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Access with Success: The Reaching For Excellence and Achievement Program at the University of the Witwatersrand

A report on a study presented to

The Department of Sociology

School of Social Sciences

Faculty of Humanities

University of the Witwatersrand

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts Sociology

By

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this research report is my own original and unaided work and that I have correctly referenced all the sources utilised. This research report has not been submitted previously for any degree or examination.

Signature_____ Date_____

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I would like to thank God Almighty for giving me strength and courage at all times.

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Abstract

Since the debut of democracy, there has been an increase in the number of historically marginalised Black students in South Africa's higher education institutions. However, this has not been accompanied by a corresponding success rate. Higher education's response to this success crisis has largely been academic development programs. While extensive research has been done on academic development programs, more especially quantitative research in disciplines like maths, natural sciences, and economics, not much qualitative research has been done on extracurricular academic development programs in the humanities and the social sciences. In this study, I explore the role of the Reaching for Excellence and Achievement Program (REAP) in students' journeys graduation. REAP is an extracurricular academic development program at the University of the Witwatersrand. The findings show that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are not a homogeneous group and that this influences the types of challenges that they encounter at university. They show that REAP played a significant role in facilitating these students' progress to graduation. They also reveal that academic development programs by themselves are not enough to address the success crisis facing students from disadvantaged backgrounds because the root causes of some of the challenges they encounter can only be addressed at a structural level. Based on the lessons learned from the findings of this study, I make recommendations for future academic development programming.

Keywords: Access, Success, Academic Development, Under-preparedness, Educational Inequality, Higher Education

One

A Context

What is certain is that those students from a working class background who do gain access to higher education will find themselves in an environment where the needs and values of their communities are alien.– Nash (2006, p. 8) as cited in Naicker (2016)

The disgruntlement with the slow pace of transformation at historically white universities began with the 'WITS Transformation Memo 2014' which was written by a group of post-graduate students at the Politics Department of the University of the Witwatersrand late in 2014 (Naicker, 2016). These students were calling for the decolonisation of the curriculum and an increase in the number Black academics in the department. It also called for the acknowledgement and appreciation of the African political, philosophical and historical intellectual traditions as a means of building a post-colonial African university. Yet, 2015 marks the year of the emergence of an unprecedented wave of student movements in democratic South Africa. According to Luescher (2016), there has never been a student movement in democratic South Africa that received the level of media attention, intellectual scrutiny and high-level government response as the collective of hashtag student movements, which includes #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall, #ReformPukke, #TuksUprising, #OpenStellies, #RhodesMustFall, #SteynMustFall, #PatriarchyMustFall, and #TheTransCollective among others. The thread that connects these formations is the struggle for social change in South African universities (Luescher, 2016).

I am particularly interested in the #FeesMustFall Movement which emerged in 2015 when students at various campuses took to the streets protesting tuition fee hikes of up to 11.5% announced by the Department of Higher Education (DHET) (Naicker, 2016). In the same year, the estimated tuition fees for the first year of a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in South

African universities ranged between R13, 600- R46, 000, with the University of South Africa being the cheapest and the University of Cape Town being the most expensive (Grant, 2015). Other degrees can cost even more. Even though the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), was established to provide funding of up to R71, 800[1] for academically talented students with financial need, higher education has become unaffordable not only for students from low-income families but also for those who are now referred to as 'the missing middle' (de Villiers, 2012; Wangenge-Ouma, 2012). These students' families are too wealthy to qualify for funding from the NSFAS and too poor to afford self-funding (Freerks, 2015). They have an annual household income between R160, 000 and R600, 000 (de Villiers, 2016). Jansen (2004, p. 301) also alludes to this issue and I agree with him in arguing that, given the post-1994 changes:

> …the problem for South African higher education will not be race- at least not in the black majority state. The problem will be the background class and regional character of students as urban institutions are strengthened and deracialised while rural universities remain marginalised in terms of institutional capacity, racial character and class status. The problem for urban institutions, on the other hand, will be the complex task of transforming institutional cultures in ways that are more inclusive and accommodating of the statistical diversity of the student population.

According to Butler-Adam (2016), President Zuma's announcement in October 2015 that there will be 0% fee increase for 2015 signalled the government's understanding of the financial difficulties faced by students. He argues that this inspired students' demand for free higher education in 2016. However, it must be noted that the concerns raised by the student

[1] This NSFAS capped amount is calculated on an average weighted full cost of study and it is communicated as part of the funding parameters each year (NSFAS, 2016).

movement are about more than just exorbitant fees. The student movement is also concerned about the neo-liberalisation of the university, universities' failure to transform, the politics of knowledge, and the long lasting legacy of institutional racism and eurocentrism (Hodes, 2015). It also demanded free-quality-decolonised higher education (Waghid, 2016). Students' concerns at the University of Stellenbosch- a historically white Afrikaans university- include Black students feeling marginalised, alienated and intimidated in a space that has remained almost untransformed and unchallenged since the debut of democracy (Naicker, 2016).

The #FeesMustFall movement emerged in a context of an upward trend of neo-liberalisation of the university worldwide (Naicker, 2016). South Africa has not been exempted from this trend. As evidence of this trend, state funding for higher education as part of the overall university income dropped from 49% in 2000 to 40% in 2012 (Hodes, 2015). As a result, universities resorted to private fundraising as a means to make up for the budget shortfall. This increased the contribution of student fees to the total income of the university from 24% in 2000 to 31% in 2012, making higher education even more expensive and less accessible to many. The drop in state funding pushes universities to seek corporate sponsorship with all the negative effects it entails (Vally, 2007). Barlow and Robertson (1996), as cited in Vally (2006), elaborate on this. They argue that universities have had to negotiate curriculum planning with corporate sponsors and professors' ability to attract private sponsors to the university became more valuable than their qualifications and ability to teach. Also, many support staff have been retrenched or outsourced to private companies (Vally, 2006).

Peter (2015), as cited in Waghid (2016), posits that the university curriculum constituted by Eurocentrism excludes 'blackness' and renders it invisible- a situation that the #FeesMustFall attempts to disrupt. The domination of a Eurocentric curriculum in historically white universities which continue to showcase their Black students as symbols of their

transformation agenda is inconsistent with what it means to be inclusive (Waghid, 2016). Such a curriculum perpetuates Eurocentrism which views what is African as its marginal other (Waghid, 2016). This is demonstrated in Butler-Adam (2016) who suggests that for students to demand the decolonisation of education and the inclusion of indigenous knowledge in university curricula is to demand the decrease of the quality of what is learned and the degrees that graduates will earn at university. This is implied by his rhetorical question, "Why take the trouble to access higher education, at no or low cost, with changed curricula and teaching (issues that might well be matters for contention), if what is learned is of low quality?" (Butler-Adam, 2016, p. 2). He argues that students acquire knowledge and values that make them successful and confident world citizens. Clearly, he believes that success and confidence will be unattainable through the free, quality and decolonized education that #FeesMustFall students demand. Butler-Adam (2016) is supporting what Naicker (2016, p. 65) refers to as the "proliferation of the kind of knowledge that is fashionable within the neo-liberal model of the academy that sees itself as part of a global knowledge market and network". This, as Nash (2006) argues in the opening quote, makes the university a space in which Black students feel marginalised because the needs of their communities are made alien in the academy.

The concerns raised by the #FeesMustFall and other student movements cannot be divorced from the success crisis faced by Black students at South African universities. Over the past two decades, the demographic composition of the South African higher education student body has become more racially diverse. In 1993, only 52% of the student body was Black (African, Coloured and Indian) and this increased to 81% by the year 2011 (HESA, 2014). This was a result of massification of higher education becoming a political imperative post-1994. However, the success rate of Black students continues to be lower than that of their

White counterparts despite the fact that Black students constitute the majority of the student body (Collins & Millard, 2013). This has been a concern for many scholars for at least three decades. However, much of their research takes a deficit perspective which views Black students as inherently deficient, lacking the cultural, academic, and economic resources that are necessary for academic success at university (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Collins & Millard, 2013; Kessi, 2013; McMillan & Barrie, 2012; Smit, 2012). These studies are concerned with establishing the reasons why the success rates of these students have remained low. As a result of this perspective, very little is known about the factors that facilitate the success of historically disadvantaged Black students who manage to graduate against all odds. Hence the focus of this study is on Black students' journeys to graduation, the factors that contributed their success, and the role of extracurricular Academic Development Programs (ADPs) in their journeys.

In this study, students from disadvantaged backgrounds are understood as coming from low-income families. These are first-generation students from households with an annual income of less than R197, 000[2], who attended poor public schools, with parents and siblings who have attained a low level of basic education or no education at all, and students from rural and township communities, the majority of whom are Black and for whom English is a second language.

Since the early 1980s extensive research has been done to establish the effectiveness of ADPs that are integrated into the mainstream (Boughey, 2010; Heydenrych & Case, 2015; Pearce, et al., 2015; Potgieter, et al., 2015; Ramapela, 2012; Scott, 2009; Smith, et al., 2014; Smith, 2013; Wood & Lithauer, 2005). However, using the Reaching for Excellence and

[2] These figures are according to 2016 Standard Bank income classifications (Hunter, 2016)

Achievement Program (REAP) as its case, this study responds to the paucity of qualitative studies of ADPs in the humanities and social sciences disciplines. Most studies are quantitative and focus on ADPs in engineering, science, economics, commerce (Heydenrych & Case, 2015; Pearce, et al., 2015; Ramapela, 2012; Smith, 2013; Smith, et al., 2014). This means that the perspective of those who participated in the studied programs, which can only be acquired using qualitative methods, is missing in the available literature. Therefore, conducting this study on REAP introduces the social sciences and humanities into literature and the body of knowledge in the field of academic development. It was driven by two main questions. The first is how do graduates who participated in REAP describe their backgrounds? The second is how do they perceive the role of this program in their journeys to graduation?

REAP was an unconventional extra-curricular academic development program launched in 2011 under the directorship of the then Assistant Dean of Humanities for Teaching and Learning, Prof. Jill Bradbury. It was funded by the office of the Deputy Vice-chancellor (academic) of the University of the Witwatersrand, Prof. Yunus Ballim. The program was aimed at undertaking research and developing curricula for the enhancement of learning and teaching of undergraduate students from disadvantaged backgrounds with a potential for excellence and to increase participation rate in postgraduates programs of study (Bradbury, 2014). Unfortunately, after the proposal and budget submitted for the Teaching Development Grant were rejected in 2014, the program was discontinued before the School of Literature, Language and Media (SLLM) and Wits School of Arts (WSoA) cohorts finished their tenure (Bradbury, 2014).

REAP was similar to ASPs of the early 1980s in that it operated outside mainstream instruction. However, it differed in its selection of participants who are already in mainstream

instruction using criteria that does not assume lack but are based on the potential for excellence. It did not serve as a form of preparation for entering mainstream instruction like most ASPs. Unlike ASPs, REAP involved academic staff members who teach in the mainstream. Even though it involved academic staff who qualified at PhD level, it still differed from the ADPs in its independence from mainstream instruction. In other words, REAP had elements of both ASPs and ADPs. This is what qualifies it as an unconventional extra-curricular ADP and it is what inspired me to study the journeys of those who participated in it.

Students who participated in REAP had to apply for the program and staff members in the different schools were encouraged to identify potential participants. Successful applicants were selected on the basis of attaining second class passes in the first semester, demonstrating a strong commitment to their studies and to participating in the program through a written motivation, and coming from a disadvantaged background. In its short lifespan, the program had a total of five cohorts from different schools. The first one was made up twelve students from the School of Human and Community Development (SHCD) who were in their second year of study in 2011. The second was made up of twelve second year students from the School of Social Sciences (SoSS) mid-2012. The third one was selected late in 2012. It was made up of ten students from the School of Education (SoE). These were going to their fourth and final year of study in 2013. The last two cohorts were selected in the beginning of 2013. A cohort of ten students was selected from the SLLM and another of eight students was selected from the WSoA. This study, given that it is only a Master's project, focused only on the SoSS cohort.

According to Bradbury (2011, 2013, 2014), the pedagogy of REAP focused on a few critical areas of academic development. It focused on developing students' cultural capital by having

them engage with key social science theories in an interdisciplinary manner and engaging the politics of knowledge. Academic literacy- including critical thinking skills, the ability to engage large volumes of material, the development and structuring of an argument, reading academic questions, and establishing the relationship between the particular and the general, between evidence and theory- was a critical focus of the program's pedagogy. It also focused on exposing students to the intellectual life of the university by involving them in academic forums that are often reserved for postgraduate students and the academic staff. It also focused on helping students connect their everyday life experiences to their textual learning, developing their critical engagement with current affairs as well as issues of social justice. This pedagogy was the programs' attempt to address the challenges that students from disadvantaged backgrounds encounter at university. These challenges are well-documented in literature which I review in the next chapter. This is followed by a description of the research design and methodology. The analysis and discussion of the data are presented in chapters four and five. Chapter six presents a summary of the main findings and conclusions of the study.

Two

One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

What remains as the most dominant challenge within the sector is to outgrow the "student under-preparedness paradigm" and move towards becoming a prepared university. - van Heerden (2011)

Inequality in higher education is a worldwide phenomenon. Despite government initiatives to achieve mass access to higher education, not all sectors of the society have equally benefited (Altbach, et al., 2009). The Indian Government requires universities to reserve spaces for students from lower classes and castes. While this has significantly increased access, the participation of Muslims and lower castes continues to lag behind the elite. Similarly, in Brazil, despite legislation that requires universities to reserve spaces for Afro-Brazilians, higher education remains an endeavour of the elite and is barely accessible to Afro-Brazilians and other minority groups (Altbach, et al., 2009; Slocum, 2008). In the United States of America and the United Kingdom, access to and success in higher education is still a struggle for students from minority groups and low- income families (Boliver, 2006; Espinoza, 2011; Ross, et al., 2012). The situation is even worse in Africa.

According to Murray and Klinger (2014), access to higher education in many African countries is generally restricted by poverty and inequality. They assert that in most Sub-Saharan African countries space at university is a commodity which can only be accessed by a privileged few. In agreement with Altbach et al., (2009) who stated that the greatest barrier to access to higher education is its cost, Murray and Klinger (2014) argue that given the correlation between socio-economic status and access to higher education, social inequalities are reproduced in Sub-Sahara Africa. They add that in many African countries, socio-economic status is not the only manifestation of inequality but also language, ethnicity,

urban-rural divide, gender and race. Transformation initiatives in Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania have increased the enrolment of women, however, when gender is coupled with socioeconomic status, poor women participate at a lower rate than their wealthier counterparts (Altbach et al., 2009).

While mass access has become a widely accepted approach to addressing the problem of inequality in access to higher education, there are unintended consequences to massification. According to Leathwood and O'Connell (2010), increased access for marginalised population groups is accompanied by a discourse of 'dumbing down' and 'lowering standards'. In many countries, students from these population groups continue to become victims of stigma, stereotypes and discrimination (Altbach et al., 2009, Kessi, 2013; Smit, 2012). Serving students from diverse backgrounds, the majority of whom receive poor quality secondary education, increases the cost of higher education due to the need for extra support services such as tutoring, counselling and others (Altbach, 2010). With these concerns in mind, I consider inequalities in the South African context.

Inequality in Pre-1994 South Africa

South Africa has one of the highest levels of inequality in the world, with its GINI coefficient calculated at approximately 0.66 in 2012 (Finn, 2015; Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2014; Letseka, et al., 2010). A GINI coefficient is "a measure [between 0 and 1] of the degree of inequality in income distribution" within a country (Arnold, 2014, p. 750). On average, the bottom 10% of employees in the country earn 90 times less than the top 10%, and 393 times less than the top 1% (StatsSA, 2015). In the past social, political and economic discrimination as well as racial, class, and gender inequality profoundly shaped and they continue to shape higher education in the country today (Badat, 2010). However, historical accounts of South Africa's

education system often present inequality as a phenomenon that emerged with the debut of apartheid in 1948 and the Bantu Education Act of 1953 (Kallaway, 1984; Kallaway, 2002). But the inequalities we see today are a consequence and a legacy of ideologies and practices that began in the pre-apartheid-colonial era. It is important to consider this history when attempting to provide a comprehensive understanding of the success crisis faced by marginalised Black students in post-1994 South Africa. This long view gives an insight into the complexity and roots of the problems that programs like REAP attempt to address.

As early as 1930, the colonial government had already established segregationist and unequal educational structures which served Whites only (Christie & Collins, 1982; Holsinger & Jaco, 2008). There were no formal administrative structures for the education of Black people. Education for Black people was provided by missionaries from Britain, France, Germany, and Switzerland. The quality of this education was nothing compared to what was received by Whites (Holsinger & Jaco, 2008; Ainsworth, 2013). This is also evident in the per capita spending of the government on school subsidies that were, after some time, also offered to missionary schools. In 1935, for example, the per capita spending for Black and White populations was £1.18 and £23.17, respectively. It was on this foundation that the apartheid government engineered the education system of its time (1948-1994).

Apartheid policies further augmented the privilege of the White minority. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 eliminated all educational activities that were opposed to its white supremacist project (Kallaway, 1984; Fiske & Ladd, 2004). For this project, Black people's intellectual capacity and educability were lower than that of their White counterparts. This rationale justified an inferior form of education which aimed to produce Black people who feel inferior and incompetent (Nkabinde, 1997; Kallaway, 2002). It was aimed at socialising Black learners to subservient positions of service to White people, thus, satisfying the labour

needs of the country particularly in the mining, agricultural and domestic service sectors (Kallaway, 1984). It established separate education departments for each of the following racially categorised populations: Africans, Coloureds, and Indians (Kallaway, 1984). These offered education of varying quality. Each racial group had schools which offered a form of education that was socially engineered specifically for it. Schools for Africans offered the worst quality of education. Consequently, most Black African learners were never prepared for higher education. According to the government of the time, they were incapable. This was overtly stated by the then Minister of Native Affairs Hendrik Verwoerd who said, "What is the use of teaching a Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice?" (Fiske & Ladd, 2004, p. 43). It is also evident in M.L Fick (1939) who argued that Black learners were four to five years inferior to the White learners in terms of educability (Kallaway, 2002). These notions are at the root of the inequalities that continue manifest themselves in the education system of post-1994 South Africa.

Consistent with the project of segregation, the school language policy was used to segregate learners into ethnolinguistic groups. This practice continues to shape the extent and the form of under-preparedness among Black, particularly African, students who enrol at university today (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). This policy legislated mother-tongue instruction for the first eight years of school for African learners. Subsequent to those years, they had to be taught half of their subjects in Afrikaans and the other half in English. This was enforced using aggressive measures whereas, at this stage, African learners had no mastery of either Afrikaans or English. They were, therefore, set up for failure. These aggressive measures triggered the most defining event in the history of educational inequality in South Africa, the Soweto uprising of 1976 (Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Kallaway, 2002; Nkabinde, 1997). School learners in Soweto took to the streets on the 16th of June in protest against the use of

Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. This escalated the level of opposition faced by the regime and its unequal education system throughout the country (Fiske & Ladd, 2004 ; Nkabinde, 1997). Some changes were made including an increase in the per-capita expenditure on Black learners and some degree of desegregation in White schools (Nkabinde, 1997).

The desegregation of some White schools was of no benefit to the majority of Black learners (Nkabinde, 1997). According to Chisholm and Fine (1994) as cited in Nkabinde (1997), in 1991 Black learners constituted 0.88% of the 904 403 students in formerly White schools. The majority of Black learners remained in school which generally offered poor quality education. Thus class inequality was introduced alongside racial segregation. Disparities in students' preparedness for higher education, post-1994, are grounded not only in the country's history of racial inequalities but also class inequalities. Higher education itself was not immune to the racial inequalities of apartheid era (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). Fiske and Ladd (2004, p. 205) assert that "as late as 1992, white students, though they made up only 12 percent of the school population, accounted for 60 percent of enrolment in technikons and 50 percent of that in universities".

Inequality in Post-1994 South Africa

With the advent of democracy came the hope that all South Africans will be equal and have equal opportunities but literature suggests that this was just an illusion (Fiske & Ladd, 2004 ; Nkabinde, 1997; Spaull, 2015; van der Berg, et al., 2012). Segregationist laws were formally abolished more than 20 years ago. However, historically White schools continue to provide better quality education with a greater degree of diversity in their student body. However, those schools that served Black learners remain poorly resourced and unable to provide their

learners with the necessary skills in preparation for higher education and the job market (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Spaull, 2015). These schools serve approximately 85% of the learners in South Africa (Taylor & Yu, 2009), a significant factor in the success crisis in higher education today. This, however, does not mean that nothing has been done at the level of higher education.

Higher education, post-1994, underwent considerable restructuring which followed two phases. The first involved changes in higher education policies and legislation in order to allow for the establishment of a single national coordinated education system (Makhanya & Botha, 2015). These changes were driven by equity, redress, democratisation, development, academic freedom, public accountability, efficiency and effectiveness. The Department of Education (DoE) was divided into the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Higher Education and Training. The second phase involved the positioning of vocational and skills development as the national higher education strategic priority which shifted the focus from the university as the pillar of higher education towards the inclusion of further education and training in the higher education landscape (Makhanya & Botha, 2015). This culminated with the release of the White Paper for Post-school Education and Training in 2014.

These changes increased access for previously marginalised Black (African, Coloured and Indians) students (Badat, 2010; HESA, 2014) and by so doing, de-racialized the student body. By 2008, Black students constituted 75% of the student body with African students at 64.4% of the student body (Badat, 2010). While Black students now constitute the majority of the student body, participation rates continue to reflect the racial inequalities of the past with Africans having the lowest participation rate (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; HESA, 2014; Jones, et al., 2008; Lewin & Mawoyo, 2014; Smit, 2012; Wangenge-Ouma, 2012). According to Lewin and Mawoyo (2014), in the year 2012, the participation rate was 14% for Africans,

15% for Coloureds, 46% for Indians and 57% for Whites. This, however, does not mean that there are no more concerns with regards to access.

The emergence of student movements like the #FeesMustFall is evidence of persistent concerns about access to higher education for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the midst of these persistent concerns, research shows that the quantitative growth of Black students at university does not correspond with the graduation rates of these students (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; HESA, 2014; Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2014; Lewin & Mawoyo, 2014; McMillan & Barrie, 2012; Scott, et al., 2007). This pattern undermines the transformation of the country's education system that has been achieved since 1994. It is as if the country is taking one step forward and two steps back.

The Success Crisis

Success and graduation rates among Black students from disadvantaged backgrounds are very low while failure and dropout rates are extremely high (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; HESA, 2014; Scott, et al., 2007). The Council for Higher Education (CHE) reported in 2012 that for a cohort of African students who began study in the year 2005 in three-year degrees, only 41% graduated in regulation time and 59% dropped out (HESA, 2014). It also reported in 2013 that the percentage of African and Coloured students who graduate within five years is still less than 50% in the majority of undergraduate programmes (Lewin & Mawoyo, 2014).

Research shows that the highest dropout rate in South Africa is in the first year of study and Black, particularly African, students make up the majority of students who drop out (Mouton, et al., 2013; Strydom, et al., 2010). According to Higher Education South Africa (HESA), 35% of students who enrol at university drop out in their first year of study (Strydom, et al.,

2010). In addition, Breire and Mabizela (2007, p. 281), as cited in Strydom, et al., (2010, p. 1), "found that only 15% of students who enrol, complete their degree in the designated time; 30% drop out after the first year and further 20% drop out after their second year of third year". These realities, Scott, et al (2007) argues, negate the progress that has been made since 1994. They are indicative of an inefficient use of state resources (HESA, 2014).

The literature shows that initiatives aimed at widening access were largely concerned with 'access as participation' instead of 'access with success' (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Lewin & Mawoyo, 2014; Smit, 2012). The former refers to merely increasing the number of Black students in historically white institutions; and the latter refers to widening access while also enabling success for these students (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007). In line with this recognition, studies about the success crisis facing Black students at university cite a number of impediments that are linked to the legacy of apartheid in one way or another: socioeconomic inequality, poor basic education, under-preparedness, and higher education institutions' slow transformation (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Jones, et al., 2008; Lewin & Mawoyo, 2014; McMillan & Barrie, 2012; Scott, et al., 2007).

Many Black students who enrol at universities are first generation students from disadvantaged backgrounds (McMillan & Barrie, 2012; Strydom et al., 2010). According to Scott et al., (2007), material conditions such as socio-economic disadvantage and student financial needs necessitate increases in higher education funding in the midst of limited resources. As a result, many students from low-income families are "too poor to stay", they cannot afford the cost of higher education and drop out without graduating (Breier, 2010b, p. 657). In line with these claims, the Student Retention and Graduate Destination (SRGD) study found that the most potent reasons for students to drop out of seven South African universities were: not having money for tuition fees and academic exclusion due to poor

performance (Letseka, et al., 2010). According to Breier (2010a), out of 257 dropouts in the SRGD University of the Western Cape case study, most were due to financial exclusion while some were due to academic exclusion or both financial and academic exclusion.

Similarly, McMillan and Barrie (2012) found that rural students on NSFAS and Bursary funding were more likely than other students to experience financial constraints leading to hunger and not affording the required learning material. They found that these adversely impacted not only on their academic performance but also on social integration which results in high failure and dropout rates. This shows how socio-economic inequalities adversely impact on the possibility of achieving widened "access with success" thus contributing to the current crisis in higher education. However, the crisis in higher education is also linked to the crisis in the country's basic education system.

South Africa's basic education is in crisis (Fleisch, 2008; Spaull, 2013; Taylor & Yu, 2009; Wiseman, 2012; van der Berg, 2008; van der Berg, et al., 2011). The quality of basic education here is one of the poorest in comparison to other middle-income countries. Spaull (2013, p. 4) states that according to the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) Test of 2007, South African Grade six learners "ranked 10th of the 14 education systems for reading and 8th for mathematics, behind much poorer countries such as Tanzania, Kenya and Swaziland". Findings from such studies, including Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), show that 75% of South African schools do not provide students with the foundational knowledge and skills they should be provided with at school (Spaull, 2013). This has also been demonstrated by the results of the National Benchmark Test (NBT).

The NBT is an aptitude test that measures potential university students' academic, quantitative and mathematical literacy designed to provide higher education institutions with additional information about potential students for admission purposes (Yeld, 2009). Yeld's (2009) report on the results of the NBT pilot study shows that less than half of participating Grade 12 graduates demonstrated proficiency in the three measurement areas of the test. Poor performance in the NBT is an indication that the South African schooling system does not adequately prepare learners for higher education (Taylor & Yu, 2009). This, therefore, suggests that most students entering universities are academically underprepared (Spaull 2013; Taylor and Yu 2009; Van der Berg et al. 2011). While almost all students entering universities are a product of a basic education system in crisis, it must be noted that this system is not a homogenous one.

Taylor (2011, p. 11) puts it well, "South Africa is still a tale of two school sub-systems…: one which is functional, wealthy, and able to educate students; the other being poor, dysfunctional, and unable to equip students with the necessary [skills]…" He adds that this pattern has strong racial implications: on the one hand, residents of affluent and predominantly white communities attend the more functional schools. On the other hand, residents of poor and predominantly Black communities often attend schools in the dysfunctional system. These schools are characterised by poor infrastructure, underqualified teachers, high learner-educator ratios ranging from 27.2:1 in the Free State to 31.5:1 in the Northern Cape in 2013, and lack of resources among other things (McMillan & Barrie, 2012; Taylor & Yu, 2009; Wangenge-Ouma, 2012; DBE, 2015). These, as indicated in the earlier sections of this report, are a legacy of not only apartheid but also its precursor, colonialism. They undermine the right to quality education and result in a basic education system which produces predominantly Black students who are underprepared for higher education (Akoojee

& Nkomo, 2007; Smit, 2012; McMillan & Barrie, 2012; Petersen, et al., 2009; Jones, et al., 2008). For this reason, Black students were and continue to be the main subjects of both mainstream and extra-curricular ADPs.

Under-preparedness is said to be one of the major contributors to the success crisis facing Black students at university. The concept of under-preparedness is often associated with the lack of skills and competencies that students are expected to have acquired at school as prerequisites for success in higher education (Jones, et al., 2008; Kessi, 2013; Ramapela, 2012; Smit, 2012). A number of studies show that under-preparedness encompasses weakness in the English language, academic and computer illiteracy, and insufficient personal understanding of the academic culture that comes with being a first generation student. Jones, et al., (2008) found that students who are taught in English and for whom this is a second or third additional language are less likely to succeed. Rural students are particularly vulnerable in this case. They also found that proficiency in English is intricately linked to the students' socioeconomic backgrounds. The Rural Education Access Program staff in Jones et al., (2011) pointed out that their students, all of whom come from rural areas, lacked exposure to spoken and written English through resources such as books, magazines, newspapers, computers and internet which were inaccessible to the poor families of these students. This problem is exacerbated for students from rural areas and townships for whom English is not a first language and who are taught in their mother tongue at school (Dass-Brailsford, 2005). Given that the medium of instruction at university is English, these students face a significant learning challenge. Even though academic language is "no one's mother tongue" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1965), it is more accessible to students whose first language is English.

McMillan and Barrie (2012) found that most rural students are 'first generation' students and lack access to experienced people who can help them learn to cope with the academic and sociocultural demands of higher education. This leaves them underprepared. The term 'first generation' refers to students who are the first in their family to enrol at university (Jones, et al., 2008; McMillan & Barrie, 2012). This means that these students' families lack the educational capital to aid their integration and support them in their studies (Jones, et al., 2008). These students are "particularly vulnerable to the disorientation and dislocation associated with transition to university" (McMillan & Barrie, 2012, p. 7).

The over-emphasis on under-preparedness as an impediment to success excuses higher education institutions from taking responsibility for students' failure (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Jones, et al., 2008). The most common higher education response to the need to provide support to students who are deemed under-prepared is the argument that this is not the responsibility of higher education since it only begins its programs where schools left off (Yeld, 2009). As van Heerden (2011) argues in my opening quote, the higher education sector needs to outgrow the "student under-preparedness paradigm" and begin to prepare itself for what the students it serves bring with them. Yeld (2009) argues that it has to improve its own curricula which is the only variable under its control which contributes to the success crisis. In the same line of thought, Jones, et al., (2008) maintain that under-preparedness should not be understood merely as a deficit that students bring to university because even universities themselves are equally underprepared for their new student body. This leads to the issue of higher education institutions' slow transformation. Many Black students in historically white universities feel alienated from the university and its culture because it does not cater for their social needs. This affects their academic performance and

contributes to the success crisis (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Moposho & Stevens, 2016; Sennett, et al., 2003; Soudien, 2008).

In a recent study of the identities of Black South African women in higher education, Moposho and Stevens (2016) found that students' articulations of their experience in a historically white university suggest that they feel alienated by these universities' perpetuation of the discourse of the country's apartheid past. According to Makobela (2001), as cited in Moposho and Stevens (2016), Black students' feelings of alienation evidences continuing racial exclusion in institutions of higher learning. This sense of alienation, for many Black students, produces a sense of inferiority because of their experiences of education prior to their university experience (Moposho & Stevens, 2016). This, they argue, is because the historically White university offers a completely different "cultural experience through language, behaviour and dress, adding to an experience of entering into a new world where one does not fully belong" (Moposho & Stevens, 2016, p. 7). This experience of alienation significantly affects students' academic performance and consequently contributes to the success crisis.

The underrepresentation of Black academics in the academy is itself an alienating factor for Black students. Strikingly, more than two decades into democracy, the racial composition of the academic (research and teaching) staff at historically white South African universities still reflects the inequalities of the past. According to 2011 statistics from the Department of Higher Education and Training cited in Naicker (2016), at the University of the Witwatersrand, where Black students constitute 74% of the student body, the percentage of permanent Black academic staff was at a low 32%. At the University of Cape Town where Black students constitute 51% of the student body, the percentage of permanent Black academic staff was at a 28%. Rhodes University which had 59% Black students, had only

20% permanent Black academics. At the University of Pretoria, 46% of students were Black and only 20% of the permanent academic staff was Black. The situation is worse at Stellenbosch University with 32% Black students and 18% permanent Black academics.

These statistics affirm claims about the transformation of the curriculum and staff composition as students of the #FeesMustFall keep saying, "who teaches matters, and what they teach matters more" (Naicker, 2016, p. 56). Naicker (2016) argues that the situation that culminated in the #FeesMustFall movement includes a moment of disconnect at historically white universities which have been complacent for a long time while the demographics of its student body have been drastically changing even at post-graduate level. These demographic changes occur in a context of an institutional culture and practices that remain decidedly white and alienating to the Black students. The culture and practices of Black students came into direct conflict with the culture and practices of these institutions. Thus, the protests of the #FeesMustFall movement bring into question the very foundations and alienating practices of these institutions (Naicker, 2016).

Waghid (2016) makes an important point in relation to the alienation of Black students in higher education. If alienation is understood in Marxist terms, the commodification of education alienates disadvantaged Black students from education itself. In many universities, students-the majority of whom was Black- who were involved in the #FeesMustFall movement protests have been asked to not be disruptive as universities get more and more commodified, leaving many Black students with dropping out of university as the only alternative (Naicker, 2016). This ensures that they vanish from the university and higher education remains the privilege of White students, further perpetuating the stereotyping of Black people as uneducated and lacking intellectual capacity. Stereotypes like this have profound implications for the academic performance of those Black students who do gain

access to higher education. The findings of numerous social psychological experiments carried out by Claude Steele, together with his students and colleagues, on students from marginalised racial groups and women in maths at various competitive higher education institutions in the United States of America show that negative stereotypes create identity contingencies that can lead to underperformance (Steele, 2010).

Identity contingencies are the things that one has to deal with because of his or her social identity in a particular situation in order to get what they want or need in that situation (Steele, 2010). Steele (2010) argues that students who come from a racial group that is negatively stereotyped as a lacking intellectual capability face a particular kind of identity contingency-that of stereotype threat- "a situational predicament in which individuals are at risk, by dint of their actions or behaviours, of confirming negative stereotypes about their group. It is the resulting sense that one might be judged in terms of a negative stereotype..." (Inzlicht, 2012, pp. 5-6). This identity contingency causes anxiety and frustration and it leads the person of a stereotyped racial group to invest all his or her cognitive resources towards defending themselves from the stereotype threat. This results in poor performance. Due to the effect of stereotype threat, places like lecture halls and university campuses, though they are ostensibly the same for all students, are actually different places for different people depending on their social group. Different people have different contingencies to deal within these places (Inzlicht, 2012; Steele, 2010).

Higher Education's Response to the Crisis

Higher education's response to the success crisis has largely been academic development programs (ADPs) (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Scott, 2009). According to HEQC (2007, p. 74) as cited in Scott (2009, p. 22) academic development is:

> A field of research and practice that aims to enhance the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning in higher education, and enable institutions and the higher education system to meet key educational goals, particularly in relation to equity of access and outcomes. Academic development encompasses four interlinked areas of work: Student Development (particularly foundational and skills oriented provision), staff development, curriculum development and institutional development.

From this definition, it is clear that Academic Development is a multifaceted concept. However, in practice in South Africa ADPs focus more on students (Scott, 2009). Therefore, in this study, this concept will be used to refer to interventions that focus on students' academic development.

Scott (2009) and Boughey (2010) provide an excellent account of the emergence and the evolution of these interventions in South Africa. They emerged, in a form of what was then called Academic Support Programs (ASPs), in the early 1980s as a response to the perceived need of a few Black students who were accepted[3] into White-English-Medium Liberal universities which included the University of the Witwatersrand, University of Cape Town, University of Natal and Rhodes University. Underpinning these programs, was a common-sense-based deficit assumption which led to the construction of these students as lacking in academic and social skills, language proficiency, key conceptual knowledge areas, and critical thinking ability (Boughey, 2010). The other assumption was that the 'deficiencies' of these students could be addressed through interventions that are located outside the mainstream curriculum, not based on any form of research, and conducted by practitioners

[3] This was after the Extension of University Education Act of 1959 was passed.

who were not competent to induct students to the content of mainstream instruction. As liberal as these programs were, they were not without limitations.

Over time, it was observed that students that participated in these programs, including bridging and foundational courses, began to fail when they entered mainstream instruction. It was also recognised that the other unintended outcome was the marginalisation and marking of Black students as different (Boughey, 2010). This raised concerns about the capacity of these programs to achieve their objectives. For this reason, they were put under much scrutiny in the mid-1980s to the extent that even the concept of "support" itself was found to be narrow and having condescending connotations of remediation and inferiority attached to it (Scott, 2009). Then concerned academics called for a new approach which was to address the limitations of ASPs. This led to the birth of what is now known as ADPs.

The concept of "development" was taken to be a suitable replacement for "support" because it is forward looking and has positive connotations attached to it (Scott, 2009). The change of name was also accompanied by the incorporation of these programs into the mainstream curriculum as to overcome the limitations of ASPs. This new approach focused on the cognitive and academic components more than the psycho-social component of students' development using interventions such as foundational courses, tutorials, bridging courses, extended programs (Davidowitz & Schreiber, 2008). While these programs are widely accepted in South African higher education policy and institutions, as a response to the success crisis, their effectiveness is still a matter of contestation.

On the one hand, these programs are praised for the ways in which they benefit the students they serve (Heydenrych & Case, 2015; Potgieter, et al., 2015; Smith, 2013; Smith, et al., 2014; Ramapela, 2012; Wood & Lithauer, 2005). Wood and Lithauer (2005) found that

students who participate in a foundational programme at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University tend to perform better in later degree studies than those who do not. And, that this program also fosters development in the social and emotional spheres of students' lives. It improved students' self-knowledge, sense of self-worth, attitude, communication and self-management skills, as well as the ability to form a support system. Ramapela (2012) found that ADPs at Tshwane University of Technology enabled students to acquire content knowledge and academic skills which improved their performance. Similarly, Smith (2013) found that the AD course in first and second-year chemistry at the University of Cape Town had positive impact AD students' academic performance so much so that AD students outperformed mainstream students. The same results were found in a Commerce Academic Development Programme (CADP) that was incorporated in first-year courses in microeconomics, accounting, statistics and information systems at the University of Cape Town (Smith, et al., 2014). Moreover, in a case study of an undergraduate engineering program at the University of Cape Town, Heydenrych and Case (2015) found that a quantitative longitudinal analysis of graduate throughput (over 20 years) demonstrated major improvements, in aggregate and also in the demographic breakdown, due to ADPs.

On the other hand, some scholars argue that these programs are limited in many ways (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Smith, et al., 2014; Jones, et al., 2008; Potgieter, et al., 2015). A statistical analysis of the impact of first-year AD courses offered in commerce, engineering and science faculties between 1999 and 2003 at the University of Cape Town showed that these courses did not improve the graduation rates of AD students relative to their mainstream counterparts. Another study found that though some AD students indicated that they had a positive experience of the BSc four-year programme (BFYP), an access program in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences at the University of Pretoria, others

expressed frustrations resulting from the high workload and inability to cope that comes with participating in this program (Potgieter, et al., 2015). Jones et al., (2008) found that students participating in ADPs acknowledge their role in helping them cope with the academic demands of higher education despite the stigma attached to these programs.

Jones et al., (2008) found that foundational and extended programs were associated with 'stupidity' and students who participated in these programs were stigmatised by those who did not. Due to this stigma, some students ended up not attending. Kessi (2013) attests to this. She argues that in these programs, Black students are represented in stereotypical and stigmatising ways. She adds that they translate into rehabilitation of a defective student instead of being mechanisms for addressing institutional stigma which excludes capable Black students who would not succeed without receiving the necessary support. Therefore, while they are beneficial in some ways, they are often criticised for maintaining the institutions' status quo (Boughey, 2010). In other words, they have not been able to overcome the limitations of ASPs. This is evident in some of the conceptual flaws of AD.

Akoojee and Nkomo (2007) argue that ADPs are still marginalised among institutional practices and they move the responsibility of effective teaching and learning to the margins of the institution. The AD strategy perceives the problem of disadvantage as located within the students given that it is based on the assumption that Black students are inherently deficient. Due to limited resources offered for ADPs, AD remains a project that cannot be expanded to serve all students. The AD strategy is racialized because of the race-based intake of most ADPs. However, it can also be argued that the race-based criteria for state funding- particularly the foundation grant- for ADP keep these programs racialised (Boughey, 2010; DHET, 2012). The success of such programs is often measured based on enrolments and not outcomes.

It is evident from the literature provided thus far that much research has been done to understand ADPs. However, many of these studies focus on conventional Academic Development Programs (ADPs), that is, ADPs that are part of and dependent on mainstream curriculum (Boughey, 2010; Ramapela, 2012; Davidowitz & Schreiber, 2008; Scott, 2009; Wood & Lithauer, 2005). This study, therefore, deviated from this trend and asked: In which ways do extracurricular ADPs contribute to students' journeys to graduation? Focusing on the role of REAP and other factors that facilitate academic success, this study addresses this question from the perspective of its participants.

Three

Why, How and To What End?

Qualitative research is enquiry into the personal worlds of others that, if one is fortunate, becomes a journey into oneself. Qualitative inquiry offers opportunities for the researcher to inquire into oneself while enquiring into the other –Sears (1992, p. 147), cited in Mehra (2012)

As a Black first generation student from a low-income family in a rural area in Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN), I encountered most of the odds that are often encountered by students from disadvantaged backgrounds at university. Against all the odds, I performed well for the most part of my undergraduate studies. In my third year (2014) of undergraduate study, I was awarded the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship (MMUF)[4] which got me thinking about education as a vehicle for social mobility. It was not until then that I developed an interest in exploring factors that facilitate academic success for students from disadvantaged backgrounds which led to my final year research project, the findings of which suggested that students from disadvantaged backgrounds appreciate the contribution of ADPs, particularly foundational programs, to their academic success (Ndaba, 2015). Therefore, at the inception of this project, my aim was to further explore the contribution of preparatory ADPs to students' academic success, particularly focusing on the Targeting Talent Program (TTP)[5] at the University of the Witwatersrand.

[4] MMUF is the centerpiece of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's initiatives to increase diversity in the academic staff of institutions of higher learning.

[5] TTP is a pre-university ADP, housed in the Student Equity and Talent Development Unit at the University of the Witwatersrand, aimed at increasing the academic, social and psychological preparation of academically talented learners from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds for higher education. It focuses more on Math, Science and English competencies (SETMU, 2017).

However, as I reviewed literature, I realised that there is a paucity of research on extracurricular ADPs while there is, though not enough, significant research on preparatory programs, especially foundation programs focusing particularly on disciplines other than the humanities as I stated in the previous chapter (Potgieter, et al., 2015; Smith, et al., 2014; Smith, 2013). After this realisation, my focus shifted from the preparatory to extracurricular ADPs, particularly REAP. This is why the central question of this study was: In which ways do extracurricular ADPs contribute to students' journeys to graduation? From this question emanated two sub-questions which this study addresses. First, what are participants' family and school backgrounds? Secondly, what are participants perceptions of the role of REAP in their journeys to graduation? I chose REAP because it was an extracurricular ADP that catered for students in humanities and Social Sciences. My aims in this study are to establish an understanding of REAP students family and school backgrounds from their own perspective and to elicit their perceptions of the role of REAP in their journeys to graduation. To achieve these aims, I employed a qualitative research methodology which allowed me to get an insight into participants' experiences, meanings and perceptions because it operates within the interpretive epistemology (Bryman, 2008; de Vos et al., 2011). I used a case study design which, according to Cresswell (2009), allows for an in-depth exploration of a program or individuals.

Due to the small scale of this study, as a Master's project, I only focused on the SoSS cohort of REAP. This meant that the population from which I sampled participants was twelve former REAP students. One of the former REAP mentors gave me the contact details of the cohort. Seven had both email addresses and cell phone numbers, four were emails only and one was only a cell phone number which is no longer working. I sent an email, with the participant information sheet (PIS) attached (see appendix A), to the eleven email addresses

asking former REAP students to participate in this study. I hoped that at least five of them would agree to participate. Unfortunately, four responded confirming that they wanted to participate. Two responded saying they would have loved to participate but they could not because they were not working in Gauteng. One works in KZN and the other works outside South Africa. Two did not respond at all and there was no other way to contact them because I did not have their cell phone numbers. The other two did not respond to the email I sent. I then phoned them on their cell phones but I could not reach one of them because the number was no longer working. The other said she does not have time because of work. Therefore, she could not participate. I ended up having a convenient sample of four participants in this study. Convenient sampling is merely including in the sample people from the target population who are easily accessible and willing to participate (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

Using a semi-structured interview schedule (see appendix B), I conducted two in-depth one-on-one interviews with each participant. These took 40-60 minutes each. I ended up with a total of eight interviews. I chose semi-structured in-depth interviews because, in line with aims of this study, they allowed me "to get a 'window' on reality from the point of view of participants and allow them to tell their story as they wish, identifying the issues that are important to them" (Bouma, et al., 2009, p. 201). Also, it allowed me to have some degree of control over what is covered in the interview while also giving the interviewees a great deal of flexibility to raise additional complementary issues. I had the flexibility to ask questions that were not originally part of the interview schedule. This is the advantage of semi-structured interviews (Bryman, 2008). Two of the participants preferred to be interviewed at their workplace during their lunch break since they work around Johannesburg. One preferred to have interviews on campus since she lived in the Braamfontein area. The other preferred to

have the interviews in a restaurant in Braamfontein since there were protests accompanied by violence on the WITS Campus. According to Monette et al., (2011), it was my ethical obligation as a researcher to prevent participants from being exposed to any form of harm, including the violence.

The first interview focused on participants' family and school backgrounds. The second one focused on participants' perceptions of the role of REAP on their journeys to graduation. In the first interviews, I explained to participants what the study is about and what participating in it entails as it is explained in the PIS which I emailed to them prior to the first interview. I also provided each participant with a hard copy of the PIS to ensure that they know everything about the study. It is ethical research practice to ensure that potential participants are well informed about every aspect of the study which might positively or negatively influence their decision to give consent to participate in the study. This includes its purpose, potential risks, benefits, and the extent of confidentiality etc. (Monette et al., 2011; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Participants gave consent to being interviewed and audio recorded by voluntarily signing the consent forms in appendix C and D. According to Rubin and Babbie (1999), potential participants should by no means be compelled to participate in any research study. In total, I had eight audio-recordings of in-depth interviews which I personally transcribed verbatim. I assigned pseudonyms to each of the former REAP students and their mentors to ensure that they remain anonymous. This, according to Wiles (2003) is the best way of ensuring participants' anonymity. It is an important ethical practice in qualitative research to ensure that, as a researcher, I do not report the data in a way that can be traced back to those who participated in the study (Monette, et al., 2011).

Seeing that I did not get as many participants as I had anticipated, I decided to use secondary data from REAP progress reports, mainly the *REAP SoSS Final Report February 2013 to*

February 2014 by van der Wiel, et al., (2014). This is data I would not have otherwise accessed. Attached to this report were excerpts from the farewell letters that the SoSS cohort wrote to REAP mentors and the complete letters that mentors wrote to students at the end of the program. These data provided an insight into the perceptions of the former REAP students that I could not interview. Mentors' letters gave me an insight into mentor's observations and experiences of working with the SoSS cohort. However, this had its own limitations. Since there were only excerpts from students' farewell letters, there is a potential for a source bias- the tendency of reporters to present a more optimistic or pessimistic view of their program - which could not be avoided in this study. Moreover, letters from mentors were not written by mentors individually, therefore, I worked with them as reflections of mentors as a collective. For this reason, the potential differences in individual mentors' experiences of the students could not be ascertained. I stored these letters, the interview transcripts and participants contact details as Microsoft word format in my password-protected personal computer to safeguard the confidentiality of this information. The ethics of research require that, as researcher, I should keep such information confidential, especially personal information like contact details of participants (Israel & Hay, 2006; Johnson & Long, 2007).

I analysed the data according to the three staged of thematic analysis outlined by King and Horrocks (2010). The first stage is that of descriptive coding. At this stage, I closely read through the transcripts and the letters to familiarise myself with the data, more especially secondary data. Even though I collected and transcribed the data, closely reading the texts helped me to also be aware of unexpected responses. Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 58), as cited in De Wet and Erasmus (2005, p. 30), recommend a close reading of transcripts "for regularly occurring phrases, and with an eye to surprising or counterintuitive material".

Moreover, reading the texts, especially the students' and mentors' letters, gave me an opportunity to interact with the data and to understand its fragments in context. This is a central practice in qualitative research (de Wet & Erasmus, 2005). Therefore, I read the texts more than once. Each time I read, I highlighted the regularly occurring phrases and the unexpected responses that were relevant to answering the main questions of this study and I wrote brief comments on the margins of the page. Based on these comments, I then assigned descriptive quotes to the data as it is recommended by King and Horrocks (2010). That is, describing what is of interest in participants' accounts to answering the main research questions (King & Horrocks, 2010).

The second stage is that of interpretive coding. This is categorising the descriptive codes and interpreting the meaning of each category in relation to the answer it provides to the main questions of the study (King & Horrocks, 2010). This was not a linear process because I had to identify patterns and relationships in the data which sometimes required me to go back to stage one and refine the descriptive codes as I moved from one transcript to another. For this reason, this stage of coding was more time consuming than the first. After interpreting the meaning of each category, I read through the transcripts again to determine how the interpretive codes manifest in each transcript. This enabled me to make sure that I do not miss the nuanced ways in which the meaning was reflected in each account of the different participants. In so doing, I identified the segments of the data that satisfactorily captured the meaning of each category in order to use them as evidence in the writing of this report.

The last step of the analytical process is to derive overarching themes (King & Horrocks, 2010). At this stage, I derived overarching themes from the interpretive codes I developed in the preceding stage by considering the complex relationships and patterns between descriptive codes. It also required me to go back and forth between the first, the second and

the third stages of the analytical process to be able to identify the right themes. What also helped me is to seek to understand the data in relation to literature. It is at this stage of the analytical process that critical thinking about the data became even more crucial. According to De Wet and Erasmus (2005), qualitative analysis is not merely about mechanically following procedure but it also involves critical and creative thinking. Therefore, in order to better understand the themes that emanated from the study, I had to read more literature than I reviewed in the previous chapter.

In the succeeding two chapters, I present my findings to answer the main questions of this study. Chapter four– *Against All Odds* - focuses on answering the question about participants' perceptions of their family and school backgrounds. This provides a backdrop against which the role of REAP in its former students' journeys to graduation is understood. Chapter five- *Reaching for Excellence, Achieving Graduation*- outlines former REAP students' perceptions of this role. However, as it is stated in David and Sutton (2000), since this is a small scale study based on a convenient sample from a single cohort of REAP, the findings I present in the succeeding chapters cannot be generalised to all the cohorts of REAP and to other extracurricular ADPs. Nevertheless, they provide an insight into the potential of such programs and the potential ways in which future academic development programming may be done to satisfactorily meet the diverse needs of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Four

Against All Odds

….the problem for South African higher education will not be race- at least not in the Black majority state. The problem will be the background class and regional character of students as urban institutions are strengthened and deracialised while rural universities remain marginalised in terms of institutional capacity, racial character and class status. The problem for urban institutions, on the other hand, will be the complex task of transforming institutional cultures in ways that are more inclusive and accommodating of the statistical diversity of the student population. - Jansen (2004, p. 301)

Nozizwe "Nozi" Motsepe

"…the punishment if you do not pass would be going to a Black school."

Nozi is a Black African woman from a township in Pietermaritzburg, KZN. She has three siblings, an older sister and two younger brothers. She grew up in a suburb in Clifdale, KZN, where her family lived in a mansion with her grandparents before relocating to Pietermaritzburg. Her mother is a teacher of brail in a special school for disabled children. Her father, who passed away in 2015, was a high school dropout. He owned minibus taxis and farms in Pietermaritzburg. *"The financial situation at home was stable because my dad did bring in the income. He was supporting us in High School"*, said Nozi. Moving from a double story mansion in Clifdale into a five-roomed house in a township was a difficult transition for her. "*And we couldn't have a helper anymore because there was no more space in the house to have someone* [to] *help us. So, we needed to take that responsibility and clean in the house and wash and do all those things",* she said.

She attended private primary schools in Hillcrest. Her grandfather, a Bishop at their church, would drive her to and from school. "*Primary helped us because you interrelate with other White kids and your parents try a lot to not bring in that you must go to a Black school, you*

know. You must go to an inter-racial school, boys and girls", she said. Her father felt it was important to send his kids to "White" schools because *"*[t]*hat is where you will learn. Go with other kids"*. "*So we were the Blacks amongst a lot of White other kids",* Nozi said. He believed children do not learn in "Black" schools because of corporal punishment. Nozi suspects that corporal punishment was the reason her father dropped out of school. "*He said to us, the punishment if you do not pass would be going to a Black school*. *So you knew that in the White school there is something to learn and if I do not pass, I will go to a Black school where no one cares about you",* Nozi explained. For high school, she attended an all-girls Christian private school which she described as similar to "*your St Stithians* [and] *your expensive rich schools*" that do not tolerate ill-discipline. Her father paid the fees. Different companies and universities came to her high school to inform matric learners about the career opportunities and academic programs they offer. In the interview, I asked her if she considers herself to come from a disadvantaged background. She said no because her parents worked so hard for her not to come from such a background. "*My dad had money coming in from the farms. My mom was a teacher getting paid. Every month end she gets paid, KFC and Debonairs. So I would never think it is a disadvantaged background",* she stated.

Initially, Nozi wanted to study Dramatic Arts but her father would not fund her studies because he believed that a degree in dramatic arts was worthless. Then she ended up studying towards a Bachelor of Arts degree with geography. Her fees were paid by her father in her first year of study. Her mother paid in the second year, NSFAS took over in the third year. Then her post-graduate studies were funded by a government bursary. Her parents were not very supportive of her at university. "*I never received support until the time I graduated. I think that is the only time they came to Jo'burg"* she said. Sometimes they would not give her

a living allowance and she would sometimes run out of food. "*So we did promotions to get by, work. I mean you are studying and working at the same time",* she explained.

In the first year, she experienced challenges with accommodation since she lived with her sister, who was doing her Honours degree at the time, in a flat off campus. *"My dad would not want to pay rent"*, she said. They would be locked out if they did not pay rent. She did not experience many academic challenges, except that people told her sociology is difficult and she believed them. That made her get poor grades at first but she improved during the course of the year. She also mentioned that some lecturers, especially in the sociology department, would assume that their students know and understand what they are teaching even if the students did not. This was a challenge for her. She managed to overcome these challenges and eventually graduated. She described herself as a well disciplined and super focused hard worker who is always willing to learn. She was mostly able to strike a balance between her social life and her studies. "*But REAP did really help me. It really did",* she said. However, her fiancé, who was her boyfriend then, also helped her by proofreading and providing critical feedback on her essays and assignments.

Nozi comes from a nuclear family- a family that consist of both biological parents and their children (Moore, 2001). Sociological theories- socialisation, learning and control theories- suggest that children from nuclear families get more economic, social, and cultural resources, which help facilitate educational attainment (Biblarz & Raftery, 1999). Evidence from national studies in South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, United States of America, Britain, Bolivia and other countries also show this positive correlation between family structure and educational attainment (Anderson, 2003). Anderson (2003) argues that family structure influences educational attainment in two ways. Firstly, parents' decision to invest in their children will influence whether a child attends school, quality of the school and the amount of

money they spend on the child's schooling. Biological parents are often the highest investors. This is evident in Nozi's story. Her father invested a lot of money in her education while her mother focused on providing for basic needs in the household such as food. This means that when both parents are present, they share the financial burden of raising their children. Secondly, "children who receive lower levels of investment each consecutive year will be more likely over time to fail, to fall behind in school, and to drop out of school" (p.2). However, Nozi's persistence in school cannot be solely attributed to the structure of her family. Another important contributing factor is her family's socioeconomic status.

Her story suggests that she comes from a middle-class family. The term "middle-class" is a contested one. However, I use it to refer to people who are in possession of a university degree and working in white-collar jobs- managers, senior officials, legislatures, professionals, technicians, and others. (Erbert, 2015; Ndletyana, 2014). It also includes those who earn an income between R31 501 – R65 250 per month (Anon., 2016). While historically, the South African middle-class was predominantly White, since the debut of democracy it has become more racially diverse compared to the working-class which has remained predominantly Black (Ndletyana, 2014). There has been a significant increase in the 'Black middle-class' (Erbert, 2015). In this way, being Black does not necessarily mean that one comes from a disadvantaged background. Race alone has become a poor measure of disadvantage. Nozi attests to this, even though she is a Black African, she does not consider herself as coming from a disadvantaged background.

Nozi's mother is a professional, a teacher. Although her father was not educated, he earned enough money from his businesses to be able to pay for his children at what Nozi described as "*your expensive rich"* private school and at university. In 2016, the annual fee at the

primary school she attended was R25 000.00[6] and high school annual fees were R168 000.00 including boarding. The schools she attended, which I will henceforth refer to as 'White Schools' given that they serve a predominantly white student body, are in the well-functioning subsystem of South Africa's basic education system which caters for the wealthiest 20-25 percent of school children (Spaull, 2013). Literature shows that these expensive private and former Model C schools provide good quality education and they better prepare their learners for high education (Spaull, 2013; Taylor, 2011). All the challenges that Nozi faced at university had less, if anything at all, to do with under-preparedness for higher education. Given her school background, this implies that she was adequately prepared for higher education. She did not have to go to universities during open days to acquire information. Universities came to her school to provide learners with the information they need to know about applying to university, an advantage that is unheard of in 'Black' schools- poor public and cheaper former Model C schools that serve a predominantly Black student body.

The other advantage that Nozi had because of her family background was that she is a third generation student. Her mother and her older sister have been to university before. Literature shows that students who have parents or siblings who have experience of higher education are better prepared for higher education because their parents and siblings guide them on how to navigate the higher education system (Jones, et al., 2008; McMillan & Barrie, 2012). In her first year at university, Nozi stayed with her sister who was doing her Honours degree in the same institution. This means she had her support and guidance on how to navigate and adjust

[6] This figure was taken from the schools to show how expensive the school is. This may not be the fee at the time Nozi was at primary school.

to the institutional structures. This was well demonstrated in her response when I asked her to describe her experience of the application and registration processes at university.

> *I was very fortunate because my sister obviously was a year above but her friends were here at Wits doing medicine now and the other one was doing psychology. So, it was easy to go through the process of helping me go through the subjects.*

This quote shows how social capital can be beneficial for a new student to adjust and navigate the structures of the higher education institution. The network of friends that Nozi's sister had at university became Nozi's social capital. According to Stone and Hughes (2002, p. 1), as cited in Forsyth & Adams (2004), "Social Capital can be understood as networks of social interactions characterised by norms of trust and reciprocity, that can facilitate outcomes at varying scales". It is important for student's adjustment at university.

Bongiwe "Bongi" Maseko

"I am the person that I am because of my granny,"

Bongi is a Black African young woman from Warden, a small town in the Free State province. She, together with her other cousins, was raised by her widowed paternal grandmother. Her mother and father left her at an early age to look for jobs in Johannesburg. Her father worked at a supermarket in Hillbrow, an inner-city residential neighbourhood of Johannesburg. He became unemployed when the supermarket closed down in 2007. Her mother worked as a domestic worker at a hotel in Johannesburg. Bongi did not have a close relationship with her parents. She, her cousins, uncles and aunts were mainly dependent on her grandmother's pension grant. However, her grandmother also had a vegetable garden to provide for her grandchildren. Vegetables and fruits were almost their daily bread. *"She would make dried fruit from scratch using peaches from her trees",* said Bongi. Dried fruits

were the only snack they had because she could not *"afford chocolate, Simba chips or sweets or anything like that"*. Even though her grandmother never went to school at all, she valued education. She learned to read, speak and write English when she worked as a "*domestic worker for White colonists"*. She personally taught Bongi to count and to speak English before she even started pre-school. "*She would write things down for me and tell me to read it out*", said Bongi.

Bongi attended rural public schools from grade one through twelve. She started primary school in 1998 and finished high school in 2008. She, her uncle and one of her cousins were the three people who finished matric in her family. She was the first to attend university. Both her parents did not get to matric. She was bullied by other children in primary school because she was performing better than most of her classmates. She said some would even say, *"Your grandmother is a witch, how can you understand this and this even before you started school. We're going to beat you up"*, but her grandmother continued encouraging her to focus on her schoolwork and not be discouraged. Nevertheless, she applauded her primary school for teaching her what she regards as important values such as the Christian bible, life skills, health and hygiene. "*There are a lot of things that I learned there that I still remember now. And then, even though they used corporal punishment. I understand its value then. It worked. It worked then, because there was no idea of abuse and all that. We understood that it was discipline so to say"*, she said.

However, the learners in her high school were not very disciplined and the pass rate for Matric was very low. "*I am not gonna blame the teachers because there are a lot of systems that they put in place for us to excel, but a lot of young people we not really up for that. We had extra classes as from grade ten*", said Bongi. Her high school lacked numerous resources. It did not have a science laboratory, the furniture was mostly broken, old and of

poor quality. The school did not have a budget for cleaning services. The learners had to clean the classes themselves every day. Even though the teachers were diligent, the school had a shortage of textbooks and other teaching material.

In grade 10, one teacher saw potential in her and decided to mentor her. She helped her understand herself better and the career path she wanted to take. She arranged for Bongi and other learners to attend open days at universities in Johannesburg. When they visited the University of Johannesburg (UJ) in 2007, Bongi got herself application forms which she filled in and gave to her father to post them to the university and pay the application fee mid-2008. She passed her matric and found out that her father did not submit the application forms. That meant that she did not have a space at university but she was not discouraged. She convinced her father to take her to UJ. They both hitchhiked from Warden to Johannesburg but unfortunately, she could not get a space at UJ. Then she tried at WITS. Fortunately, WITS accepted her to register for a social science degree. However, she did not have money to pay the registration fee. Then she phoned Nomusa, a Chartered Accountant from Warden, who was part of the team that organized trips to university with Bongi's high school mentor. Nomusa offered to pay her registration fee. The rest of her tuition fees were paid by the Mayor of her local municipality, in Warden.

The first year was very difficult for her. She stayed with her cousin in Soweto which is far away from campus. There were times when she lacked money for transport and would not attend classes for weeks. This meant missing lectures, tutorials and some tests. Later the same year, she was raped on campus. This adversely affected her to the extent that she dismally failed and got academically excluded. In 2011, with the help of the Student Representative Council (SRC), she successfully appealed her academic exclusion. She also got funding from

the NSFAS which paid for her accommodation closer to campus and her living expenses from the first year until she graduated.

She received a lot of social and spiritual support from her friends whom she found at God First, a Christian student organisation at WITS. *"Our friendship was more like sisterhood because there are a lot of things that they know that even my family does not know that I have gone through and also when I couldn't afford toiletries or anything. They have always closed that gap without making me feel like I am struggling or anything. I never felt like I was struggling actually while I was with them. They made sure that whenever their parents gave them an allowance, they would share it with me"*, she said. She also began therapy at the Counselling and Career Development Unit (CCDU) at WITS. She received academic support from the WITS Writing Centre and from the REAP. She described herself as a prayerful woman of faith who values education and is creative, relentless, self-aware, self-disciplined and an independent thinker. She said these qualities, among other things, helped her to overcome the challenges she faced at varsity. *"I am the person that I am because of my granny"*, she said. She believes that if it was not for her grandmother, she would not have been the strong woman she is today.

This story shows that Bongi grew up in a single-parent extended family, with the single parent being her widowed grandmother. An extended family is one which consists of at least three generations (Moore, 2001). Echoing the findings of Makiwane (2011), this challenges the dominant discourse which views older persons as passive recipients of care and financial support from younger generations. Bongi's grandmother cared for and supported her grandchildren, not the other way round. Research shows that in South Africa it is common for grandmothers to be the primary caregivers of their grandchildren (Makiwane, 2011). According to Statistics South Africa (2012), as cited in Pillay (2016), census 2011 shows that

25 percent of South African households have 'alternative' family structures- such as grandmothers living with their grandchildren, child-headed households, and others. This is more prevalent in rural communities (Pillay, 2016). This is due to the absence of biological parents, among other factors, as a result of death (usually caused by illnesses related to the AIDs pandemic) and the migrant labour system (Makiwane, 2011). In Bongi's case, migrant labour is the reason for the absence of her parents in her childhood. For this reason, she said *"I do not have a functioning relationship. I do not know how I can label it. I do have a relationship because I know that this is my mom and dad"*. This demonstrates the detrimental effects of the migrant labour system on the family structure. It creates fractured families.

Sociological theory predicts that children from 'alternative' families like Bongi's get fewer economic, social, and cultural resources, that facilitate educational attainment (Biblarz & Raftery, 1999). Unlike Nozi's family which had multiple streams of income, Bongi's family was solely dependent on her grandmother's pension grant.[7] This is because both her parents were blue-collar workers earning very little income. So, Bongi's grandmother received no remittances from them. As a domestic worker, at the time of her daughter's childhood, Bongi's mother earned much less than the recommended minimum wage of R2 065.47 per month set by the South African Department of Labour for domestic workers in 2014 (Herman, 2015). Therefore, given the family income, even though Bongi's grandmother valued education, she could not afford to send Bongi to White schools to get a good quality basic education. Bongi, therefore, attended public schools which provide poor quality education.

[7] The older-persons grant is an amount of R1 500 per month for persons over the age of 60 years and R1 520 for persons who are over the age of 75 years. It is paid by the government to people who are South African citizens or permanent residents, who live in South Africa, not receiving another social grant, not cared for in a state facility (Anon., 2016).

Even though she commended her primary school for teaching her important life values, she was a victim of bullying in the same school. Research shows that bullying is a common phenomenon in South African schools (Laas & Boezaart, 2014; Rossouw, 2003; de Wet, 2005). It shows that in 2008, more than one million learners in South Africa were victims of some form of violence[8] and in 2012 a study conducted by the University of South Africa found that in a sample of 3 371 learners, 1 158 (34.4%) had been bullied (Laas & Boezaart, 2014). This alludes to the lack of discipline in South African schools. Bongi blames the low pass rate of her high school on the ill-discipline of the learners and not the teachers. However, she also alluded to the lack of resources in her school- shortage of books and furniture, not having a science lab and substandard classrooms- a common phenomenon in public schools in the malfunctioning subsystem of South Africa's basic education (McMillan & Barrie, 2012; Taylor & Yu, 2009; Spaull, 2013). Due to these factors- ill-discipline and lack of resources- it makes sense to argue that Bongi received an education of poorer quality compared to Nozi. This is an example of the way in which the well-documented inequality between the subsystems of basic education in South Africa manifests itself in students' personal lives (McMillan & Barrie, 2012; Taylor & Yu, 2009; Spaull, 2013).

The inequality of access to quality basic education, demonstrated by the stories of Bongi and Nozi, is connected to the socioeconomic inequalities between their families. As Spaull (2013) suggests that the children of the wealthy attend good quality white schools and the children of the poor attend poor quality black public schools. Bongi comes from a poor family whereas Nozi comes from a rich family. This relates to the growing socioeconomic inequality among

[8] This does not necessarily mean bullying and it is not limited to learner-on-learner violence. However, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) which broadly defines violence as including aspects of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, bullying is a form of violence (Laas & Boezaart, 2014).

Black people in South Africa. Research shows that with the emergence of the 'Black' middle-class, the gap between Black and White people is slowly decreasing (although it is still very big) and there is an increase in the level of inequality within racial groups, more especially among Black Africans (Dupper, 2014; Ramphele & Wilson, 1989; Terreblanche, 2002).

Bongi's grandmother could not afford to buy snacks for her grandchildren but Nozi's mother could afford fancy foods like Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) and Debonairs pizza. Bongi's grandmother and both her parents worked blue-collar jobs whereas Nozi's mother worked a white-collar job and her father was a business man. Bongi's father did not have money to pay her registration fee at university but Nozi's father could pay not only the registration but also the tuition fees. Therefore, the financial challenges Bongi encountered at university- not having money for convenient accommodation, transport, food and toiletries- are related to her family background and they affected her academic performance. I am not ignoring the fact that her experience of rape also significantly contributed to her poor academic performance and eventually being academically excluded from the university. Research shows that many students from disadvantaged backgrounds experience financial constraints which often lead to hunger, poor academic performance, and dropping out of university because of financial or academic exclusion (Breier, 2010a; Breier, 2010b; Letseka, et al., 2010; McMillan & Barrie, 2012).

Of further significance in Bongi's experience of university is that going to university meant moving to the city, far away from home. "*You know one of the challenges that I had was feeling all alone. My family being in Free State…that meant that most of the time I couldn't go home"*, she said. Research shows that the stress of living large distances from home is one of the main factors that make Black African students' adjustment at university a difficult process (Sennett, et al., 2003). This is because, for many of them, this process involves

adapting from a rural to an urban environment, and "leaving the closeness and support of extended families and small communities, to live in impersonal and isolating residences" (Sennett, et al., 2003, p. 109). However, Nozi did not mention this as a challenge she encountered at university. Given that she went to a boarding school, she was used to being away from home. This too, shows how the type of school one attends determines one's level of preparedness for higher education. Nevertheless, the good thing is that against all these odds, Bongi eventually graduated with her first degree.

Eveline (Eve) Munyoro

"...we were able to make the most out of what we've got"

Eve is a Black African woman from the inner-city of Johannesburg, the first born of four daughters. Her family is originally from Zimbabwe. They moved to South Africa when her father, who was a professional soccer player, got an opportunity to play for a team in the Premier Soccer League (PSL). Sadly, a few years later, he suffered a terrible injury and could not play anymore. *"*[H]*e never got an education so the only thing he could do was to do these jobs that do not need qualification",* said Eve. Both her parents only had matric and are working as security guards. They could not afford a lot of things but they made sure that they provided for the needs of their four children. *"So, yes life, we weren't spoon-fed. We did not get all the things that these other rich kids get but then we were able to make the most out of what we've got",* Eve stated.

Despite the fact that her parents are in the same occupation, Eve constantly referred to her father as the provider and said nothing much about her mother's contribution to providing for the family. "*My father provided. He is a provider till this day*". *"My father provided regardless because he also did not know*". *"…my father is a provider. He provided for me,*

he still provides for his family". This view of a good father as a provider is a widely held one in South Africa, even in the cases where men are not earning any income (Richter & Morerell, 2006). Bongi and Nozi also hold this view of fatherhood. They expected their fathers to provide funding for their education. Bongi developed resentment for her father because of his failure to fund her education. *"I do not know how he did not plan for me or anything",* she said. Literature suggests that the inability to fulfil the expectations of being a provider is one of the reasons many South African men abandon their parental responsibilities (Morrell, 2006; Richter & Morerell, 2006).

Eve attended a public primary school in Park Town, Johannesburg. But for high school, she went to an all-girls former Model C school in Park Town. It *"is actually a school that caters for everyone. It is a model C school, but then it was something that kids from disadvantaged backgrounds can be able to access. It was cheaper and it provided good education as well",* she explained. Since WITS University is close to her high school, she attended its open days. Since grade eight, she told herself that she will work hard in high school so that she could go study at Wits afterwards. In matric, she applied at WITS with the help and guidance of her parents and friends. She got accepted and her father paid the upfront registration fee for her. *"He actually hustled for that money because it is like your pay. That's your salary. He had to save up for that of which he managed to get"*, Eve explained. The rest of her fees were paid by the NSFAS until she graduated. For her Honours degree, she was awarded the University's Post-Graduate Merit Award (PMA) which covered her tuition fees. She was the first in her family to attend university. Two of her sisters followed after her.

First year was very difficult for her, especially the first six months. She was computer illiterate, so she had to learn how to type. In high school, only students who were doing Computer Applications Technology (CAT) as a subject were allowed to use computers. She

did not have a personal computer either. This meant relying on the university computers for her assignments. This was challenging because she stayed at home, far away from the university. She would have to stay in the computer lab at WITS until dark and then take a bus to Hillbrow. She still had to walk through the dangerous streets of Hillbrow to get to her house. "*However, my dad later got a laptop of which I started using and it made life easier. So I would just do my research at school because you know I would need the internet at varsity",* said Eve. Her friends, whom she met in class, helped her to learn to use computers. Coming from similar schooling backgrounds is what enabled them to relate to each other and eventually become friends. *"So you were comfortable speaking to someone who understood your background"*, she said.

She received academic support from her tutors and lecturers. Attending the First Year Experience (FYE) Program helped her to adjust to and cope with the demands of higher education. *"Second year was fine. I was adjusting, you know. I was adjusting. I was on my feet. Things were better because now I understood. I knew some of the things that were going on. And then ok fine, the REAP program also came into place",* she said. What kept her going despite the challenges that she experienced is consistently working hard, that she knew what she wanted and was greatly motivated by one of her first-year tutors who was a post-graduate student at the time. She also believes in the power of prayer. *"I believe that in order to make it in life, you have to pray. I prayed for guidance from God"*, she said.

Her life became much easier when she got a space at one of the student residences at WITS. However, this came with its own challenges. It meant that her parents had to provide her with a living allowance for food and other basic needs. *"It would be difficult at times because sometimes maybe my dad didn't have the money",* she said. She had to take a part-time job to cover her living expenses. *It was challenging because sometimes you would have to miss a*

few lectures there and there you know. And also the fact that now I did not have time to read for my assignments before. "To read your course packs before lectures, now you have to read after", she explained.

Even though Eve, like Nozi, comes from a nuclear family, her family's socioeconomic status distinguishes her family background from Nozi's. Eve's parents matriculated but they did not have higher education qualifications. Eve argues that this is why they worked blue-collar jobs.

> *You know these days, people are like, if you are educated, you went to university... But then with me, my parents did their matric but then as you see it wasn't enough for them to get their dream jobs. That is why they resorted to something they did not want to do.*

Here, Eve echoes van der Berg, et al., (2011) who argue that education is an important determinant of labour market prospects. "Having left school early or having received a low-quality education, most children from poor households stand at the back of the job queue and are less likely to obtain stable and lucrative employment" (van der Berg, et al., 2011, p. 8). In other words, the less qualified one is, the less likely he or she is to get lucrative employment and the more qualified one is, the more likely he or she is to get lucrative employment. This was also evident in the stories of Bongi and Nozi. Bongi's parents and her grandmother did not have higher education qualifications and they worked unstable and less lucrative jobs. But Nozi's mom had a teaching degree and she worked a more lucrative white-collar job. This, however, is not to say a higher education qualification guarantees lucrative employment. Statistics show that there is a high rate of unemployment among graduates in South Africa. According to Bhorat (2004), as cited in van Broekhuizen (2016), evidence from the 1995 October Household Survey (OHS) and March 2002 Labour Force Survey (LFS) shows that

while the overall unemployment rate is increasing, the graduate unemployment rate increased by 139% between 1995 and 2002.

While literature suggests that children from nuclear families get more economic resources, which help facilitate educational attainment (Anderson, 2003; Biblarz & Raftery, 1999), Eve's story shows that the socioeconomic status is a crucial determinant of the extent to which parents invest in their children's education. Unlike Nozi's father, Eve's father could not afford to pay his daughters university fees. *"You know that upfront fee was R7500. He actually hustled for that money because it is like your pay. That's your salary. He had to save up for that of which he managed to get"*, said Eve. This also attests to research evidence showing the socioeconomic inequalities among Black people in South Africa (Dupper, 2014; Ramphele & Wilson, 1989; Terreblanche, 2002). As in Bongi's case, Eve's parents could not afford to send her to 'white' schools. Therefore, having attended 'black' schools, she struggled because of computer illiteracy and poor academic writing skills when she started at university. These are common indicators of under-preparedness among students who attended 'black' schools (Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Jones, et al., 2008).

Eve's story broadly demonstrates the manifestation of the socioeconomic inequalities among Black people and the consequences thereof on children's education. Her family, unlike Nozi's, could not afford to hire a domestic worker. Therefore, as a first born child, she had an extra burden on her shoulders. *"I need to cook for my family. I need to do my assignments and I do not have enough time because maybe the next day I've got a lecture at 8"*, she said. As a first-generation student, she also had the pressure to set a good example to her sisters by doing well in her studies despite the challenges she encountered. When she was in the third year of study, she moved to a student residence on campus which took away the extra burden. However, this came with its own challenges. Although she had NSFAS funding, she

sometimes lacked money for food and toiletries. According to the findings of McMillan and Barrie (2012), this is more likely to happen to students who are funded by NSFAS resulting in adverse effects on their academic performance and social integration. Eve had to get a part-time job to earn an extra income. This affected her studies because she missed some of her lectures and had less time to read and study. However, Eve managed to graduate with her Bachelor's and her Honour's degrees against all odds.

Fundisiwe "Fundi" Mathegu

"The system was never meant for us"

Fundi, the first born of three children, grew up in a small village in Limpopo. *"... I grew up in a, you could say, a child headed household and my sister took care of me and my grandmother",* Fundi described her family circumstances. When she was very young, her mother left Limpopo to work as a domestic worker in a predominantly white suburb in Johannesburg. Her mother was unable to finish primary school but she could read and write both English and Afrikaans. When Fundi was in Grade four, her sister got married and Fundi had to move in with her mother who lived in a one roomed house in her employer's backyard. She started school at a rural public school in her village. It was not a good school. It mostly served children from low-income families. *"It was fashionable to go to school without your shoes. I remember this one day I was looking for a tastic bag so bad. I also wanted to carry my books in a tastic bag because other kids had that even though I had a school bag",* she said.

When she moved to Johannesburg, she attended a predominantly white former Model C primary school. The transition *"was very traumatising. It was terribly traumatising"*, she said. She could not speak, read or write neither English nor Afrikaans since her rural school

taught almost every subject in the vernacular. For this reason, she could not play with the other kids in school. She would even pretend to be sick so that she would not go to school in some days. She had to repeat Grade four because she was not coping in Grade five. Her new school was much different from her former school. It had heaters instead of blankets to warm them up in winter. Everyone had the full school uniform. It was a very hygienic school.

Her mother's employer promised to pay the school fees for her but when the time came to pay, she refused to. Therefore, her mother had to pay from her little salary. *"*[I]*t was actually very difficult for her because it was unplanned",* Fundi explained. Even though her mother did not finish high school, she valued education. She always encouraged her daughter to do well in school. Then for high school, Fundi went to a cheaper predominantly black former Model C high school. "*You know the funny thing with* [my high school] *is that it is right there in a suburb in Randburg but it services a lot of children from like your Cosmo City, you know the surrounding townships*", she said. The quality of the school was poorer compared to her primary school. It had underqualified teachers. "*I remember we had an Afrikaans teacher who couldn't teach Afrikaans",* she said. The learners in the school were not as disciplined as those in her previous school. There were gangs in the school. "*I remember there was the Indian boys had a fight with the Kasi boys. So the Kasi*[9] *boys came in a taxi and the Indians came in their Golfs. Like it was just different"*, she explained.

Her first year at university was funded by the Council bursary and NSFAS funded her thereafter. Her post-graduate studies were funded by the PMA and the National Research Foundation (NRF). She also worked part-time while she was studying in order to get extra money to cover her living expenses. "*I did not need a lot for living expenses because I was*

[9] Kasi is a South African slang word for "Township"

involved at CAF a lot and a lot of my social life was church and church doesn't need money. And my fashion taste is very different. So I never had to worry about keeping up with the trends because I was worried about doing my own thing", she said. The first year was very challenging for her. The teaching pace was too high. She struggled with time management, referencing and academic writing. She did not have a personal computer until REAP bought her a laptop in her second year of study. She attended the FYE program, but she could not continue. It was taking too much of her time. Courses like philosophy were very difficult. *"I remember I had a blackout even when we were writing one test"*, she said. She believes that this is also because she did not come from a very good school. "*I think you know as kids that went to Model C schools that were not so good and township schools. I could tell you it was a common thing you know. I think it is because our education system did not prepare us like that"*, she explained.

One of the biggest challenges she faced was the fear of arguing against the authors she was reading. "*I mean also as an African child who is also a girl, you do not know how to talk back. You accept what they are saying to you and then you keep quiet. And then you murmur and you go along…first of all, this person is White. And that is authority as well, umlungu*[10]*. How do you challenge a White person like that"*, She did not receive much support from her family because, "*…my family just did not understand this whole academic thing and how life is",* she said. *"*[E]*ven though my mother couldn't support me academically. Yho! That woman made sure that everything else was done. My mother would always tell me that, "listed child, just study",* she added. However, her friends from the Christian Action Fellowship (CAF), a Christian student organisation at WITS, would pray with her, encourage

[10] "Umlungu" is a Zulu word for White person.

and support her. She would encourage herself too. From second year onwards, things got better because she found a space at the student residence and had adjusted to and learned to cope with the demands of the university. She focused more on her studies. She defined herself as a strong, hardworking, purpose driven, resilient and independent woman who knows who she is and what she wants.

She asserted that resilience was very important to her because, "*The system was never meant for us",* she said. I asked her what she meant by this. She responded, "*The system is very much anti-Black. So that is the first thing. I mean the language. I always say that we do not have the cultural capital. Cultural capital in education is things like the language that is being used because what the system does is: it eliminates people by virtue of the fact that they do not know the language... Like you would sit in class and people would laugh at something and you are like, you are still trying to figure out what was funny and reasoning as well". "Your culture is not gonna cut it. It is only when you are in post-grad when you've got a foot in. That is when you can reinforce your own culture, forcing yourself into space that you did not belong",* she added.

This story shows that Fundi grew up in two types of households- first in a sibling-headed household and then in a single-parented household. This is a completely different experience from that of the other participants in this study but it is very prevalent I rural communities in South Africa (Pillay, 2016). Her growing up in a sibling-headed household exemplifies the way in which the migrant labour system creates fractured families (Makiwane, 2011). Moreover, Fundi's story challenges Moynihan's "pathology of matriarchy" hypothesis which suggests that father absence is destructive to children because it means they will lack the economic resources, a role model, discipline, structure, and guidance that a father provides leading to low educational attainment (Biblarz & Raftery, 1999). Even though Fundi grew up

without her father, she defines herself as a disciplined and hard working person, and her achievements support this. *"And that actually worked well for me because then at the end in Grade 7 I did well. I was in the school leadership you know"*, she said. She is already in possession of a Master's degree. However, this is not to say her being raised by a single parent had no challenges. As you will see later, challenges were there.

She comes from a low-income family since her uneducated mother worked a blue-collar job. This also echoes the notion of education as a crucial determinant of labour market prospects (van der Berg, et al., 2011). Suggesting that it was not her mothers' choice to not finish school, Fundi said, *"*[t]*he thing with my mom is, she was unable to continue with her studies, but she could read and write both English and Afrikaans"*. She experienced personal challenges that led her to drop out of school. However, Fundi was not comfortable discussing these personal challenges with me. Nevertheless, Fundi's story shows that her mother valued education despite the fact that she was a primary school dropout.

Fundi attended schools in both subsystems of education. She spent four years "black" primary school, four years in a "white" primary school and five years in a "black" high school. In describing her experience of schooling, she highlighted the well-documented socioeconomic inequalities and cultural discrepancies between these schools (McMillan & Barrie, 2012; Taylor & Yu, 2009; Spaull, 2013). In her "black" primary school, *"it used to be fashionable to go to school without your shoes, even when you had school shoes"* because most of the learners came from poor families. On one hand, her "white" primary school was well resourced with highly-qualified teachers, heaters in classrooms. On the other hand, like many "black" schools (Jones, et al., 2008; McMillan & Barrie, 2012; Taylor & Yu, 2009; Wangenge-Ouma, 2012), her "black" schools were under-resourced with underqualified teachers. Teacher shortages and poor teacher quality are some of the factors that contribute to

the inefficiency of South Africa's basic education system, particularly in subjects like mathematics (Carnoy, et al., 2012).

Fundi also alluded to the phenomenon of gang related violence in her high school. This is evidence of the lack of discipline and the prevalence of violence in South African schools (Laas & Boezaart, 2014; Rossouw, 2003; de Wet, 2005). In a study conducted in six provinces of South Africa, Mncube, et al., (2014) found that gangsterism is of serious concern in South African schools in all six provinces and is one of the factors that worsen violence in schools. It is a terrorising factor and a barrier to learning (Mncube, et al., 2014).

The medium of instruction in her "black" primary school was mostly vernacular whereas in her "white" primary school it was strictly English (Afrikaans for Afrikaans classes). According to Probyn (2009), codes-witching- the structured and systematic use two languages in the classroom- is a strategy that teachers in rural and township schools use to support learning since most learners in these schools are second language English speakers. As a result when they get to university, they have less cultural capital compared to students from more affluent schooling backgrounds (Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Espinoza, 2012; Jones, et al., 2008; Kaap, 1998; Sulivan, 2002). According to Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction, "cultural capital consists of familiarity with the dominant culture in society and especially the ability to understand and use educated language" (Sulivan, 2002, p. 145). Literature suggests that the lack of cultural capital is one of the contributing factors to Black students' under-preparedness for higher education which results in adjustment problems related to communicating in English at university (Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Jones, et al., 2008; Kaap, 1998; Sennett, et al., 2003).

The academic challenges that Fundi encountered at university are related to the well-documented phenomenon of under-preparedness among Black students due to poor quality

basic education (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Jones, et al., 2008; McMillan & Barrie, 2012; Petersen, et al., 2009; Smit, 2012; Spaull, 2013; Taylor & Yu, 2009; van der Berg, et al., 2011). In her own words, she argues that the schools she attended did not prepare her very well. Moreover, Fundi's struggle to make arguments that contradict the White authors she was reading and her statement that "*The system was never meant for us"* both allude to the whiteness of and the coloniality of power in the South African university. Both these issues are part of the concerns raised by student movements like the #RhodeMustFall and the #FeesMustFall which call for decolonisation of high education (Hodes, 2015; Luescher, 2016; Naicker, 2016; Waghid, 2016). This also alludes to university's slow pace of transformation which literature shows is an impediment to Black students success at university (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Jones, et al., 2008; Lewin & Mawoyo, 2014; McMillan & Barrie, 2012; Scott, et al., 2007). Against all these odds, Fundi managed to graduate with a Bachelor's degree and went on to pursue Honour's and Master's degrees. She is soon to register for a PhD.

Five

Reaching for Excellence, Achieving Graduation

"The argument that "black youths are regressing educationally" feeds a dangerous narrative that is not supported by any education data. Not improving fast enough, yes. Regressing, no. This does not change my view that our education system is in crisis and that we need meaningful reform". - (Spaull, 2016)

In the preceding chapter, I provided a broad description of the family and school backgrounds of four former REAP students as well as the many odds against which they managed to graduate. I now turn to the role of REAP in their journeys to graduation. This program had four academic staff members who were actively involved as mentors of the SoSS cohort. Their relationship with REAP students was understood by both parties as a mentor-mentee relationship rather than a lecturer-student relationship. This relationship, as I will show later in this chapter, according to Wood and Lithauer (2005, p. 1012), "offers an ideal space for the development of emotional competencies which have been shown to be positively related to academic and social success (Van der Zee, Thijs and Schakel 2002; Slaski and Cartwright 2002)"

Unlike the ASPs of the early 1980s which were conducted by practitioners who were not competent enough to induct students to the content of mainstream instruction (Boughey, 2010; Scott, 2009), REAP mentors were highly qualified individuals who were familiar with the content of the mainstream curriculum given the fact that they were also mainstream lecturers. For this reason, as Fundi puts it, they were able to adequately explain *what is expected of a social science student.* They were able to provide the relevant guidance and academic support in terms of strategies that students could use to better understand course content and approach assignments. They offered to help students proofread and edit their assignments. This contributed significantly to their academic performance as well as their

journeys to graduation. Eve's description of the role of mentors illustrates this point very well: *Because most of them dealt with some courses that we were doing. They could give us guidance, that "ok, with this assignment, this is what is required"..."* Describing her relationship with one of the mentors, Eve reiterated the benefits of having mentors who are knowledgeable about the content of the mainstream curriculum, "*Cynthia gave us insight because, I remember doing anthropology well, you know, she was there to kind of give us a broader knowledge about what was really happening and how you could better understand anthropology as a whole".* According to Espinoza (2011), this is the value of a mentor-mentee relationship. Even though most participants presented positive accounts of this relationship, Nozi suggests that it was not experienced in the same way by all REAP students, *"We never got to have a good relationship with the heads. They are busy...the person who would check your essay or help you in developing something was Judith".*

Nevertheless, data suggest that REAP facilitated its students' development of academic skills such as critical thinking, critical analysis, reading large volumes of material, research skills, study skills, academic writing skills, referencing, and exam preparation skills. According to Espinoza's (2011) pivotal moment framework, the transfer of academic knowledge and skills is one of the key features of an effective intervention. She argues that this is because educators use their relationships with students to transfer knowledge that is crucial for their academic advancement and success. Participants' responses suggest that they needed this because their schools did not adequately equip them to cope with the demands of higher education. In Fundi's words, *"... academia was that scary, difficult, impossible space because I couldn't think right Mthobisi. I just couldn't get the thinking right, the writing right and I think that is what REAP did. It showed me that, no you can".* In Bongi's words, "*I mean like referencing. When you get to varsity you have no clue what that is because we do*

not reference in high school you know". These responses echo a prevalent argument in literature. That is, the argument that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are often inadequately prepared for higher education (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Jones, et al., 2008; Petersen, et al., 2009; Ramapela, 2012; Spaull, 2013; Spaull, 2015; Taylor, 2011).

Participants stated that the academic knowledge and skills they acquired significantly improved their academic performance. Nozi explicitly stated this in here farewell letter, "*I listened to what my mentors have suggested and this has changed my academic life. Instead of getting C's, I am getting A's and B's".* It also improved the quality of their work and their studying efficiency as Fundi stated, "[t]*hat improved the quality of my essays because I had thought broadly and I had thought critically as well… Also before exams, what we used to do is…we used to talk about how to write an essay for an exam and how to write an essay for class.* In Bongi's words, "*…whatever it is that I learned from REAP did make a difference in terms of the quality of my assignments and the quality of the work, my writing…"* These responses affirm research evidence showing various ADPs that improved students' academic performance by facilitating their acquisition of relevant academic knowledge and skills (Heydenrych & Case, 2015; Potgieter, et al., 2015; Smith, 2013; Smith, et al., 2014; Ramapela, 2012; Wood & Lithauer, 2005). Now the question is: How did REAP facilitate this process? The data suggest that it is through the three main elements of REAP's academic development intervention- seminars, individual consultations, and excursions- that it facilitated it students' acquisition of academic knowledge and skills.

Seminars

These seminars focused on academic knowledge and skills, students' career prospects, campus lives as well as discussions of local contemporary issues and reflections on the

excursions (van der Wiel, et al., 2014). In these seminars students engaged with social science theories in an interdisciplinary manner under the close supervision of their mentors, in reading and writing exercises done in collaboration with the WITS Writing Centre and they attended Humanities Graduate Centre seminars as a way of introducing students to the intellectual life of the university (Bradbury, 2014). Data suggest that these seminars, and the REAP experience as a whole, also ignited in students a sense of belonging to a community of practice in which they experienced freedom, comfortability, and mutual support. In this community, these students were able to develop a voice that can be heard and envision what Espinoza (2010) refers to as 'new possible selves'.

Even though students did not explicitly state that they did not feel like they belonged in other spaces within the university, however, their responses insinuated this. Feeling alienated mainstream classes led Millicent to resent mainstream lectures, but she felt belong at REAP. In her letter, she says, "*...before REAP, I did not like going to class because I just felt out of the loop with the classroom environment.* Eve also shared a similar sentiment in the interview, *"It wasn't just one person. It was team work... Because, you know, at Wits it is always you and that person... But then with REAP, it was like your family. It was a home away from home".* Likening REAP to a "family" and "a home away from home" implies that she felt a sense of belonging in a similar way that she feels in her family. This sense signifies student's development of academic identity defined by Jensen and Jetten (2015, p. 2) as the "the extent to which students feel they belong to a greater academic community, students' experience of personal academic worth and their visibility in the academic environment". Studies also show that this is connected to academic achievement (Chickering and Reisser, 1993; Lounsbury et al., 2005; Pas-carella and Terenzini, 2005; Pasque and Murphy, 2005;

Scanlon et al., 2007; Torres et al., 2009; Hughes, 2010) as cited in Jensen and Jetten (2015). Students with a well-developed academic identity are more likely to perform well.

Moreover, Eve in the above quote suggests that the university culture is more individualistic while at REAP it was more collectivist since the focus was more on the success of the whole cohort rather than of individual students. She differentiated REAP seminars from her mainstream lecturers, "*It is not like a lecture where you get students who sit there and there and there.... REAP was comfortable. It had a homely feeling to it because these individuals are focusing on you..."* This echoes Millicent's feelings of alienation and discomfort in mainstream lecturers, an experience that in literature is shown to be common among Black students in historically white universities (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Moposho & Stevens, 2016; Sennett, et al., 2003; Soudien, 2008). Irrespective of the many attempts to transform higher education since the debut of democracy, the actual transformation has been very slow particularly in historically white universities (Moposho & Stevens, 2016; Sennett, et al., 2003; Soudien, 2008). It is one of the concerns raised by student movements like the #RhodesMustFall and the #FeesMustFall (Hodes, 2015; Luescher, 2016; Naicker, 2016; Waghid, 2016).

Data suggest that out of this sense of belonging made REAP to be experienced as a safe space and facilitated a form of freedom from alienation, stereotypical mind-sets, the deficit perspective of self and lack of confidence. This was evident in participants use of phrases like "free to speak", "comfortable", "break the shell", "come out of the shell", and "opened me up". In Eve's words, *"You are free to speak... I am not a person who speaks in lecture rooms. I am not a person who likes crowds, but then there you are offered the chance to be yourself and just be free".* In her letter, Lerato expresses similar sentiment, "*I finally found a platform to break the shell, to let people see what this 'young' girl has in store for the world.*

I have become more articulate, more engaging, confident and most importantly passionate about life". REAP became a platform for her to overcome the deficit perspective realise her potential. This is echoed in Fundi's letter as well, *"I realised that I was capable of thinking analytically but the way I had come to approach academics prevented me from moving into that. REAP enabled me really come out of that shell and start thinking. It also helped me see the value of my reasoning".* These quotes present REAP as a safe space in which students could freely express themselves, explore their potential and develop self-confidence. Poor self-confidence appears to be connected to students' internalization of the of the deficit perspective from which Black students from disadvantaged backgrounds are often understood and worked within higher education (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Boughey, 2010; Kessi, 2013).

It is also evident in the data that through the activities– discussions, reading and writing exercises- REAP facilitated students' development of a voice and the ability to make that voice to be heard. Data suggest that students learned to think independently and to confidently express those thoughts. In Nozi words:

> *The confidence that it gives you when they say critically analyse something. So you've got Marx and you really do not agree with this…Like you may not agree with something but just make it clear why you do not agree with it and be able to express why you do not agree with it and have other arguments or…doing research that can help you argue whatever you want to argue in life.*

In her farewell letter, Eve echoes this, *"I am proud to say that REAP played an active role in helping me shift away from my shyness and speaking in public because I have grown to realise that my opinion about any issue does matter".* This enabled them to develop sound

arguments in their assignments and also to actively participate in lectures, as Lerato stated in her letter, "*I bet my classmates were surprised especially this year of how I had started to make my voice heard, to stand before all and boldly and confidently share my mind, thoughts, ideas, visions and dreams".* In Fundi's words, *"I started talking more in tutorials. I had that confidence to ask my tutor if I did not understand something".* This signifies help-seeking behaviour. According to Espinoza (2011), one of the main outcomes of an effective intervention is the gradual transformation of students' dispositions towards learning, and students' adoption of a help-seeking behaviour is one of the characteristics they develop if this transformation has taken place. Adopting a help-seeking behaviour helps students mobilise supportive relationships with people around them from whom they can get information or other resources that they need for educational advancements and success (Chanock, 2007; Espinoza, 2011; Nkambule, 2014). Moreover, some of the participants argued that the confidence they gained enabled them to speak out against unfairness and racial injustices in their departments and in the university as a whole. Fundi was part of the Wits Transformation Working Group which, according to Naicker (2016), marks the debut on an unprecedented wave of student movements against the slow pace of transformation, particularly in historically white institutions. REAP mentors in their farewell letters commend their students' growth in independent thinking and the ability to confidently share their thoughts and opinions.

Moreover, Fundi's participation in REAP, particularly her interaction with Maya, enabled her to break free from particular stereotype and negative attitudes she had about people who are different from her. This allowed her to widen her network and source of academic support in the university which then contributed significantly to her academic performance and consequently her journey to graduation: *"I started interacting more with different people in*

my class and we would discuss our work. We would discuss our exams.... So that was the one thing that Maya did, she broke down those stereotypical mind-sets that we carry around". This broadened her network and increased her social capital. As she said*, "It gave me access to people that I would have, initially dismissed".* In these quotes, it appears that the REAP did not only work to break down other people's stereotypes about Black students from disadvantaged backgrounds, but also these students' stereotyping of people who are different from them. While literature shows that stereotypes can hinder access to social capital for the stereotyped person (Hampton, 2010; Horsford, 2010; Steele, 2010), in these quotes, Fundi shows that since they preen network formation, they hinder both the stereotyped and the stereotyping person from accessing social capital.

Participants suggest that this sense of belonging was intensified by their cohort's cohesiveness demonstrated by mutual respect despite individual differences in personality, beliefs, life choices and backgrounds. In Nozi's words, *"We did get along as a group. You would think that putting a lot of people together would be difficult because now people have different ideas. I think everyone respected each other…we were all understanding each other in one space".* Even though she did not use the word "respect" per se, Fundi acknowledged the unity in diversity in the program. She made reference to how she, as a Christian woman who holds particular beliefs about gender and gender roles, comfortably interacted with one of the mentors who is a Black Lesbian woman and an academic. In her own words, "*…the first thing that she did is that she broke down those barriers for me".* I asked what she meant by this. She elaborated, *"I had to just see her as a person and accept her as who she is and her decisions. And she was very open about whom she chose to be, who she chooses to be and who she is you know".* This element of mutual respect culminated in long lasting friendships, one of the main benefits that Eve derived from her participation in REAP. In her words, "*The*

benefits that I got from REAP, I got to make friends... Like I said, with the REAP program we were kind of from different backgrounds but then we kind of had a few similarities from there and there". This also suggests that REAP served as a platform for it students to develop Social Capital.

Social Capital is "the value derived from membership in a social group, social network or institutions" (Jensen & Jetten, 2015, p. 2). Students' social capital influences their choice of university major, academic performance and their university experience in general (Jensen & Jetten, 2015). The data shows that, as members belonging to a community of practice, REAP students were able to provide academic support to each other in many ways. This, Nozi said, was facilitated by being *"interactive in the school life of the university and other kids, the conferences that we would attend and the preparation that we would do. The teamwork that we would have to do".* Working as a team enabled them to share knowledge and skills with each other. Fundi's comment about her relationship with Jabu also echoes this notion of mutual support in the program:

> *The other thing was that it gave you like a support system. I remember there was a guy called* [Jabu] *and* [Millicent]. [Millicent] *and I started working together in our assignments and stuff and I remember I did very well in one take-home exam because we were working together on it. And* [Jabu] *as well, we used to study together for Politics and IR essays and exams*

This contradicts Espinoza's (2011) conception of learning as a linear transfer of knowledge from the educator to the student. It signals the value of peer learning- "that is, learning from and with each other" by sharing ideas, knowledge and experiences– and its impact on students' academic performance (Boud, 2001).

Data shows that REAP seminars also enabled students to envision "new possible selves"- "students' aspirations of what they could or would like to become" in the future- an important outcome of an effective intervention (Espinoza, 2011, p. 38). Three whole seminars were dedicated to future prospects where they had a chance to think about, share their ideas and get guidance from mentors concerning the paths they would like to take after the program (van der Wiel, et al., 2014). This distinguishes this program from other ADPs which only focus on the academic and cognitive development of students (Davidowitz & Schreiber, 2008; Heydenrych & Case, 2015; Potgieter, et al., 2015; Smith, 2013; Smith, et al., 2014; Ramapela, 2012; Wood & Lithauer, 2005). Having Black female academics as mentors and role models inspired her to strive to become an academic regardless of her race gender and socioeconomic background. In her own words:

> *But also the fact that REAP really asserted that you can come from a low-income family, be Black, be female and do academia. Like I am going to do my PhD soon because I want to be an academic and you know we do not have a lot of Black researchers in education and evaluators.*

Moreover, mentors' letters highlight the possible future selves that students envisioned during the course of the program. In a letter they wrote to Grace, they said, *"As we got to know you, we admired more just how much focused energy you have spent thinking about making plans for your future– from considering going to business school at Wits, to doing peace and conflict studies…"*.

Consultations

REAP students also acquired the knowledge and skills through individual consultations with mentors. Literature shows that individual consultation is valuable for students to learn good

writing skills (Chanock, 2007; Nkambule, 2014). It allows [lecturers] to "understand students' good reasons for bad writing, on the basis of which [lecturers] can design sympathetic, richer, and more relevant learning experiences for larger groups of students" (Chanock, 2007, pp. A-1). For REAP mentors, being sympathetic and academically supportive did not mean spoon-feeding students. Instead, it meant empowering them by facilitating the development of the skills they needed to be able to get things done on their own. This, among other things, enabled them to continue academically succeeding even after they after the REAP program ended. In Bongi's words, *"I remember there was a time I met up with Joyce to discuss the assignment that I had… She was very open and they were not spoon-feeding us. They were not doing things for us".* Similarly, in here farewell letter, Fundi commended this empowering effect, *"I am also grateful that the program was conducted in such a way that equipped us and did not make us feel dependent on our mentors so I feel empowered and so grateful for the opportunities it offered me".* Both these quotes reveal the differences between REAP and the ASPs of the early 1980s. Literature shows that ASP students were not adequately equipped to become independent. As a result, they failed to cope in mainstream instruction (Boughey, 2010).

Moreover, data suggests that through consultation sessions, mentors managed to break down boundaries in the lecturer-students relationship. In this way, they increased students' confidence and enabled them to seek help even from mainstream lecturers and tutors. Fundi's letter clearly illustrates this:

> *I also used to have a serious fear of consulting lecturers and tutors because I have always thought I had nothing valuable to bring to the discussion and through REAP those boundaries have been completely broken down and there is a sense of self-confidence which allows me to charge forward and approach them.*

While there is extensive research evidence supporting the argument that that help-seeking through consultation is said to be beneficial to students (Chanock, 2007; Nkambule, 2014), Hurley and Hurley (2011) argue that it should not be assumed that help-seeking students receive the help they need, that the help will be effective and students' academic performance will improve as a result thereof. In their study, they found that help-seeking attitude predicted improved academic performance whereas actual help-seeking did not. Nozi's description of her experience of consultation sessions with her mentors reflects a similar outcome, *"...some of the things Cynthia would not understand because she doesn't do sociology you know. She could help when she could help, like correcting your comma, correcting your full stop but not the content. Your marks would still come back low".* This also suggests that other mentors, because of their disciplinary backgrounds, were perceived by some students as not competent enough to provide substantial academic support.

By saying, "*I have always thought I had nothing valuable to bring to discussion…",* Fundi shows that students from disadvantaged backgrounds, who have often been understood and worked with from a deficit perspective in higher education (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Boughey, 2010; Kessi, 2013; Nkambule, 2014), also tend to see themselves from this same perspective. This could be one of the contributing factors to the success crisis that is evident in South Africa's higher education today. Therefore, by appreciating and listening to the ideas and thoughts of students, REAP mentors helped them to overcome the deficit perspective of self. Even the mentors' letters show that they appreciated students' thoughts and valued their contributions to the discussions. They demonstrate mentor's acknowledgement of the students' development, growth and confidence to express their thought. In a letter they directed to Fundi, they say, *"We will remember you as a determined,*

self-assured young woman, with a searching mind, and a confidence to share her thoughts and beliefs with others".

Data shows that REAP individual consultations did more than just facilitating students' academic development. In these sessions mentors also provided students with emotional support which indirectly but significantly contributes to students' academic performance (Hobden & Hobden, 2015; Nkambule, 2014; Sennett, et al., 2003; Wood & Lithauer, 2005). Working with students from low-income families at UCT, found that adjusting to the emotional demands of higher education is among the most important predictors of students' academic performance in their first year of study (Hobden & Hobden, 2015). REAP mentors' letters demonstrate the emotional support they provided to students who experienced serious emotional challenges. In a letter directed to Thembi who suffered bereavement, they say, *"With recent personal events, we have missed having you in some of the later REAP sessions, but wish you strength in coping with these, as well as strength with the aftermath of your father's passing".* Although most participants shared similar sentiments regarding the supportive relationship they had with their mentors, but these sentiments are not equally applicable to all the mentors. Due to differing mentoring approaches, students trusted some mentors more than others. To illustrate this, Bongi expressed her reluctance to seek Judith's help because of her strictness. Judith's strictness increased the rigidity of the boundaries in her relationship with the students, thus thwarting the trust component of the relationship, *"I could say that Judith was very strict, I was always very reluctant to approach her. I was just scared of her because she was strict".*

Even though participants in the interviews did not particularly use the words "emotional support" but they described their mentors as "caring", "kind", "patient", "compassionate", "always willing to help", "having faith in us" and they how mentors helped them cope with

their "personal issues". This is well illustrated by Bongi's account of her relationship with Joyce, *"I would always knock on her door and ask for help on personal issues and also on assignments. So I do not know if I am willing to talk about that, it is a very emotional thing".* This tacitly demonstrates that students trusted their mentors. According to Espinoza (2011), trust forms the foundation for an effective mentoring relationship and it is achieved when student begin to perceive their mentors "both as professionals- whom they respect and go to for advice on navigating school processes and as friends whom they can turn to for emotional and moral support and encouragement" (p. 35).

In the case REAP, trust was also cultivated by mentors' self-disclosure. Literature from diverse disciplines shows that this is strongly and positively correlated with trust (Cohen, 1995; Cragan, et al., 2009; Ledlow & Coppola, 2011; Vaughan & Hogg, 2014). REAP shared personal stories about their academic journeys and the challenges they had to overcome to get to where they are, to inspire their students. Bongi alluded to this:

> *…I remember Joyce told us her story about how she became an academic…she was a dancer, ballet if I remember correctly. And then she met somebody who said to her that "you can do much more than that", and that is when she developed an interest and then she went to varsity and from then she never stopped. So, it was a beautiful thing to hear somebody say that they started somewhere… they did not just get there easily. They had to start from somewhere and start believing in themselves.*

Personal stories were accompanied by words of encouragement for students to work hard, read beyond the prescribed set of reading and to believe in themselves and that regardless of their race and gender, they are capable of succeeding. Participants suggest that this significantly contributed to their academic performance as well as their progress in the

journey to graduation. In Eve's words, *"They wanted us to go an extra mile, to stand out in a way. In order to stand out…you had to try and change your way of thinking in a way".* This echoes what Nozi said in her farewell letter, *"You also taught me to see essay questions as a good challenge that I could make success of. You advised us that we should take pride in these assignments because we were about to produce work that was our own…"* In this way, consulting with mentors regarding her assignments facilitated transformed her attitude towards assignments- a shift from a pessimistic attitude of seeing assignments as insurmountable problems towards viewing them as an opportunity through which one can prove themselves and actualise their potential- another sign of an effective intervention according to Espinoza (2011).

Moreover, data suggests that REAP mentors served as role models to their students. Given that most of them were first generation students, which literature shows that they often have no access to role models who have university experience (McMillan & Barrie, 2012), this significantly contributes to how they perceived their studies and envisioned 'new possible selves'. Fundi illustrated this when she expounded one what was inspiring about Judith:

> *She* [Judith] *…One of the first Black females* [in the department]… *Judith taught me hard work because Judith was a hard worker. She would have us reading…She was just that real on the level of, "Black child if you are gonna make it in the system, you need to know the system how it works and make it work for you"… She really forced us to be hard workers. She really stretched us.*

As established Black women in academia, intellectually engaging with them was very inspiring for Fundi as an aspiring Black female academic. In her own words, *"Now you have got people like Joyce, who is a very senior lecturer, sitting in and you have to debate with*

her. It gives you confidence beyond that sitting, that, "Oh my God, actually, my ideas are worth something…" She elaborated, *"I mean, they are very established scholars and having access to them, it's like an invaluable resource to be able to think and reason with those people…"* Even mentors' farewell letters to students, written from a strengths perspective rather a deficit perspective- foregrounding strengths, growth and development that they witnessed in their students rather than the shortcomings- proved to be very inspirational. Therefore, unlike conventional ADPs which focus on the cognitive and academic components of students' development (Boughey, 2010; Davidowitz & Schreiber, 2008; Scott, 2009), REAP also sought to motivate and inspire its students to work hard and to recognise and actualise their potential.

Excursions

Over and above seminars and individual consultations, the SoSS cohort of REAP went on several excursions to connect students' live and textual learning (Bradbury, 2014). This affirms Espinoza's (2011) argument that an effective academic outreach program should expose students to new experiences and opportunities through trips to places like cultural events and others. Through exposure they get to learn about opportunities that they never thought they had.

They went to the Market Theatre, Wits Art Museum, Freedom Park, Voortrekker Monument, the Cradle of Humankind, and academic conferences. Most of them had never been in these places before. Eve stated that no one in her family has ever been to these places and counted these excursions as a *"privilege"* and a *"blessing"* and an opportunity for her *"to learn more about South African history"*. In Bongi's words, "*I remember we had a trip to Maropeng in North West. We went down some caves. I had never done that before, it was a beautiful*

experience for me mainly because I love geography….It was a wonderful experience for me". In these excursions, students acquired more knowledge about the society they live in which transformed the way they view the world. In her farewell letter, Thuli puts it this way, *"The outings and trips we've had were not only educational and social but they were mind impactors. Nothing is fulfilling as having your perspective of the world shift and you adopt new lenses of looking at the world".*

For some of them, it was an opportunity to put their thinking and analytical skills to work since there were discussions about the experiences they had and what they learned in the trips. In Fundi's words, *"...we would have to talk about them in a more analytical way, you know...It also helped me think about social issues in line with my studies you know, like homosexuality, religion and all of these things".* What was more interesting to me is that the play *Hayani* by Atandwa Kani and Nat Ramabulana staged at the Market Theatre inspired Bongi to explore her origins and life history to the extent that she started writing an autobiography. In her own words:

> *I can't remember the play but it was by Atandwa Kani and his friend... The play was about identities, where we come from and how we sort of evolve as we grow as people…I remember since then I developed an interest in writing a book about my own story. It has been very difficult because it took me down to some of the experiences that I was not ready to dig into. I had to really go back home and start from scratch, asking my mom questions like: Where was I born? What happened between the time I was born and you leaving, coming to Jo'burg? And, some of the things my mom was not willing to answer. So, there are a lot of questions also in the book. I am asking myself, what happened here? I had also to go back to my teachers. I*

remember I met one of my teachers in Grade one just to ask her about her experiences of me, what did she think of me when she first saw me? What kind of a learner was I?

Exposure to academic and research conferences inspired Fundi to pursue a career in academia. It motivated her to pursue Honour's and Master's degrees. In her own words:

…they encouraged us to pursue postgrad. And there was this other day, this other time when there was a possibility to attend a conference… They talked to us about submitting an abstract. So it gave me exposure to the world of academia. So what academia is about, what academia contains. You know, what it means to be an academic.

For her, a career in academia *"is not just about the money, it is about knowledge production*" which she believes is not a common pursuit among Black people. She argues, *"We must interrogate the knowledge that exists as well and, as Black people, we must also write our own stories and do our own research, and academia allows you to do that".* I asked her to expound what she meant by knowledge production. She added:

First of all, ownership, people make money out of knowledge. Why can't we make money out of our own knowledge? Two, representation you know. I mean all knowledge is interpreted and represented. So the person that is interpreting the information, they are not a machine. They are a person that carries values, cultural norms and all of that influence how they interpret data. Now, if we as Africans are not interpreting our data, our own then someone else is interpreting it according to their own standards. According to their own values and cultural norm. So that is why it is that important

The issue that Fundi is raising here is what Alatas (2000, p. 24) termed 'intellectual imperialism'- "the domination of one people by another in their world of thinking"- specifically exploitation as its trait. Fundi is particularly concerned with exploitation as a trait of intellectual imperialism. According to Alatas (2000), exploitation in intellectual imperialism is when data is collected from one region, processed and manufactured in the region of the domination in the form of books or articles and the sold to the dominated people who were used as mere informants. Fundi suggests that Black people are often not the producers of the knowledge they consume. Her emphasis on the significance of having Africans producing their own knowledge and telling their own stories in their own perspective echoes Alatas' (2000) argument if the dominated people remain docile and not produce their own knowledge, they will become more dependent on the dominating European scholars. Fundi is concerned by the misrepresentation that Africans are not telling their own stories. As Mwakikagile (2000) stated, the imperial conquest of Africa distorted African history. In Nkrumah's words, "Our history needs to be written as the history of our society, not the story of European adventures" (Mwakikagile, 2000, p. 12). This points to, in Fundi's words, the "*need to interrogate the knowledge that exists"* which cannot be divorced from need for decolonisation in higher education, an issue that has become more topical in South Africa especially after emergence of student movements like the #RhodesMustFall and the #FeesMustFall (Hodes, 2015; Luescher, 2016; Naicker, 2016; Waghid, 2016).

While it is evident that the intervention of REAP played a pivotal role in students' journeys to graduation, it is also evident that REAP was not an all perfect program. It had its weaknesses. Its timing was not the best. In Bongi's words:

> *" ..it would be nice for REAP to walk with you from first year all the way through to fourth year and not just focus on you on that one year, your final year. I mean by third*

year, there is a lot that I have already learned and it would be nice for me to learn these things from first year. To have my eyes opened when it comes to expressing myself, writing well, reading more and being interested in things that are happening around me, especially because it focused on students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. I mean, that already says that we need REAP from the onset going forward..."

Here Bongi suggests that they would have benefited more than they did from if REAP was introduced in their first year of study. According to Murray (2016, p. 39), as part of educational reform, there I a need for a reconceptualization of the first year of study which is a critical stage at which universities must take the responsibility "to engage students to take ownership of their own learning and to provide a learning context in which students can develop the skills necessary for their subsequent education". This affirms Espinoza's (2011) argument that pivotal moment timing matters. In her own words, "The timing of a Pivotal Moments- whether they occur early or late in the students' educational career- has significant implications for the long term academic achievement of students from low income…backgrounds" (p. 65).

One of the mentors stopped working in the program and some students had difficulties working with her replacement because of her disciplinary background and mentoring style. From the perspective of students, this limited the degree of academic support that she could provide. In Fundi's words, *"Our mentor had to change from Judith to Cynthia and Cynthia had a different style as well...So with Judith, it was a lot of direct knowledge and direct information which we didn't quite have that advantage with Cynthia"*. Moreover, participating in REAP and an extracurricular ADP meant that students had an additional workload and this affected their time management to some degree. This sometimes frustrated

some of them who felt that REAP activities were taking the time that they could have used to study or write their assignments. In Fundi's words, *"like to be honest with you, sometimes we felt, we felt like, especially during the last week of the semester, Yho! It was so frustrating because I could be typing my essay but I had to go to REAP, time management".*

The issue of time was a more serious one for Eve who lived with her family in the inner-city of Johannesburg. While some of the sessions finished late, she had to walk by herself on the dangerous streets of Johannesburg inner-city. In her words, *"It was very challenging. However, thank God nothing bad happened to me. So the programs would finish off late…I remember she would sometimes leave earlier before the program ends because you need to get home".* She will get home late and still be expected to do her chores as the first born of the family. This echoes the findings of Potgieter et al., (2015) and Jones et al., (2008). Potgieter et al., (2015) found that some of the AD students in an access program expressed frustrations because of high workload that comes with participating in the ADP with which they were not able to cope.

Despite the weaknesses I highlight here, data shows that the program had an "added value". That is, it benefited students beyond their academic development (Wood & Lithauer, 2005). The interpersonal skills students learned at REAP also helped them in the workplace. In Nozi's words:

> *REAP really helped us to try look outside of what you are studying, look at other things that are around you, how people are, besides your sociology...So we had to like really critically analyse things and try not take things at face value. See that there is a deeper meaning in things. It has helped. It has helped a lot in the work space. Like, I deal with a lot of people in consultations.*

In a similar way, Bongi also found the skill she learned at REAP to be very helpful in writing her book:

> *...I have learned to express a point when I have it and to also understand that sometimes the most audible person is not the person who has the greatest points... Yeah, it is that and writing. Like I said, it is helping me with even writing this book. I understand that words are important.*

In conclusion, the achievements of former REAP students cannot be exclusively attributed to REAP. Data provides evidence that there are factors- ADPs, personal qualities - which contributed to these students' academic development and advancement. They attended tutorial as part of their mainstream instruction. Tutorials are part of the conventional ADPs that are structured according to the new approach to academic development that emerged in the mid-1980s as an alternative to ASPs (Davidowitz & Schreiber, 2008). Nozi participated in a cultural exchange program in Grade 10 which, she claims, enabled her to better understand what she was taught in anthropology when she came to university. In her words, *"…when I came out of that* [cultural exchange program] *and came to Wits, taking anthropology was easy because I understand what it means when they are talking about definitions of cultural relative, you need to be ethnocentric about people's cultures".*

Eve participated in the First Year Experience (FYE) program which the university runs as a means of helping first-year students adjust to the university environment and its demands by teaching them the academic and social skills they need to adjust. Both Bongi and Fundi noted that they frequently visited the WITS Writing Centre to get help with their assignments and essays. The writing centre is a space where students can talk about or read a draft of their written work to a trained writing consultant who is there to help students improve their work

by writing with them and constantly asking them to explain their ideas, thus forcing them to use the act of writing as a form of learning (Nichols, 1998). Data shows that other campus resources like the Counselling and Career Development Unit (CCDU), libraries, computer labs and the SRC office were also said to important sources of support for these former REAP students.

Students' personal qualities also played a significant role in their journeys to graduation. These include: "self-awareness", "purposefulness", "Resilience", "intelligence", "focus", "working hard", "faith", "independent thinking", "self-discipline", "relentlessness", "positive attitude", "self-motivation", "willingness to learn", "time-management", and "determination". Literature supports that most of these qualities contribute to educational achievement. Dass-Brailsford (2005) found that faith, relentlessness, and resilience are closely linked and they contribute to academic achievement among disadvantaged Black youth in South Africa. Fundi believes that because she was such a hardworking students, she would have graduated even if REAP was not there. In her words, *"...I think that from my character and how I was working I was guaranteed to graduate but I do not think I would have pursued post grad if it wasn't for REAP".* Bongi's relentlessness, positive attitude and focus enabled her to not give up on her education when she was academically excluded:

> *I got excluded. If I wasn't relentless, I could have easily said, "I am leaving. I am going back home. I can't struggle like this". After everything that happened to me that year, I could have just given up that easy and said that "This is too tough for me". But I said to myself, "You know what, I know it is embarrassing. I am going to start a new class. My peers are leaving but it is fine. I understand that this is my journey". Then I went back and I just had to be positive and focus on the fact that I want to go for it and I really want to graduate.*

Student Christian organisations served as a source of social capital which provided students with social, spiritual and emotional support. According to Yosso (2005, 79) as cited in Nkambule (2014), 'Social capital' also refers to "networks of people and community resources that can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society's institutions". The spiritual support Bongi received from a student Christian organisation helped her to deal with her experience of rape and the problems she had in her family, "*So it just helped me to get out every other pain I had within especially towards my dad for disappointing me when I really needed him.* Praying with other students from these organisations was found to be particularly helpful to these students. In Bongi's words, "*So I praying and I meeting with other young women who were also going through the same things helped me really to take it out of my system"*.

Fundi shared a similar sentiment, *"…my roommate as well, she was doing second year and she had a friend who was doing final year. My friend was like a serious woman of prayer. She used to encourage me a lot and so forth".* Moreover, Bongi's friends whom she met at the same organisation on campus supported her when she did not have money for food and toiletries, "*And also when I couldn't afford toiletries or anything, they have always closed that gap without making me feel like I am struggling or anything…They made sure that whenever their parents gave them an allowance, they would share it with me.* The types of support that participants were refereeing to her are connected to academic performance given that optimum learning is only possible when social, emotional, spiritual, physical and intellectual spheres are well functioning (Wood & Lithauer, 2005)

Six

Where to from here?

"…it [problem-posing education] affirms women and men as beings who transcend themselves, who move forwards and look ahead, for whom immobility represents a fatal threat, for whom looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are so that they can more wisely build the future."- Freire (2014)

Given that this study was carried out at a very small scale using convenient sampling, only focusing on a single cohort of an extracurricular ADP, its findings are not generalizable to all extracurricular ADPs. I, therefore, recommended that similar studies be carried out on a larger scale in other extracurricular ADPs like REAP in order to further explore the potential of these types of programs in assisting students from disadvantaged backgrounds to overcome the challenges they face which undermine their potential to succeed in higher education. Having presented the findings of this study in the two preceding chapters, I now turn to their implication for future academic development programming and higher education in general.

Based on these findings I conclude that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are not a homogeneous group and should not be worked with as one in interventions that are aimed at providing them with support. This study found that family backgrounds may differ in terms of family configuration, income levels, and geographical location. This is also evidenced by the recent acknowledgement of what has been termed "missing middle"- students from working and middle-class families with an annual household income between R160, 000 and R600, 000, who are too rich to qualify for NSFAS funding and too poor to afford the exorbitant university fees- which led to the introduction of a new financial support structure specifically for these students (Merten, 2016; de Villiers, 2016). The findings of this study

suggest that this heterogeneity shapes the experiences that students bring to higher education which, to some degree, influences the types of challenges they encounter therein. What does this mean for future academic development programing?

Academic Development practitioners in ADPs that seek to understand and satisfactorily meet the needs of the students they serve need to consider individual challenges that can undermine the positive impact of the program on the students' academic performance. The findings of this study reveal that students from disadvantaged backgrounds do not only face academic challenges when they get to university. They also face financial, emotional, social, and cultural challenges all of which directly or indirectly impact on their academic performance. This requires a holistic approach to academic development- one that forges collaborative work between academic development practitioners, academic staff and the university support staff. The findings of this study demonstrate the significance of developing both social and cultural capital in students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Therefore, a holistic approach is one that would facilitate the development of both these forms of capital. Literature shows that students from middle-class families are more likely to achieve higher levels of education compared to those from working class families (Espinoza, 2012; Sulivan, 2002). It suggests that this is because students from middle-class families possess more educationally valuable social and cultural capital which allows that excel academically. The findings of this study also affirm this. They show that REAP facilitated students' development of both social and cultural capital with significantly contributed to their academic performance.

However, the findings of this study also show that the involvement of the professorial staff in REAP was both an advantage and a disadvantage to the program. It was an advantage because they are highly qualified academics of higher ranking, with more teaching

experience in higher education and were, therefore, more competent to facilitate students' understanding of mainstream course contents and their development of academic skills compared to the underqualified Academic Development Practitioners of the 1980s (Boughey, 2010; Scott, 2009). However, it was at the same time a disadvantaged because, as Nozi suggested, *"They are busy"* and they were not always present in the seminars of the program because of the other commitments they had such as mainstream teaching, research, etc. Some of the sessions were, therefore, facilitated by graduate students. Thus, the value of their presence in and the impact of their expertise on the program were limited by their other academic and professional commitments. Therefore, future academic development programing needs to consider ways of ensuring that AD students are less dependent on those who facilitate the programs.

Academic development programs should take proactive steps to increase students' self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1997, p. 3), as cited in Wood and Olivier (2004, p. 289), "self-efficacy refers to the belief the student holds about his or her capability to 'organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments'". The findings of this study suggest that students from disadvantaged backgrounds have a tendency to internalise the deficit perspective from which they have been viewed and worked with in higher education. This lowers their self-efficacy eventually leading to poor academic performance and literature shows that students with high levels of self-efficacy are more enthusiastic, open to feedback, likely to be effective in problem-solving, time management and resilient when faced with difficulties (Wood & Olivier, 2004). Wood and Oliver (2004), propose four elements that can be incorporated into an academic development program to facilitate the development of self-efficacy. The first is fostering positive interaction between students and their mentors as well as other students in the immediate environment. The second is a focus

on intrinsic growth through academic and life skills sessions as well as input from mentors. The third is developing an internal locus of control through experimental learning, small group discussion and provision of feedback by mentors. The last one is getting students to reflect on the knowledge, skills and attitudes they have acquired for them to develop a deeper understanding of themselves and their potential.

However, holistic academic development programs are, on their own, insufficient to address the success crisis facing Black students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The findings of this study suggest that the progress and success of REAP students were not a result of the intervention of REAP alone. There were multiple contributing factors. It makes sense, therefore, to conclude that the support that students from disadvantaged backgrounds need can only be provided through multiple interventions that occur at different points in their academic journeys and at different levels of the education system. Academic development programs only intervene at an individual and group level. There is also a need for complementary interventions at a structural level. The findings of this study, and literature in general, shows that one of the greatest impediments to many Black students' success at university is under-preparedness due to poor quality basic education (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Jones, et al., 2008; Lewin & Mawoyo, 2014; McMillan & Barrie, 2012; Scott, et al., 2007; van Heerden, 2011).

It is also evident that the alienating institutional culture, more especially in historically white universities, also contributes to the success crisis. Therefore, universities must make it one of their highest priorities to transform in ways that are more inclusive and accommodating of the statistical diversity of the student population (Jansen, 2004). Without this much-needed transformation, the positive effects of ADPs will be greatly undermined. In the current higher education context in South Africa, it is nearly impossible to speak of transformation without

making reference to the students' call for decolonisation of higher education as amplified by recent student movements like #RhodesMustFall and the #FeesMustFall (Hodes, 2015; Luescher, 2016; Naicker, 2016; Waghid, 2016). The inclusivity that Jansen (2004) is referring to cannot be achieved without decolonisation of education. Of course, there are contestations about what decolonizing education mean and about how would decolonized education look like. Much research still needs to be done to answer these questions. However, by decolonisation here, I do not mean the negation and demonization of European knowledge and the valorisation of the African because, as Edward Said stated, Afrocentrism is as flawed as Eurocentrism (Go, 2013). However, I am referring to the need to, in Fundi's words, *"interrogate the existing knowledge"* from the underside of modernity- "from the perspective of the excluded other" (Escobar, 2007, p. 187). Moreover, part of decolonisation of higher education would be to overcome the 'silences' and 'absence' of the marginalised identified by Boatca (2013) and the grand erasure and the gestures of exclusion of the subaltern groups as it is stated in Connell (2007). This can be done by including African indigenous knowledges and pedagogies into higher education curricula.

Another important issue that needs to be addressed at a structural level is the issue of graduate unemployment. The findings of this study, echoing der Berg, et al., (2011), suggest that one's level of education is a crucial determinant of one's labour market prospects. According to Nkambule (2014), for Black students from disadvantaged backgrounds, attending university opens doors of opportunity to improve the socioeconomic statuses of their families. Even the recent call for free education by the #FeesMustFall movement is partly inspired by the same notion that education facilitates social mobility. However, statistics show that there is a high rate of unemployment among graduates in South Africa (Pauw, et al., 2008; van Broekhuizen, 2016; Moleke, 2006). Moleke (2006) suggested that

graduate unemployment is generally higher among Black African in South Africa. Therefore, ensuring access to and success of students from disadvantaged backgrounds without making any attempts to create lucrative employment opportunities will not improve the lives of these students and their families.

The other important point to note is that of REAP's inconsistent presence. After the proposal and budget submitted for the Teaching Development Grant were rejected in 2014, the program was discontinued before the School of Literature, Language and Media (SLLM) and Wits School of Arts (WSoA) cohorts finished their tenure (Bradbury, 2014). This meant that even though it had positive outcomes, other students from disadvantaged backgrounds could not get the opportunity to benefit from it. This is indicative of the marginality of ADPs to institutional practices (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007). It shows the unsustainability of these programs as a result of being located in the margins of institutional practices. According to Akoojee and Nkomo (2007, p. 392), academic development "remains an activity that cannot be expanded. The resources required would be far too excessive for use by all students". However, these facts about REAP do not delegitimise or negate the benefits that its students derived from participating in it. These are indicative of the challenges in and the potential areas of improvement for the higher education sector and in future academic development programming. The challenges faced by higher education institutions in South Africa are many and they are increasing in magnitude. Squeezed between a basic education which has failed and decreasing state funding, the future of already marginalised academic development programs such as REAP is bleak.

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Appendix A

Participant Information Sheet

Mthobisi Ndaba

P.O. Box 145

Loskop

3330

Email:sompisikandaba@gmail.com

Phone number: 073 8472 527

Dear Participant,

I am a student at Wits University and for my Master's research. I am conducting a study on the role of the Reaching for Excellence Achievement Program (REAP). I am interested in finding out the ways in which the program facilitated the academic success student from the School of Social Science cohort of Reapers.

Participation involves making yourself available at a time and place of your preference for an in-depth face to face interview that I expect will last approximately 45 minutes to an hour. If you are interested and available, a further one to two interviews of similar duration would be helpful to me, but only if you are available and would like to. I would also like to record the interview provided that I get your consent to do this. This is for no other purpose but that of

ensuring that I would be able to more accurately capture your responses during the interview and during transcription.

Participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to decline to participate in the study without any consequences. Participation will not be beneficial to you in any way. You free refuse to respond to any question which you would not like to respond to, and also to withdraw from participating in the study at any time without any consequences. If you choose to participate, that would be or great value to me and I appreciate it very much. I will ensure that no one will know that you participated in this research, and I will not use your real name in the transcription of the interview and in reporting the findings of this study, provided that I get your permission to do so. In this way, you will not be identifiable in any way as a participant and I will also ensure that the results are reported in a way that cannot be traced back to you. However, I cannot guarantee that you will agree with my representation and interpretation of your response in the research report.

If you are willing to participate, I will be most grateful. You are welcome to contact me at the number listed above or to contact my academic supervisor, Professor Zimitri Erasmus, by telephone at 011 7179 999 or by email at Zimitri.Erasmus@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely

Mthobisi Ndaba

Appendix B

Interview Schedule

Interview One

1. Please tell me more about your family background.
2. Please tell me more about your school background.
3. Please tell me about your experience of the process of applying for a space at university.
4. What were your sources of support, if any, did you receive as you were applying?
5. Who funded your studies?
    a. How did you get to know about the sources of funding?
    b. How did you pay for your living expenses?
6. What were your sources of support at university?
7. What is it about you that enabled you to continue progress until you graduate?
8. What are the challenges you faced at university?
    a. How did you overcome those challenges?
9. If there are any significant individuals in the academic staff (tutors, lecturers, supervisors, or mentors) that played a significant role in your journey to graduation, please tell me more about your relationship with them.
10. In general what made you to progress until you graduate?

Interview Two

1. In what ways, if any, did REAP play a role in your journey to graduation?
2. What was your overall experience of the program?

3. Please tell me more about the benefits you derived from your participation in the program if there were benefits.
4. If there are any individuals from the REAP who were particularly significant your journey to graduation, please tell me more about their contribution.
5. Please tell me about the challenges you encountered in your participation in the program if there were any.
6. Please tell me about other extra-curricular programs which played a role in your journey to graduation, if there are any?

Appendix C

Consent Form for Participation in Study

I, _____ am willing to participate in Mthobisi Ndaba's research study. I understand that there will be no direct benefit for me in participating in this study and that there are no potential risks involved. I understand that participation is voluntary and that there will be no benefits for participation. I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

I have been given sufficient information about this research project. The purpose of my participation as an interviewee in this project has been explained to me and is clear.

I have been guaranteed that the researcher will not identify me by name.

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet. My questions about participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D

Consent for Audio Taping of the Interview

I_____hereby give the researcher Mthobisi Ndaba the permission to audio-record the interview.

Signed: _____ Date: _____