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Creating a mental health citizen: exploring mental health discourse and its contribution in defining blackness and community among young urban blacks post-Fees Must Fall

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2020
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2019

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Masters Research Report

Submitted on: 18 March 2019

Research Topic: ***Creating a mental health citizen: Exploring mental health discourse and its contribution in defining blackness and community among young urban blacks post-Fees Must Fall***

Submitted to the Department of Anthropology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts (Anthropology)

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Declaration:

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from work, or works, of other people, have been attributed and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Acknowledgements

To Dr. Julia, Dr. Hylton, Jabulile, Thuba, Canon Collins Trust, Masego, Sharon, Credo, Ancha, Sonwabile, Thabang, Musa, Nomvuzo, Zintle, Kile, Claudia, Eve, Safeeyah, Sibahle, Gratia, Sharona, Keketso, Chuene, Musa, Prof Thea, Siya, Nkululeko, Leyya, Anthony, Miranda, Kabelo, Sashalene, Andrea, Dr. Nosipho, Trinity, Alda, Manape, my Aunt Kelebogile and Uncle Lucky, who through their constant support and encouragement made my MA journey bearable, fun and exciting.

This research report is dedicated to the fallists of the yesteryear

The fallists of today

And the fallists of tomorrow

Who will continue the fight for the black child to have the opportunity to have a fair fight.



#WitsHungerStrike (2019) by twitter user @Mnce_za

Abstract

The #FeesMustFall protests of 2015-16 were critical in raising issues that have long affected students. They were especially important in shedding light on the struggles that black students have long faced in universities around South Africa. The post-#FeesMustFall moment is used here to interrogate the after-effects of the #FeesMustFall protests two years after they have taken place, but specifically with regards to a new relationship that this moment has created between the experiences of black university students and the discourse of mental health. Issues surrounding mental health are explored and interrogated through the concept of mental health citizenship. Through employing biological citizenship, I trace discrete practices of mental health as well as institutional interventions at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. I suggest that my findings point to the issues of precarity that were primary issues during the Fees Must Fall protests and how they contribute to issues of mental health. I highlight how moments of the everyday intertwine with the bigger institutional structures to create what I have termed a mental health citizenry.

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Introduction

Drawing from Adriana Petryna's concept of 'biological citizenship,' I want to explore how the propagation of mental health discourse can influence particular ways in which people belong to public or political communities. The aim here is to articulate the circumstances through which communities that identify as suffering from any mental health condition come into being; to show how social relationships and relationships with people and space manifest prevalent mental health discourses and to show how spaces such as urban universities and the broader city environment are conduits of such discourse and the manifestations thereof.

Rationale

From 2014 on, South African universities saw the advent of the #MustFall movement, such as #RhodesMustFall at the University of Cape Town, and then #FeesMustFall across the nation's university system. This period also saw an increase in the articulation of mental health discourse amongst those who were actively or passively involved in such movements. The #FeesMustFall protests were focused on the rise of university tuition fees and how this would affect the mostly previously disadvantaged or poor population of black students. It gave rise to heated and conflictual discussions about racial inequality, lack of transformation, and economic and social inequality. This moment created a space for a wide range of issues to be brought to the fore; one of those issues being mental health. The moment was important as it highlighted mental health as something which also affected black students. The idea of mental health that permeated during #FeesMustFall stands in strong contrast to the longstanding idea that mental health is often seen in black communities as a western or middle-class concept. In his piece, *People don't get depressed in Nigeria*, Ike Anya (2012) echoes this sentiment. The piece is about a western trained Nigerian doctor who was placed in rural Nigeria and is faced with a patient who seems to be suffering from post-partum depression. He doubts this regardless of all the signs pointing him to this diagnosis (Anya, 2012). According to him and many of his

colleagues, depression is a western illness; therefore 'People don't get depressed in Nigeria', which is the title of the article (Anya, 2012). This could also be read as; *black people do not get depressed*. Mental illness and mental health in black communities is something which has not been taken seriously, or something which is not of a black concern.

#FeesMustFall student movement protests met with a lot of police brutality. Many students, mostly black, in the front lines, clashed with the police as well as with private security hired by most university campuses. This resulted in physical altercations from both sides. Private security (bouncers) was in full assault mode whenever there was a group of students protesting. Police were also frequently dispatched to the campuses and the surrounding places when a protest arose. Campuses and surrounding places such as Braamfontein and Auckland Park in Johannesburg became heavily securitised and militarised for that period. A lot of students used the language of trauma to express how this had affected them. Nor was this restricted to those who were actively taking part in the protests: many passive participants claimed to be experiencing trauma. This inadvertedly highlighted power dynamics between state-run institutions, such the university and the police, and the students, in which those who 'lacked power' were subjected to punishment and control, not to spread a particular discourse. The black students were therefore subjected to the status of, as Foucault (2006) would put it, '*a condemned man'*

This moment of student politics reconfigured mental health as something that should be an issue for black people and their articulations of blackness. This moment saw a rise in which mental health was understood and embodied as important by most of the black students in the movement. We see in this moment a rise in the use of language of mental health in the everyday. Words such as 'triggered,' which is part of PTSD discourse, started being used everywhere; from social media posts to everyday conversations amongst students. Certain spaces, words, actions, start to become triggering.

Whether the Fees Must Fall protests concretely resulted in the proliferation of mental health discourse is something which remains to be proven, because there could be a lack of consciousness about the fact that there is mental health discourse going on. However, the post-#FeesMustFall moment is used here to interrogate and explore the links between events, such as that of #FeesMustFall, the proliferation of mental health discourse, community building, and unity and the exploration of blackness as something which is not immune to mental health. In exploring this, I looked at how people use mental health discourse as a way to define mental health and related suffering as a problem of blackness as such, and not as something relegated to whiteness or to the middle class. I also look at how mental health discourse becomes a mode of talking about a crisis, or simply, pressure. When a Wits student committed suicide in 2017, a Wits SRC member would subsequently go to say that, "unspoken pressures on students were becoming prevalent in higher education institutions." The #FeesMustFall student movement saw mental health made into part of the imagination of blackness amongst black students. The social imaginary of mental health also therefore extended beyond the political space as such. It proliferated into the everyday.

'I also investigate how mental health discourse in the post-#FeesMustFall moment has continued as a vestige for the emergence of abstract self-organised communities, centred on mental health discourse and blackness. This could be through exploring how the articulation of suffering has become a prerequisite for membership in such communities, and how shared suffering could be used to define blackness or black identity. I also investigated how such communities mobilise, through which modes, through which platforms, and how the university in the city allows for such community organisation and thinking about concepts such as mental health to take place. I, therefore, ask the question:

How does mental health discourse contribute to defining blackness and community among young urban blacks post-#FeesMustFall at Wits University, Johannesburg?

Chapter One

Literature Review

With reference to existing scholarly literature, there are three overarching areas I have drawn on to frame my account of how mental health discourse has reshaped articulations of blackness and community among students post-#FeesMustFall. Those areas are: citizenship, community and belonging; the issue of blackness; and anthropology and mental health. With the concept of citizenship, I investigate how people organise and form communities around certain discourses. In exploring blackness as a theme, I am interested in work on how blackness and black identity has been defined and continues to be reconfigured, and spcifically how it it performed and configured in the Fees Must Fall protests of 2015 and 2016. Finally, I look at anthropological and other perspectives on the question of mental health.

Citizenship, community, and belonging

Citizenship implies membership in a particular public sphere, but also links to individual senses of belonging based on shared interests and experiences. I draw here especially on Adriana Petryna's notion of 'biological citizenship' (Petryna 2004), in order to frame my own concerns with the parallel development of what I call mental health citizenship. I have also explored a body of anthropological work on cults of affliction, understood as communities that are organised around shared experiences of suffering or a particular discourse on suffering and healing. Lastly, I explore Michel Foucault's work on "the body of the condemned" (Foucault 2006), as a way to highlight how physical order and the *punishment* of those who lack power can produce communities of dissent as well as communities of shared trauma.

In *Life Exposed: Biological Citizens after Chernobyl,* Petryna (2004) chronicles the aftermath of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear explosion in Ukraine, which resulted in casualties, injuries, and environmental damage. During this period, the state was instrumental in creating what Petryna

refers to as *biological citizenship*. Because of damaged immunity and higher rates of thyroid cancer among the exposed population, the government of Ukraine took it upon themselves to compensate the exposed population, thereby turning them into 'biological citizens' whose primary relationship with the state was framed by their damaged biology. The Chernobyl nuclear explosion thus ironically created certain public benefits for the exposed population. But this process of awarding certain benefits to those who were exposed was reliant on whether the government identified them as people who were suffering from the after effects of the explosion (Petryna 2004: 255). The case of Chernobyl highlights how people made concerted efforts to be diagnosed with illnesses related to radiation so as to be able to claim state disability benefits. There was thus an active decision to become a biological citizen, as well a push by the Ukraine state to create this category. The aftermath "exemplifies a process wherein scientific knowability collapses and new categories of entitlement emerge" (Petryna 2006:251). Access to the proliferating discourse around the causes of certain afflictions, because of the nuclear explosion, now gave people agency to become classified as part of the exposed population, and thus receive the benefits attached to being part of such a population. Scientific knowledge and its accessibility and palatability made it easier for people to embody what may ultimately afford them a livelihood. The case of Chernobyl also shows how a government organised suffering into a discourse linking nationhood to biological and scientific knowledge. Organising suffering in such a way results in what Anderson (1983) terms an 'imagined community'. Anderson posits that members of such imagined communities will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. While he was referring to the modern concept of nationalism or the national state, the same line of thinking can be applied to smaller and more fragmented but self-organised imagined communities.

Organising around suffering, and adjacent concepts such as care giving and healing, is not of course a new concept. Didier Fassin's *Bodies that Remember* (2007), an ethnography of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in South Africa, shows how people who had HIV/AIDS, as well those who were carers, public advocates and nay-sayers, all organised their acts around the medical phenomenon of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Many of them did not know each other intimately, but that is what Anderson's concept of the imagined community helps us to understand. Fassin (2007) also highlights how such organisation around HIV/AIDS was premised on growing respect for and the increasing accessibility of scientific and medical discourse on HIV/AIDS.

There is also a much longer genealogy of social organisation around experiences of suffering. In Africa in particular this is revealed to us in anthropological studies such as Victor Turner's classic work on *Drums of Affliction* (1968) and also later by Janzen (1986). Turner (1968) sketches how Ndembu communities in Zambia formed 'cults of affliction' for those who were affected by particular experiences of suffering. By this Turner means that individuals were grouped or organised according to a set of symptoms which were associated with a particular illness, or in the case of the Ndembu, a particular ancestral shade. Janzen (1986) traces similarly how for Lemba communities in the Congo, illnesses affecting the head, heart, abdomen and sides, which were typically signs of witchcraft, were treated by priests and priestesses in processes that were followed by rigorous ritual: a "medicine of the village" or "the sacred medicine of governing" (Janzen 1986:4). African communities have organised around suffering and healing for a long time, and this will continue. What is changing is the particular kind of discourse through which certain modes of suffering are described and can be shared. The Ndembu and Lemba cases are reminiscent of Petryna's discussion of biological citizenship, as there was an organising authority. This makes them unlike communities such as those organising around the HIV/AIDS pandemics, which do not necessarily involve an

organising authority, such as state power and traditional authority. The latter would be the case with mental health citizenship as well.

Michel Foucault's discussion of "the body of the condemned" (2006) reveals another way in which suffering is configured into the self-organisation of a new kind of political community. The advent of #FeesMustFall produced a sense of shared oppression and marginalisation from the state apparatus and the university management, through the use of the police and private security against students. Foucault (2006) highlights how the use of power against the subdued or subjugated inadvertently creates the opposite, or a community in opposition - a community of sufferers refusing their oppression.

The Issue of [B]lackness

Blackness is an issue constantly reconfigured, embodied through different media and in different modes, and rooted in complex histories and genealogies. In framing blackness for my discussion here, I consider claims by Wade (2009), hooks (2015), Fanon (1994) and Sexton (2015) about the immutability and mutability of racial identifications, especially in the context of the South African socio-political landscape and history. I will also look at how racialisation and blackness emerged and continues to be reconfigured and mobilised in the Fees Must Fall movement as well as in other South African historical protests.

Wade (2009) sketches how 'blackness' in post-independence Colombia is imbued with different modes, such as those of skin colour and of class. Defining 'blackness' as something embedded in the history of marginalisation and oppression was again the national project in Colombia as a mixed-race nation where race was seemingly not important. There was an ambiguity here in the definition of 'blackness'. Wade (2009) therefore asks how ideas of how to define blackness, which are mainly produced in hegemonic structures such as that of the academy, filter down to the masses. Blackness is disseminated through different modes and

platforms such as those of academia and other institutions such as the state. Wade (2009) highlights how the constitutional reform of recasting Colombia as a multi-ethnic and multicultural nation included the promulgation of a law to recognise black people as Colombians. Unlike Colombia, modern South Africa has always been very clear in the project of racial categorisation, most especially of blackness. The case of the post-Fees Must Fall moment and the Fees Must Fall is to understand how black-identifying black students reconfigure and define blackness outside these hegemonic predilections. Even though hegemonic knowledge, such as that of mental health is being propagated by the black-identifying students, there is a sense of self organisation and agency from them in terms of how they identify in spaces like that one of a university.

bell hooks (2015) describes a struggle to represent blackness outside the discourse of colonialism and oppression, as these perpetuate the idea of white supremacy in the contemporary moment. hooks (2015) shows that dominant modes of representation and identification reify not being able to identify outside the realms which have been normalised, and therefore do not allow other modes of being and identifying. The propagation and use of certain discourses such as that of mental health may challenge 'normalised' ways of being. And in the case of black students, it may challenge the dominant ways in which their blackness is defined, bringing to the fore new ways of identifying. hooks (2015:3) writes that dominant discourses that are used to define and sketch out what blackness is, such as those of colonialism, "challenge insurgent black intellectuals and/or artists to look at new ways to write and talk about race and representation to work to transform the image of blackness." The struggle to define blackness outside the confines of the dominant discourse, which black academics themselves have been party to, is pushing black people today, such as those in universities, to look and reconfigure blackness differently. As highlighted before, hooks (2015) notes how theorising black experience (she is looking at the U.S) is a difficult task because of the

dominant discourses around it and being socialised in white supremacist educational institutions There is, therefore, difficulty in exploring how black identity is maintained and reconfigured in mostly white institutions such as that of the university. Blackness is therefore not seen as something which is complex, and therefore worthy of critical analysis and reflection. Mental health and its discourse might be a contemporary way to reflect and come up with a language through the experiences of #FeesMustFall participants, or what Baldwin !962) refers to as "horrors of black life" to define blackness and black identity. hooks (2015:4) writes:

> *For those of us who dare to desire differently, who seek to look away from the conventional ways of seeing blackness and ourselves, the issue of race and representation is not just a question of critiquing the status quo. It is also about transforming the image, creating alternatives, asking ourselves questions about what types of images subvert,' / pose critical alternatives, and transform our worldviews and move us away from dualistic thinking about good and bad.*

Blackness, as I have pointed out in my introduction, can also be defined based on histories and life experiences. Contrary to hooks, Frantz Fanon (1994) and Jared Sexton (2015) highlight the overwhelming power of dominant discourses. In a chapter on "the fact of blackness" in his seminal work *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon highlights to us how the construction of blackness manifests by way of othering. The most basic construction of a black man is being called 'black'. This creates a sort of antithesis to whiteness: the latter being pure and virtuous, while blackness is associated with bruteness, darkness and savagery (Fanon 1994:88). Sexton (2015) likewise looks at blackness and black issues through Black Lives Matter, as something which is grounded in the systemic brutality against black people and the consequential trauma that comes with that brutality. hooks (2015) argues exactly against this pessimism; that, if we must continue to define blackness in relation and through hegemonic power structures,

especially those of white supremacy such as colonialism and slavery, blackness and black identity will be stuck in perpetuity. My research looks at how students organise around suffering using concepts of mental health discourse and blackness.

Blackness & Student protest culture in South Africa

Race and racial injustice is something which is embedded in why there are protests in South Africa. The disparities between the majority black population in South Africa and other races in terms of access to basic rights and resources such as access to education and social justice, is an impetus for the emergence of protests and social movements in South Africa. Fees Must Fall is not the first instance this has happened. South Africa has a history of protests against such, most notably the 1976 youth protests. Segregationist politics of the South African apartheid state from 1948 meant that different groups as classified racially by the state itself, different racial groups had access to state resources differently (Eriksen, 2016 in Andestad 2018). The state was instrumental in forging and creating 'blackness' through these classifications. The apartheid state would further pass laws to suppress any protests and resistance against the apartheid state, through The Suppression of Communism Act passed in 1950 (Andestad, 2018). Further acts were passed to maintain the Apartheid state. Acts such as the *Group Areas Act of 1950* which meant that different race groups had to live in different designated areas; the *Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953* which meant different race groups had designated public resources (Andestad, 2018). This included the education system (Reddy, 2004). This was part of the apartheid states' plan to consolidate the white identity through economic, social and cultural domination (Reddy, 2004). This led to the unequal distribution of educational resources on the basis of race with the Apartheid states objective to teach black youth or rather non-white youth that their otherness(inferiority) was natural which was to establish black people as docile (Reddy, 2004). Differentiation in every aspect of the 'natives' life also meant a differentiated higher education system – the unintended consequence

being the student resistance that emerged from black universities (Reddy, 2004). These universities usually referred to as 'bush' colleges, were established to along ethnically classified black group (Reddy, 2004).

By the time of the 1976 Soweto uprisings, there was an increase in student numbers in universities which provided basis for political mobilisation and resistance , and therefore truly effective mass protests; the established segregation of students into ethnic institutions, which angered and frustrated black students; and the realisation that the apartheid state intended to reproduce the apartheid through institutions such as the university (Reddy, 2004). This was due organisations like South African Students Organisation (SASO) created by Steve Biko in 1968, after feeling frustrated by the predominately white ran National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) (Reddy, 2004). SASO sought to mobilise, unite and represent the needs of black students across the country. The ideology of SASO greatly aligned with that of the Black Consciousness (BC) movement (Reddy, 2004: Becker, n.d). The ideology was profoundly influenced by militant philosopher, Frantz Fanon, and specifically his book, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Becker, n.d).

According to Reddy (2004), two moments undergird the culture of student revolt in South Africa – the 1972 protests at University of the North, which initially were against the expulsion of Onkgopotse Tiro but also campaigned against Bantu Education and the 1976 Soweto Rebellion. The 1972 protests although initially in University of the North spread to other black/'bush' universities across the country (Reddy, 2004). Reddy (2004) contends that, at a political, cultural and symbolic level, the 1972 paved a way for boycotts and protests to be used as a strategy to fight the oppressive regime. Protests intrinsically became part of the black social imagination – an imagination which was a tool of liberation, survival and self-preservations of selfhood. The 1976 Soweto protests just like the protests and boycotts that began in 1972 in University of the North fully sought to reject Apartheid education (Bantu Education).

The 2015 and 2016 protests across South Africa sought to employ and draw from South Africa's protests culture through mobilising mostly black marginalised students and inadvertedly reinforcing black students' identity and politics. The protests of #FeesMustFall although they were about the issue of access of a large number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Mandew, 2014), most who happen to be black, the preceding protests and protests were about inclusion and equality in the post-Apartheid South African state 21 years after apartheid ended. The 2015 #FeesMustFall protests more than anything, were about the increase in fees and what affect it would have on poor students, and to some extent, students who were referred to as the missing middle (Andestad, 2018). The missing middle students were mostly poor black students who did not qualify for NSFAS (Jansen, 2017). After the massive pressure from the students protests, President Jacob Zuma established a commission to look into the Higher Education and Training (Andestad, 2018). Students would then come to realise the precarity they found themselves in including lack of accommodation and financial indebtedness after university (Andestad, 2018). The result of that was #Shackville which saw students from the University of Cape Town erected 'shacks' in the middle of UCT'a main campus square, which symbolised the financial exclusion of poor black students, and also symbolised homelessness (Langa et al., 2017 in Andestad, 2018). The protests were marred by violence especially from the state police and university hired security against students. I will unpack intimate details of the Fees Must Fall in the Must Fall chapter of this research report.

Anthropology and mental health

The social life of mental health has been studied extensively by anthropologists. No longer simply the purview of psychiatry and the biological sciences, mental health is now the purview of ethnographic investigation too (Kleinman, 2012). As Kleinman (2012:181) suggests, this has come with the expansion of the referential field of mental health discourse: where mental health used to be restricted to afflictions such as dementia, psychosis, depression and anxiety

disorders, it now includes include problems such as substance abuse, serious school failure, and family breakdowns, as well as violence and its traumatic consequences. This widening of mental health discourse has also in turn rebounded on psychiatry itself, such as in the revision of 'The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders' (popularly known as the DSM). Aggarwal (2013) highlights how social and cultural concepts have been included in the manual's 4th and 5th editions (DSM-4 and DSM-5). In the same breath, Aggarwal critiques how the institution of psychiatry has involved a linear understanding and production of mental health concepts. especially in the production of mental health and psychiatric discourse from white and/or Euro-American experience. Vega and Rumbut (1991) reiterate this, highlighting how minorities have been excluded in understandings of mental health in the United States. A minority experience was therefore never included, being framed instead as an object for separate anthropological inquiry. There is however a concerted push for studies on mental health in non-western societies, which has a danger of regressing to the problematics of classical anthropology, romanticising the discreteness of the non-Western other. Karen Nakamura's ethnography *Disability of the Soul* (2013) shows how mental health conditions such as schizophrenia are also present outside Euro-America, not necessarily being culture-bound. Joao Biehl's *Vita* (2005) also intervenes in this debate. Based on fieldwork at a psychiatric facility in Porto Alegre, Brazil, he shows how mental health is understood in relation to rigid western psychiatric concepts. He questions why the culture concept is not applied when treating patients. He argues for understanding mental health wth reference to underlying social sources such as divorce and family problems, and how the focus of treatment could move from disease management to understanding the significance of lived experiences (Biehl, 2005). This echoes Kleinman's argument for understanding mental health beyond rigid biomedical/psychiatric concepts.

The case of mental health discourse in the South African university, and its links to events such as #FeesMustFall, encompasses what Kleinman (2012) alludes to: that mental health is now being understood beyond the biological or psychiatric domain. Social issues such as collective trauma frame a more holistic understanding of mental health, it's the dissemination of discourses regarding it.

Chapter Two

Methodology

Description of site

The field site for my research is the main campus of Wits University, in Johannesburg. The Wits campus and its surrounding city environment allow spatial possibilities for concretising how broader socio-economic and political considerations become part of the basic constituting experiences of its people. This provides depth when it comes to data collection.

The field site for the proposed research was dictated by where I found my own participants, and where these participants were. This allowed a sense of freedom and agency to my participants, which in turn helped me to construct the space of possibilities and the lines that confine that space, based on their movements and space they chose to occupy (see Gupta and Ferguson 1997:102). The field site chosen also challenges the traditional view of what an anthropological field site should be. The field site I chose speaks to the fast, mobile, changing dynamics found in particular places in a globalised world (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:103).

Biological citizenship as a conceptual tool

I used discourse analysis as a main analytical tool. Discourse shapes conceptions of identity and belonging (Gee 1999). Through the use of discourse analysis, I systematically explored the often-opaque relationships of causality and determination between 1) discursive practices, events and texts, and 2) wider social and cultural structures, relations, processes, in order to investigate how such practices, events, and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power (Gee 1999). According to Gee (1999), discourse is "different ways in which we humans integrate language with non-linguistic 'stuff' such as different ways of thinking, acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, believing, and using symbols, tools, and objects in the right places and the right times so as to enact and recognise different

identities and activities, give the material world certain meanings, distribute social goods in a certain what, make certain sorts of meaningful connections in our experience, and privilege certain symbol systems and ways of knowing over others (Gee 1999: 12-13).

I looked at situated identities which emerged during #FeesMustFall and highlighted how different identities and social positions are enacted in different settings in this post-#FeesMustFall moment (Gee, 1999). I also looked at how language is used to describe students' suffering regarding issues of precarity and mental health on campus. I also relied on conversations – "that is, long-running and important themes or motifs that have been the focus of a variety of different texts and interactions (in different social languages and discourse through a significant period and across in array institutions) (Gee 1999: 12-13).

I used the concept of mental health citizenship in relation to a small community of students and not the population under a state as in Petryna's work on biological citizenship. I appropriated Pretyna's concept through discourse analysis to locate, and map communities organised around mental health discourse and to understand the lived and contested experiences of the students, through interviews and observations.

Methods

I employed a purely qualitative approach to my research. In so doing, my study was ethnographic (Schensul and Lecompte 2010). According to Schensul and Lecompte (2010), ethnography is a systematic approach of learning about the day-today social and cultural experience of an institution, a community, a group of people, and other settings in which the ethnographer's interactions are the primary tool for data collection.

Initially, when I proposed my study, I thought interviews were going to be my primary method of inquiry. That turned out not to be the case. Although I did use ***in depth interviews,*** this was only at the end of my fieldwork. Through this, I wanted to be able to collect ***stories and***

reflections with regards to how participants experienced #FeesMustFall. The type of interviews I undertook were more retrospective as I strived to find out how and when particular events in the participant's lives influence their understandings today. Qualitative interviewing is a form of 'guided conversation' in which the researcher systematically looks for and carefully listens to what is being conveyed 'to hear the meaning' (Kvale 1996; Rubin and Rubin 1995; Groleau 2006). With this, I hoped to reveal chain-complexes in which past experiences are linked metonymically to present experiences through a sequence of events surrounding the experiences without any **explicit causal connection or salient prototype** (Groleau 2006). I also engaged in ***participant observation*** as a method of inquiry. As a student at the University of the Witwatersrand, I had underestimated and taken for granted the roles participant observation might play in my research. I had told myself that, because of being overfamiliar with the space, participant observation and pure observation might not work as I would miss out on insights or take some observations for granted because of this overfamiliarity. However, throughout the process and reflecting on my fieldwork experience, I was able to recognise patterns that I had taken for granted before and used my position as a new student on the campus to fashion myself as an outsider during the fieldwork process.

a) Finding participants and conducting interviews

Participants were recruited through snowballing after approaching students on campus to tell them about my research and see if they were interested in participating. I first approached students I knew could help me connect with any of the students who were involved in the #FeesMustFall protests of 2015 and 2016 and recommend people to whom I could start speaking. For instance, I engaged in casual conversations with some of the students in the Humanities Graduate Centre computer lab about the research I was doing, with the hope that they could recommend participants. I was also direct and purposeful in finding participants. I

conducted interviews which sometimes lasted less than 30 minutes with each of the participants. Forty-five minutes was the maximum time I allocated to each of the students.

Participant observation

I engaged in conversations regarding mental health discourse in communal spaces on the Wits University campus, most of the time in postgraduate offices located in the Robert Sobukwe building. Other spaces included the Humanities Graduate Centre, where seminars are usually held, and the Wits University Anthropology department museum, as well in public spaces on campus such as the Library Lawns and the Piazza, in front of the Great Hall. These places provided great insight especially on events the university hosts in them. For me to be allowed into certain circles, I had to be intentional about building rapport with students who are often in these spaces. I did this for instance by striking up conversations with postgraduate students in the Humanities Graduate centre computer labs. The initial plan was to strike up rapport before beginning to formally recruit people as participants. I then realised that students were more than willing to engage the topic of mental health, and that they saw it as an important issue. Another reason it became easier was that students understood that this was for my own academic work, because they were also students, and therefore understood how research worked, that their anonymity would not be compromised, and that I would take the necessary steps to protect them. Although participant observation is about observing and participating in the activities of students, it should not come across as, or be, covert. Some of the observations were not formally announced, however, especially in places where there were large gatherings of students in public university spaces.

b) Conversation, flow, and note taking

I mostly used my smartphone device and my tablet as well as a notepad to take notes, as well as to record my interviews when I was given permission to record electronically. The

smartphone as a note-taking device creates a relaxed and informal environment for the participants. I then transferred my data to my computer, allowing me to organise my data thematically. Using integrative memos, I linked discrete observations and interview notes together as to substantiate particular themes (Emmerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011:193). So, as not to alienate the participants, I kept the initial conversations short, especially regarding the research. This was done until such as the time I felt comfortable enough to engage in longer conversations with the participants.

Ethics

The American Anthropological Association's Code of Ethics (2009) indicates that:

> *Anthropological researchers should obtain in advance the informed consent of persons being studied, providing information, owning or controlling access to material being studied, or otherwise identified as having interests which might be impacted by the research… Informed consent, for the purposes of this code, does not necessarily imply or require a particular written or signed form. It is the quality of the consent… that is relevant.*

The participants' identities have been kept anonymous to protect and respect their identities and personal information. Pseudonyms were used to do this without any intended distortion of the data itself. My research supervisors and I ate the only ones who have had access to all the information from the study. If my participants at any stage of the research study felt uncomfortable, they had a right to withdraw from the study. None of my participants withdrew from the study during the course of fieldwork. My participants were not rewarded in any way. It was stated at the beginning of the research that participation in the study was voluntary and did not come with any incentives. Overall, then, ethical considerations covered voluntary

involvement by the participants, understanding risks and benefits, gaining informed consent and ensuring confidentiality and privacy (Schensul and Lecompte 2010).

During my fieldwork, then, I met and interviewed several students who would become central in telling the following stories and experiences of precarity and mental health discourse in the post-#FeesMustFall moment. All these students were doing postgraduate studies, with the majority enrolled for a Masters degree in the Faculty of Humanities. Although I did not explicitly ask them their ages, most were in their late twenties, with the oldest being 46. All but two were black female students in the university. Vuyelwa, in her late thirties, came back to university after being financially excluded from Wits in the 90s. She would go on to work, and after years of employment, decided to resume her studies in 2014, a year before the first Fees Must Fall Protests. Vuyiswa, who is in her late forties, decided to come back to university because she felt she needed change. During our conversations, she told me there were moments when she felt that she had thrown herself in the deep end. Zoe is an international student, also enrolled for a Masters degree. She has been a Wits student from undergraduate studies to today. Vuyelwa, Vuyiswa, and Zoe have been friends since undergraduate studies. Dumisane was a member of the student governing body and was active in the student political and governance landscape on campus. He is one of the only two men I interviewed during fieldwork. Mandisa and Sbu are both Masters students in the Humanities faculty in the university. Finally, there are Lily and Lelo, with whom who I did not engage in as much depth, but through observations and deep hanging out, offered invaluable insight.

Positionality as reflexivity

Positionality and situated-ness are measures of privilege or disadvantage; people tend to position themselves to maximize the amount of power they can exercise over others (Schensul and Lecompte 2010). I did not 'study down' here, but rather horizontally. By this I mean that

I did not hold any power, whether socially, financially or educationally, in relation of the students I wanted to interview or to be involved in my study. And as someone who identifies as black, was involved in the #FeesMustFall movement at another university, and was still a student, I believe this allowed me to be the best centrally positioned person to conduct this research. I was also diagnosed with a mental health condition after the first protests, in 2016. I am in no way saying that there is a direct correlation between the event and the diagnosis or even the exposure to mental health discourse. This whole project is also a reflexive project. Therefore, I have to be aware of how my past experiences could in a way have influenced how I asked questions and how I reacted to the participants' replies

Chapter Outline

The substantive chapters that follow describes interactions as well as observations during the second semester of 2019 at University of the Witwatersrand. The chapters will also include a retrospective account of #FeesMustFall and then trace how this has inform students' views on protest culture, issues of precarity and identity, and mental health. The chapters will trace and locate discrete practices that inform mental health discourse on campus. The ethnography will also look at deliberate attempts by the university to interact on issues of mental health with students, and how they went about doing so. The ethnography will first chart out the events of Fees Must Fall. The following chapter will look at the formalised interventions and practices by the university especially during the exam period with regards to issues of mental health. And finally, the last chapter will look at the everyday practices of students, during and outside the exam period when students experience stress and precarity.

Chapter Three

Fees Must Fall

> *We want to state that while this movement emerged as a response to racism at UCT, we recognise that experiences of oppression on this campus are intersectional and we aim to adopt an approach that is cognisant of this going forward. An intersectional approach to our* ***blackness*** *takes into account that we are not only defined by our blackness, but that some of us are also defined by our gender, our sexuality, our able-bodiedness,* ***our mental health****, and our class, among other things. Rhodes Must Fall movement, 2017*

This chapter is a preamble to the ethnography that follows. It traces how #FeesMustFall protests, and related movements before them, contributed to how black students see and imagine themselves when it comes to issues of mental health. It also highlights and foregrounds how mental health can be intertwined with issues of identity and materiality, and therefore manifest in concrete terms in discrete practices as well. The chapter gives a brief archival account, a personal account, as well as reflections from some of the students who were involved in the protest. Through this it examines how #FeesMustFall unfolded, and how the movement still informs how black students deal with issues of exclusion, precarity, and identity, two years after the last protests. Finally, this chapter begins to locate mental health discourse in the context of the #FeesMustFall movement, and in the post-#FeesMustFall moment.

Is it really the post-Fees Must Fall Moment?

It is February of 2019, and the new academic year is about to begin. The Wits Student Representative Council (SRC) has organized a protest: #WitsHungerStrike. The SRC has mobilized students for a sit-in on the concourse of Solomon Mahlangu House (formerly Senate House) to protest the financial exclusion of some students due to historical debt and lack of

funds to pay for registration and accommodation. This is after the collapse of an agreement between the SRC and the university management to allow those students to register despite the historical debt. Some students sit in the middle of the concourse singing, while others stand on the side-lines, taking pictures and videos, presumably to post on social media. Surrounding the students is also a bunch of mostly black men clad in all black clothes with reflective neon peach and lime bib-vests. These men belong to an outsourced security company, which is brought in to maintain peace during these demonstrations. This is happening almost two years after the Fees Must Fall protests of 2015 and 2016, which were primarily about fighting for mostly black students to have access to free and affordable decolonized tertiary education. I leave Solomon Mahlangu House to go attend to errands. Coming back I encounter chaos, as one of the students is dragged and man-handled by the security men - often referred to as bouncers by students in the movement. On their vests is written "Steward" for some reason. Being involved in #FeesMustFall myself, and identifying as a Fallist,[1] I get flashbacks of the brutality that we experienced during the 2015 and 2016 protests. This suddenly feels like a déjà vu moment. At the end of the 2018 academic year, I met with a group of students to discuss issues of blackness with reference to a group of African-American scholars. One of the students, *Anna, a doctoral student who was heavily involved in the protests, brings up #FeesMustFall as an integral moment in which blackness was invoked: "#FeesMustFall was about fighting for the black child to have access to these institutions of higher learning like any other child." The student conceded that although the movement did not attain all its goals, this was a step in the right direction. There were victories to be celebrated: exposing the capitalist nature of the tertiary education system, such as the outsourcing of workers; exposing the structural barriers when it came to accessing tertiary education; exposing the patriarchy of protest culture; and exposing

[1] Fallist – a fallist in an activist engaged in the struggle to overcome all the circumstances of oppression and prejudice and rejects a heteropatriarchal order and advocates for free and decolonised education without exclusion of others (Rioting and Writing: Diaries of Wits Fallists, 2017).

the anti-black nature of universities, black marginality, black pain (Mashibini 2017). Ndlovu (2017) supports this: "although the zero percent fee increase of 2015 did not solve the structural problem of exclusion, the struggle unearthed some important questions on transformation and decolonization" (Ndlovu 2017:38). One major victory of course was that black students came to know that they were also worthy enough to be in these spaces, and they will continue fighting to get into these spaces. Because of this, *Anna claimed that this was no post-#FeesMustFall moment, but rather a suspended one. One drama student, *Sbu, talks about how this is a post-protest moment, but even that does not do justice to student protests that both before and after the #FeesMustFall moment. He says this is an interlude in a play that has been on for a long time. Black students have been protesting inequality and injustice, the most prominent example being the 1976 June 16 protests. *Anna laments how #FeesMustFall as a suspended moment is an incomplete struggle, because of 2015 and 2016 actions not achieving all the desired outcomes, some victories aside (Ndlovu, 2017). The stage has been set. Solomon Mahlangu House, just as it was in the 2015 and 2016, is the epicenter of this play which is continuing as foreseen by *Sbu. Some of the former Fallists huddle in postgraduate rooms and labs and talk about how this is all triggering.[2] Before I hear this, of course, I wonder in a mixture of despair and disappointment about why they are not there in solidarity with the students. I understand now. The following day, the 6th of February, I bump into one of the Fallists from another university, just a stone's throw away from Wits, who is now enrolled for postgraduate studies here at Wits. She is walking away from a group of students singing. Before I even get a word in, she tells me how traumatic the 2015 and 2016 protests were, and how seeing all of this is triggering for her. She reflects on how when we started protesting in 2015, we just jumped in without thinking through the consequences. She goes to say that throughout that process one

[2] Triggering usually associated with PTSD discourse is slang for something that causes a negative emotional response. The emotional response can be fear, sadness, panic, flashbacks, and pain, as well as any physical symptoms associated with these emotions (shaking, loss of appetite, fainting, fatigue, and so on) (everydayfeminism.com)

never had a chance to reflect on the trauma which was imposed by them. Only after the protests did one have to deal with all that trauma. Before we part, she tells me that one must remember that no-one owns the movement – and must know when to back off and walk away and allow new blood to take over. More than anything, she says, walking away is a radical act of self-care and self-preservation. I suspect this is how she justifies recusing herself from participating, without being labelled a coward or a sell-out. I walk towards a group of students in front of the Great Hall in Robert Sobukwe Block (formerly Central Block) where students and Wits workers are singing in protest while the bouncers guard the only exit and entrance to Robert Sobukwe Block and Solomon Mahlangu House. By the end of the week, the #WitsHungerStrike protests is called off as the SRC and the University management have reached an agreement.

The Decolonial turn: Robert Sobukwe and Solomon Mahlangu

The #FeesMustFall movement was about much more than stopping fee increases and abolishing fee-based access to education. It was about disrupting an education system which was systematically excluding certain people who were academically qualified. It sought to disrupt the unequal, racialized social and economic order that black students face daily in a university in a postcolonial society (Chinguno, Kgoroba, Mashibini, Masilela, Maubane, Moyo, Mthombeni and Ndlovu 2017). It sought to highlight university spaces as a contested realm that "often reflects and brings to the fore broader societal struggles such as inequality, unemployment and poverty, and therefore demands for the decolonization of these spaces" (Chinguno et al., 2017). The movement wanted the university to be informed by an Afrocentric canon (Chinguno et al., 2017). So it was not a surprise that two of the most prominent buildings on campus were renamed to reflect this decolonisation process. While in some respects a step forward in decolonising and creating inclusive space, the gesture renaming can equally be seen as tokenism, maintaining what Stoler (2008) calls imperial formations. Imperial formations are

forces of power which endure beyond formal exclusions that legislate against equal opportuninity, commensurate dignities and equal rights (Stoler 2008). The renaming of the buildings does nothing in alleviating the everyday exclusions faced by black students, as it will be highlighted in later chapters.

Robert Sobukwe Block

Robert Sobukwe Block, formerly Central Block was renamed on the 18th of September 2017 by Sobukwe's son, Dini Sobukwe, and Wits Chancellor, Justice Dikgang Moseneke. According to Canadian Communist League (Marxist-Leninist)[3]:

> *Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, founding president of the PAC, died on Feb. 27, 1978, at the age of 54, at the hands of the racist authorities. Sobukwe was kept under house arrest after leaving Robben Island in 1969. He was seriously ill with cancer, but the racists refused to give him proper medical treatment. Sobukwe was jailed or banned for the last 18 years of his life. It was illegal to quote anything that he said or publish any of his writings. However, the message of Sobukwe, the message of liberation, was clear. This message was taken up by all Azanians who refused to live under slavery. Here are some quotations of Sobukwe which reflect his determination and vision in the fight against racial oppression and imperialism.*

According to the university, the renaming commemorated Sobukwe's service to the University as a lecturer in African languages, and his contribution to fighting apartheid. Sobukwe, an intellectual of Pan-Africanism, founder and first president of the Pan Africanist Congress was celebrated for his role in initiating and leading the anti-pass law protests of 21 March 1960,

[3] See https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ca.secondwave/ccl-azania.pdf

Considering Sobukwe was a former lecturer and struggle activist, the renaming of the building less than a year after the 2016 Fees Must Fall protests seemed apt[4].

Solomon Mahlangu House

There has not been an official unveiling of the new name for Solomon Mahlangu House that I am aware of. Going through public records, I struggle to come across anything that might signal the date and time Solomon Mahlangu House was officially deemed to be so. The signage of the building, however, has been changed to such, and signs around campus now direct people to Solomon Mahlangu House. Solomon Mahlangu House was previously known as Senate House and was the epicentre of the #FeesMustFall protests, as well as protests and demonstrations long before the #FeesMustFall era. In 2015 students unofficially renamed it for the memory of the youthful anti-apartheid martyr Solomon Mahlangu, executed by the former regime in in 1979, three years after the June 16 protests (Pilane and Sosibo, 2016). This evocation of his memory could be also be heard in the song, Iyoh Solomon, which became an unofficial anthem of the #FeesMustFall movement. The song invokes the time of Umkhonto weSizwe (Spear of Nation), the military wing of the African National Congress (ANC), and how they were killing 'Boers'[5] during apartheid.[6] It was sung throughout the protests and also in subsequent actions. This makes it both a rallying call in the present and a link to the bygone era of defiance, which the students through this song were invoking (Pilane and Sosibo, 2016). During #FeesMustFall, Solomon Mahlangu House became a place of refuge for many students – as if the protests brought some reprieve to their anxieties. Mthombeni (2017) talks of how

[4] See https://www.wits.ac.za/news/latest-news/general-news/2017/2017-09/robert-sobukwe-immortalised-at-wits.html

[5] Boer is the Dutch and Afrikaans noun for "farmer". In South African contexts, "Boers" refers to the descendants of the then Dutch-speaking settlers of the eastern Cape frontier in Southern Africa during the 18th and much of the 19th century.

[6] Apartheid was an ideology by the then ruling political party, National Party (NP), which made laws that forced the different racial groups to live separately and develop separately, and was grossly unequally and benefitted the minority white population (https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/history-apartheid-south-africa)

Solomon Mahlangu House became a home for many black students. This except from Mthombeni's "A Home away from Home: Tales of 'Solomon Mahlangu House' During #FMF" (2017), highlights how Solomon Mahlangu House became much more than a building;

> *#FMF movement brought contemporary comfort, ease and relaxation for those that lived under the tables, those that slept at the computer labs and libraries. It allowed them to let their guard down once, seeing Solomon Mahlangu House became the bedroom for the masses. Not only was it the bedroom at night where students slept, it was also turned into the study rooms, classrooms, kitchens, dining and boardrooms where decisions and big meetings were held. (Mothombeni 2017:46)*

Being the epicentre of the protests, Solomon Mahlangu House was a central point where students, even from outside Wits, would meet and organize. In the next section, I provide a brief outline of the #FeesMustFall student protests in South Africa, and how they are informed by both the politics of identity and the need to fight inequality and precarity.

Rhodes Must Fall: Identitarian Politics

The #FeesMustFall protests that started in 2015 followed on a smaller and earlier student movement, #RhodesMustFall, based primarily at the University of Cape Town #FeesMustFall was not necessarily a result of this earlier protest, but was informed by the politics behind it. On the 9th of March 2015, Chumane Maxwele threw faeces at the statue of Cecil John Rhodes, long standing at the middle of the University of Cape Town's campus. This sparked what the #RhodesMustFall movement called radical protests against racist symbolic violence against black students (RMF 2015). The movement would then go on to say that the removal of the statue would be the beginning of the full decolonisation of the university (RMF 2015). This was to fight a neo-colonial corporate university, which has entrenched colonialism and coloniality with hierarchies embedded in class, race, gender, religion, language, and culture

(Mabasa 2017). This became national news, and just like the larger #FeesMustFall movement that succeeded it, it gripped the national imagination, and especially that of students in tertiary institutions. The movement would then come to define itself with reference to questions of blackness, black here including all racially oppressed people of colour[7] (RMF 2015). #RhodesMustFall sought to elicit black voices to speak of black pain that is continuously relegated to obscurity, ignored and silenced (RMF 2015). The #RhodesMustFall rhetoric would also spread to other universities, including institutions in the United Kingdom and the United States. The removal of the Rhodes statue on the UCT campus was about bringing into the open the institutional racism that black students have faced daily in South African universities, which is something that had been brewing for years, but needed an outlet – the #RhodesMustFall movement being just that (Chaudhuri 2016). The discourse around the #RhodesMustFall movement would then spread to other universities around South Africa, drawing largely from the Cape Town students' mission statement and demands. The mission statement of the Rhodes Must Fall movement included renaming buildings to honour black historical figures, removing statues that celebrate white supremacists, supporting and empowering black academic staff, improving academic support systems, improving facilities that help black students deal with psychological trauma as a result of racism, ending outsourcing and the victimization of workers, and providing avenues workers could use to deal with issues of racism and sexism (RMF 2015). Open Stellenbosch, a student political movement at Stellenbosch University, drew heavily from this #RhodesMustFall discourse. Open Stellenbosch wanted to draw "attention to issues of systemic alienation and marginalization in higher education" (Mpatlanyane 2018:12). On their Facebook page, Open Stellenbosch positioned itself as a collective of students and staff working to purge the oppressive remnants of apartheid in pursuit

[7] Black in the case of Rhodes Must Fall includes people or students who are not white, in South Africa, this means students who are categorised or identify as 'coloured', 'Indian/Asian' and 'African/Black'. In the rest of the paper black refers to students who self-identify as black and/or African.

of a truly African university (Open Stellenbosch 2019). Other universities such as North West University (NWU), University of Pretoria (UP - popularly known as Tuks) and the University of the Free State (UFS - popularly known as Kovsies) would have students interrogate issues of language, together with Open Stellenbosch, as something which created a culture of exclusion in universities in South Africa, some with black students in the majority (Mpatlanyane 2018; Linden 2017).

Fees Must Fall: Fighting precarity & other issues

The #FeesMustFall movement followed swiftly on the heels of the ongoing #RhodesMustFall struggle, in October 2015. Students at the University of the Witwatersrand organised protests against an announced 10.5% increase in their tuition fees for 2016. The use of the #MustFall hashtag here was crucial, as #RhodesMustFall had generated a momentum that would hopefully carry the movement, and it did. #Fees Must Fall spoke to an issue regarding tuition fees that affected many students. Although the Wits Fallists' initial protests were specifically about the fee increment, they quickly moved on to much more systematic calls for the public provision of free, decolonized, quality education. For most students, fees have always been a source of anxiety. In my own case, at the end of every academic year, I would owe the university at least 75% of the tuition fee, with the hope that during the following year I would somehow come up with the deficit. Most of us never saw this as something fair, but we soldiered on and tried to make ends meet. Student owing fees would not be allowed to see their final marks, and whether or not they could proceed go to the following year of study. This was a stressful period. The university would not see reason. I remember thinking about how it did not make sense for the university to do this, as it further disadvantaged the student. How is a student supposed to seek funding if they do not even have their academic progress to show to potential funders? This was and is something I have always found frustrating but accepted. Students had always protested academic and financial exclusion but were pacified through

intimidation and coercive practices by universities. #FeesMustFall broke through this situation. On the 14th of October 2015, Wits students came together to protest the university's intention to increase the tuition fee for the following year (Ndlovu 2017; Moyo 2017). Students from other universities would realise that universities do this almost every year without anyone responding. Black students in particular did not need a second invitation to join in the protests, as they had always believed that university fees were unjustifiably high and contributed to the exclusion of many, especially at universities such as Wits and UCT. Of course, this was about more than fees alone. The #FeesMustFall movement was "trying to redress the age-old problem; the problem of capitalist structures, which have now re-invented themselves in the guise of neo-liberalism, preaching free-trade and democracy while perpetuating the same old hegemonic practices, the practices of socially eliminating certain groups in society from economic participation through exclusion in education" (Moyo 2017:51). The movement thus spoke to the material conditions of most black students, including issues of accommodation on campuses. In the year following the first #FeesMustFall protests, in February of 2016, students at the University of Cape Town would erect shacks on the main campus to bring attention to the lack of affordable student housing for students, which would then come to be known as #UCTShackville. The racialisation of access to education – the exclusion of "the black child" -- was the main concern here, whether due to cost alone or to more systematic social processes.

By the second week of the protests, most universities in South Africa had joined the movement that started off at Wits. This was after a concerted effort to get more students across the mational university system involved, through social media awareness and especially the proliferation of the social media hashtag #FeesMustFall. There was a challenge to the prevailing status quo that university education was for those who could afford it through private wealth. Bourdieu (1977) would refer to this as challenging the prevailing doxa, which in the case of the Fees Must Fall, was the dominant free-market notion that allowed inequality to

prevail. The protests were a way to disrupt what was deemed normal in universities in South Africa. This included disruptions of the academic programme and blocking access to campuses. Students would protest in front of university entrances while a string of cars on either side were lining up trying to get in or out (Moyo 2017). Protestors at the University of Johannesburg, who would join the protests later than other universities, would leave the campus to protest at an intersection, leaving traffic heavily backlogged. The universities would then contract external security to help maintain order and to protect non-protesting students as well as campus facilities. Campuses soon became heavily militarized and securitized throughout South African universities, with "bouncers" found at primary points of protests on campus. The campuses also had police vehicles roaming and parked at certain key points, such as the piazza in front of the Great Hall at Wits. This caused tension between protesters, private security and police, which manifested in violent exchanges between the two groups. The student protests started peacefully but ended up in scenes of violent conflict. In the book *Protest Nation*, Duncan (2016) says that a growing number of protestors have argued that peaceful forms of protest do not work, as the state simply ignores them -- hence the statement 'burn to be heard.' Duncan (2016:1) alerts us to how "protests, or expressive acts that communicate grievances through disruption of existing societal arrangements, bring problems in society to public attention in direct, at times dramatic, ways. Because they are inherently disruptive, protests can wake society up out of its complacent slumber, make it realise that there are problems that need to be addressed urgently, and so hasten social change". The antagonisms resulted in brutal violence being inflicted on students, myself included. If one was not careful, a fist would make contact with one's face, leaving you dazed and being dragged off by your fellow students, so you did not end up in custody. The university ended up feeling both like and unlike a police cell. A university in the #FeesMustFall moment was full of contradictions. At one moment university security, outsourced security and the national police would embark on concerted

efforts to capture students involved in the protests, to question them, to keep them captive and to eventually to send them to jail. At the same time, universities were sites of exclusion through formalized processes maintained by the university. The protests of 2015 would continue throughout the final term, without some universities considering pushing exams back to a calmer time. A slogan began to emerge: '*we will strike and pass at the same time.*'. Students would protest during the day, and at night sit together to organise and to study. Some alumni of universities would offer services to tutor students during this period, so that students did not fall behind. This even became performative when students in a group of protesters would go into the circle with their books and feign studying, which would then rile up others to sing louder and with more energy. This was to show that students were protesting for something which was fundamental to them, and to the new constitutional order of the country. Acquiring a tertiary education was something which gave students hope, holding out the promise to transcend the precarious circumstances they found themselves in.

The violence inflicted on students continued. As conflicts escalated on campuses around the country, tear gas and stun grenades were thrown. Students would run in different directions, eyes and lungs burning from the tear gas, struggling to catch breath while running away, trying not to be shot by rubber bullets. The pain from the impact of the rubber was painful, but one would only be aware of the full might of the bullets when the excruciating pain intensified later, without the protection of the adrenaline felt when protesting. Sbu and Mandisa, both postgraduate students at Wits, reflect on how that was not even the most painful part of the protests. What they found particularly painful was seeing black police officers shooting at them without a hint of regret. How could they shoot at students who looked like them – who were black. "We are fighting for your children to also have access tertiary education, yet you are busy breaking us up, against us," said Mandisa

The #FeesMustFall was as a period which students say experienced like a child without a father. The father here is the government, university management, or the powers that may be. There was a sense of very personal betrayal: "the betrayal being that there was an expectation that you were going take care of us, but you are not," as Sbu told me during one of our conversations. Mandisa, expressed the same sentiment. So, the mood was one of abandonment. And seeing police shoot at students just hit home. Students vowed to continue to disrupt campus life until their demands were met.

Heading to the Union Buildings

The pinnacle of #FeesMustFall activities in 2015 was a rally in front of the seat of government, the Union Buildings in Pretoria to demand the attention of the then-President, Jacob Zuma. Droves of buses from campuses in cities close to Pretoria would make their way to the Union Buildings to implore the president and the sitting government to reconsider increments and fees for deserving students in universities across South Africa. The #NationalShutdown on the 23rd of October was preceded by a march to Luthuli House, the headquarter of the ruling African National Congress in Marshalltown, Johannesburg. The #NationalShutdown coincided with a march on the South African parliament in Cape Town, for students who could not make it to Pretoria. SRCs and students were hoping to be addressed by the president on their demand for a 0% fee increase and for free decolonized education. The environment became very tense, especially with different groups of students now divided on how to protest: peacefully or with violence. I remember one of the students, a young black man from one of the universities around Pretoria telling me how angry he was at the seeming privilege of protesters from elite campuses. He was angry not only at fees being used as a tool of exclusion, but also angry that this had only become a major national issue when students at Wits and UCT started to protest. To add insult to injury, he said, students from these same universities were telling them now

how best to express their anger. The day would escalate into violent exchanges between students and the police – police shooting at students with rubber bullets and stun grenades, while students threw rocks at the police. I would later discover that some students shattered concrete bins into small enough rocks to throw at the police. We all became casualties of the police onslaught. They threw tear gas to disperse students. You could not escape this. We would find ourselves running away from where we believe the source of the tear gas was coming. We were running against something which was invisible to us – and the only way you could know whether you were affected or not would be by whether your eyes stung or not. We ended in a McDonalds franchise, where students were seeking refuge. On the television screens inside the McDonald, it looked like a warzone at the Union Buildings, with helicopters and smoke hovering over the scattering crowd. By 15h00 on the day, we heard that there would be a 0% increase on fees nationally, and an hour later we headed back to our respective universities.

Some universities would go back to a normal academic programme. However, some students were still disgruntled by the reality that fees had in fact not fallen. Other issues such as outsourcing of support staff on campuses would arise across South African campuses, such as UCT's #UCTShackville to protest lack of accommodation for black students, #UJ's #OccupyUJ to protest outsourcing and unfair dismissal of students because of involvement in protests, UP's #AfrikaansMustFall to protest Afrikaans as a medium of language and tool of exclusion, Rhodes University's #RUReferenceList to protest gender violence and the encompassing #EndOutsourcing movement. These were all continuing offshoots of the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements. The following year, at around the same time, the Minister of Higher Education and Training (DHET) would announce an 8% increment in fees, which would then spark another wave of national protests, aptly hashtagged

#FeesMustFallReloaded or #FeesMustFall2.0. This time they were more violent and more intensely surveilled and managed. The 2016 protests also saw more official violence against students. But in some ways the 'reloaded' protests were different to those of 2015. As Gasa and Dougan (2016) reported, "Private security companies employed by institutions to protect property have been accused of ramping up the use of force against protesters. Suspensions, expulsions, interdicts and arrests have fractured the movement and rendered students less mobilised — and more angry." Any form of protest action was rapidly quashed by outsourced private security, and also by national police at some universities. Students at more liberal institutions such as UCT and Wits managed to organise, but not without feeling the brunt of the violence inflicted on them by private security. Students were angrier, and the response to the protests was extremely brutal towards students (Gasa and Dougan 2016). This moment was fraught with extreme violence, expulsions, and detentions of students. All of this produced an atmosphere in which the question of trauma became more prominent.

Situating Mental Health through trauma in the FMF

In March of 2016, about four months after the first #FeesMustFall protests, I would find myself at my university's psychological services unit because I was having such a difficult time dealing with everything from my school work to working multiple jobs, so that I could sustain myself. I was also struggling to sleep and found myself distrustful of spaces I found myself in, including my university campus. I would then later be diagnosed with PSTD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. I was told that PTSD could manifest long after one had experienced a traumatic experience. I was told this is one of the specifications that I was experiencing PTSD, which according to the DSM-5[8] cannot be fully diagnosed until at least six months after the trauma(s),

[8] The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition is the 2013 update to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the taxonomic and diagnostic tool published by the American Psychiatric Association

although the onset of symptoms may occur immediately. PTSD is included in a new category in DSM-5: Trauma- and Stressor-Related Disorders. Pontsho Pilane (2017) would report that besides students suffering physical injuries such as shallow wounds from rubber bullets, rashes from tear gas, and burns from stun grenades, some people also reported mental health issues including increased anxiety, an inability to sleep and even increased thoughts of suicide. Many students still suffer from the trauma, anxiety, depression and mental illnesses because of the protests (Livemag, 2017). Given the range of mental health issues faced during and after #FeesMustFall protests, the next chapter will chronicle mental health discourse in an institutional level and how it is navigated in the post-#FeesMustFall moment.

Chapter Four

Incipient Mental Health Citizenship

During #FeesMustFall protests in 2015-16, mental health emerged as an issue that was now part the social and self-imagination of black students. The consequent increase in awareness of mental health issues also created new relations to an environment where various university institutions offered help and care with regards to mental health. I therefore argue that mental health discourse in the post-#FeesMustFall moment facilitated what I call *mental health citizenship* in university settings. This chapter looks at how university offices, including those of student governance, navigated issues of mental health at an institutional level.

Situating Mental Health on the Wits Campus

It is the last half of the last semester: September to November of 2018. Campus has become a bubbling pot of pressure and stress for most students. They are under pressure to finish coursework assignments and, for postgraduate students, to finish grading undergraduate papers. Most of the postgraduates I spend time with are also tutors. We are at our wits' end and under pressure to submit all our work for our coursework on top of submitting undergraduate grades. "The dawn of the Jacaranda season is upon us," comments Lily.

Each year, in South Africa, between September and November, the Jacaranda trees go into bloom. The trees can be found far and wide in the province of Gauteng. Although not indigenous to South Africa, they have become synonymous with the cities of Pretoria and Johannesburg. These trees are widespread in the Johannesburg northern suburbs, and also on

the Wits campus. So there is a belief amongst students that if the Jacaranda season starts and you have not started studying for exams, or finishing off your assessments, you are in trouble. This will then be a period of stress and pressure for a lot of students, as they will receive their coursework marks before exams and find out if they have done well during the year or semester. The students I am with are very sympathetic to undergraduate students during this time.

"Hey mntase!" Zoe quips in with an added Xhosa affectation. She continues, "Imagine paying the fees you pay only to find out that you have failed. I can only imagine what that does to a student"

Zoe, who is a tutor, finds out that some of the students did not get good enough marks. Her department wants to exclude them from writing exams. "What if they go jump?" she laments. This is especially poignant as the university has indeed experienced suicide attempts, and where one student has managed to take his own life. She goes to the department to fight for them, for the department to see reason. The students were eventually allowed to write the exam. Through official emails from the university, there is recognition that the Jacaranda season is a stressful period for lecturers as well as teaching assistants and tutors – who are also postgraduate students. Postgraduate students mark assessments and have to complete a range of administrative tasks, which is quite stressful. The Jacaranda season is not only about the advent of exams and final administration tasks, but also about how mental health discourse manifests during this period. Mental health becomes a regular topic of conversation amongst students, and between the students and the university management.

The Jacaranda season assumes a lot of things. One is that it is normal for students to feel pressure because of the rigorous nature of academic programmes. There is also a lot of implicit reproach, along the lines of: 'If you have been consistent with doing your schoolwork

throughout the year, then you will not be as stressed or as under pressure during exams time.' This creates an atmosphere where what Das (1995) calls the sense of a *deserved suffering* can have deadly repercussions. The acceptance of the Jacaranda season, as a model of institutional and psychological time, also fails to take into consideration individual and collective suffering that students go through even before the advent of it. The processes by which suffering has came upon people (Das 1995) is not taken into consideration during this period. During the 2018 Jacaranda season, several students attempted suicide.

The 2018 suicide attempts

Suicide attempts at Wits are an impetus for conversations about mental health at the University. On social media, some students say that nothing is surprising about the suicide attempts that have taken place. A group of students I hang out with attest to this same sentiment. There is a feeling that the university is not doing much to curb this.

One @AmandahNotBlack (09h32 p.m – Oct 24, 2018) on Twitter, believes suicide is becoming normalised at Wits, and it is not okay (Times Live, 26 October 2018).

'We are not okay!! We are not okay!!' twitter user @amyRiel, tweets (2h39 a.m - Oct 25, 2018).

Another Twitter user, @SnowlesX tweets about the Wits Suicides, 'well this saddens me. Suicide will always hit you like a wave; Wits doesn't come close to doing enough; none of these institutions do (9h23 p.m – Oct 24, 2018).

The university management would then send out emails to the university community about all these suicide attempts and how they are finding ways to support the university community better when it comes to their mental health. In the emails, the Vice-Chancellor would go on to talk about how the university is convening with experts to seek their expert advice on mental health-related issues and come up with strategies that can be implemented to reach all students

who require assistance. Some postgraduate students are not optimistic about this. They infer that this needs to happen at all levels. It is okay for the university to provide more support to students, but if it does not occur from the bottom, it comes across as insufficient. The following quotation from my fieldnotes expresses this sentiment:

> *"The university could do more to make sure this happens from the departments. Some of the lecturers and academic stuff are bent on making life difficult for students. There is a lack of empathy from the academic staff in understanding that students do not do well because of personal problems. What is painful is seeing the disparity between the different students in terms of being given leeway based on whether a student fulfils the university's prerequisites of having sick letters from doctors. For most students, especially black students, access to doctors or therapists in not readily available." (Fieldnotes, 2018).*

"Students are a heterogeneous bunch," comments Zoe, "who somehow are supposed to handle the pressures of a competitive and demanding university environment the same. Students would fall through the cracks without the universities noticing anything until a suicide attempt," Zoe and Vuyelwa both concede though that if universities took into consideration every cry from students, some would take advantage of it. "I must admit that something as arbitrary as having a mental health issue would be a way to get out of writing an exam or getting later submission dates for assessments," says Vuyiswa. The consensus amongst the women, however, is that a lot more can be done in terms of support from the tutors, to the lecturers, to the head of departments, to the deans, in supporting students and recognising the many factors that contribute to problems of mental health. One student of mine in the first semester was not coming to class for most of the semester, only to find out that she had been struggling with getting accommodation and funding for that, to the point where she found herself depressed and going to CCDU, the university's counselling unit. She was able to reach out to the

department and plead her case. The department would then allow her to make up her year mark through a variety of assessments, with support both from me and from the course lecturer. Some students, however, do not actively seek help: as the Dean of Students at the university would come to allude, do not reach out. The Dean attributes this to the fact that somehow there might not be a culture of reaching out when one is facing problems that might lead to mental health issues. The Dean would go on to say that strategies to help would have been too wide and encompassing as students are from different environments and background. More than increasing the capacity of campus counselling services, "the university would have to grapple with what it means to create an inclusive, caring institutional environment where the well-being of each member of the campus community, is of utmost importance" (September, 29 October 2018)[9].

Students are more than ever, because of unencumbered access to information are now able to locate themselves in mental health through discourses that emerge because of incidents like suicide attempts, and how institutions like universities contribute to the flailing mental health of its students. Students are able to draw links with the precarious environment of the university and their mental health. There is also a move towards a collective understanding that issues of mental health, pressure and precarity are individual, as hinted by Vuyiswa. The students I speak feel more could be done to support students, and therefore make sure they are set up to succeed in an environment which is challenging and demanding of students. However, there seems to be a suggestion that students do not seek help when facing problems whether it be of mental health or something else. One could assume that the explicit ownership by black students of mental health as something which is part of their world and their blackness lacks. I use Anya (2012) in the introduction to prelude to this.

[9] A commentary by the Wits University dean of students, Jerome September, on campus suicides, published on the university website (available at: https://www.wits.ac.za/news/latest-news/in-their-own-words/2018/2018-10/campus-suicide.html)

The response by the university to the suicides attempts was an attempt by the university both to control the narrative and to indemnify themselves from any potential backlash they could face. The university does this by normalising the pressures that a university supposedly comes with. The inference, in this case, is that problems relating to the mental health of students are part of the student experience in a university. Social media responses from students are negative, even going as far as to suggest that, through this, the university normalises suicide. We see through official means how the university distances itself from the suicide attempts, and mental health issues faced by students, by inferring that students themselves do not seek help or rather reach out. The student protests about the material conditions that students face, such as lack of accommodation and tuition fees, suggest otherwise. It is clearly the case that issues of mental health go far beyond clinical or medicalised ways of viewing mental health. They include social aspects which the university seems to conveniently sweep aside when it wants to. As Kleinman (2012:182) says, "political economy creates suicide just as surely genetics does" (Kleinman, 2012:182). This applies likewise to the material conditions students suffer from or rather struggle with. Kleinman, Das, and Lock (1997) also suggest such bureaucratic responses by institutions such as universities intensify suffering by normalising the terror that comes with suffering from issues of mental health, such as that of suicide. Students are rather transformed and seen as "malingerers, irresponsible litigants and simple frauds" (Das 1995: 19), and therefore silenced. The university is instrumental in imagining and configuring issues of mental health, especially when crises like suicide attempts by students occur.

Reactions to students' suicides and mental health

Mental Health Awareness Month campus campaigns

Masters students from the Wits School of Drama's 'Drama for Life' programme partnered with the CCDU in 2018 to raise awareness about mental health issues. The Drama for Life students were doing the campaign as part of their own final Masters coursework.

I manage to go to two activations on campus. Exams have already started, and because of this most if not all social events and activations on campus have been put on hold. This awareness campaign happens to take place during Mental Health Awareness month, and in lieu, comes across as a reaction to suicide attempts by students on campus. The month of October was declared Mental Health Awareness month, as an initiative by the South African Government's Department of Health, with the objective not only to educate the public about mental health but also to reduce the stigma and discrimination that people with mental illness are often subjected to. The Drama for Life Masters students came up with interactive campaigns to raise awareness. One campaign had students share about what mostly stresses them in school, at home in the city. The whole point of the campaign was to inform students to pause and breathe when they are feeling overwhelmed. Around where the campaign was, there were bold semi-colon (;) signs everywhere. The semicolon idea came from Project Semicolon which was founded by Amy Beuel on April 16, 2013. The movement was founded to lend support and be in solidarity with those struggling with mental health, suicide, addiction and self-injury. As explained by Amy Beuel herself:

> *"The meaning of the semicolon represents continuance. Authors usually use the semicolon when they choose not to end the sentence. You are the author, and the sentence is your life, and you're choosing to continue.*[10]*"*

[10] Semicolon Punctuates Mental Health Awareness available at: https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/talking-about-trauma/201609/semicolon-punctuates-mental-health-awareness

Another campaign tackles reducing the stigma of mental health illnesses and issues (see image 1). The set up included having a circle made of different coloured cloths in the middle of the piazza in front of the Great Hall at Robert Sobukwe Block. In the center of the circle were small to medium sized drums, which passers-by could use in the circle. To get into the circle one had to walk through a small passage marked by the coloured cloths, where there were messages about defeating and reducing the stigma of mental health difficulties, as well as raising knowledge about the aims of Mental Health Awareness month. The team of Drama for Life students had enlisted the help of professional drummers to create hype as well as lead students in drumming. The noise from the drums created sonic attention which piqued the curiosity of students moving between the student centre (the Matrix), the library, the direction of Robert Sobukwe Block and Solomon Mahlangu House, and the general direction of the west campus. Students would then go to inquire about what was happening and proceed to join in the drumming. The set up was in an open space, and even on such a hot and sunny day as this was, still had students willing to take a moment for a turn to beat the drum. Speaking to one of the Drama for Life students, I am told that the whole idea is to make noise about issues of mental health, to destigmatise and demystify topics of mental health. The entire campaign is a partnership between Drama for Life and CCDU, was also to raise awareness about the services CCDU offers, given the exam period and the suicide attempts. Black students seem to show more interest in targeted campaigns on campus, including those about mental health – the semi-colon one, and the de-stress zones, which I am going to elaborate more in the next section. Issues of mental health are more than ever becoming part of black students' imaginations of their situation, whether this is deliberate or not.

The events were a deliberate attempt by the university and students to establish mental health as something which is part of the social ecosystem of the university, and therefore should be taken seriously. The discursive practices the university and the students were partaking in was

a the institution can shape and control how students interacted with mental health as opposed to the visceral and sometimes alienating lived experiences of students. The discourse as much as it had student participation, was controlled and shaped by the university through the relational power they possessed.



Image 1: Poster for the Drumming for Life Campaign by Drama for Life Students in partnership with CCDU.

De-stress Zones

The newly elected Progressive Youth Alliance (PYA)[11] Student Representative Council (SRC)[12] in partnership with the university also decided in 2018 to create what they referred to as a destress zone (see image 2). The destress zones are there to help students destress after a stressful exam, or to take a break from a very demanding study and exam schedule. "This is

[11] The Progressive Youth Alliance or the PYA is a comprised of the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL), South African Students Congress (SASCO), Youth Communist League (YCL) & the Muslim Students Alliance (MSA), which are affiliated with the African National Congress – the South African ruling political party

[12] The SRC or the Student Representative Council is a body which is elected into power by the student community in universities around South Africa. In the University of the Witwatersrand, the members who are voted into the SRC are politically affiliated, and the student political parties are usually affiliated with the bigger political parties in the country.

such a fun idea," I casually comment to a student standing next to me, who I would later find out is a member of the PYA. We are both standing on the side-lines as we watch students gleefully jump and run around the inflatable jumping castles.



Image 2 Source: University of the Witwatersrand Facebook page

"We are working hey. This is what the students voted for," he responds enthusiastically to my initial comment. He tells me that a toll-free 24-hour helpline has also been set up in partnership with the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), who are always on standby to help students who is in any distress during this stressful exam period. One can hear the happy screams of the students far away from where the destress zones have been set up. My interest is piqued by the loud, joyful noise; I see colourful inflatable jumping castles on the library lawns. I am filled with excitement and happiness myself and I decide to take some pictures. Students are jumping on the castles; some are chasing each other; some are playing games that neither need nor require the inflatable castles; while some are simply observing with excited interest. The de-stress zone also has candy floss and popcorn on offer. There are long queues of students that snake around the library waiting to get their hands on the free treats. One can see some of the SRC members, wearing their political-affiliated golf shirts, trying to control the queues. Some of the SRC members I recognise are also partaking in the activities – jumping

and playing on the different inflatable jumping castles. There is a sense of nostalgia created by the jumping castles in the de-stress zone. “Eish friend, you know I would not mind having jumping castles for my 21st birthday,” a female student tells her friend. “They really remind me of my childhood, when I could just be a child and not have to worry about anything” she concludes longingly. This was a welcome relief for the students, and the SRC saw this. The SRC then planned to take the destress zones to the Parktown Campus too. They were such a big hit, the SRC had them again the following week.

Other initiatives by the SRC included a coffee and snacks drive. The campus exam drive by the SRC included giving students who were studying overnight coffee and snacks on campus. An SRC member also told me about how they gave students sweets with motivational messages from the SRC during the exam period. I ask another SRC member whether all of this, including the de-stress zones, is to score political points, or a way of politicking, considering that mental health and student support was one of their promises during their manifesto launch on the run for SRC seats. She concedes to this: “it is what it is.” But she reminds me that I have to see that the SRC is first and foremost also made up of students, so they experience what the student population experiences, and therefore why not do something about it? Being students themselves means that they can empathize with what students are going through, and are therefore better positioned to help and come up with interventions.

With regards to the series of suicide attempts, the first reaction from the SRC is to declare a state of emergency and to call for deferred exams – in consultation with the university - for students who felt they could not write, as long as they have a letter from the CCDU or a private health care practitioner. The SRC initially called for the postponement of exams for everyone, because there was a belief that the academic year was made shorter. One reason was that some of the students received their year marks too close to the exams, and therefore if some students

were not happy with their grades, they would not have had enough time to query their marks before they went in to write exams. Dumisane tells me that during the first week of exams, the week of the 31st of October 2018, some students had still not received their marks. Some of the students had a congested examination timetable. The SRC's intervention was to ask for a week postponement of exams where they would bring in psychologists to help and speak to students. Typically, when one applies for a deferment, one has to come with a doctor's note. If the student felt that they had a particular condition, they could get a letter from the CCDU. The university still wanted control over how it implemented and ran exams. The letter from the CCDU would be enough to grant a student a deferment. So, I ask him, were letters from the CCDU accepted for a deferment? Another question that comes from me is how students did not know about this deal struck between the university and the SRC on behalf of students. Dumisane tells me they have been telling students, but then he reverts to say to me that I must remember that they do not have access to the SRC accounts, which the previous SRC refused to hand over. I am unable to verify whether students are getting this information about all the interventions the SRC is making on behalf of them.

Paranoia and suspicion

I decide to set up a meeting with some members of the newly elected SRC. I manage to get a meeting with Dumisane. During a meeting with another SRC member, one who has had an intimate encounter with the suicide attempts that have been taking place on campus, I got the sense that he partly blamed the incidents on the university's rush to finish off with the school year quickly. I arrive at Dumisane's office at the Matrix, where the SRC offices are. There is music playing in the background – I cannot place the name of the artist, but it sounds like Caiphus Semenya.[13]. "The university shortened the academic year because, in the past, exams

[13] Caiphus Semenya is a South Africa composer and musician (Available at: https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/biography-caiphus-semenya)

usually started a bit late, which gave students more time to prepare," Dumisane tells me adamantly, although I suspect this position might be biased by the fact that is also a student himself. "The university has deliberately pushed that the assessments be submitted earlier than usual to avoid any impending student protest that might occur," he continues with his criticism on the university. Dumisane further goes on to say that this had happened the previous year too. This is an insidious symptom of the post-#FeesMustFall moment, he also adds on. This highlights paranoia from both sides – both from the students and from the institutional management. Whether the allegations that Dumisane is making are true or not, it is worth thinking about how students process the recent students' suicide attempts both in 2017 and 2018 as something which is brought on by shortened academic schedules on top of the precarity faced by some students on campus. Dumisane, who was also an SRC member in 2016-17, when #FeesMustFall protests took place, is of the opinion that the university wants to avoid that as much as they can, even if it is at the expense of some students.

The de-stress zone was a joint initiative with the Dean of Students to return things to normal through providing an outlet during this stressful exam period. It was therefore an official attempt to try to normalise what was occurring on campus, pre-emptively pacifying any dissatisfaction or protest that could arise because of the suicide attempts. The university and the SRC were making students incipient citizens of its mental health regime. The university Vice-Chancellor would send out e-mails expressing how he knew this was a stressful period for both students and staff members. We see the incipient citizenship of mental health-related issues forged and legitimised through the institution. The sending out of e-mails hints at the fact that although students and staff members may face issues of mental health, because of the pressures and stress that come with exams, this is normal. The email would go on to say that

members of the university community need to look out for one another. The email ended with, "I wish strength and success to all in the coming weeks.[14]"

"You see wena Kagiso; this is a way the university normalises sh*t. It is normalising something which should not be seen as normal. I understand that varsity is not supposed to be a walk in the park, but it should not be stressful and putting people and students under," Vuyiswa argues. "There is a difference between a school that has a supportive environment that allows students to thrive and be challenged and a pressure cooker environment that is normalised," she concludes. The fact one will get emails of this nature year in and year out highlights the normalisation of the mental pressures that students and members of stuff go through. This is seen as okay until a student attempts suicide. This goes as far as students internalising such discourse. Students will talk about how they work well under pressure or how stress is an essential in pushing them to get their work done.

The politicisation of mental health

"The discourse surrounding issues of mental health is more prominent during certain events such as exam time or moments of trauma (such as the #FeesMustFall protests)" Vuyiswa argues. This means throughout periods of "calm" issues of mental health are not part of university conversations. I observe events when issues of mental health enter the social capillary of students. One is the SRC elections campaigns, and the other ones are when exams are about to start and of course the suicides attempts. During the SRC campaigning, the two leading student political parties on campus, the EFF-SC,[15] which was the ruling party on

[14] Email sent on behalf of the Wits University Vice Chancellor, Adam Habib titled Wits VC talks about exams and mental health challenges (sent on the 31st of October 2018, 22h04)

[15] EFF-SC – The Economic Freedom Fighters – Student Command is the student wing of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and is based in institutions of higher learning such as universities and Further Education and Training (FET) colleges around South Africa.

campus then, and the PYA which was contesting to take over. Both party manifestos included mental health issues as something which should be addressed. This included statements such as, "We are going to force and work with the university to prioritise issues of mental health affecting students." There were raucous cheers for both parties when they raised the issue of prioritisation of mental health, although this may only have been because party members were supporting their respective political organisations. One member of the newly elected SRC would later go on to say that, although this was part of their political strategy, it is important for them to help and support students when it comes to issues of mental health and to understand mental health issues that students go through. One result of that support would then be the de-stress zones. Such initiatives would show that the current and newly elected SRC is working hard to prioritise students and their issues.

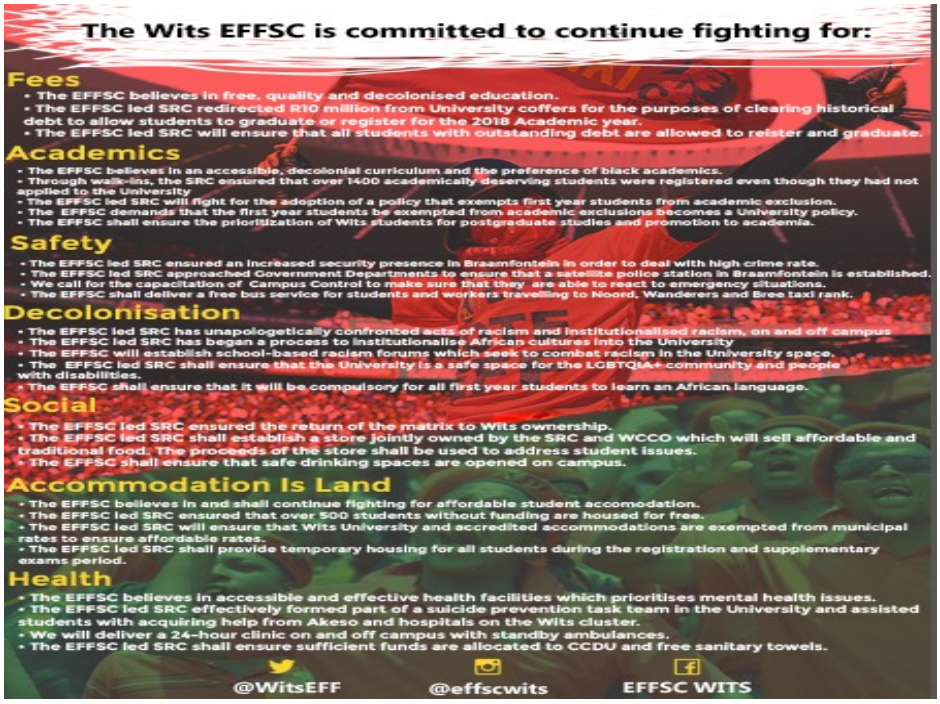

Image 3 The Wits EFF-SRC SRC elections manifesto. Source: www.wits.ac.za.



Manifesto

Fees

- Re-Launch the #Save-a-Degree campaign to raise funds for the Humanitarian Fund in order to assist financially struggling students.
- Waiver the upfront fee payment for students who are unable to pay it.
- Allow for students with outstanding debt to graduate.

Accommodation and Food

- Lobby the Gauteng Partnership Fund to intervene on high rates at private student accommodation.
- Assisting WCCO in the greater food Sovereignty project at Wits.
- Increase the capacity of Campus Protection Services and increase security visibility around Braamfontein, Parktown and Mandela Bridge and in all outside residences.
- Negotiate with External Residences to remove upfront payments for NSFAS students.
- Approach government to offer and lease unoccupied buildings to the university at reduced rates in order to house students without accommodation.
- We ask that the Campus Health and Residence Life office allow students to move into residences with outstanding debt.

Mental Health

- Increase the capacity of CCDU to adequately reflect the needs of the student populace.
- 24-hour Wits suicide hotline.
- Increased visibility of CCDU throughout all campuses.
- Bridging the gap between CCDU and Emthonjeni Centre.
- The restriction on CSO's to be lifted in order to provide an outlet for students.

Gender, Transformation and Decolonization

- Decolonization of the curriculum in order to embrace our African culture and history.

Image 4 The Wits PYA Manifesto. Source: www.wits.ac.za

Compared to their rivals, the EFF-SC, the PYA as per their manifesto was more deliberate in instrumentalising mental health issues as part of their elections strategy. Whereas the EFF-SC spoke about mental health as part of the broader health agenda, the PYA made it a specific line item in their manifesto. The PYA manifesto also spoke to the issue which seemed to be a running theme amongst students I interact with – the visibility and the capacity of the CCDU. Students would often complain that they do not know where the CCDU is, and what services it provides. CCDU, they said, should be in students' faces throughout campus throughout the year. This sentiment is something which the PYA used to mobilise during the SRC elections campaign. Immediately after taking office, in the heated context of the suicide attempts, one of the PYA members, who is not part of the SRC, told me how they were able to have a 24/7 suicide line in partnership with SADAG. However, this was not information that was particularly made known to students. Again, the lack of access to social media platforms was

to be the barrier to this. The SRC also added that CCDU had been staffed with more people to cope with the influx of students who might need help during the exam period

Conclusion

Part of the unmaking and making of a mental health citizen was to admit that there was a problem, and that is normal to have such problems, especially during periods of stress. The university would legitimise the plight of so many students by normalising the unintended consequences of suffering from issues of mental health. This included official statements such the Vice-Chancellor's message that "I know that it is a stressful period for many, and now more than ever, we need to come together to look out for one another."[16] Offered during the exams and after the suicide attempts on campus, this message locates the culture of mental health strains, such as stress and anxiety, as being something which is a norm. This also hints at how the university is seen as a space which perpetuates mental health problems as a normal part of its operations. The making and unmaking of a student citizen with reference to issues of mental health is a process that therefore proceeds through interventions, especially during moments of stress and trauma. These include the de-stress zones, the increase in staff, campaigns and such. But these interventions do not include a consideration of the root causes for problems of mental health among students. Mental health citizenship is therefore in very complex ways a social as well as a therapeutic issue, embedded in the everyday experiences and struggles of students. In the next chapter, I examine how questions and discourses of mental health emerge in a context of student' precarious everyday experiences and their struggles to find ways of dealing with these issues.

[16] Ibid pg. 53

Chapter Five

Discrete practices of mental health in the everyday

Mental health has become a problematic of student life in ways that manifest well beyond official university institutions, policies, and major interventions such as the ones discussed in the preceding chapter. The discourse of mental health has increasingly proliferated also in the ways that students reflect upon and interact with their own everyday experiences of precarity and struggle. Many students at the University of the Witwatersrand express the sense that, to survive and get out of the system intact, there are things they will have to do to come out in one piece. But this does not mean they are able to avoid the pressures of university life. The following chapter locates and highlights ways in which students, mostly black students, deal with issues of everyday precarity such as homelessness and hunger, and how that feeds into discussions of mental health. Issues of precarity and mental health and the discourse surrounding these are sometimes instrumentalised by such students in an attempt to survive institutional exclusions. This chapter explores such linkages. It does not try to create a link where there is not one between mental health and precarity but tries to map through discrete practices how issues surrounding mental health discourse emerge.

Mapping Wits University: Spaces of refuge & exclusion

Walking around the University of the Witwatersrand's Braamfontein campus, as a relatively new student myself but also now as a researcher, I am limited by my own unfamiliarity with the space. I find myself not knowing exactly where to observe and locate my field. But I am a student at this university, which in a way gives me some level of insight, especially when it comes to research processes such as participant observation. I do not have to try hard to assimilate into this space. But the trick is also not to allow my position as a student to deceive me into over-familiarity, to the extent that I miss or take for granted some cues and information the space is giving me. I have to allow myself to relax and embody my experience of the space,

but be careful not to take this so much for granted that I end up missing out on some information which could shed some light on how students think about mental health and adjacent issues. It is the second semester, and I spend most of my time on campus between a couple of places – which I have decided will be primary sites for my ethnographic enquiry. Between going to classes, doing assessments, tutoring, hanging out with friends and consulting students, I am between the following places/buildings on the university campus; the Anthropology Museum (where I attend my classes), the postgraduate offices in the West Annex of Robert Sobukwe Block, the Humanities Graduate Centre at the South West Engineering Building, the Postgraduate Club - otherwise known as the PIG, the Matrix (which is where one finds the student centre, Student Representative Council (SRC) offices, and other shops), the Wits Art Museum (WAM) restaurant, Solomon Mahlangu House (formerly known as Senate House) and the university Piazza in front of Robert Sobukwe Block, where the Great Hall is located (see Annexure D). In these spaces, I am able to observe, to have conversations and otherwise interact with students (mostly postgraduates) about issues relating to, but not limited to, mental health discourse in universities, and most importantly in the particular context of Wits.

Wits: Braamfontein Campus East

The Braamfontein Campus is the main campus of the University of the Witwatersrand. The other campuses are located in Parktown, to the north of the Braamfontein Campus. The campuses in Parktown house a Business School, a Health Sciences campus, a Medical School, and an Education campus. The Braamfontein Campus houses the rest, and thus the majority of the Faculties and their students. Wits has a total enrolment of around 34 000 students[17]. The university is a closed campus. One of the students reminds me that this was not the case when she first enrolled back in 1997. She claims the campus used to be an open campus, and that one

[17] https://www.wits.ac.za/about-wits/facts-and-figures/

did not even need a student card to enter the premises. At the end of 1997, the campus was closed off because it was starting to become unsafe. The Braamfontein campus is divided between West campus and East Campus. I did most of my fieldwork in East Campus and did so for the following reasons: it is where I was mostly based, it is where one can find the main building (Solomon Mahlangu House) that houses the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, and many other executives of the university. This is also the primary access point for most students who stay around Braamfontein and elsewhere. The buildings are huge and grey, and the oldest ones are sometimes reminiscent of the Greek-style motif one sees in books and movies about Athens and ancient Greece. The East Campus also houses Robert Sobukwe Block. Robert Sobukwe Block houses the School of Social Sciences and most its departments, staff, and student offices. It also houses the Great Hall, where graduations take place from time to time. As discussed earlier, in Chapter 3, what is interesting about Robert Sobukwe Block and Solomon Mahlangu House is that they were not known by those names until recently. Formerly known as Central Block and Senate House respectively, the Fees Must Fall movements of 2015 and 2016 demanded the buildings be renamed to such as a step towards decolonising university spaces. The East Campus further houses a number of student residences, the science and engineering buildings, libraries, sports halls, sports fields and the Wits School of Arts buildings such as the Wits theatre and the Wits Art Museum. Students are usually found hanging out at the student centre (The Matrix), where there are fast-food shops, a cafeteria, and large sitting areas. One can also find the SRC offices at The Matrix. Other common hang-out spots include the library lawns, nestled between the Wartenweiler Library, Umthombo building, William Cullen library, and the Geosciences building (see Annex 1 – map of the Braamfontein Campus). Students can also be found at the many computer labs around campus. There are two designated computer labs in Waternweiler library. The other computer labs are located at Solomon Mahlangu House – three which are open 24 hours, two being for

post and undergraduate students, and one solely designated for postgraduate students.

Homelessness as social suffering

One often finds black male students sleeping overnight in the computer labs during the semester – doing assignments or studying for tests and examinations. "Some of the students do not have a place or a home to go back to after classes," Zoe tells me. 'I know this feeling,' I think to myself. I have on numerous occasions myself studied overnight at those labs to do assignments and to study, often because I had no space to study where I stay and would also have no access to the internet or a computer there. Many of the students who are there overnight find themselves in similar positions; the 24-hour study computer labs are spaces where students can find refuge at night when there is nowhere else they can go. It provides safety and a roof over their heads. The other space where I am told that students can stay and study throughout the night are at the Wartenweiler Library 24-hour study area. Mthombeni (2017) reflects on how, during #FeesMustFall, Solomon Mahlangu House was a place of refuge for a lot of students, especially for those who did not have anywhere else to go. For once, students could without shame go to the bathrooms to freshen and wipe themselves up with whatever they could find. Carrying their whole lives in their bags, they would face the day with a renewed sense of hope. Having a community of other students around them in exactly the same situation made things bearable. The public dimension of #FeesMustFall made it less shameful and less embarrassing to be in this situation. The reality is different for those who are still without accommodation to this day. The #WitsHungersStrike in 2019 was directed as a protest against homelessness among students two weeks into the new academic year. Mthombeni (2017) points out that issues of dignity and humanness and shame are navigated carefully. Students would sleep, or rather pretend to get a shut eye after long periods of studying, but then have to wake up early to avoid the glaring of other eyes filled with unmasked surprise and sometimes also a palpable disgust.

Kleinman (2012) describes at mental health as a condition which is put at issue in multiple social contexts, many of which lie beyond specifically clinical settings such that of the hospital. Problems of everyday life, as well as non-medical catastrophes, were added to the DSM in an effort to take into consideration social suffering as an issue which is part of mental health (Kleinman 2012). Not having a place to sleep, for a myriad of reasons, is a mode of social suffering and can contribute to problems in students' mental health. Again, Mthombeni (2017) echoes this point regarding homelessness in reflecting on how students for once felt that it was okay to sleep on campus during the #FeesMustFall protests, without feelings of shame and humiliation. Social suffering, of course, is an issue which exists because of encompassing macro-scale structures such as the global political economy of race and class inequality, and how that frames the personal problems individuals face (Kleinman 2012; Kleinman, Das, and Lock 1997). Kleiman et al. (1997) further say that social suffering exists in high-income as well as in low-income societies, and it primarily affects those who are poor and powerless – in the case of Wits, these are mostly black students. Because of this social suffering and their comparative exclusion or marginalisation, black students may end up being disproportionally exposed to mental health problems such as depression, suicide, and PTSD, on top of the general effects of strenuous academic demands. But this social suffering, as with the students, tends to be normalised – the collective pain and suffering is normatively unrecognised and therefore assumed to be normal. Even after the increased recognition of such problems that was created by the protests in 2015-16, black students still face material inequalities and precarity, which result in social suffering which in turn can contribute to mental health problems among students.

Food (in)security as a mental health issue

I often find myself at the Humanities Graduate Centre computer lab during the period of my fieldwork. I go there as early as I can during days when I do not have classes to attend or

tutorials to give. I know that if I arrive there early I am guaranteed to find a place to sit and a computer free. It is not a large computer lab and can house at most 20 postgraduate students at a time - and that is if all the computers are in fact working. Students who use the computer lab are, as the name of the place suggests, Faculty of Humanities postgraduate students. The Humanities Graduate Centre also has doctoral fellows' offices and a venue for Humanities seminars and conferences. Because of how small the computer lab is, the people who frequent it, such as myself, soon become familiar with the other students who do so. One can also, however, sense that this familiarity stems from further back in time. I notice this because I am new to this university and its spaces. The computer lab is often filled with raucous laughter and chatter, if not all the time, even though it is supposed to be a quiet space. This makes the space inviting but intimidating at the same time. It is inviting because one can strike up a conversation with other students, even if it is simply to ask for help with using the printer or asking about events on campus. But it is intimidating because working there raises the question of how one can penetrate an already-established community of postgraduate students. The computer lab community is also composed of students who do not necessarily partake in the laughter and chatter. These students usually have headsets on, presumably listening to music to block out the noise from all of the chatter and laughter. Because of this composition of the computer lab at most times, I have an opening to chat with some of the students. But more than anything, I recognise some of the students from the cross-campus #FeesMustFall protests of 2015 and 2016, when I was a student at another university close to Wits. Students also tend to eat in the computer labs, although that is also not allowed. I recognise that aside from the food they bought from the student centre (The Matrix), or packed from home, students would generally eat food that has been served at one of the frequent seminars that are hosted by the Humanities Graduate Centre. I recognise this by the paper serviettes used to carry the food, or the use of the paper plates and plastic glasses that have been used to serve the food at these events. A

group of women students I often talk with would attend seminars in the Graduate Centre because of the guarantee that they will be able to get food if they attend. Because food is generally served before the seminar, the brave ones eat the food and not even attend the actual seminar. The ones concerned about how they would be perceived, myself included, would stay there for a while before we made our exits, and went back to the computer labs to resume what we were doing for our studies.

A few weeks into fieldwork, during the middle of the second semester in 2018, when most of us were feeling the pinch of having no money to spend on lunch during our time on campus, one woman student, Lelo, a Fees Must Fall activist, is called out for just going to the seminar to eat the food. I remember the events leading to that moment.

"Do you think they will allow us to have some food?" one young woman asks, directing the question to her peers. "I don't feel comfortable hey. That's a private event, and I don't think we are invited," another young woman adds. "As black students, generally we're hungry and struggling. They know this. And what are they going to do - are they going to chase us away? Let them try," *Lelo proclaims, with a sense of bravado. She marches out with gusto to get some food in the common area of the Humanities Graduate Centre.

"Some lady asked me if I was attending the seminar cause the food was only for attendants," she tells the group when she comes back with a small plate filled with finger foods comprising mainly small pastry pies and meat and a can of coke. "I told her I wasn't one of the attendees, got some food and left. White people don't know how hard we have it. And it is not like the food is not enough," she adds. She relays this with confident calmness. Listening to this, I think we should muster some courage, and get food for ourselves as well, but we lack her bravado. "Iyuuh, I can't" responds one of the other young women there. "Imagine being interrogated

about why you are helping yourself to food which isn't for you?" "Honestly, I would be humiliated. Embarrassed, to say the least," she says this turning her chair back to her computer to resume whatever she is doing.

It is clear that hunger and food insecurity has its limits. Dignity to some of these students is also important. It is so important that they rather go hungry than subject themselves to humiliation. The irony in all of this is that the Humanities Graduate Centre would host events, then go on to call students to eat because there was so much food available and it should not go to waste. Of course, one should look at these on a case-to-case basis. When external parties host events – not directly sponsored by the Humanities Graduate Centre itself -- some attendance would be required to be able to access the food. It is not stated anywhere that this is a rule, but generally, students would get food, sit for a few minutes of the seminar, then leave to go back to the computer lab. With HGC events, on the other hand, there would generally be some leeway on whether one is obligated to stay for the seminar or whatever event that was happening there. I remember that in one instance when the HGC was hosting an event, we were told to get something to eat when we were free. There was no expectation for us to attend the event in order for us to get food. I have seen it with other HGC events where students do not generally feel the pressure to conform to this expectation. Food, as we might see, is part of a student's survival toolkit. Students find ways to get food without having to spend their cash.

One late afternoon, at the HGC computer, to do some work, I find myself sitting next to a male student. "Hey, my guy' he greets, and I nod slightly. "Can you please make sure no one sits on the computer. I want to go somewhere quickly". "I'll be quick" he adds quickly. I am assuming from seeing mild irritation from my face. The computer lab was empty at around that time. There were probably around four students at that time, myself included. The student is an older

male, probably in his mid-to-late twenties, black and of medium height. Before he requested that I make sure that no one takes his seat, he seems restless and shifty. I could not put my finger on it, but he looks uncomfortable and nervous. I try to ignore this and continue looking at my screen until the request. “Sure man. No problem,” holding up my hand for a thumbs up. The student comes back just under an hour later, from wherever he has gone. He proceeds to sit down with a bag-pack and a small box.

“You know man if you ever need food, there is a place where you can get it.” As if reading my mind, he tells me that there is a place where students can get non-perishables for free. He then proceeds to show me the food; it includes: a 2 kg pack of maize meal, tinned fish, tea, coffee, powdered milk, a small bag of sugar, and morvite (a sorghum-based porridge breakfast food). He advises me that if I ever need food and get into a place where I cannot afford to buy food for myself, that place will help me out. “Why don’t students know about this? I would think this would public knowledge,” I say to him. He does not respond to my question, proceeds to thank me, put on headsets and face his computer screen.

The university has a Food Bank. I recall during the university’s celebration of the Mandela Centenary Day in July 2018, the Wits Citizenship and Community Outreach office (WCCO) had a food drive where they were collecting non-perishables and money towards the food bank. According to their website, one can get food packs on three weekdays between 15h00 and 16h00. The WCCO also runs a Masindleni (loosely translated, “let’s eat”) Daily Meal Project, which supplies students from disadvantaged backgrounds with daily meals. This interaction saddened me because it hit home. There is shame around hunger and lack amongst many black university students. This is probably the reason why some students found it hard to go to an event to just to take some food, because they fear being interrogated for taking food that is not

meant for them. This is probably why students have to feign to be interested in seminars hosted at the HGC, to gain access to the food. So that they are not seen as needy, and only there for the food. I start to wonder: had the computer lab been full, would the man have shown me the food parcel, and interacted with me about it?

The Sanctuary

It is mid-October 2018, and it is warm outside. I decide to take a walk to The Sanctuary. The Sanctuary is where the Wits Citizenship and Community Outreach office (WCCO) and the Food Bank are located. It is quite far from the main campus buildings and lecture halls. The Sanctuary is located almost at the other end of the campus, by the rugby fields and the multi-purpose sports courts. The WCCO starts giving food parcels out at around 14h15 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and 15h00 on Fridays. I am an hour early, and I cannot bear to walk up to where the main buildings are and walk back yet again later. I decide to sit on the grass under the trees opposite the Sanctuary buildings and the rugby field. The Sanctuary building looks like it used to be someone's house, and so it does not look like most of the other buildings on campus. It stands alone with paths going around it, with small patches of vegetable gardens between them. I am also here to get a food parcel, as I am strapped both for cash and therefore for food. I am waiting there, anxiously wondering if maybe there is a process I have missed out on to get the food.

"Hello. Is there something I need to do in order to get the food parcel?" I ask one of the students who was also there early. "All you need is your student card to get the food. At least that was the case the last time I came here," she tells me. Before coming to the Sanctuary, I noticed one of the students I know with plastic bags full of non-perishable groceries, and I asked her when she got them. "I got the food from The Sanctuary. There's a food bank there, and the stuff they

give out is actually decent hey." "This must be the place the guy I had encountered from at the HGC computer lab must have gotten his food," I think to myself.

I ask her how to get there. She tells me how to do so, but then goes on to give me a peculiar piece of advice: "make sure you look hungry." To which I respond, "But I am hungry. I do not know if I look it though." The number of students, who knew that the collection time on Fridays is 15h00, started to trickle in. But unlike myself and a couple of other early-comers, who sat under the protection of shade, on the grass, they started to queue in front of the entrance. About ten minutes before the official collection time, I make my way to the queue to join the rest of the students. How the collection works is that every Wits student can collect food from the Sanctuary every four weeks, provided there is enough food available. If you show up before the four weeks has elapsed, you are not allowed to take a new parcel. I realise this because one of the students in front of me tells us that she's worried that she might not be allowed to get food before the following week. "But I am hungry, and I don't have any food at my place. Surely, they can't be that merciless not to give me food." She looks exasperated and anxious.

We wait in the queue in the harsh sun for about twenty minutes before they finally open the doors to let us in to collect the food parcels. They finally let us in at around 15h10. One person collects the student cards from us to swipe them – I am assuming to note us in the system and check if we're here before the four-week interval has elapsed. The queue moves quickly. It is finally my turn. The volunteer grabs my student card and a couple of other students' cards, then comes and gives them back to us. Before she gives the girl in front of me her student card, she informs her that she, unfortunately, will not be allowed to get the parcel. She does not look surprised, simply grabs her student card and prepares to leave. A couple of students signal that she should wait for them and they will give her some of their food. I get my parcel which

includes: canned foods, peanut butter, porridge, and pasta. I think to myself, this might not seem like it is a lot, but it does give you something to work with. Earlier, one student had told me that, when you have this, you do not need a lot of money to supplement groceries. I arrive outside to see a small group of students giving the student who was denied a parcel some of their food. I approach and ask to give her a couple of tins of canned foods. She accepts only some of this offer. She tells me that she has more than enough to last her this one week, before she can get food again.

During my fieldwork, a student I end up talking to explains to me how not having simple necessities such as food contributes to the general worry and anxiety of students. He suggests that because of this overall stress, students also struggle to perform well when it comes to their academic tasks. The uncertainly of not having sources where one can maintain a steady supply of food can induce stress which can contribute to an individual's mental health difficulties (Elsevier Health Sciences 2017). Another factor is that "acquiring foods in socially unacceptable ways can induce feelings of alienation, powerlessness, shame, and guilt that are associated with depression" (Elsevier Health Sciences 2017). And a university such as Wits is a petri dish for such feelings to accumulate and manifest. Wits has students from many different backgrounds and classes. Some are from wealthy backgrounds, and can afford to acquire food in ways that are socially acceptable. Other students, mostly black, are from disadvantaged backgrounds and on financial aid. *Vuyelwa reflects on how as a postgraduate student, having spaces that are less open to the public gaze, such as the Robert Sobukwe Block offices, takes psychological pressure away from having to buy food from restaurants and fast food places around campus, knowing fully well that one cannot afford to. Students describe hunger, and uncertainty about where to get food, together with accompanying feelings of shame and anomie, as major sources of stress. And students usually have to choose between the different

factors and stressors. This was prominent during the #FeesMustFall events. Students depended on food parcels given out during #FeesMustFall sit-ins at Solomon Mahlangu House and across different universities. Students ate together, shared plates and cups in settings where a sense of community was cultivated, and shame was for a moment at least relegated to the periphery (Mthombeni, 2017).

Spaces of healing and community: The case of Robert Sobukwe Block, West Annex

Robert Sobukwe Block, which houses most of the School of Social Sciences departments, also houses postgraduate offices for Honours. Masters and Ph.D. students. I spent a lot of my time with a group of black female students in these communal department rooms. These spaces provide a privacy and comfort that cannot be found during undergraduate studies, where spaces that students must share with a larger group, such as the library and the computer labs, do not offer privacy. "It feels like a privilege to be a postgraduate student because you get to have access to spaces like this," quips Vuyelwa. "One gets to choose whether to be at the HGC computer lab or not. You are not forced to always be in those spaces because of lack of options. It might not seem like much, but it is," she adds.

One can work in those spaces overnight, as postgraduate students are given full access to the rooms by their respective departments. Unlike undergraduate students, who experience homelessness or must work throughout the night to finish their school work, they do not get to have prying eyes undressing them with suspicion and surprise. There is comfort in knowing that the group of people you share the space with will not judge you or silently interrogate you with their eyes. The freedom to be able to exist, and have access to such a space, reduces the stress one might have, and allows for one to concentrate on school work. "Imagine students, especially first years who do not have such privileges, imagine the stress," says Vuyiswa. The students I am in constant interaction with all met in the course of their undergraduate studies,

and then went on to register and enrol for postgraduate studies together. So, there is a sense of kin and familiarity between them. And even with anyone they bring into the ingroup, into the communal area, there is a sense of acceptance. Because of this, they support each other throughout their studies. The support is anything from helping each other with tuition fees, with accommodation, with a place to shower and freshen up after studying overnight, and with food. Dineo, also a postgraduate student. reflects on how this makes the university experience much more bearable, enjoyable and less stressful. Hefner and Eisenberg (2009) posit that friends, family and significant others play an important role in providing social, emotional and material support to students during their university years. This sort of support helps students adopt mental and psychosocial mechanisms that can contribute to students' self-esteem and self-efficacy and therefore can buffer any negative effects of stress. Vuyiswa also believes that the institutional culture of a university such as Wits adds to the general alienation of black students. She reflects on how when she started going to this university, she never really felt part of it, because it was never built for her: "I would have never thought in a million years, I would find myself in a building named after the Apartheid struggle hero and activist, Robert Sobukwe." One of the demands of the #RhodesMustFall movement at UCT was for buildings to be named after to "names of either black historical figures, or to names that contribute to this university taking its African positionality" (RMF 2015) seriously. Vuyiswa believes that this is when we can start embarking on the process of healing and accepting that black students also deserve to exist and access spaces such as universities such as Wits.

Instrumentalisation of Mental health

During a conversation with some of the women of the West Annex, I encounter an interesting perspective on how mental health discourse is instrumentalised by students. "Students go to CCDU so that when they face academic exclusion, they can use the fact that they have been going to CCDU because of the many problems they to appeal their exclusion," says *Vuyelwa.

“You didn’t know?” asks Vuyiswa, noticing mild shock on my face. “I know of students who have been doing this since undergrad,’ she adds.

Students use the CCDU as a tool which they can use to appeal academic exclusion, in cases where they have not done well enough in their studies. While appealing to the Wits Re-Admissions Committee (WRC), students would have to state why they should be re-admitted after being academically excluded. Vuyelwa tells me that some students have figured out that if they want to have grounds for appeal in place, if at any point in the future they find themselves academically excluded, they have to establish a record of seeking help from the CCDU consistently. Looking at the form, I see why students do this. The form (see Annexure A) asks what factors contributed to the students’ failure, and then lists a several such possible factors such as ill-health, financial difficulties, accommodation problems, and family problems. The form then asks a student whether they have sought help or taken steps for personal redress, one of the redresses being going to the CCDU. Vuyelwa explains that students build a pre-emptive record by going to the CCDU consistently about any of the problems that students face, including accommodation, food, and financial problems and how this contributes to a students’ concentrating on their studies. The form asks whether the student applying for re-admission is comfortable with CCDU releasing a confidential report about their consultations. If the student agrees, then one would need to go to CCDU and put in a request for the report to be sent to the Faculty and the WRC. Students instrumentalise this to manoeuvre themselves through issues such as academic exclusion, in ways which are not necessarily readily available for them to use or access. Vuyiswa adds that, although she does not necessarily agree with this or support it, she understands why some students would do it: “Black students have been struggling with so many issues and expected to do well in school regardless. Imagine having no place to stay, owing fees and facing precarity day in and day out, and then be expected to

do well? It is impossible. Students seem to have found a way around this by instrumentalising issues of mental health. This is also an important dimension of the form of mental health citizenship emerging on the campus.

During my fieldwork, from observation alone, black students are the ones faced with having to find such ways to navigate the precarious situations they find themselves in. It is mostly black students one sees at the HGC for the free food. It is only black students one will see in queues to receive food packs or daily meals. It is only black students one will see sleeping in computer labs and in the library at night, because they have nowhere else to go. This chapter has traced mental health and the discourse around it through discrete spaces and the practices students adopt in them. There is a realisation later in the chapter that the struggles students go through could be instrumentalised to navigate the very rocky waters of university life, especially when it comes to issues of exclusion, whether academically or the broadest of terms. Although there are not easily extricable links between all these places and practices, social suffering can contribute to the mental health difficulties of students. In the previous chapter we saw how mental health citizenship is created and maintained by the university itself, through institutions such as the CCDU and the interventions of university offices and those of student government. In the current chapter we have seen how mental health citizenship is equally created, instrumentalised, and internalised by students themselves.

Conclusion

Petryna (2004) explored how members of the Ukrainian public, due to access to scientific knowledge about the effects of the Chernobyl nuclear explosion, created a space where new kinds of public entitlements emerged. The entitlement to public assistance on medical grounds, fostered and enabled by the Ukrainian government, allows new forms of citizenship to emerge, which Petruna describes as a mode of specifically biological citizenship. Being a member of this emerging category of medical or biological citizens allowed those who were members to access certain benefits, while others did not. In this research report I have argued for the emergence of a similar mode of mental health citizenship at Wits University. There are of course both differences and similarities in this comparison to the Ukrainian case. Becoming a mental health citizen at the University of the Witwatersrand differs as there are a lot more factors involved, but it also mirrors some factors. Mental health and related issues have always been a concern in tertiary institutions, but the discourse around mental health has recently increased due to the newly and publicly articulated understanding of precarity and black students' everyday material conditions. The #FeesMustFall student movement was a moment which contributed to this emergence of a public discourse on precarity and material conditions as factors that are part of mental health and the discourse around, especially amongst black students. A new mode of citizenship framed by this particular discourse of mental health would then emerge both in the common sense of the term and in the more abstract form – a citizen of the state versus institutionalised citizenship of a discourse. Mental health citizenship also emerged alongside the issue of blackness, seeing that issues of precarity affect mostly black students. This reframed an older relationship in which mental health was generally understood as a white or middle-class issue, alien to the experiences, identities and culture of black South Africans.

State citizenship versus 'discourse' citizenship

The #FeesMustFall protests in South African campuses in 2015-16 brought about new forms of public entitlement from the national state, to provide for the financial situations of students in tertiary education. Students were seeking to gain political recognition, as well as recognition as citizens of a state, in order to gain access to public welfare, through the provision of free public education. The reluctance of the state and its institutions to accede to all the demands of the students raised other issues which would then come to be realised as the sources of precarity for black students. The #FeesMustFall movement was the impetus for students, especially black students, to realise that through social action, they can secure economic and social entitlements (Petryna 2004). The entitlement demanded here was access to free and decolonised tertiary education. Through this, students were positioning themselves as wards of the state, who need to be looked after and taken care of. Through trauma that students endured during Fees Must Fall, mental health discourse became something which black students understood to affect them more viscerally. This filtered through to everyday life, through understandings that the material conditions and precarity of black students' everyday lives form a part of their mental health while on campus. These are the same material conditions and precarities which were issues during the #FeesMustFall protests themselves. The creation of a mental health citizenry on campus was achieved both through student practices and through overt institutional responses by the university. Mental health and the discourse surrounding it was framed as a response to widespread issues of food insecurity and hunger, homelessness, and also of course the general academic pressures that students faced. Practical connections to the discourse of mental health would arise through students' use of institutionalised spaces such as the CCDU, or through informal conversations among students themselves. Institutional responses to mental health problems, especially during exam periods, would include an increase in awareness about services that universities offer to students to better deal with mental health. One of those awareness campaigns was the collaboration between Drama for Life and

the CCDU, to raise awareness about issues of mental health, health-seeking, and care. Reciprocally, students mobilised their own new awareness of how the university responded to issues of mental health. They instrumentalised the discourse surrounding mental health to deal with issues of academic exclusion. The idea would be that students, because of the pressures they face from having no money, food insecurity and homelessness and having to perform well in their academics, end up suffering from mental health problems, which could cause distractions and affect their studies. Students used this to fight academic exclusion by the university. The making and creation of the mental health citizenry in a South African university space is both through self-inscription by students, and through the institutionalisation of issues of mental health and the discourse around it through official means.

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Annexure

2018-2019 Wits Readmissions Application Form

WITS UNIVERSITY

Full Names:

Surname: | Student ID:

Date of Birth: | Term:

Program:

Student Representation

Please tick the appropriate box

Do you wis the student member of WRC to leave the meeting when your case is considered ? Yes | No

Contributing Factors

Briefly list and detail the factors that contributed to your failure (e.g. ill-health, financial difficulties, accommodation problemes, family problems etc).

If reasons were due to ill-health, please get the medical practitioner who attended to your illness to complete the University Health Form and attach this document together with any supporting information with yourr application.

Please attach any other relevant documented evidence with your application e.g. extra time application, police report etc.

Explain why the problems indicated above will not affect your later years of study if you are permitted to renuew your registration. If you are readmitted, how do you plan to overcome your difficulties? If possible, please provide evidence of your intentions.

Personal Redress

Please tick the appropriate box

Have you done the following:

Consulted with Campus Health and Wellness Centre?	Yes / No
IFYES, do you want them to give a confidential report to the WRC?	Yes / No
Consulted with Counselling and Careers Development Unit?	Yes / No
IFYES, do you want them to give a confidential report to the WRC?	Yes / No
Consulted with other medical providers, i.e. doctors, hospitals?	Yes / No
Consulted with Faculty advisors?	Yes / No
Consulted with course co-ordinators or lecturers?	Yes / No
Submitted any information during the past academic year to the Faculty Office or to Schools that may support your representation?	Yes / No
Attended academic development tutorials or received academic support offered through consultation with your tutor or lecturer?	Yes / No

If you have indicated above that you wish the CHWC and/or CCDU to provide confidential reports, you will need to go to CHWC and/or CCDU to request them to send the reports to your Faculty Office by the closing date for submission of this form.

Declaration

I declare that information given on this form is true and correct.
The submission of false information will be viewed in a serious light.

Student Signature

Date

Annexure B: Consent Form

2018

My name is _____ and I agree to participate in the research project conducted by **Kagiso Nko**.

1. I have read and understood the information given to me about this project. I have had opportunities to ask questions and have received all the information I need.

2. I understand that I will not receive anything for participating.

3. I also understand that I may withdraw at any time without any penalties.

4. I agree to be interviewed (please mark all applicable boxes)

A	In a group (I understand that confidentiality is more difficult to ensure in group interviews and am willing to participate regardless.)	
B	Individually	
C	For the interview to be recorded	

5. I understand that I can ask for help if the research project causes me any distress.

Signature:……..

Date:……..

Annexure C: Information Sheet

Information Sheet 2018

Dear Sir/Madam

Please read the information below carefully and ask any questions you may have about it before completing the consent form.

My name is Kagiso Nko (1632080) and I would like to ask you to participate in a research project titled '***Creating a mental health citizen: Exploring mental health discourse and its contribution to defining blackness and community amongst young urban blacks post-Fees Must Fall***'. I am a Masters student at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg with the Department of Anthropology.

1. Participation is voluntary. That means that you will not receive anything if you participate. It also means that you do not have to participate. You can even stop before the project is finished without any penalty.
2. If you agree to participate, you will have to take part in conversational interviews, in-depth interviews (estimated 45 minutes) and with your permission, allow me to spend time with you in your social space as to allow for unfiltered observation of the social space.
3. I will interview you individually in a safe place. The interview will take estimated 45 minutes and if you allow it, it will be recorded. The recordings will be stored in my laptop and only I as the researcher will have access to them.
4. The purpose of this research is to understand and Investigate how mental health discourse in the post-Fees Must Fall moment has acted as a conduit for the emergence of abstract self-organised communities centred on mental health and blackness. If participation in this project causes you any emotional, physical, or mental discomfort, I will inform you & about the Counselling Careers and Development Unit (CCDU) where you can receive help and assistance from professional medical experts.
5. Your identity will be protected at all times. I will do this by you giving me permission to safely secure all data collected on my laptop for the period of my study. Therefore, I will abide by the ethical code of conduct. The consent form will be kept separate from all other documentation and will be in a locked cupboard to which only I have access. If you choose to reveal your identity, you will be informed about the repercussions.
   Your personal details will have to be stored for 8 to 12 months. Any publications resulting from this research will not mention your name or any identifying information about you.

If you have read this document and understand what is expected of you, please consider participating in this research. If you are willing to do this, please sign the consent form.

Kind regards

Kagiso Nko

nkokagiso@yahoo.com

+27796826509

Supervisors

Dr. Julia Hornberger

Supervisor and HOD: Department of Anthropology

Faculty of Humanities

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Julia.Hornberger@wits.ac.za

Dr. Hylton White

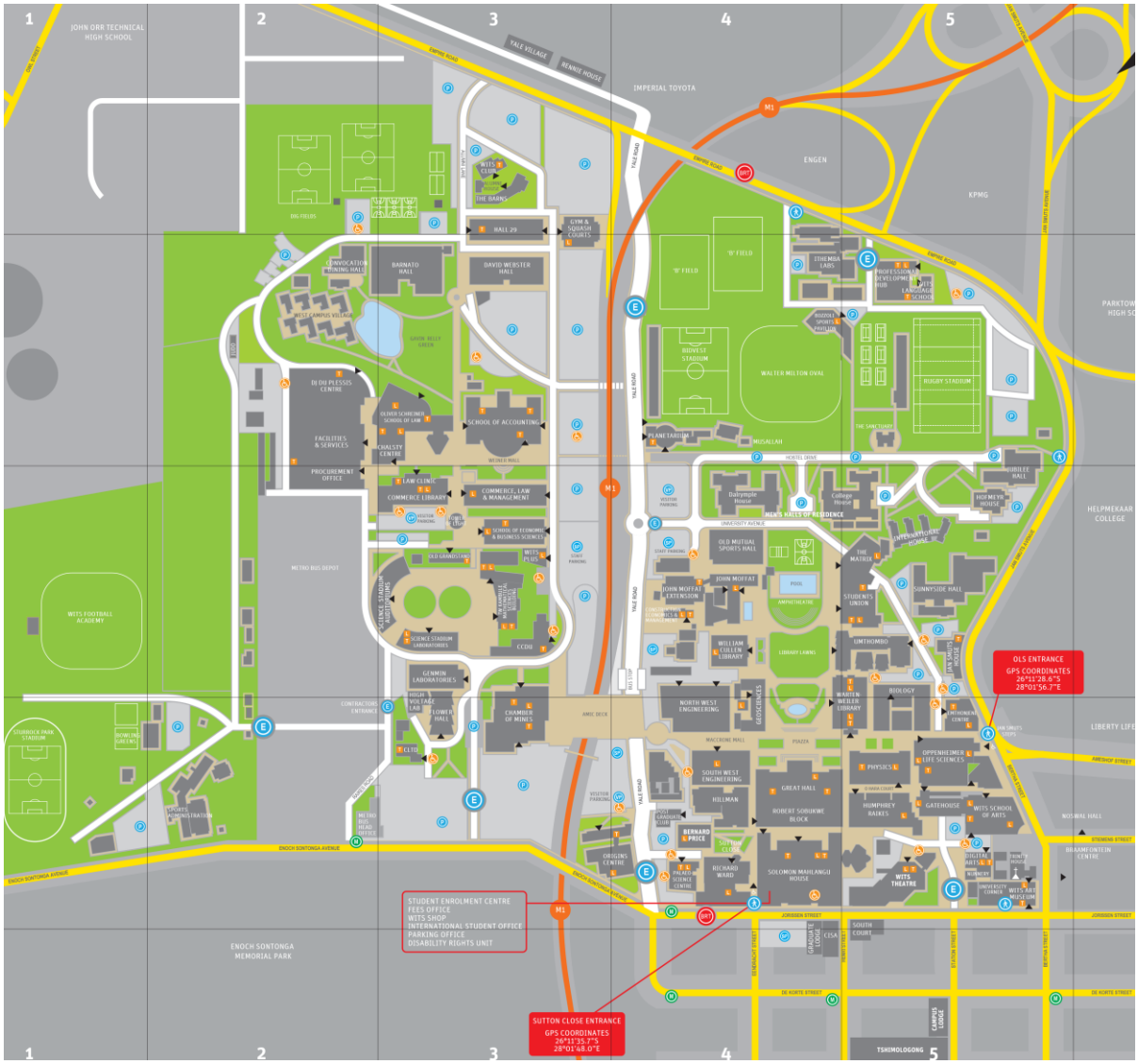
Co-supervisor: Department of Anthropology

Faculty of Humanities

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Hylton.White@wits.ac.za

Annexure D: Wits Braamfontein Campus Map


OLS ENTRANCE
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STUDENT ENROLMENT CENTRE
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PARKING OFFICE
DISABILITY RIGHTS UNIT
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