person 'cause "Oh no, they are something that you don't like". Your whole friends attacking friends; it becomes a war of the thingies ... Now,

geez ... the division. I understand, society has divisions, but the divisions that we see ... and we don't even know what's the cause of it. Like, why White people don't mix with Black people. And there is no racism; you don't even ... you can't explain what's making that division (Other participants: You can't.) 'cause they don't hate. They ... I used to ... I did practicals with BDS students. I just kind of like them, but not all of them. So, yah, when it's time for practicals, we will talk because they need my work and I need yours *(laughs)*. We have to share, so yah we're like "OK cool, cool, cool". Leave the door; [inaudible]; we just have to talk to each other (Moderator: OK, I see.). [inaudible; Essence: After completion of project, students of different races don't interact anymore] It's over; it's done. It's bye-bye (Moderator: OK).

Tsholo: It's very confusing; I don't understand; I'm so confused. That's what I don't get, 'cause we can't really say; if you were to ask us what's the problem: I don't know. Like, these people have not faulted me; they didn't do anything.

Moderator: OK. So, there is no racism?

Participants: No. No, there isn't. Not even (Moderator: It's just people keeping to themselves?). Yah. I understand.

Moderator: Anele, is there something you want to say, and Kholofelo also?

Kholo: I just wanted to add; besides, OK, we don't have racial division, I mean, sorry, "[racial] problems", but I have noticed now that we are having ... if I can say, 'cultural divisions' (Moderator: OK). Yah. Zulu people will stick together; actually, not that I'm saying Zulu people. I don't wanna ... Let me not ... I'm not being specific but, for example, a lot of Vendas will probably chill together there. Hey, I'm Pedi, but I don't speak Pedi. But I wanna learn Venda, but some people won't be accommodative for me to learn. Some Tsongas will chill there together. The Pedi people ... let it be. And I want to ... I want to diverse with you guys, you know, but I can't. I will also say, "OK, fine", I'm forcing myself

to be ignorant, because I know that they won't accommodate me; so, why should I even bother? And I mean, in varsity; this is where you're exposed to so much, you know. By the end of, I mean by the time you get your degree, at least know you could have at least learnt one language.

Sonto: You need to. You need to (Kholo: In the Health department, yah] , especially in what we do; you need to, because you're gonna interact with a lot of patients who will speak to you in Venda.

Kholo: Yes! And you really want to help this person ... You really want to help this person, but you can't; you can't converse, because why? You were forced to be ignorant of teaching ... I mean being taught how to speak that specific language.

Tsholo: I know; because like say now, for an example; this is the truth, where there's like ... the Swatis would ... if you ... the Swatis who're in fourth year would pass notes down to the first-year Swatis, and then they would pass notes, and pass this, what what, but only if you're Swati. So, maybe if you ask to have some of that, "I'm sorry, but we can't help", and they will act like they can't; you know that they have stuff. So, if you're from other countries, the other lands *(Participants laugh)*. Say now I'm [Congolese] and I meet another fellow [Congolese] *(Participants agree)*. The Congolese will stick to each other (Phuti: Amen.). And I don't know ... (Participants: 'Cause we're not xenophobic. And they form a society!). And the thing is, we're not xenophobic in the slightest. We don't care that you're Congolese, OK, but don't come around here and then you [inaudible], and you form societies.

Participant: Just to add, OK, not linguistically [literally], because we will do the things.

Kholo: I think we are also, as a varsity; I'm not sure if it goes under "advantage", but we are lucky that we don't experience such things, let it be [be it] racial issues, let it be [be it] xenophobic. Like, right now, as you can see, the past months have been hectic for other people out there, and we ... I was very ... I was still telling my mom: I'm very grateful that

I'm in this varsity because we didn't go under. OK, strike: last year we tried, we failed (Participant: 'Cause it was exams.). They stopped the strike; because we wanted to do a mini strike; president decided "No, this strike is a bone and, yah no, it stopped" (Moderator: OK. What did you want to strike about?). (Another participant: Transport; Another participant: Fees.). No, no, no, in the beginning of the year. I think it was the BSc ... it was people failing stuff (Another participant: The res); the res as well (Phuti: They were doing a non-[inaudible]). But I feel like we are ... (Moderator: What about the res?) There is another res that they signed a contract for (Moderator: So, the res wasn't even built?).

Kholo: No, no, no, it was in a terrible condition.

Moderator: OK. I see.

Phuti: The res was shut down for two years (Moderator: OK). So, they re-opened it; they did no renovations whatsoever (Moderator: OK. I see.).

Kholo: So, but other than that, we are just grateful that we did not go under. We didn't undergo any of that; last year as well, even with *Fees Must Fall*, we tried and they failed (Moderator: OK). So yah, that's my advantage (Moderator: OK).

Participant: Yah, that's the only advantage they managed (Moderator: That's the only advantage?).

Tsholo: Or the main one [rather] (Moderator: OK).

Participant: Another advantage ... (Moderator: Another advantage?).

Tsholo: No but, on the real, on the real, from what I've seen, if I'm really being honest, the opportunities, really are, if you come from the school ... they're there, if you graduate. There is so much, if you're from Medunsa (Phuti: Hmm, *their* Medunsa, yes.). OK. I don't know about BSc, but the Health Sciences. If you come from Medunsa, they give you first preference. I know this for a fact. Yah, if you're doing Medicine, they give you first

preference (Kholo: It's because of the practicals; Tsholo: Yah, they just ...; Phuti: They know.).

Phuti: But now the problem is starting a new university, having to gain new rep [a new reputation]. There are some embassies in the country, in the whole world internationally; there are students who are from the UK; they wanna study in Medunsa; type into their computers, Medunsa doesn't even exist (Moderator: OK.) on their systems. No letter was issued to all the ambassadors internationally, that the university has changed its name (Moderator: Oh, you're talking about the name change? Participants: Yes). Yes; when you change your name, you gotta now ... you have to start a new reputation, you're just a new baby, now (Moderator: OK). You need to start all over again; the rep ... you have a reputation to gain now. When you say like, no, they changed the name to "Sefako Makgatho Health Science University": "Why does it look like it's a high school? Ay, I'm fine, I'm OK".

Tsholo: Ya, especially with us, Black people. We like, uhh ... we, like traditional. Black people, don't like to change (Phuti: We don't like to change.). You go to your mom, who's in Limpopo, for example, and you're gonna say ... or your grandparents, and you're gonna say, "No, I go to Sefako"; they're like "Huh, excuse me?". Like, you have to ... everyone knows Medunsa, you know. So, they will just ... yah.

Moderator: Are you guys unhappy with the name?

Phuti: Everyone is unhappy (Moderator: What are you unhappy about?). They striked once in 2014 for the name (Lerato: And I heard that it was hectic.). It was hectic; they burned the gate, R800 000 worth of damages at the gate.

Moderator: But what's the problem? Why does everybody hate the name? Yes, Ndzanga?

Ndzanga: It's because no one knows who we are (Moderator: OK), and how can you get a job saying, "OK, which varsity did you go to ..."; "Sefako Makgatho"; "where is that?"

Tsholo: You have to say "Sefako Makgatho"; you can't say "Medunsa" (Phuti: Legally;

Moderator: OK. I see what you mean.).

Tsholo: And the thing is, I feel like there should have been more press coverage around the

name change (Moderator: Around the name change?). If Wits were to change its name, I

mean, people in Nigeria would know *(Participants laugh)*. Right now, even with *Fees Must*

Fall, it's 'cause Wits stood up (Phuti: Because Wits finally stood up. *Other participants*

agree). That's when it got popular.

Moderator: OK, so why do you guys think that something like ... an institution like Wits

would get more news coverage, for example, [inaudible], if their name was to change.

Phuti: Oh, because you cannot easily buy their SRC there (Participant: Yah.). Unlike here.

Moderator: OK, Anele?

Anele: Wits invests in everything, from the resources for the students—everything. They

have a lot of libraries, they have a lot. Here, if you wanna scan a document and e-mail it, I

don't think I can do it here.

Participants: I can't. You can't scan.

Anele: I don't think I can. Wits, you can do it, and they have a student portal. They have a lot

of things; they invest in their resources, and here, they don't. I don't know what they do with

all the money (Phuti: We wonder, hey.). I don't know ... I've seen the SRC; they have

phones, they have Note 5s, R16 000 a person.

Participants: They have cars, all of them. They have cars (Moderator: Who's got cars?). The

SRC members (Moderator: The SRC?). Yes, all of them!

Kholo: Adding to that, with the money, like, where does the money go? For example, South

Point initially ... not initially ... South Point Residence is R14 000, OK? But we are charged

R22 000. Meaning—oh Maths— (Another participant: R8000?) R8000 goes to the school

(Moderator: OK). They're taking it. I don't understand why, because ... (Phuti: They're not

even doing the administration.). We don't even benefit in any way, especially with the busses, that go at certain times. For example, like now, I would want to probably ... I've decided, OK, this bus is going there from 12 from campus to town—some bus drivers, OK, you can take your chance—at 12, you like, get into the bus—the one with the people who are getting off, you will get on. Some bus drivers will say, "Where are you going?" Like, I'm going to school, homie *(Participants laugh)*, I've got a class at 2, and they'll be like, "No". And mind you, they're coming here, but they're refusing to take you *(Participants agree)*. My money! (Moderator: Why are they refusing to take you?). I don't understand (Moderator: Oh, that's not ... the bus doesn't leave at that time?) Yah. They have that thing that, after 9, no one should get on the bus (Moderator: Even if the bus is coming here, they won't take you?). Yah, and I don't understand. It's not by rule. I am entitled to it because they ... their buttered bread is because of me, my money, and now they need to also respect that I have class; I've got school (Moderator: Yes). I need to go to school now; if you say "No", I don't have R20 to go to a taxi to come here (Phuti: Five blocks away.) and get off there and risk my life by passing that junction (Phuti: And getting hit by a car.). You know what I mean?

Moderator: Yes, Sonto.

Sonto: I don't know if now it's a varsity issue, or it's those side excuses for the busses, but I was writing one morning, Monday morning, at 7:45 and this bus driver got lost. In my mind, when a new bus driver comes, you show them the way. He can't get lost, not at a 7 o'clock bus (Phuti: Not with the 7 o'clock bus.). This guy turned at ... (Another participant: Mabopane) Mabopane. I was 30 minutes to an hour late for my test; my first test of the year.

Kholo: Mind you, the lecturers don't care.

Phuti: The lecturers don't care.

Moderator: What happened?

Sonto: Nothing happened. I had to get in, I had to write as fast as I could.

Kholo: The lecturers don't care If you're late or not ... or you ... because it's usually the busses, actually.

Tsholo: Same thing with the Sportscom situation when you're writing exams. I don't know how you guys do it. I mean, I've cried.

Moderator: So, is anybody staying in res, other than the ones who've said?

Participants: Yah, we all said we stay at res. We all stay in res.

Moderator: On campus?

Some participants: No.

Ndzanga: I stay on campus.

Tsholo: One more advantage ... One advantage I can say is that everybody does have a res; we do have res, everyone. I mean, I don't know who didn't get; like, even if you have a crappy res.

Phuti: No, but there are some kids.

Moderator: Even those who stay on campus—the CBD [correction]? (Participants: In general.).

Phuti: But there are kids who do not have, like res, are supposed to stay at home (Moderator: OK) [inaudible] because they accept a large amount of kids, whom they cannot cater for ... they can't cater for. This year, BSc, we have ... I know the number ... this year, they took close to 500 students, for BSc; last year, it was 300 (Moderator: OK).

Kholo: With the money issue, what they could do is build resses, instead of giving, for example, the SRC for a specific event, a big amount of money. 1. OK: But now the problem is that, with our soil, it's clay, so having to build something on clay's very dangerous; (1). But there could be other alternatives, which is town, finding a place and actually buying it, renovate it and it's going to be fine. Let it belong to Medunsa, not to be rented by Medunsa (Moderator: OK, I see what you mean.). Yes. Because now they can't ... I mean, the two

buildings that are built, they had to build underneath first, before actually building on top. They can't build.

Participant: Yah, that's why they don't build; but, we've got so much land.

Phuti: But there's room there; we have land there on the other side and it's OK.

Kholo: No, it's not OK; everywhere, the clay it's ... thingies ...

Phuti: It's possible.

Participant: Here it was clay; but now ...

Phuti: Yah, they made it possible.

Participant: It's possible.

Phuti: It's possible. At the end of the day, if something is possible, don't make excuses [that] "there is clay".

Tsholo: Because in Wits, that's what they do with Wits. Wits, they own places, like, they own properties and then they renovate them and [turn] them into res, all around Braamfontein (Participants: Yah, yah.). Like, the majority of Braamfontein is Wits because they like, own everything ... even, there is like factories and stuff; they buy those places then renovate it and make it res.

Moderator: OK.

Sonto: I know that they bought a res near Park Bay (Another participant: Yah.), that is near Park Bay, so now the Park Bay hospital, it says "University of Witswatersrand", and then underneath, it says "Park Bay".

Kholo: Yah, because it belongs to ... It's like Sefako ... I mean, what do you call this? George Mukhari. By law, when the school changed, it was supposed to be called "George Mukhari" or "George Mukhari" changes, and then, to Sefako Makgatho, but because it's *us* and delayed, and they are not serious about life; we are not, for example, at Baragwanath, they want to build a varsity called Baragwanath University, because now what the Health Science

... I mean the Health Department of government, they want to build a varsity next to each hospital, but of course we are very delayed with these things (Participant: Yah, that's what should happen; Moderator: OK). That's another thing of the name change, why we're also having problems. Because people will be like, "Hey, where do you guys do your practicals?"; "George Mukhari"; "But why George Mukhari / Sefako Makgatho? It's not making sense".

Moderator: OK.

Lerato: Another thing, he said that they take a certain number of people [inaudible], a huge number of students. Yes, also at Dental, last year they took ... it was not a big number, but this year, the BBTs, Dental Therapists and the Oral Hygienists were like ... they are like, close to 50, 40-something—knowing that last year they took 34. This year it's close to 50, cubicles are not enough in the clinic; so, how many students are they gonna fail, so that they can take a number that's gonna occupy the cubicles?

Dembe: Sorry, I have to go.

Moderator: I'm sorry. Have you given Zama your number?

Yes: Yah. (Moderator: Ooh, you gave it via ... I'm sorry. *Participants leaves*).

Moderator: Dzanga, you said something that I wanted us to go into. You said when you're White, you go into Medicine (Dzanga: When you're what?). You said when you're White, you go into Medicine.

Participants laugh.

Phuti: Ay, let's not lie. (Moderator: Would you like to elaborate on that?; Another participant: True; Another participant: What did she (Dzanga) say? Another participant: True. When you're White, you go into Medicine.). When you're White, you go into Medicine.

Participant: Or BDS.

Kholo: Being in the Health Faculty, I agree to that, as well (To another participant who also wanted to talk: Sorry, you may go ahead; The other participant: No, you may go ahead.). 1.

We only have one White person in BSc (Phuti: The whole of BSc; *A participant laughs.*).

The whole of BSc; literally from the first year until Honours, there is only one White guy

there.

Participant: Everyone knows him.

Kholo: I don't know how he got there *(Participants laugh.)*. I think he must have, you know

... (Another participant: Yah, applied for BSc.). Yah, no, no, no ... you know. (Phuti: You

know.) He probably got 40s, and I'm not saying he did, but, it's a bit ... I mean, we don't

have an Indian in BSc *(Participants laugh)*. It hurts 'cause, I mean, why, why, why ... are

they different from us. You know what I mean? (Moderator: OK.). Yah.

Moderator: OK.

Ndzanga: I was saying that 'cause, even though ... OK, we can't prove that when you're

White you go to Medicine, when you're Indian, you go to Pharmacy *(Participants laugh)*, but

when you look at them (Another participant: It's true, though. *Laughs*), when you're White,

you going to Medicine or you go to Dental Surgery—not just Dental.

Participants: Not just Dental; Dental Surgery!!

Ndzanga: When you're Indian, you go to Pharmacy. Everyone else—'cause you're Black—

you know where your place is. You stay in Physiotherapy; you stay in Occupational Therapy;

or you stay in BSc. You know your place. And we don't understand why, why are all the

White people in Medicine? How is that possible? How in this world, is like, such a huge

number of the Medicine people White? How does that happen?

Phuti: I can tell you, if you look at BSc and see a White person. No. BDS or Medicine.

Several participants: Then, if it's an Indian person, Pharmacy or BDS. Yah.

Kholo: Can I say something? It's a bit weird. When I applied in 2012, cause I ... after Grade

12, after matric, I applied ... I mean, I went to upgrade ... Actually, when I applied in Grade

11, I specified my race as "White" (Participant: Oh my God.). This school accepted me for

Medicine (Moderator: Yes?), but I did not receive a letter. So, I decided: OK; no, the varsity accepted me. OK, let me go upgrade. When I came here late last ... I mean early, as a late applicant, they're like "Oh, you got a student number"; I'm like, "What? Was I? I was accepted?"; "Yah, for Medicine"; I'm like, "Sorry, what? How? I was not even told!" And what I was forced to go through is BSc, oh because I'm Black. So, I'm like (Phuti: Oh, I'm gonna do that now; need it so badly.), "Can you do something about this?" She said "No, that's already passed; you can't".

Moderator: OK, clarify. Please clarify again what happened? You were accepted ...?

Kholo: For ... I was accepted for Medicine.

Moderator: For Medicine, and you were not aware?

Kholo: In Grade 11, yah. I was not aware because they don't give you statements, they don't send sms's, they don't even call you.

Moderator: OK, and then?

Kholo: I went to ... I did my matric. I upgraded because I ... OK, I also applied in matric, but I didn't apply here; I applied in other varsities. I upgraded; during my upgrading in 2014 (OK, I also didn't apply here), I applied in 2015 early, January, when the ... I mean, before registration for first years, and they told me that there's nothing they could do (Moderator: They couldn't allow you to register in Medicine?). Yes. (Moderator: OK). Because I did my matric, upgraded; so, I can't use my matric ... I mean, my Grade 11 results (Moderator: OK. Oh, I see.). So, therefore, I was pushed into BSc, and of course I was sold the dreams, 'cause now the thing is, there are so many BSc students who want to do Medicine, and they only take about five (Moderator: OK). Now, what marks ... what marks should you get? Why should we fight to get into BSc ... I mean, to Medicine? You can't take five and accept about 300 or 400 BSc students, and each and every one of them, you tell them, "Oh no, girl you're gonna be accepted!"; "Umm, no, Phuti, no, you just work hard, work hard and yah, you get

there"; you work hard *(Participants agree)*, but I mean, you get lecturers who literally fail you because you said, "But Sir, I don't like the way you teach; can you teach like this?" And they start disliking you.

Moderator: OK. Yes, Sonto.

Participants mumble, then one shushes them.

Sonto: The president, in that meeting last week, he was like, "Yah, uuh ... remember how they were accepting five students from BSc to Medicine? Now they are accepting seven!" I'm like ... (Another participant: What?) *(Participants laugh)*. I'm like, "Oh *(claps)*, good for you! You actually did something!" Nx.

Moderator: OK, guys, before we wrap up, how confident are you that you will complete your degree within record time?

Participants laugh.

Participant: Zero.

Kholo: Sorry, umm ... zero (Phuti: Zero), I'm repeating already. I'm repeating one module.

Lerato: I'm repeating one module.

Tsholo: I'm going to repeat two modules!

Phuti: I'm repeating two modules next year. So, I can't .

Moderator: So, we have five people who are not confident? And the others?

Some participants: Who's confident?

Moderator: Anele, you're confident?

Anele: I survive; I'm not confident (Moderator: OK).

Sonto: It's not confidence; it's hope. (Phuti: Your hopes.).

Moderator: OK. You're hopeful?

Sonto: Even today, that lecturer didn't look at me nicely. So, I must be careful; I should be afraid.

Sonto: She doesn't play; some other new lecturer ... and everyone says we should be afraid, and she didn't look at me properly today, so I should be afraid.

Moderator: Is there anything else that you guys would like to add? You said quite a lot, quite a lot; I can't even say "a mouthful".

Participant: Oh, sorry.

Moderator: You said many mouthfuls (Participant: Yah.). I thank you. Thanks. I appreciate your time and, if there isn't anything to add or ask, then that would be it. *Silence.* OK, that's it, then; thank you. Thank you so much with your time.

Focus group discussion concludes.

Transcript 4: UP Focus Group Discussion 1

Moderator: Hi everyone. We're going to start now. My name is Tsholofelo—does anybody know me? *(Participants shake heads)*. OK, great. My name is Tsholofelo; I'm doing my PhD in Psychology, so this is research for that and, as you can see on the consent form in front of you, the study is on predictors of academic success among undergraduate students. So, what we're gonna do now— you can read the ... you can read the consent form for further information—so, basically, what we're gonna do now is have a group discussion about various topics related to academics and, if you do agree to participate, you can after having read the consent form; you can sign and then we carry on. Just to briefly mention what's on the consent form, I have said what we're gonna do ... oh yes, confidentiality: you don't have to use your real name, you don't have to even use your surname, and information that you provide will be treated confidentially. Nobody will be able to identify you, based on how the research will ... how the results will be presented; and they will be presented in the form of a thesis, academic journals, conference papers, lay articles, on media, and so on. And if you ... we don't foresee any risks that you might incur from participating in this study, but if you feel that you could benefit from psychological counselling, based on your participation in this study, there are the details for Student Support services. Please take them down and you can receive counselling there at no cost. And after this, if you want further information or have any questions to ask, please take my details down so that you can send me an e-mail or call; there are my details there. And signing the consent form is indication that you choose to parti ... you consent to participate in the study and you may withdraw anytime. You will not be penalised for withdrawing. And we'll be recording the ... yah, everything that's going on.

Portia: What should we write as a place?

Moderator: Place ... you can just say UP. So, we're gonna start with those questions when everybody has signed; please let me know so we can continue.

Silence.

We can start with you guys introducing yourselves.

Nontsikelelo: My name is Nontsikelelo [surname]

Moderator: OK and ...?

Nontsikelelo: What am I studying?

Moderator: Yes.

Nontsikelelo: I study Human Physiology Genetics and Psychology (Moderator: And year?) Third year.

Makaziwe: Hi, my name is Makaziwe [surname] (Moderator: You don't have to say your surname at all.). OK; my name is Makaziwe and I'm studying what she is studying (Moderator: OK); third year as well (Moderator: OK).

Presti: My name is Presti and I'm studying Bio-Chemistry and Human Physiology (Moderator: What year?). Third.

Reabetswe: My name is Reabetswe and I'm studying BA degree, Human Psychology 2nd year (Moderator: OK).

Nhlanhla: My name is Nhlanhla; I'm studying BA General, English Literature, 2nd year.

Moderator: Reabetswe, Presti, Nontsikelelo, Makaziwe, Nhlanhla. OK. Yah, so, give honest responses, as honest as possible, and when you do, just so we know who said what: before you answer, just say your name; either your name or the name that you're using for the purpose of the research. Firstly, why did you choose to study here at UP?

Reabetswe: I chose to study at UP because, based on the information that I got from the Internet and from people who studied here before. It's ... I found out that it's one of the best universities and very multi-racial and diverse; that was very interesting (Moderator: OK).

Nhlanhla: The reason why I came here is because I Googled UP and saw it was rated Number 4 in Africa's top universities, just under UCT and Stellenbosch [inaudible].

Moderator: OK, I see; and the others?

Makaziwe: OK. I chose UP because we have a lot of people coming to our school, telling us about UP and what they offer, and then basically what they were telling us is that, trying to get into UP is hard and they don't just take anyone. And a lot of people from our school didn't wanna apply because they were scared that they're not gonna ge accepted. So, I was one of those: "I'm gonna break the barrier. I just wanna see if they're gonna take me or not" (Moderator: OK).

Presti: Ah well, I didn't wanna be too close to home, but then I didn't wanna be too far, so I though Pretoria was the way. Then I thought, I researched like ... the universities in Pretoria and then UP turned up to be one of the best, and there is a girl from my high school who used to be like, the best student, and she came here. So I thought this is it (Moderator: And where is home?) Soweto (Moderator: OK).

Nontsikelelo: One of the reasons why I came to UP was for choir; they have the best choir in the country (Moderator: OK), and I'm part of that choir now, so yah, I'm happy. *Everyone laughs*.

Moderator: OK ... very interesting. And what do you think are the advantages of studying here—advantages and disadvantages.

Reabetswe: I think the advantages would be that you get to meet a lot of people from very different backgrounds and cultures and everything. You get to learn a lot about those people and where they come from, and with the university being one of the best, you get like, that recognition by people when you're done with your degree. I hope it's going to be much easier for you to get a job because people are familiar with ... I assume, a lot of people know what kind of university UP is and has a lot of good things (Moderator: OK).

Nhlanhla: I think after completing my degree, my status will be a bit high, 'cause like, attaining a degree from a highly rated university, like, puts you on a higher pedestal.

Moderator: OK, and the others?

Makaziwe: I think studying here at UP exposes you to a lot of opportunities, plus when you're done with your degree, you know where you're gonna fall into. It's not just, you're gonna chill at home and do nothing. So, you get exposed to lots of opportunities and things, and you meet a lot of people that influence you on how you think and how you see your way forward with your studies and stuff like that (Moderator: OK; what opportunities are you referring to?). OK, you get like, academic recognition and all those things (Moderator: OK; like they were saying?). Yah (Moderator: OK), and the disadvantage: I feel like, sometimes you feel like you're disadvantaged because of your skin colour—you know that type of thing? The race thing is always there all the time (Moderator: OK). So, you feel like some of the people are getting better treatment because they have a certain skin type, and then because you're not from a highly advantaged family, you can't have the same resources that they can afford to get, so that they get better marks (Moderator: OK).

Presti: I think you get to interact with people from different backgrounds and cultures. Even though UP is in Pretoria, it's still an international university; you get people from other countries coming here. So like, you get to learn a lot of things from different people and what else? Yah *(laughs).* The disadvantage is basically ... that's it, 'cause it's ... I think it's just race, but then it's not much of a big deal 'cause personally, I haven't experienced any, but you get people who are affected by it around me, yah (Moderator: OK).

Nontsikelelo: They have said pretty much everything. To add on to that, as she mentioned already—or they mentioned— exposure ... and to different aspects, like academically, socially, and the recognition—or the academic recognition that you get after receiving your degree and the friends you make; those are advantages. The only disadvantage, really, would be the race card 'cause it ... I also haven't been affected by it. I don't think it's that necessary,

but it is there and I don't think it's gonna go in a while. *(Another participant laughs)*. But it's not that big of a deal.

Moderator: OK (Nontsikelelo: Yes). You guys have mentioned the race thing a lot, like ... can you go further into ... further details about what you mean; or when people have had experiences, what experiences you're referring to?

Nontsikelelo: Recently, there were strikes about "Afrikaans Must Fall". That disrupted us a lot, in terms of our work, 'cause our timetable had to shift and to try and accommodate the time that we lost too about the lectures and stuff. And that was ... it was really unnecessary because only certain people like ... what is it called? Political groups felt the need to use ... I don't know ... to use ... last year was the whole "Fees Must Fall" situation. So, they used that as a way to try and lash out about how they feel about the whole race thing (Moderator: OK). Ya.

Moderator: And ...

Makaziwe: I think with the race thing, you even see it in class, like when you ... like the way your lecturers present the work to you, and you understand that maybe when a person—a White person—asks a question in class, the response they get is more detailed, specific and what-not; but when you ask a question, it's just like they're trying to just rush over on your answer. They're not giving you specifics on what you're really asking about, and you find that in tasks, sometimes when you ask the *demis* to come help you, they have this funny attitude towards you, it's like they don't wanna help you, but they have to because it's their job. And when you see how they interact with other learners, it's like a whole different setup, and you're like, "but aren't you supposed to be like fair with all of us and stuff like that?" So, I have personally experienced it and you try not to let it get to you because there is no use trying to fight something, being like ... asking them, "Why are you treating me like this, blah blah blah?" So, you just keep your cool, you just continue with what you're doing, but you

can see and you can notice what is happening around you (Moderator: OK, OK.). So I think that's ... a big problem, but then I hope one day, yah (Moderator: OK. Did you say "the demis"?). Yah, the demis (Moderator: What are "demis"?). Tutors (Moderator: Oh tutors. OK, I see.).

Presti: I think it's the same with mine 'cause like, I think I've experienced it, even though I didn't take it to the brain and all that 'cause in class there was a time like, Afrikaans students ... they ask things in Afrikaans, and then the lecturer will explain in Afrikaans, forgetting that some of us don't know Afrikaans. So, we get to lose out on other points and the tutors like, they're best friends with Afrikaans students. And you get there, you don't know if it's a tutor or a friend or what, and the way they explain things, you can see that these people are friends, so they can explain it clearly.

Moderator: OK, and the others?

Nhlanhla: Myself, I have never experienced any racism [inaudible] so...

Reabetswe: I think I've seen, like ... the things that they were saying, that they were talking about, like when a Black student would raise their hand in class, wanting to ask a question, the lecturer would take time to notice them, or even notice them, but then just carry on speaking, and only attend to them after they're done speaking. And then when, in case where a White person raises their hand, it's almost as if they respond immediately to them and they answer them [inaudible].

Moderator: OK. Other than the class context on campus, in social ... in the social space, what do you think inter-race relations are? Yes. Go ahead, Presti. Can I borrow my pen? Thank you. Thanks.

Presti: At the library, I have noticed that it's even worse, this racism thing. You get there, you're a Black person, you're carrying your water, they tell you water is not allowed. A White person is gonna get there carrying juice, water, a burger, but they ... they let her pass.

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If you're inside and you're talking, your voice is so low, they will shush you, but then if it's a White person, then it's like OK, it's fine, 'cause your voice is smooth *(Everyone laughs).*

Nontsikelelo: I haven't seen interracial like ... togetherness here in Pretoria like back at home (Moderator: Where is back home?). Back home as in Pietermaritzburg in KZN (Moderator: OK). There are cliques and like, when you ... I don't know how to explain it ... OK, well, there is that bit of interracial like ... friendship thing going on (Moderator: OK), but there is also those people who're still stuck in times and are quite racist (Moderator: OK) and a friend of mine spoke to me about the racism encounter that she had with a girl who, like, she would talk to someone in Afrikaans and then when she would ask her to explain in English, she continued speaking in Afrikaans. And that's just downright ... (Moderator: OK. Was that in class or ...?). No, that was like an outing, just like with other friends (Moderator: Oh! I see. OK).

Reabetswe: When it comes to relationships between inter ... I mean, yah, interracial people outside of the classroom. I haven't noticed anything inappropriate. I actually had ... I was actually quite close to this other White girl, like, she would help me study and stuff, but it wasn't like we're best friends or anything, but she was just being kind to me (Moderator: OK). I really appreciated that (Moderator: OK).

Nhlanhla: I think as ... sometimes Black people are to be blamed for some problems 'cause to some extent they bitch about White people behind their backs and they grovel in their presence. So, they're like two-faced in a way that, behind their back, they can talk their minds, but in their presence, they're like ... they're licking their ass *(Participants laugh)* [inaudible], so, to some extent [inaudible]. Sorry for the language (Moderator: No, it's OK. Knock yourself out). *(Participants laugh).*

Nontsikelelo: To add on to that, I'm not saying that everything is [inaudible] and everything, but I have friends, like White friends, who are totally against the whole like, racism thing,

and they're sad, they're quite sad that there are still people who act like that and they're ashamed that, you know, they have ... they're friends with people like that and I think they always try; there will be those people who always try to accommodate us and be nice to us and, you know, speak English and, yah. (Moderator: OK). There is a little bit of good (Moderator: OK).

Makaziwe: I think we just tolerate each other. It's not a thing of, "I wanna be your friend, I wanna get to know you", but you're here for your own business; I'm also here to do my own thing. If you don't like me, it's fine, I don't like you as well, because I feel as much as we say that White people are racist, Black people are racist as well towards White people. It's like a war. We try and do bad things and blame other people for it. We say we do bad things because they're racist, that's why we're doing (Moderator: OK) these because they're White and they have everything. So, we're trying to justify what we're doing by blaming other people. But I think it's just a matter of tolerance; it's not really some kind of relationship going on between people of different races. We're just here to like ... each and every person is here to mind their own business at the end of the day (Moderator: OK). So, we just learn to live with each other to pass time until you get your degree and you're done.

Moderator: OK. And since you've ... ohh, before we go to that one, can you speak about language, you've mentioned language to some extent. In terms of language, in what way do you think the medium of instruction or language, just in general, contributes towards your academic performance or that of your friends?

Presti: I don't think it affects me at all, like, I'm here to get my degree. If I can understand what the lecturer is saying to me, it's fine. I don't care if there are Afrikaans classes 'cause I don't attend them. So, they don't bother me at all (Moderator: OK). So, I think language is just fine, the way it is. This "Afrikaans Must Fall" thing is just another way of (Moderator: OK, so you're happy with ...) ... I'm just happy (Moderator: OK).

Reabetswe: On this one, I have to agree with all those people who were protesting against the whole Afrikaans thing, because I feel like if you get taught in your mother tongue, it's much easier for you to actually understand what is being taught, other than when you have to learn in a different language, and some of us are from the rural areas. I'm not saying that it should be an excuse, because we do learn [inaudible] where we come from, but it's like, it's very much easier when something is being explained in a language that you've grown up with and you understand it better, 'cause the Afrikaans kids ... they get that, and we don't get that. Some of us don't even understand, we have to live with dictionaries because we have to get meaning ...the proper meaning of words, so that you don't get the context of what you're studying wrong. But then yah.

Nhlanhla: I think English is OK as a medium of instruction 'cause I can imagine if I went to look for a job in Germany with a Psychology degree taught in Zulu *(Participants laugh).* So, I think this language will limit my opportunities (Moderator: OK). So, the only opportunities will be in KZN or in South Africa (Moderator: OK), but English you got ...

Moderator: Would you like to add?

Reabetswe: Yes, can I just add to what ... In my opinion, like, not like we have to get the whole material in your home language, but there should be some kind of a supplement to your studies, like maybe tutorials. They can have tutorials, not that they have to translate everything into your mother tongue, but at some point, they have to make it easier for you by trying to use your mother tongue so that things that are difficult for you to understand, they become easy (Moderator: OK).

Nontsikelelo: Can we ask questions? (Moderator: Yes, sure.) OK; but I feel like, every ... I'm sure every single school like, OK, not every single school, but most schools are taught like ... English is the medium of instruction or like it's a universal language. So I mean, personally for me, I don't think I'll understand any scientific work in Zulu. It's like, what is an enzyme

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in Zulu? So, you're lost and you know you wouldn't understand fully. So, in English ... I think English is the way to go.

Presti: I don't think she [Reabetswe] means it that way. I meant like, when you explain, '*No, Ntsiki, ama enzymes uwafaka kanje ukuze uthole kanje*', you know. Now you know, instead of using English all the way.

Moderator: OK. Is that what you meant, Reabetswe?

Reabetswe: Yes, I mean, I understand that some words cannot be translated into African languages (Moderator: OK).

Makaziwe: I think there are basically two sides of this whole language thing. You can be for it or be against it because there are pros and cons on both sides. For instance, let's say the Afrikaans kids ... they grow up probably from kindergarten being taught in Afrikaans, that's all they know. They're not really fluent in English and they come here and they're still being taught in Afrikaans. So, now it's like, this new system that they're telling them, "we're gonna scrap Afrikaans completely", then they're going to fail because they don't understand English; they've been taught in Afrikaans all their lives. And with us, we had to ... we kind of had to be accommodative. I didn't know, we had to fami ... oh gosh, sorry ... familiarise ourselves with the whole concept that we're gonna study in English from preschool, high school 'til you finish school. So, not a lot of people are kind of like ... are fluent in English; we don't really understand it, but they have to try, and ... I don't know ... and make sense of what is being said, because I mean, if we're gonna have all the languages that we have in South Africa being taught here in varsity, it's gonna be chaotic, honestly speaking, and we're not gonna find as many educated people to actually do the jobs, to teach in all those languages and stuff. It's good to explain the work, that's OK, blah blah blah, so that you understand, but not that they change every single thing to your language which you prefer, because I mean, they have to change the textbooks. It's gonna be a whole lot of work put into

it and in the amount of time ... By the time you have to d ... I mean, graduate, that will be long done, it's like, it's gonna be over for you (Moderator: OK). I don't know if that makes sense. *(Laughs.)* It's gonna be hard, so I think (Moderator: OK) this language thing ... it's a "yes" and a "no".

Moderator: OK. Is there anything you would like to add, Presti?

Presti: I just think like, Black people are at an advantage. Like, this English thing is, like, we're just being put up there and we don't even realise it. 'Cause like they said, you go to Germany, the only language you know is Afrikaans, and what if it's like, a company where you're going to speak in English and you can't. And we're at that advantage that you can just get that job wherever you go.

Moderator: OK. And how do you think the institution could enhance students' academic experiences?

Makaziwe: I think there should be like, more workshops being provided to students on helping them how, you know, how to handle your time, how to make study timetables and all of that. But then, if more workshops will be incorporated, then that will expose a lot of s... 'cause I think a lot of students are not coping with academics because they can't manage their time and they just do things. You think, "OK, now I'm gonna study this now". You think out of the box, you don't actually plan for it. So, sometimes you miss out on work that you were supposed to cover because you didn't really write it down and plan for it. You just did it out of your head. So, if those things, those skills, were taught to like, students, it will really help them to, you know, increase and up their marks. (Nontsikelelo: I think that there already are like, workshops). But they're not out there. They're always running, but they're not always in our face like, this is happening, you need to know that this is happening. They run them behind closed doors, so it's either you know about it or you don't know about it. You know,

so if they could make more awareness about it, then you will know something is going on there, maybe if I go, you know.

Nontsikelelo: OK, I get that, but I think that it's also within the students themselves to ... if they really need help like, the time management and study skills and stuff. They will want to go and find out where it is, and it's their responsibility, they said (Moderator: OK), "You're all on your own; we're not here to spoon-feed you and tell you, 'OK, right now, let's go to study skills'". *(Everyone laughs).* So yah, we're all people, it's time to ... (Moderator: OK. So, students must take responsibility, according to you?). Yes (Moderator: OK).

Presti: I think ... OK, they're both right, to some extent. OK with [inaudible], there is, it's so hard sometimes. I know there is orientation before you come here; they tell you everything where you go when you need help. But then, some students don't get the opportunity to attend orientation because of financial issues or other issues. So, once you miss it, you've missed it. You will never know what to do until you find out yourself. And people don't read e-mails; they don't read their e-mails and like, they always send us e-mails; maybe there's gonna be this workshop about study skills and all that. So, I think it is your responsibility to find out and talk to people, even if you don't really know where to go. I'm sure if you ask your friends, someone might know something.

Moderator: OK, and other than time management, what do you think are the things that the institution could do to make students' academic experiences better?

Nhlanhla: I think, with myself, I don't have any problem 'cause I think university, mostly, is self-study [inaudible]. At university level, I think it's expected that they will just lay the foundation and then, you just finish the top (Moderator: OK).

Reabetswe: I feel like they said—she said. It's your responsibility as a student to know that you have to do stuff and try and go there, go out there and look for help if you need it. Besides time management, I think, if not the university, but you should try and as a student

try and engage with other students and then like, form study groups and stuff like that. In that way, you know you will get motivated; and when other students are studying, you also know that you have to study. If you cannot manage yourself, then try and find people who are already at that level that you're trying to get to, so that you get motivation.

Moderator: OK. Yes.

Nontsikelelo: Can I just add? Maybe then, to enhance in academic ... or your experiences, they could use the Student Centre and have people advertise the whole, like, how you can better your academic performance like, cause the Student Centre, I feel like it's the centre of like, where everyone is and, like, where's ... like ... there are always people at the Student Centre, and whenever you walk past it and something is happening; it's like "Oh, look what's happening", so you wanna go and find out if you're interested or not (Moderator: OK. So, you basically think there should be more awareness about things that are there for students, currently?). Yes, yes.

Moderator: OK. And, do you personally know anyone who's dropped out or who's considered dropping out over the past year or two, or even currently?

Nontsikelelo: OK. Yes, I have. We have a friend. Yah, she was struggling pretty, pretty, pretty bad, like the first year. That was back in 2014, umm, so after six months, like, she left UP because she wasn't getting the marks that she could have wanted to get (Moderator: OK). So then, she went to UJ and [inaudible] (Moderator: OK; then she dropped out because she wasn't performing as well as she was supposed to be?). Yes.

Moderator: OK, and the others, do you know anyone who's dropped out?

Makaziwe: I know ... I think two girls, who came here with the hope of doing Medicine and then they went via our Biological Science [inaudible], and then they took them in first year; they went through the whole process; and they were not accepted because they ended up failing the core modules of what they had enrolled for (Moderator: OK), trying to get into

something else. So then, I think, I don't know if they were excluded or what 'cause they really failed so bad and they passed the electives, and the electives don't really count that much (Moderator: Oh, OK). They ended up having to go enrol at other institutions and try again; and the other girl, she just basically... she fell pregnant and then she decided to stay at home. So, basically, her life just came to a standstill (Moderator: OK; is that the same person or different?). No, it's two different girls.

Moderator: OK; and Presti?

Presti: And another thing, I think the university has a funny way of communicating with us, 'cause sometimes you don't get the message until it's too late. OK, like it happened like, first year ... OK like, when we got here, we all wanted to do Medicine [inaudible] *(laughs)*. Then you get here, they tell you about this other way of getting into Medicine. You waste a year trying to get into Medicine, then you only find out [in] November that you're not gonna get into Medicine, and they told you [that] you were. And then, if you fail, they exclude you. They don't send you an e-mail to tell you that they've excluded you; they just block you. You're just blocked and you don't know what's going on. You come to campus, you attend class everyday (Moderator: OK ... My goodness.); you don't know you're blocked until *(laughs)* marks come out and you're like, "Why aren't I there?" You go and ask, and then they tell you, you're excluded since last semester and you're like, "What!?" (Moderator: OK). Ya, so they must just find ways.

Moderator: OK. Yes, Nontsikelelo?

Nontsikelelo: Can I just add on to that? I would like to share my experience with you guys. I almost got academically excluded in my first year, and obviously I've had my bite off. I think I've progressed way, way, way better; I think it was the shock of going from high school to varsity. That was quite, I mean, it was quite a big jump. I was overwhelmed like, [inaudible]

enrolled, and time management and study skills and all those things felt like ... it fell apart and ... but I made my way up.

Moderator: OK. You guys; do you know anybody who dropped out?

Reabetswe: No, I don't know anyone (Moderator: You don't?).

Nhlanhla: I know one guy who was doing BA, but he dropped out; so now he is applying to do BDS studies.

Moderator: OK. Why did he drop out, if you know?

Nhlanhla: He failed (Moderator: OK). So, I think it was more ... he didn't know what it was all about (Moderator: Oh I see) ... there was no career guidance.

Moderator: Guidance; OK. Yes, Presti; do you want to say something?

Presti: No.

Moderator: You mentioned that it was a big step to adjust from high school to this now new context; what were your guys' experiences like, initially and up to this far; what have your experiences been?

Reabetswe: It was really, really, really tough. It was horrible, actually, 'cause like, you know when you're in high school, you're doing so good like, you are the best, and you're out there. Everybody knows you are the best *(laughs)*. You know when you're walking around, people know, "she is the best". *(Laughter).* All your teachers know you and in class, it's like, you just ... everybody knows you're good and you know you're good; you're doing so well, and then, you have to come to varsity, where there's like, a 1000 other good students and nobody knows your name; nobody even cares about you *(Participants laugh)*, whether you're doing great, you're getting 100s or 90s or whatever, nobody gives a damn about that. And it was really, really, really hard and ... for me, I also struggled with lectures; like, I wouldn't ... I missed most of my lectures, like, I felt like I don't wanna go to class because there are so many other students in class. I feel so afraid to even ask questions or talk to the lecturer, or

even talk to the person next to you, like, it was just a whole new different terrible thing there. It was very bad.

Nontsikelelo: Sorry, can I add on to what she said? The whole knowing that you're smart in high school; like, you are one of the best students and like, coming to varsity, it kind of dumbs you down, and you feel like you're so stupid (Reabetswe: Yes!). You start getting like, 40% and 50s, and not getting the marks like all the 80s and 90s that you used to get in high school. I guess that kind of suppresses your self-esteem (Moderator: OK), or like, you lose faith in what you're capable ... what marks you're capable of getting, until you sit down and you figure out how you're gonna get back to where you originally were, and then you're OK.

Moderator: OK. Yes?

Reabetswe: Can I just add something? (Moderator: Reabetswe?). Yes. From ... [Interruption]. My first year wasn't so great, but then so far, I think I have made a lot of progress. I've learnt to ... I think I've adjusted really well. I know what is expected of me. I think I can manage ... I manage my time better than I was last year. I don't feel as horrible as I felt about going to class; now I have friends, someone that I know I'm gonna sit next to and ask questions, and with the whole interaction with the lecturers, I don't really do much of it, but in tutorials, I try and speak my opinion and ask questions, and so far, I'm doing really much better than last year.

Moderator: OK, and other people with different experiences? Nhlanhla ...

Nhlanhla: I think, myself, I wasn't really shocked when I came here to this university because I think I came here when I was a bit older, so, I was like a bit more mature and mentally psyched into this whole thing. So like, I didn't have that very rough experience. I'm not saying I had distinctions or ... you know, but I'm saying like, I didn't struggle much 'cause of like, my age, maybe (Moderator: OK, alright).

Makaziwe: Basically, in high school; I mean, in matric, they kind of prepare you that when you get there, it's a huge jump. They keep emphasising that things are gonna be different, blah blah. So, for me, I think I kind of had programmed my mind to that, that it's not gonna be high school, I don't know what it's gonna be and how it's gonna work, but it's gonna be a huge jump. So, I have to be ready to handle anything. So, when I got here, at first, I was not ... like I didn't know what to expect, but I kind of knew it's gonna be hard; and then when you start writing the tests, I could see that something is not right somewhere, 'cause you can see with your marks *(Another participant laughs)* that, you know you're smart, 'cause you know, you believe in yourself and stuff. But when you look at the mark you get, you're kind of like, "OK, maybe I really need to up my game". So, I feel like my first year, there was a lot of pressure because I had a lot of modules, like, that I had to study for and everything, but I managed to manage my time and the pressure so well, that my marks for first year were actually the best, [inaudible] you know (Moderator: OK). So, I think it depends on the ... I don't know ... how you look at things 'cause we can all do the same thing, but how we perceive the information and stuff is what determines how well you're going to actually perform and stuff like that. So, for me, it was like, you know what, I wanna get good grades, I'm gonna put in the effort, the time, and everything. I chose not to complain about it most of the time, but actually doing the work and understand, and that helped me a lot (Moderator: OK).

Presti: Like, it was so bad *(laughs)*, like when I came, you know in high school I used to pass, even if I don't study. I knew I was gonna get that 75 and then like, when they told me: Here, you get 75, you have a distinction. I'm like "Whoa!! I'm gonna be getting a lot of distinctions". Then I came here; I was so motivated. OK, in high school, I used to be like, the best Maths student; came here, my first test, I got like 27%. I'm like, this is not my script *(Participants laugh).* I even went to the lecturer to ask for the memo, so I could cross-check,

and I could see that something was wrong, and then after like ... I think I was just so demotivated. Like, the whole year, just ... was not good for me. Like, I didn't know how to manage my time and do—I felt like I had a lot of things that I had to do, and I didn't know like, how to put them around. So, I just left them all like, just not do them, and then ... but then in second year, I realised that something that might work for someone else is not gonna work for me. If attending classes and tutorials works for her, for me it doesn't. I don't attend class and I still pass, but if I attend class, I get confused and fail. So, I thought to myself, maybe I should stop attending classes in 2nd year, then I stopped, then I passed. So, I found my key *(Participants laugh)* (Moderator: So, that's working for you?).

Moderator: OK. So, you all agree that it was tough in the beginning and then progressively got better? OK; going back to dropping out, other than the things that you've mentioned about the university, making or having awareness, raising awareness about things that could help students, like you mentioned study skills at the Student Centre, and so on. Other than those things, how do you think the institution could help students who are at risk of dropping out? How could they prevent that, if they can see that the student is at risk, or even identifying students who are at risk?

Presti: I think they're already doing that. Well, for me, 'cause first year, my first year was sort of like ... you kind of ... contact ... like, when your semester mark's like ... I think in our faculty, they evaluate all the marks and see what's going on. If your semester mark is like *there*, for the first time (Moderator: OK), OK, your semester test is gonna come with a paper at the back like, to tell you that your marks are bad (Moderator: OK). It's either you drop the module or you make a plan. And the faculty advisor actually calls you and explains to you ... like, tries to give you study methods (Moderator: OK) that could work for you, and she is gonna follow you until your 2nd semester test (Moderator: OK) to see if you've made progress or what (Moderator: OK. So, I understand they do that with the BSc students?). Yah.

Moderator: Other than that, what do you guys think the university could do, in addition to such things, and do you see that as something that could work in your faculty, for example *(gesturing towards students not in the Health Sciences Faculty)*?

Nhlanhla: I think it might work in our faculty, but I have never heard anyone who's had anything (Moderator: Anything like that?) Yah. But, it's got the Writing Centre, and it's [inaudible] to help with writing skills (Moderator: OK).

Moderator: Nothing to add? OK. I'm a bit worried about time. You've mentioned some of the things that students might struggle with in their first couple of years of studying, like adjustment, time management, and so on. What other things, if any, do you think they could have issues with. You could refer to academic, social, psychological challenges.

Nontsikelelo: I think some people really struggle finding the people they click with ... their friends. So, some people choose to remain on the low, and I don't know, maybe they get used to that. And some people feel they can't be on their own. So, then, I don't know ... making friends could be their problem.

Moderator: OK. Yes, Reabetswe?

Reabetswe: I was gonna say that. I do agree with her 'cause with me, personally, I'm quite shy and it's very difficult for me to actually, just go to people and talk to them. Even coming here like, I thought doing this could actually help me, 'cause it's very hard for me to just engage with other people; so yah, in my first year, it was also that.

Moderator: OK, and anything that ...?

Nhlanhla: I think 'confidence'; students struggle with confidence. Like, we come here and we see all these people carrying iPhone 6, 6 Plus, and you've got a Samsung Galaxy, and you feel like, inferior *(Participants laugh)*, so ... (Another participant: Yah).

Moderator: So, you guys can relate?

Participants: Yes.

Presti: I think balancing your social and academic life, 'cause when you come here, there is always gonna be a 'Monday singles', 'Thursday student night', 'Friday what-what'. So, if you don't realise, you're gonna attend everything, every day. But then, you need to balance; maybe have some sort of timetable: OK, I'm gonna go out two times a week or maybe—OK, two times a month, and then on Friday, I'm gonna cross-night. On this day, I'm gonna do this. And you should be able to follow your timetable, 'cause friends are always gonna come up with something; like, "OK, dude, something came up *(Presti laughs; Participants laugh)*; let's go there. OK; you get this and this and this". And then you think, "Oh OK, let me go". You should be able to ... to know yourself and know what you want and be able to get what you want (Moderator: OK. So, you should be self-disciplined?). Yes.

Moderator: OK. How confident are you guys that you will finish your degree in record time?

Participants laugh.

Nontsikelelo: Oh, 0% confidence there. No. OK, with us, from the whole wanting to get into Medicine thing, we enrolled in Biological Sciences, and then we had to change our course. So then, that gives ... that means we're already behind by a year, so ...

Moderator: OK, but with the revision of your study period, how confident are you then, with this new one, that you will finish in record time?

Some participants express belief that they will finish in record time. (Moderator: You could? OK).

Another participant: *Giggling.* Very confident.

Moderator: OK, good to hear; and you guys *(gesturing towards other participants).*

Nhlanhla: I'm also 100% that I will finish next year.

Reabetswe: I think I have a pretty good chance, not necessarily 100%, but yah.

Moderator: OK. So, you guys are optimistic?

Participants: Yes.

Moderator: Anybody who has friends who think differently, that they don't think they could finish in record time? Reabetswe?

Reabetswe: I have this other friend of mine. Last year, first year, we were doing the same thing, and then I think she failed a lot of her modules, and then this year, she told me that she wants to change to Law and, just yesterday, she was just telling me about how worried she is that I'm gonna finish before her and she is still gonna be here. She added these new modules that she is still confused about and, basically, she was just kind of like, feeling ... like, she can't do it. Like she ... I feel like she regrets changing her course (Moderator: OK), but then she couldn't stay with the old one because she's all like, it's not what she wanted to do here.

Moderator: OK, alright. We are almost done. Second-lastly, given the institution's historical background, specifically being a historically Black— historically White institution; would you say that there is currently an equal representation of members of different races in the institution?

Several participants: No.

Moderator: What do you think is the situation?

Makaziwe: Well, OK judging from our faculty, the way I see it, there are more White people than Black (Moderator: In your faculty?); in our faculty, but when I look at the overall ... sometimes ... it's confusing 'cause you can't really look at people like that and determine if there are more White people than Black people, but from what I have seen, I think you could say there are more Black people, overall, than White people (Moderator: OK), 'cause you see a lot of Black people around on campus.

Participants: It's because you know Black people ... you only know Black people!

(Laughter).

Makaziwe: Like, you normally see Black people in the areas that I walk in, and in other areas, there are more Whites. *(Participants agree and laugh)*.

Participant: It's true.

Nontsikelelo: I think they're evenly distributed.

Moderator: OK. More or less equal?

Nontsikelelo: Yes, it's more or less equal. 'Cause it's like, there are sections where only Black people chill, and there is (Moderator: OK), in [inaudible] is the only side where you find all the White people—and other areas (Moderator: OK) like Oom Gert and (Moderator: OK) yah.

Nhlanhla: I think, with the staff, it's mostly White; the lecturers (Moderator: With staff?). Yah (Moderator: OK); you will hardly come across Black staff. It's usually White staff. *(Participants laugh)*.

Moderator: Is there anything that you would like to add to that, Presti?

Presti: I personally think there are a lot of White people, compared to Black people, 'cause in our space, there are White people, you go to the Whites' space, there are no Black people. You go to the Oom Gert side, there are White people. So, you know there are a lot of White people, compared to Black people, but because you are used to ... you don't have White friends, you just have Black friends, so, you feel like there are a lot of Black people (Moderator: OK; because those are the ones you come across?). Yes, but then you go to tutorials, there is a lot of White students (Moderator: Oh, I see.) Lecturers ... I don't even think I have a Black lecturer this year. No Black lecturers; only maybe one tutor, like just visiting that day (Moderator: OK). (Another participant: Visiting; *laughs*).

Makaziwe: Even with the strikes, but you can see, there are more Black people than Whites. Like, with the strikes ... OK, for the "Fees Must Fall" thing, 'cause we ended up being collaborative with each other, sticking together for one purpose, and you could see that there were more Black people than White people, and then when they started fighting against each other, you could see the amounts of Whites against the amounts of Blacks. The Black people

were like, a trillion times more than the White people. So, I think from that, that's where I gathered that there are more Blacks than Whites.

Moderator: OK, that's very interesting. Did you want to add something *(gesturing towards a participant).*

Nontsikelelo: Yah, I would like to comment. Is it maybe not then because of the amount of people in certain political groups on campus? 'Cause Afriforum has ... I think they have quite like, they have very few people, compared to the DA and the ANC and EFF, which is mainly Black, and the DA, which is a mixture of White and Black. So and ... I think there were only ... there weren't ... not all political parties fighting against each other. It was Afriforum and EFF (Moderator: OK).

Presti: And with the "Fees Must Fall" thing, like, White people have bursaries and scholarships. They're not gonna take part 'cause they already have someone paying for them. And Black people, it's your parents who are paying, so you feel like you need to attend the thing. So, you're not gonna get a lot of White people attending the thing (Moderator: OK).

Participant: Because they're scared (Moderator: Scared of?).

Nontsikelelo: 'Cause they're scared that [inaudible]. For ... the reason why most of them don't want to participate is 'cause they're scared of what could happen, 'cause these things kind of get violent (Moderator: I see.), which it did.

Moderator: Alright. Guys, thank you; is there anything that anybody would like to add?

Nontsikelelo: No, thank you very much.

Moderator: No, thank you guys. I appreciate it. Yah. Can I have the consent forms please?

Focus group discussion concludes.

Transcript 5: UP Focus Group Discussion 2

Moderator: OK, before we start, can we just go around the table for you to introduce yourselves?

[Participants introduce themselves and moderator confirms their names]

Moderator: First of all, could you guys briefly tell us why you chose to study at this institution?

Brendan: It's the only one that accepted us *(Moderator asks participant to repeat himself and verifies what participant said)* It's the only one that accepted me.

Moderator: Oh really? Before you speak, please say your name so we know who said what.

(Moderator reminds participants that they don't have to say their surnames).

Willem: My bursary wanted me to come here.

Moderator: OK.

Thuli: It's the only university that accepted me.

Hlohi: My mom wanted me closer, so I couldn't go anywhere else.

Tumi: Umm ... I don't know, I just felt like I needed to come here.

Joubertus: I just like the atmosphere over here, so [inaudible] ja.

Geenan: This is the only institution that had my academic program.

Moderator: The one that you're studying for?

Geenan: Yes.

Moderator: OK. What do you think are the advantages of studying here, and disadvantages?

Brendan: For engineering, this was the best Engineering Faculty, so I guess that's a plus (Moderator: OK), and there's free WiFi there *(Participants laugh)*.

Moderator: Yes, other people? Willem?

Willem: Because if you look at Accounting in the national exams, we got the highest pass. We had 222 people and 15 failed. If you look at ... we had a 92% pass rate; if you look at

UCT, Wits, Potch, they all have between 60 and 70% (Moderator: And what are you studying?) Accounting.

Moderator: Accounting? (Willem: Yes) OK. Other people?

Hlohi: Well, my mom actually begged me when I was accepted because she was like, apparently one of the best universities, and then if you go to this university, you've got a greater chance of getting a job in the future. So ja.

Joubertus: The degrees offered will be worldwidely recognised; so, you could get a job anywhere around the world after you complete your degree.

Moderator: Geenan?

Geenan: Everything I need is here, so ... (Moderator: What do you mean by everything?) Like, in my academic research, everything that I need is here, I mean it's all here.

Thuli: I'm not sure, but getting the best job, if you study at UP; I'm not sure about [inaudible].

Moderator: OK, and any disadvantages that any of you can think of about studying here?

Thuli: I'm so mad at UP! *(Laughing)* They stole my year, last year, 'cause I was doing Social Work—first year—and I was in Std 10, but I passed all the modules. So, last year when I was here to register for second year, all those modules I was doing didn't reflect and I had to register for first year modules again. So, which means I had to do two first-year modules. So I was like ... yah (Moderator: OK that's ... that's ...; Thuli: That sucked). And while I was doing Archaeology last year, there was this guy who said he's repeating all his ... all the years with Archaeology because they lost his records; he has to repeat from first to the last—he didn't graduate. So yah (Moderator: OK). It's bad. (Moderator: It's very interesting; I've never heard of that; Another participant: Shocking; Moderator: Yah). Yah.

Geenan: OK and Geenan, you wanted to say something?

Geenan: It's very far away from home; I'm actually from the Western Cape (Moderator: Oh so it's far from where you're originally from?) Yah.

Moderator: OK. Tumi?

Tumi: For me, I think maybe there is not enough information given about certain ... like what she was saying about ... maybe the person didn't know that they had to, would have to re-do and everything like that. So, I think sometimes there's not enough information about what you have to do. Let's say, if you're coming from another university, then you must come here and they don't tell you "Oh, this is how it works" and stuff like that. So, I think that's the disadvantage, yah (Moderator: OK).

Brendan: I found that last year—I'm doing Engineering—I failed two modules, and then there were pre-requisites for a lot of our modules this year, my second year. So, I tried to pick up third-year modules that like, had no pre-requisites and stuff, just random things, and then I thought it was stupid because I had to study first-year modules and now I had to do third-year ones, but like, they had had nothing to do with each other. So, it set me back a whole year, unnecessarily, because I could've just picked up the third-year ones and [inaudible]; it cost me a year. This year I have two modules; so, it feels like a waste.

Moderator: OK. So, there are issues with what, miscommunication, record keeping.

Hlohi: Yah, I agree with the two ladies. They actually did that to me too like, after first year, well, the sat me down, they told me which modules to get in my second year if I wanna graduate. And during the second year, at the end of the first semester, they called me in and they're like, 'cause like, in the first year of Crim [Criminology], I didn't get exam entrance, so they excluded me and then they de-registered me, and then I had to do 120 something else. And they didn't tell me I have to do 110 if I wanna graduate; they just told me, "No it's fine, you just have to like, have a certain amount of modules during the second semester". So last year, at the end of the first semester, I get a call and they were like "We need to consult with

you again" and I'm like "OK, what's going on?" and they were like, "No, you have to do Social Work 110 'cause you can't just do 120 if you wanna graduate". So now I'm doing a first-year module, whereas I'm on the third level, and it feels a bit weird; you know when you have to sign there and they look at you like, *(gasp)* 1-4! [year of first registration as a student] *(Participants laugh)*. And it seems like you failed a million times, whereas you didn't even know. So you always get that look like, *(demonstrates a look of surprise)*. You start feeling like "What!", you start counting [inaudible] when they'll start giving that funny look; so, it's very unsettling.

Moderator: OK. How ... What have your experiences ... Some of you have touched on your experiences. Other than those experiences, what have your experiences at this institution been since you registered?

Brendan: I'm quite happy like, with the Engineering Department; it's quite like, updated; the Study Centre is very nice, so I'm happy.

Moderator: OK, and other people? Are you generally happy, generally sad?

Willem: Actually, I'm very happy here. There's no bad experiences. Everything is set out properly. The campus is quite big. Everything's been awesome, res life has been awesome (Another participant: Res life ... *Participants laugh*).

Tumi: For me, I think it took a while to be happy *(laughs)* where I am, because there were a lot of black marks along the way, but I think right now where I am, I'm quite happy with what's happening. Yah.

Hlohi: I'm actually quite content, but there's like concerns. Like, you know how people will be like, "There's racism around here" and I'll be like, "I didn't realise it" and they're like "Nah, it might have been subtle, you might not have noticed it" and I'm like, "It'll only affect you if you let it be" because sometimes people blow things out of proportion. Like, somebody would do something so subtle, but because they're just so focused and so based on

the race thing, they'll be like "Oh you're doing this 'cause you're White! You think you're better than us" and all that, and that part it just ... it just unsettles me 'cause like, some people just make mountains out of ant-hills *(Some participants nod)* and that kind of like, it just sets me off because sometimes I feel discouraged. I just wanna disappear.

Participants: OK. And other people ... different experiences or in relation to what Hlohi says?

Unidentified participant (Black, Female): It seems it's a BA thing *(laughs)* (Moderator: It's a BA thing?) It's like just here *(Participants laugh)*.

Moderator: OK. How do you think the institution could enhance students' academic experiences?

Joubertus: They could get more computers in the library (Moderator: OK) 'cause there's always queues. I mean, for people that don't do Engineering, 'cause we use the Study Centre, like, there's a lot of computers; like, for people that don't have access to the Engineering Study Centre, there's not enough computers (Moderator: OK).

Geenan: I want to agree with that because there's times when I got into the library, Merensky library, and then there's queues of people lining up for computers and not everybody has the privilege of Internet access out of campus, so ...

Moderator: OK. Yes?

Willem: They should make less online stuff, because if you look at everything you have to do, your semester tests and stuff; sometimes online stuff clashes (Moderator: OK, like CBTs and so on?) Yes (Moderator: OK), like UPO (Moderator: What's that?) UPO, the first-year module that all first-years have to take (Other participants: Ooh, UPO) (Another participant: It's very useless).

Moderator: OK. So, other than that, you guys are happy, you don't think the university could do anything to make your experiences better?

Hlohi: I just feel some modules should actually give us more work. You know how they only give you two tests, and then those two tests kind of like predict what you're gonna do. Like, if you fail both tests, it's over for you; or if you fail one and then you get a good mark on the other one, it's just like it's late for you. So, I feel like they should like, give us tests in-between, like sub-tests to actually prepare us for the major tests and to also like, add up onto our marks, not to just rely on two things that will like, predict if you get exam entrance or not. [inaudible]

Moderator: OK, OK. Tumi?

Tumi: I think they ... like I was saying earlier on about the information ... I think there needs to be, from when you get ... when you start from first year, they need to tell you that this is how it's gonna go, these are all the modules that you're gonna have, because sometimes you get to a certain stage and realise that you have to be sent back because you didn't do something that you were supposed to do, and yet you didn't know you were supposed to do it or you didn't have the right information. So I think, first giving us more information ... yah, they can be creative with how they give us the information (Moderator: OK) but I think it should be more available to us.

Moderator: In relation to ... Yes?

Brendan: The food court at the Klooster saal, like the queues there are ridiculous; like, often like, instead of going to go wait there, we'll go back to res and then just don't come back to campus [inaudible]. 'Cause it literally takes like an hour to [inaudible] get lunch, I mean, the queue there is almost out the door. It's an hour and a half every day [inaudible] waiting for food.

Moderator: Going back to what some of you have mentioned, with regard to lack of information and having to do things that you didn't know that you had to do, in the

beginning, what would you say your experiences ... let's say in your first year, overall, or the first couple of months. Going back to that, how were your experiences?

Thuli: Mine were a nightmare because I was travelling from Soshanguve and I didn't have res and I failed two semester tests, then I managed to pass, so yah.

Moderator: OK, and others?

Willem: It's been quite good for me. In Accounting we literally have [inaudible]. So, they gave us timetables [inaudible] beforehand, we knew what we have beforehand. There was no clashes, no mix-ups.

Moderator: So, it was very organised for you?

Willem: Very organised.

Moderator: And other people? Maybe you could also mention if you felt overwhelmed, and so on? Or how have you adjusted? Yes?

Tumi: I might have a different experience 'cause I started off at a different campus (Moderator: OK). So, I think there was a lot of pressure there because if you failed, there was a certain pre-requisite. Let's say, I was there and I wanted to get into Accounting, then you would have to pass with something ... 70%, things like that. So, I think it was a lot of stress and it was overwhelming, maybe a little more than if I had studied at the Hatfield campus. Yah. Stressful.

Moderator: And other people?

Hlohi: My first year was pretty crazy. I don't know what I was doing. I was just lost; I was a lost cause in my first year. But as time went by, I actually started getting used to the system and I managed to make it this far. (Moderator: OK, what did you feel lost about?).

Everything, it was just so overwhelming, where like, in high school, as they said, it was kind of like the school fed you and it didn't seem like it was hard, and then when you get here, it just overwhelms you 'cause it's very different from what you're used to in high school. Plus,

the school that I went to, it didn't like, put more pressure on academics. It was mostly about Arts; so, we didn't have that much pressure that most schools had. So, when I got here, it was just ... (Moderator: OK).

Brendan: I find like, I love it because in high school, like during classes, I'd just like, sleep. And then, now coming to Engineering, the classes aren't mandatory, so I can skip all my classes and just do what I want to do and study in my own time. [inaudible] It's been working for me, so far. I don't even waste my time going to class.

Moderator: Do you personally know anyone who's dropped out or people who are considering dropping out and if you do, and do you happen to know what ... what are their reasons—who are either considering or having dropped out. Yes, Brendan?

Brendan: Well in first year when I got here, in res, they had quite a few engineers who dropped out. But most of them were like alcoholics and drug addicts *(Other participants express shock)*. [Inaudible] at res; when they were in high school I think they were like, living with their parents and stuff [inaudible] but then when it gets to res, it's like there's no one to look after them, and then they just become absolutely ... and then it's like, they have no self-control.

Moderator: So, they dropped out because of that?

Brendan: Ja.

Thuli: I know a friend who was supposed to do his final year in Social Work this year, but he dropped out; he said it was personal, so ... (Moderator: He was supposed to do ...? Final year?) Yah, in Social Work.

Willem: I have a few okes in my Accounting classes that are actually thinking about dropping or changing courses because FRK [course code] is impossible to pass.

Moderator: So it's because a certain module is difficult?

Willem: Yes.

Joubertus: I think some people drop out because ... I know somebody who wanted to change courses, not necessarily drop out. But because they were not able to pick or they didn't know what to do, so they just chose something that their parents would've liked them to. I think if there was more information and more open days considering different types of jobs or different types of directions to study, it would give children in high school an idea of what they want to do.

Moderator: OK.

Tumi: Umm, I think ... What was the question? Sorry *(Laughs)* (Moderator: Do you know anyone who's dropped out or who's considering?) I had a friend who ... we were also at the same campus, the Mamelodi campus together, and then she dropped out 'cause she just felt like the whole environment wasn't for her ... so she went to ... she's in UJ now.

Hlohi: I have a friend; he actually dropped out, but then it was because his parents gave him the option to drop out. They actually told him, like, they could see that he wasn't OK, so they told him, "Just discontinue your studies for the year, and just come back home and calm down a bit, do some introspection and stuff and you go back next year, if you like it". He's back right now; but then I found that very nice of his parents, 'cause most parents would pressurise you like "Nah, you're just being some ... being a spoilsport"; it's not that hard, but I appreciate what his parents did. And I've also been considering dropping out and doing other things, but ah ... the best thing [is that] I just graduate (Moderator: And what year are you in?) Third, final.

Moderator: OK. OK, what some of you ... you've mentioned that there's a course that's impossible to pass; what are the reasons for some students consistently performing poorly, according to you?

Willem: Time management. For some people it is sometimes hard to manage your time if you have a lot of stuff to do. First quarter I didn't do that well because yah, I didn't study; this

quarter, I planned to ... what I've been doing is, I set out different time slots; like, for an hour, I do this and I go study there. You should just get your time management [inaudible].

Geenan: I think it's just about prioritising, so if people like, especially first-years come here and then they think you go to university and it's free and open and [inaudible] and you study whatever, and then at the end of the day, they don't go to class, they skip class and don't study and everything just piles up and up, and that's when subjects get intensively hard.

Brendan: Well I find that there's a lot of the modules. Like, you go through all the examples in the textbook and stuff, you do them perfectly, and then you get your test, and the questions that they ask are so much harder than anything you've ever seen before, and it makes it very difficult for some guys to [inaudible], whereas if you give us some ways to practise the hard questions, then the guys would do a lot better.

Moderator: So, the test is very different from what you expect?

Brendan: They think they know everything and then you get to the test ... *(laughs and so do other participants)*.

Moderator: OK. Is there something you'd like to say, Geenan? (Geenan: No). Is there any way in which you think the university could support students who are at risk of dropping out?

Geenan: I don't think there's anything because I've heard that there's a lot of counsellors who people actually go to and it's ... then it's up to students that they have to make the appointment because I've heard in one of my lectures people are saying, if you fail this, then you go and see someone, here's their numbers on the board, so, it's up to students. The university can only do that much, and then students have to do [inaudible].

Moderator: OK. Willem?

Willem: That's what I was saying.

Moderator: Thuli?

Thuli: I agree with him 'cause there are a lot support systems on this campus, so it's up to the student.

Moderator: OK.

Hlohi: I actually kinda like, feel like yah, the support system is there, but the [inaudible] is, most students don't use it because they realise that it's not a magic pill. That the moment you go to the counselling and stuff, some people expect it to be that thing like, "after I go, somehow miraculously, they'll feel sorry for me and then will give me marks". So, they just feel that it's hopeless and somebody will be all like, "What's the point? Let me just drop out; 'cause either way I'll go there; they won't give me a potion to make me smarter; best thing I just drop out".

Willem: But the counsel isn't there to make you smarter. It's there to help you emotionally, to set your mindset right. If you're going with the whole mindset, the counsel still is [inaudible], then you need to get your mindset right.

Hlohi: That's why I'm saying like, it's sad that most people don't have the mentality that they have to change; they just think that it's gonna be a magic potion and they're like "ah, it's not gonna be a magic potion". So, they just drop out. So, for them, what they're doing is not right. Like, the way they have the mentality for it, that's why they just drop out at the end of the day.

Moderator: So, they don't appreciate what the system has to offer?

Hlohi: They think they should actually not put in any effort, and the system has to put in effort and maybe it will feel sorry for them. [inaudible].

Moderator: OK. And how confident are you and your close friends that you'll get your degree in record time? *(Participants laugh)*.

Thuli: Tjo, I was. (Moderator: You were?) Yah, I was (Moderator: So, not anymore?) Not anymore. 'Cause I was supposed to do my third year this year, yet I'm doing second year, so ... I should sue them *(Participants laugh)*. I'm joking.

Moderator: Regardless of the fact that you had to repeat a year, what you had to do ... when you were in second year, you had to do first-year modules? (Thuli: Yah). OK, since doing first-year modules, how confident do you think you'll finish within three years?

Thuli: Now ... you have no idea how far [inaudible] *(laughs)*, so, I will ... If they don't give me my degree in time, I'll sue them; 'cause I will. I'm positive! I'm not failing! *(Participants laugh)*.

Moderator: So, you're very confident?

Thuli: Yah, I'm confident! I'll sue them. *(Participants laugh)*.

Moderator: And other people?

Geenan: I'm optimistic that [inaudible].

Hlohi: I was on record until they kept on telling me like, if you don't do this, you're not graduating and like, why didn't you give me all these things in first year? So, will I ever graduate? 'Cause soon enough they're gonna tell me one of my modules that they told me to take for the second year, one of them I'll have to do or I'll not graduate; that's how they like blackmail you and tell you I won't graduate, so I'll have to do that one.

Moderator: OK. So, umm ... Tumi?

Tumi: I feel like the dream has been shattered *(Other participants laugh)*. Well for me, I changed my degree, so ... but the nice thing about it is, I started with this new degree like, this year. But because first year, most of the modules—it's still the same Faculty—so, I could just jump right into second year. But there were some modules holding me back, so, at least I took initiative and went and spoke to them and at least they were like "OK, no it's fine, we'll deal

with this and whatever". So, record time for me, it's practically like, over for me, but in the amount of time I have now, I think I can finish.

Moderator: So, you started a new degree and it's a three-year degree? (Tumi: Yes). So you think you will finish in three years? (Tumi: I'm just doing second-year modules this year, and then it's just two first-year modules. So, I can ... Yah.) So, it can be done still? (Tumi: Yes) and others?

Brendan: My degree is very ... if I can just get a degree, I'll be happy *(Participants laugh)*. Now it's already gonna be five years (Moderator: Oh so it's a five-year degree?) 'Cause it's all four years, and then I failed that one year, then [inaudible] (Moderator: Ooh OK).

Moderator: But you're confident that from this point onwards, you can finish within the specified years? (Brendan: Ja).

Moderator: OK, and Geenan and Joubertus?

Joubertus: Ja, I think obviously, the people who set it up knew it would take a certain amount of time, so then, I think it's possible, I think I'll be able to make it in the set amount of time, depending on how hard you work (Moderator: How hard are you planning to work, to get ...?) *(Participant laughs)* Quite! Quite hard.

Geenan: And I'm also planning on being done in my set time (Moderator: OK).

Moderator: You guys didn't mention this; are there maybe psychological, social— you mentioned those associated with the system a lot—but are there any issues, personally that for you were challenges, and if they somehow affected your studies, like ... I don't know ... emotional, psychological, social issues ...

Joubertus: Ja, I think peer pressure has a lot to do with it, especially being in res. Most of the guys like going out, like almost every night and don't worry too much about their studies. And obviously, they ... 'cause you're friends with these guys ... cause they're practically your brothers; you're living with them; you feel compelled to go out with them and participate and

everything. So, I think that takes a lot of time away from studying and everything, and also if you play sports and stuff, you're expected to perform in everything that you do, so for me I play golf, so that takes a lot of time from studying. Obviously, if you have a girlfriend, ja, it's just a lot of time [inaudible]. Time management is a big big thing (Moderator: OK).

Willem: But I just believe you should get the right mindset, you shouldn't take any emotional problems and then they affect you in your work life and your study life. You should just let it roll off your back and stay focused on what's important, and [inaudible].

Hlohi: Listening to Willem, Sometimes it's easier said than done because sometimes the emotional problems might be too deep that you can't ignore them; you know like, I also have situations like, back at home, parents' conflict and all that. And you might try to forget about them and you might try to like, just focus on school; but it seems like now they realised I study Psychology, now I'm like the mediator and I'm the psychologist, and I have to listen to them, and listening to them sometimes discourages you, and you'll be like, why are you here in the first place if they're gonna fight because of you. And sometimes emotional things will kind of like, set you back, no matter how much you try and avoid them and try and ignore them, sometimes they just come and bite you constantly (Moderator: M-hhm). So, it's pretty hectic.

Willem: Ja, I agree with you, but there are ways for you to let's say procrastinate that emotion, keep it down, push it down, just forget about it, like listening to music, smoking and drinking *(Participants laugh)*.

Moderator: Yes, Tumi.

Tumi: I think for me it would be more like personal issues 'cause sometimes, I wouldn't say it's maybe people saying all sorts of things but it's just ... sometimes you just feel like you can't do it. Like, sometimes you feel like, "why is this person ...", comparing myself a lot is something that I struggle with. It's like, there this person that is getting such great marks and

maybe they're hardly in class, and then you are here and you take every class you feel like you're doing everything right, but for some reason, things aren't working out. And then you start questioning yourself, and maybe it's just ... sometimes you don't realise that it could be the way you study, your study methods or how you time-manage, stuff like that. Sometimes, you just immediately go into that emotional state. So, for me that could be something that I would struggle with a lot.

Moderator: OK. And given UP's historical background as specifically a historically White institution, what do you say about representation of students from various racial backgrounds on campus? Are they more or less equally represented or not, according to you?

Brendan: I would say that there's more non-White students now; it's more like the country [inaudible] now than ... Definitely [there's equal representation], yah.

Moderator: OK; you all agree on that?

Joubertus: Also, if you look at the amounts of ... how they split up the acceptance from different schools and urban areas and ... rural areas. How they accept children from various areas, I think they've done a good job of how they accept people (Moderator: OK. Ensuring that it becomes representative?) Yes.

Moderator: Did you get the question, Hlohi, or would you like me to repeat it? (Hlohi: Please repeat it). My question was, to what extent do you think campus represents students from various race groups? (Hlohi: Like, represent in what context?). Do you think there are more White students than say, African students, Indian students, or do you think ... in terms of numbers, in terms of numbers. (Hlohi: [inaudible] / *simply wanted to hear the question*).

Moderator: What do you think of current racial integration at the institution, especially against the backdrop of the earlier ... earlier this year, the protests and so on?

Willem: I'd say it's not ... they teach you a lot about integration and stuff, but sometimes they don't implement it very well. Like, I think [inaudible] that in res, you're not allowed to have

a Black and a White as roommates *(Other participants seem surprised, concerned)*. That's standing against integration, while they teach us a lot about integration, [inaudible] teaches you about integration (Moderator: Do you mean that, in theory, there is that teaching but in practice, that's not implemented?). For sure; that's right. They don't do it practically, they don't implement what they are stating it to us.

Brendan: Well, I'm one of those, of the affected, it's opening up my eyes to a lot more, but the main instigators of it were all the political parties, causing trouble with the minority of the students. They were almost like, radicalised, sort of like view with like, tunnel vision [inaudible]. (Moderator: OK. So you think it's ... so you think umm ... the political parties are ... I don't know, they're the ones dividing ...) The core of the whole. Like, yah. (Moderator: OK. You don't think it necessarily represents the individual students?) Well, I think the students who are in there believe that it represents them, but they've been so ... for students to go crazy like that [inaudible]. I mean, [inaudible] on Twitter, people saying things like they wanna kill all the White people and ... stupid things! (Moderator: So you think the, p ... poli— I keep forgetting the word—"Political parties"! ... are the instigators? OK).

Hlohi: I actually do see a problem, hey. Everything was rosy, I was seeing life in rose-coloured glasses until the political parties came around and then they just started making it a fuss, like you know that day when you just happened, and it's like a 'shattered-glass' moment where you're like "*(gasp)*, really?!" and kind of made me realise that there's a bit of [inaudible] inequality. Like, let us all study in one language, let us all be equal 'cause there's like people from other provinces; I'm pretty sure English, they can't really hear it but then they're just there instig ... they're using it because it's the only thing that they gave them. So, let us all be equal, I get it, like English is not a lot of people's home language. So, it's best if we all actually suffer inconvenience, instead of like, some people get *that*, but the way they actually went on about it was wrong. Like, why would you wanna threaten other people, like

"Take your language and go back where you came from!" That is pretty wrong; it's not the right way to go about it; like, why make it such a terrible thing, make them seem like such horrible people, instead of just saying, "Let's all be equal; let's all use one language". The end. Now they're just like going further and they're like, "We're gonna kill you" and like ... that was just so wrong (Moderator: OK).

Willem: I agree, the way the parties implemented it. [inaudible] They want Afrikaans to fall immediately; that's impossible to me because you get a third-year student that's been studying in Afrikaans all his life and it's not his fault that he chose to study in Afrikaans, but what happened in history is not his fault. It's the only way to ... (Moderator: The system enabled him to study in Afrikaans all this time) Yah, so it's not his fault. So, you can't just punish him now because of the system. If they wanna take Afrikaans, there must be a few years because it just can't happen *now*. The way the EFF implemented it was wrong; they want it to happen *now* (Moderator: OK). Like now, what happened at UCT, like now their resses [inaudible] *(Another participant: Yah ... Participants chatter about the events at UCT)* became crazy; that's not right (Moderator: OK).

Hlohi: I always ask myself ... (Moderator: Please speak a bit louder).

Hlohi: Sorry. I always ask myself, "Why do people break down things when they are not happy with something?"; "What did that monument do to you?"; "Does it come during the night and haunt you?" *(Participants laugh)*. Seriously. Some people just run and break things and they're like "They're oppressing us!" and we're like, "No, they never came in the night and whipped your ass while you're sleeping". So there's no need to do that; it's just there, it's a monument, it's inanimate, so let it be.

Tumi: But I also think that, yes the political parties are definitely ... they're the instigators in what is happening, but I think that maybe there are deeper issues and then ... it's like, now those political parties now start bringing those things up and then everyone now wants to

start, "Yah! This is what's happening!" And then you get some groups that come together and then they want to cause havoc yah and yah, because they're having these issues and, you know, political issues or racial issues and things like that and, what Willem was saying as well, I think the university doesn't address it enough, and also the implementation of what they are saying, you know; they're saying they want to be equal and things like that, but they're not actually implementing it. I think that also causes issues 'cause, I mean, we're students, we're intelligent *(laughs)*; we can tell that uuh ... we can tell when there is just all talk, but there's no action. So, I think we also see these things and we are observant of what's happening and I think there's a bit of a clash between how the university addresses certain things and how the students address certain things. I think that's where the [inaudible] catastrophe (Moderator: OK, OK).

Willem: But I also think that most of that is the people. It's not just the university, it's the people's mindset. Like, people have this mindset to look at me as a White guy, and look at you as a Black person, and then they judge you because of your colour, because of your race. They don't think about the deeper person. So I don't think it's the university's fault only. I think it's the people's mindset, the way people think, the way people go about stuff.

Moderator: OK. Any other opinions? *(Silence)* OK. How do you think racial integration patterns at the institution affect students' experiences, or academic experiences or broadly, other experiences? *(Brendan asks for clarification of question)* The extent to which you think that there is racial integration or not on campus, how do you think that affects students' overall experiences on campus or academic experiences?

Brendan: I find that it's [inaudible], it's fairly integrated. [inaudible] You're put into your own groups for projects and stuff (Moderator: OK), so it's, yah.

Joubertus: I don't think anyone really cares about who they work with because everyone's here to get their degree (Moderator: M-hhm). Everyone is here to work and to learn, so I don't think it matters, really (Moderator: OK).

Hlohi: Well, I've been saying that I don't really care about the things that are happening around me; sometimes I do notice them when it's a bit like, just in terms of ... a bit of concern. Like when you go to Oom Gert, then you'll just be standing there and you'll have that look where everybody's just like ... And mostly I like chilling with my White friends, and then when you walk through the door, they give you that look like, "What are you doing here?; you're so not ... you don't belong here", and stuff like that. It kind of like unsettles you, and you wonder if you belong here. I just don't like feeling that negativity, so sometimes I just feel like putting myself in ... maybe trying online education or something 'cause like, I don't like that feeling where people are looking at me and undermining me because of my race and stuff .

Moderator: OK. Are any of you *(gesturing towards the African students)* you're studying in English probably? You guys, are you studying in English? *(Gesturing towards the rest of the participants)*. All of you are studying in English?

Willem: I'm studying in Afrikaans *(Participants laugh)*.

Moderator: OK; how do you think that language, for all of you guys, the language of ... the medium of instruction, specifically for you, how do you think that affects your academic performance? Is it negatively, is it positively?

Brendan: English is my home language (Moderator: OK), so it's fine and positive.

Geenan: I was ... my home language is actually Afrikaans, but I think I chose the right thing to study in English because the whole world, if you go across the world, then it will be English. Everybody understands English. So, I think yah, it made me in a positive mindset (Moderator: M-hhm).

Participant: Sorry, I would just like to ask, how long are we still gonna go on? (Moderator: We're almost done; that's the last question. *Participants laugh*).

Hlohi: I'm actually pleased with English 'cause like, I don't understand my home language like, it's too deep for me. Even writing my home language, it's crazy. So this thing of like, either you drop Afrikaans or you have all the languages, it's very unnecessary because like, at the end of the day, it's gonna cost the school a lot of money and some people don't really want their home languages 'cause our home languages are just insanely difficult, and as for equality, I feel like everybody ... 'cause some of them ... for some, it's gonna be easier if they learn in their own languages, but that's gonna cost money. So, I don't know how they feel about that (Moderator: So, yours is working for you?) Yah, mine's working for me.

Moderator: OK. Willlem?

Willem: Like she said, if you wanna bring in all the other languages, it's kind of impossible because I spoke to one of my friends in res, he said you can [inaudible]. He said not all the words like, let's just use ... "are active"; but not all the words are in African languages. The African languages aren't involved enough in those words (Moderator: M-hhm). And for me now studying in Afrikaans, I only did one module in Afrikaans (FRK); it's because I did Accounting at school in Afrikaans, so just that switch would've made it way harder for me (Moderator: OK, OK).

Tumi: I think ... You were saying the integration ... (Moderator: Are you going back to the previous question?) What was this one? (Moderator: Language) *Participants laugh*. Oh the language? (Moderator: Yes). Umm, for me it's working but I mean, all through primary and high school, we were taught in English, so it works and yah and I think what Willem was saying as well, some of the words aren't ... so, I think it's quite impossible to include every language. Because I mean how would ... there are so many languages, but I think it would be umm ... nice to have maybe just one African language for those students that think that they

want to be taught in their home language, but then another thing is, then the others are gonna be like "No, this and that; we want ours in and ...", so I think, I think it should just stay the way it is because it's just gonna be too ... too much havoc (Moderator: M-hhm) Yah and not ... you can't always make everyone happy (Moderator: M-hhm) Yah.

Moderator: Albertus and Thuli, would you like to add anything? Nothing? OK, I'm done with my part of the ... Oh lastly, what do you think the institution could do—if you haven't mentioned it already—to enhance students' overall experiences?

Brendan: Free ice cream *(Participants laugh)*

Thuli: Free tablets (Another participant: Whaat?; Moderator: Free tablets. Are you serious?) Yes, I'm serious.

Moderator: OK. I just want to know for sure. You were joking with the ice cream, right? *(Participants laugh)*. So, you think everything is perfect; there's nothing that the university needs to do; you're fine?

Female participant: I'll think about it.

Moderator: If there's anything that you'd like to add, you may, but otherwise I'm done with my side of the questions. OK guys, thank you so much; I appreciate it ... umm please ... (To Research Assistant: If they haven't given ... Oh, you have their details? OK) ... Can you please give me your, those of you who haven't, your details, and I'll send you airtime. Thanks a lot; I appreciate your time.

Focus group discussion concludes.

I. Audit Trail

Before data collection

I requested permission to collect data from UP and SMU. Along with my request, I submitted a summary of my research proposal to the SMU Research Ethics Committee for reference, and a full proposal to the University of Pretoria's Ethics Committee for both permission to conduct the study at the institution and for ethical clearance. I commenced with data collection after obtaining permission from SMU to conduct the study at the institution (see Appendix B), and permission to conduct the study at UP's Faculty of Humanities, followed by ethical clearance from the latter university's Ethics Committee (see Appendix D).

Data collection

I commenced with data collection at SMU and alternated between the two institutions according to participant availability. As per my initial research proposal, the research assistant and I put up posters (see Appendix E) on notice boards on the university campus and the on-campus student residences, inviting first-, second- and third-year students to participate in the study. The intention was to conduct the study on participants at these study-year levels to enable some form of uniformity in study durations across the two institutions. When no responses were received after several days of putting up the posters, the research assistant and I approached small groups of students on the university campus, asking them to participate in the study based on whether they were first-, second- or third-year students. Approaching first- to third-year students was based on the intention to enable the recruitment of participants with more or less equivalent enrolment periods at the HBHEI and the HWHEI. This was especially considering the fact that the prescribed study period for Humanities

students, who were the target population at the HWHEI, is three to four years. We took the contact details of students who were willing to participate in the study. Due to subsequent difficulties with arranging for suitable times for the focus group discussions with a sufficient number of participants (i.e. at least five), one of these prospective participants, Thabo, offered to assist with the recruitment of the study participants and arranging for focus group discussions, especially given his knowledge of the university's test calendar and the academic commitment of students in various programmes at the time. Thabo made arrangements for the venues on campus, at which all three focus group discussions at this institution took place. He also either set up dates and times of the focus group discussions according to participants' availability, or facilitated our (the research assistant's and mine) contact with prospective participants who could also assist with participant recruitment, based on specified inclusion criteria. The first focus group discussion at SMU took place on 16 March 2016, the second on 14 April 2016 and the last one a week later, on 21 April 2016. The first focus group consisted of six Black participants, three male, and three female. The second consisted of five White participants, four female and one male. The third comprised eight Black participants, seven female and one male. A Black, female research assistant co-attended the first and third focus group discussions, during which she functioned as a scribe and helped with administrative tasks such as noting participants' first names, study year and contact details. Contact details were provided so as to facilitate the transfer of airtime vouchers, which were used as incentives. A White, male research assistant co-attended the second focus group discussion, carrying out tasks similar to those performed by the first research assistant, as indicated above.

Each focus group discussion at the two institutions started off with me introducing myself by name and as a postgraduate student at UP, then indicating that the aim of my study was to identify factors that students assume to affect their academic success. I intentionally

omitted my occupation as a lecturer, in the hopes that my status as a student would facilitate rapport and participants' sense of openness towards me. I intentionally omitted mentioning the role possibly played by race in shaping students' academic experiences as an additional study aim, as I believed that, should it be play a role, then this would spontaneously emerge during the course of the focus group discussions. This is especially considering the assumed inherence of race in individuals' experiences across contexts, as per the tenets of critical race theory (see Chapter 2). At introduction, I also handed out consent forms (see Appendix F) to be signed by participants, which included my details and those of my study supervisor, the aim of the study, and what the focus group discussion would entail (i.e. a discussion among participants, based on questions that I were to pose, regarding factors affecting academic success at their respective HEIs), including ethical issues such as voluntary participation in the study, withdrawal from participation and the option for participants to access counselling services at no costs at their respective university campuses. I verbally reiterated participants' option to access free counselling services at their institutions, should their participation in the study lead to distress at the time of data collection or thereafter, and ascertained whether they were aware of the location of the student counselling division on their campuses. I also indicated to participants that the focus group discussion proceedings would be recorded and that they had the option to use pseudonyms. Participants were given an opportunity to ask questions, and were informed that the focus group discussions would commence once each had signed the consent form. The focus group guide (see Appendix G) was used to steer the focus group discussion; the questions specified in the guide were intended to elicit a discussion about factors that participants found to affect their academic success. The duration of the focus group discussions ranged from approximately 50 minutes to 90 minutes. In addition to their responses to, and discussions pertaining to the questions in the focus group guide, prior to closing off the discussion, participants were asked if they wished to provide

any further comments pertaining to the topic. Thereafter, participants were thanked for their participation and asked to ensure that the research assistant has captured their details, to enable the allocation of incentives for participation.

At UP, the recruitment strategy entailed putting up posters on notice boards in the Humanities Building. The first focus group discussion was scheduled. When none of the anticipated participants (who had e-mailed me, indicating their interest in participation, after which a focus group discussion was scheduled) showed up at the venue where the discussion was set to take place on the scheduled day and time, I revised the recruitment strategy. Subsequent to this episode, the research assistant recruited prospective participants by approaching students on the university campus, inviting them to participate based on whether they met the inclusion criteria (i.e. first-, second- or third-year students enrolled for at least one module in the Humanities Faculty; permission had been obtained from the Humanities Faculty to conduct the study on students enrolled for modules in the faculty). Those agreeing to participate were given a later time on the day of recruitment, at which the focus group discussion would take place, as well as the on-campus venue where the discussion would take place. Those who could not participate on the same day of recruitment were to be contacted at a later stage for possible participation in the second focus group discussion. Five Black participants attended the first focus group discussion at UP on 15 April 2016; four of these participants were female, and one male. Subsequent to this, the second research assistant recruited additional participants in a manner similar to that employed to recruit participants for the first focus group discussion at the institution. A total of seven participants attended the second focus group discussion at UP. Of these, four were male, and three were female. Moreover, two of the male participants were White, and one Black; all three female participants were Black. I conducted only two focus group discussions at UP, that is, one comprising Black participants only, and another comprising a racially diverse sample.

Data analysis procedures

       I made field notes of my observations regarding each focus group discussion soon after conclusion thereof. These included my overall impressions of each discussion, and are presented as observational findings in Section 5.3.4. I conducted verbatim transcription of the data soon after data collection, capturing all utterances including word fillers, false starts, etc. Thereafter, I re-read each transcript while listening to the audio-recorded data, to ensure accurate transcription. Where necessary, I rectified any previously missing or inaudible parts during this process, and also added any previously omitted details or utterances. To commence with analysis, I re-read the transcripts to familiarise myself in the data, as per Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines. During this process, I conceptualised possible codes or themes under which some of the participants' statements could fall, also making notes to this effect in the comments section of the transcripts. Thereafter, I merged all the data from either HEI into one document, such that there were two sets of transcripts. I assigned all statements in the transcripts to codes. Thereafter, I assigned the codes to the relevant preliminary themes, based on links between each other and to the respective overarching themes (see Table I1 for preliminary themes and the codes assigned to these).

Table I1: Preliminary Themes

Theme: Prejudice	Theme: Language	Theme: Unfair treatment by institution
Codes	**Codes**	**Codes**
Appreciation of diversity	*Transitioning from an*	*Some courses taken for*
Preference for one's own	*Afrikaans LOLT in high*	*granted*
ethnic or race group	*school to English*	*Victimisation of students by*
Racial discrimination by	*Not being able to keep up*	*lecturers*
university management	*with English*	
Racial discrimination by	*lectures/English-speaking*	
lecturers and tutors	*lecturers*	
Racial discrimination in the	*Lecturers speaking*	
library	*Afrikaans in English*	
Racism not experienced	*lectures*	
personally, but has been	*English is suitable as a*	
experienced by	*medium of instruction*	
acquaintances	*The scrapping of Afrikaans*	
Black people to blame for	*as a medium of instruction*	
being hypocritical about	*(indifference, should be*	
racism and their personal	*done gradually, "it's best if*	
interactions with White	*we all actually suffer*	
people	*inconvenience")*	
There are White people who	*African languages*	
condemn racism	*inadequate for academic use*	
Black people also show	*Supplementary material*	
racial intolerance towards	*should be provided for*	
White people	*African students*	
Unfounded accusations of		
racism unsettling		
White spaces and Black		
spaces on the university		
campus		

Choosing to study at a historically Black higher education institution to avoid racism *Students either unaware of, or neglecting strained interracial relations to focus only on completing their degrees* *Student racial composition* *Staff racial composition* *Racially discriminatory patterns of student admissions according to study programme* *The university's practices contradict policy regarding racial integration* *A sense of not belonging in 'White' spaces at the university*		
Theme: Protests at the institution **Codes** *Protests at UP disrupted academic activities* *Political parties radicalised students during protests* *Political parties/protests conscientised some about inequalities*	**Theme: Psychological issues** **Codes** *Low self-esteem based on comparisons with others* *Self-efficacy* *Passing beyond one's control* *Lack of confidence regarding completion of studies*	**Theme: Adjustment** **Codes** *The transition from high school to tertiary* *Handling the deep end of higher education environment well* *Unable to cope with the university environment,* *Needing to be taken care of*

University had a history of not addressing students' concerns *Condemnation of Black-on-White racial intolerance expressed during protests* *No reasons for protests at SMU, compared to other institutions* *Previous protests at SMU not successful*	*Motivated to complete studies (due to having come too far, a need to be financially independent, financial incentives, and admission into a prestigious study programme)* *Lack of motivation due to not studying towards desired course (i.e. Medicine) / not knowing whether one still wants to study Medicine*	
Theme: Family **Codes** *Family problems* *Role of parents*	**Theme: Distance** **Codes** *Distance from home* *Distance from campus*	**Theme: Academic performance** **Codes** *Failing modules* *Workload: "Give us more work"* *Workload: Work overload*
Theme: Social life **Codes** *No extracurricular activities* *Making friends* *Failure by some students to accept others for who they are, due to differences in background* *Intimate relationships derail focus on studies*	**Theme: Self-regulation** **Codes** *Self-regulation/Students must take responsibility* *Peer pressure* *Setting priorities* *Time management*	**Theme: Emotional aspects** **Codes** *Having emotional problems* *Being deliberate about overcoming emotional problems* *Maturity an advantage*

Theme: Affordability	Theme: Accommodation	Theme: The institution's failure to deliver
Codes *Affordability of studies* *Affordability of services offered at the university*	**Codes** *All students being in university accommodation is an advantage* *Some students residing in on-campus residences, others in residences in the CBD and others with parents or relatives* *There are advantages and disadvantages to residing with relatives*	**Codes** *The institution fails to deliver on promises* *The institution ignores students' concerns* *The university does not channel funds towards students' real needs*
Theme: The university environment	**Theme: Institution's name**	**Facilities**
Codes *A suitable study environment* *It's a suitable institution for me* *"The best institution"/Institution a good choice or Competitive* *"I'm happy at this institution"* *Everyone is content at the institution*	**Codes** *Dissatisfaction with name change* *Non-consultation with students*	**Codes** *Satisfaction with facilities at institution* *Dissatisfaction with facilities at the institution* *Suggestions for improvement*
Theme: Campus food	**Theme: Unfavourable comparisons with other institutions**	**Theme: Support by institution**

Codes	Codes	Codes
Poor-quality campus food *Poor service at cafeteria* *Long queues at cafeteria/dining hall*	*Wits has better facilities, compared to SMU* *Wits would get better press coverage for concerns similar to those of SMU students or students at other institutions*	*Various types of support (including academic, psychological, financial, infrastructural) currently being provided by the institution* *Suggestions for institutional support*
Theme: 'People are doing as they wish' **Codes** *No accountability to students* *Students failed by authorities* *Corruption*	**Theme: Safety concerns** **Codes** *Concerns about security on campus and in university residences* *The lack of a robot to control traffic at the main gate is unsafe for students* *Death of a student after a hit-and-run vehicle accident (the incident did not make news)* *Students' requests to have robot installed had previously fallen on deaf ears* *The university does not channel financial resources towards student safety*	**Theme: Students lack information** **Codes** *Better awareness could be raised about resources available to students, to enhance their academic performance or experiences* *Dropping out due to lack of information about financial assistance offered by the institution* *The institution does not provide sufficient information about modules needed to complete one's course programme* *High school learners should get more exposure to possible career paths*

		Important academic skills such as time management should be imparted to students
Theme: Efficiency vs. inefficiency by the institution **Codes** *Timely provision of correct timetables* *Efficient registration process* *Lack of communication about academic exclusion* *Lack of timely communication about required module credits* *Poor record-keeping by the institution* *Inefficient, long registration process* *Administrative staff unavailable when needed* *Incorrect timetables provided* *Students bear the consequences of disorganised academic departments and lecturers* *Enrolment into the wrong study programme*	**Theme: My study course** **Codes** *Why I chose my course* *What participants are studying*	**Theme: Miscellaneous** **Codes** *Jokes* *Uncertainty about reasons for students dropping out* *Uncertainty about what the university could do to enhance students' experiences*

Not getting value for one's money as a result of disrespect by lecturers'		
Poor or no communication about exam results		
The university does not prioritise communication about important academic issues that affect students		

After ensuring that all data were indeed relevant and attributable to the assigned codes and, therefore, respective themes, I refined the themes displayed in Table I1 above. I present the final themes in Figure I1, which are discussed in detail in Chapter 5 of this thesis.
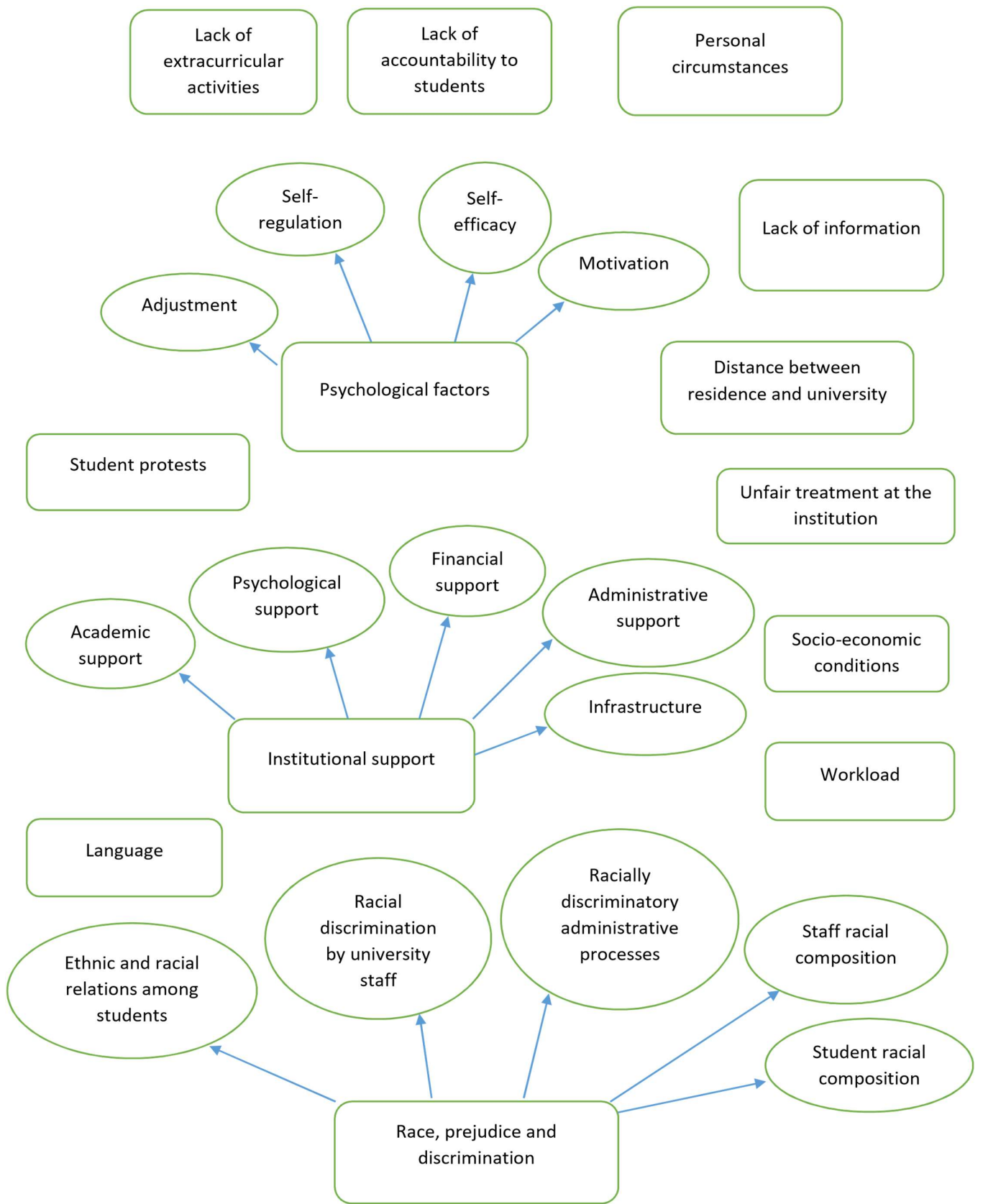
Lack of extracurricular activities

Lack of accountability to students

Personal circumstances

Self-regulation

Self-efficacy

Motivation

Lack of information

Adjustment

Psychological factors

Distance between residence and university

Student protests

Unfair treatment at the institution

Financial support

Psychological support

Administrative support

Academic support

Infrastructure

Socio-economic conditions

Institutional support

Workload

Language

Racially discriminatory administrative processes

Racial discrimination by university staff

Staff racial composition

Ethnic and racial relations among students

Student racial composition

Race, prejudice and discrimination

Figure I1. Thematic map

Ultimately, there was a total of 13 themes. After refining the themes as shown in Figure I1, I reviewed the transcripts in the two documents once again to ascertain if each statement was indeed accounted for in the final, listed themes.