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Realizing potential: Retrospective narratives of successful black female university students from disadvantaged backgrounds

Research report submitted by

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Declaration

I declare that this research report is an original report which accurately acknowledges the sources from which the information was obtained. It is submitted for the Master of Arts degree in the field of Psychology by Coursework and Research Report to the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. This report has never been submitted for any other degree, course or examination at this institution or any other institution.

X _____

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MA Student

X _____

Date

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Chapter One- Introduction

1.1 Background of the Research

The Reaching for Excellent Achievement Programme (REAP) is a research and development project at the University of the Witwatersrand with a transformative agenda to address the issue of social and racial inequality in postgraduate programmes in the Faculty of Humanities and to examine alternative curricula and pedagogical practices for teaching economically and educationally disadvantaged students with the potential for excellence. The REAP project was a response to the transformation objectives of Wits University. The university aims to increase the participation and success of Black and female students, and to develop those with the potential to become A- rated postgraduate researchers and world- class scholars. It also aims to improve curricula because the low throughput and low retention rates (Archer, Chetty, & Prinsloo, 2014; Steenkamp, Baard, & Frick, 2009) at the university, particularly of Black students (MacGregor, 2009), suggest that these students are not learning because they are not being appropriately taught (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007). According to Daggett (2005), academic excellence cannot be measured through assessment, the only true measure of academic excellence is students' abilities to apply what they learned in school to the ever- changing work environment created by the global economy. He argues that assessments are important however they cannot be regarded as the definition of academic excellence instead the focus should be on providing relevant education which is the result of effective learning and in order for effective learning to take place, standards, curriculum, instruction and assessment should be interconnected and should reinforce one another (Daggett, 2005). This is why transforming the university is necessary and why projects such as the REAP are improving curricula and pedagogical practices.

The programme has thus far assisted four cohorts of disadvantaged second year students with aggregates of between 58- 65% to improve their marks and to achieve excellent results in order to attain access into postgraduate programmes. This was done through the development of academic literacy, exposure to knowledge outside their respective disciplines, and participation in a wide array of intellectual and cultural activities (i.e. acquisition of cultural capital) (van der Wiel, Kiguwa, & Erasmus, 2014). The focus of the programme was on helping students achieve academic excellence through the development of academic literacy because only by striving for excellence will students succeed in life (Daggett, 2005) and as is evidenced by the results, this aim paid off. All the students are currently in postgraduate programmes at WITS University and various other universities across the country or have graduated and are currently working (Meda, 2012).

1.2 Brief Discussion of the Paper

In chapter one, this paper will present the objectives and rationale of the study. Then, a brief discussion of other literature on academic performance of students in higher education will be presented. This section of the paper will additionally discuss other theoretical frameworks used in the various literature, in order to demonstrate the gaps that were found in both the other studies as well as the theories they used to explain their findings. Chapter two discusses the theories underlying this study. This includes the Social Reproduction Theory developed by Pierre Bourdieu, which focuses on the concept of cultural capital and its influence on academic performance as well as the Socio- cultural theory developed by Vygotsky, with an emphasis on the concept of the zone of proximal development. Chapter three presents the literature review of studies on the academic performance of South African tertiary students. In chapter four, the methodology utilized in this study is presented, including the research design, the sample and sampling method, the data collection procedure and method, the data analysis procedure, reflexivity, the ethical considerations, limitations as well as how the results will be

disseminated. Chapter five discusses the coding process that was taken to analyse the data from the semi- structured narrative interviews. Chapter six presents the thematic content analysis which was conducted and the discussion of the findings. Chapter seven, which is the final chapter, presents the conclusion of the study.

The argument presented by this study is that a majority of the literature presents Black university students in South Africa as underprepared (Boughey, 2007; Downs, 2005; Sommer & Dumont, 2011; Strydom, Mentz, & Kuh, 2010), as the group of students who perform worse than students of other ethnic groups (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Scott & Letseka, 2010), as the group that constitutes the majority of students who drop-out of university and do not graduate in minimum time (Letseka & Maile, 2008) and that there is a lack of focus on Black university students who are successful. Currently, universities are seeking strategies to improve success and graduation rates at university, particularly of Black students (McGhie, 2012) however if Black students represent the group of students who struggle the most at university then it only makes sense that the techniques used by successful Black students should then be investigated in order to improve their success and retention rates.

According to Bourdieu (1976), universities require of students in assessments what they do not teach them and thus, only students who possess the cultural capital needed at university are able to not only succeed but also excel. He argued that students from lower- class and working class backgrounds lack cultural capital and thus, fail to perform well at university. Vygotsky (1978) argued that students from disadvantaged backgrounds who achieve average grades have the potential to perform better if they receive assistance from their teachers or more competent peers. The current study found that the respondents, who were former- REAP students, who are Black and due to the willingness to participate, female students only. This is perfect because of the emphasis of Wits University on improving the success rates of Black and female students. The findings from this study show that for the respondents

the factors which contributed to their success included the influence of teachers on their perceptions of school and school subjects and as a result, their work ethic and academic performance; the pace of adjusting to university; the significance of effective lecturing styles on their academic performance; the formation of an academic identity; acquiring academic literacy; and the importance of the social capital gained in the REAP.

These findings which emerged indicated that not only do academic, social, psycho- social and emotional factors influence academic performance at university, but so does one's schooling background. In additional, a further argument in this study is that the findings provide proof that Black students achieving average or poor grades at university actually have the potential do perform far better however that in order for this to occur these students require assistance to gain the advanced academic skills they need, the psycho- social development they need and social support from the university staff. These were all factors provided by the REAP facilitators and thus, second year Black students achieving average grades became high achieving post- graduate students with merit awards and scholarships. This may have been a small qualitative study however due to the fact that high achieving Black female students provided this information and that similar threads were found across the transcripts suggests that it is important to take these factors into consideration when pedagogical practices and curricula are being improved/ tailored for teaching the diverse student body, with a large number of non-traditional students, who are students from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly Black students (PRINSLOO & SUBOTZKY, 2011).

1.3 Brief discussion other literature

Part of the research process of this study entailed a thorough literature review, particularly focusing on South African studies investigating factors influencing academic performance. The majority of the South African studies found had quantitative research designs. Further, the results of these studies either

show a single variable, several variables or models developed to explain academic success however each only provide minor or partial explanation of factors which predict academic success. In addition, the theoretical frameworks used were not elaborated upon sufficiently in order to explain how the factors put forward contribute to success. Below is a brief discussion of the studies found and the gaps found which explain the focus of the current study, its theoretical frameworks and methodology utilized.

1.3.1 South African Higher Education Context

According to scholarship, the problem created by increased access to higher education is a problem experienced in many countries worldwide (De Jager and Bitzer, 2013), however this study's literature review focus is South Africa because the REAP not only commissioned this study but South Africa's history of racial segregation and its immense impacts on the education received by the majority of the population warrants attention. After South Africa became a democracy, the National Commission on Higher Education drafted a policy document requiring higher education institutions to increase access to higher education which was a major component of redressing the social injustices of the apartheid regime (Akoojee, 2002; Brüssow, 2007; Zewotir, North & Murray, 2011). Government and higher education institutions became concerned when success rates were far less than access rates (Kaburise, 2014). After more than twenty years of democracy and widened access, higher education institutions in South Africa are experiencing problems of high attrition rates, low graduation rates, and the underpreparedness of incoming students (Kioko, 2010), specifically relating to Black students (Boughey, 2010; Downs, 2005; Sommer & Dumont, 2011; Strydom, Mentz, & Kuh, 2010). Thus, this is the context of interest and the higher education context that this study seeks to contribute to.

1.3.2 South African studies on factors influencing academic success

A study investigating Black university students was conducted by Grayson (2011). According to Grayson (2011) research in South Africa has shown that Black university students performance worse than White

and Indian students academically. Furthermore, it has been found that fewer Black people aspiring to become engineers actually do. It was found that the 2002 cohort of engineering students, only 35% of the Black students graduated from the 5 year course but in 7 years, which was higher than the number of Black students who graduated from the 4 year programme. This study however, similar to the REAP, found that after undergoing a developmental programme (i.e. ENGAGE), black engineering students from the university of Pretoria performed better than their White counterparts. For example, “In 2010, of the 305 students that registered for ENGAGE, 58% passed at least 70% of their modules and could proceed, 53% of white students and 71% of black students” (Grayson, 2011, p. 69) and “for the 2009 cohort 46% could proceed, 38% of white students and 50% of black students” (Grayson, 2011, p. 69). This programme was developed because of the low number of engineers in the country as few students are graduating in appropriate time. Six factors were found crucial to success and thus, incorporated into the programme. These factors include “background knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, cognitive skills, practical skills and metacognitive skills” (Grayson, 2011, p. 72). The understanding of the developers of the programme was that first year students need support to transition from high school to university and that they can be assisted to become independent learners over time. Vygotsky is cited by the author because he stated that there are cultural differences between high school and university. He argued thus that students need to be enculturated into the university environment. The author argues that success is only facilitated if enculturation occurs (Grayson, 2011). Similar to the REAP, this programme used Vygotsky’s idea of the zone of proximal development in guiding the design of the programme. Similarly to the REAP, this programme resulted in greater student success. Thus, validating his theory and suggesting it’s importance in understanding academic success in higher education and validating its use in the current study to explain the success of the REAP students.

A study conducted by Heerden (1995) investigated factors which affect the academic performance of Black university students and found that various factors play a role such as being academically

underprepared, poor quality high school education, lack of effective study methods, lack of familiarity with the university culture, lack of proficiency in the language of instruction, lack of time management, financial problems, and other environmental problems (Heerden, 1995). This is one of many studies which have brought about the realization of the factors that cause problems for this particular group of students however this can no longer be a focus. It is important to find ways to intervene to make success possible and that is what this current entailed.

In a study titled "Retention: predicting first-year success at a higher education institution in South Africa" by Lourens (2002), the integration- committed model developed by Tinto in 1975 was used as the theoretical framework underpinning the study. This model was adapted by Pascarella and Terenzini in 1983. Another development on this model was made by Liu in 2000 who argued that in addition to integration, satisfaction also plays a role in the retention and success of students (Lourens, 2002). This article however fails to elaborate on what is meant by satisfaction. Another theorist used was Yorke, who discussed factors that influence attrition. These include financial problems, a disjuncture between the student and their course, and a poor university experience which includes their experiences of the lecturers, the teaching and the way courses are organized (Lourens, 2002). The emphasis of these theories is on retention, which suggests that the intention is not on how to assist students in achieving excellent grades, but simply ensuring they pass and thus, remain at university. This is problematic because in a context where social justice is the mission then facilitating excellence is most likely the only way in which to transform the status quo where White South Africans occupy the highest occupational positions in society as well as the highest social class (http://www.news24.com/MyNews24/raceclassgender-in-an-unequal-south-africa-20160118). The model established that various factors determine whether or not a student remains at university. The first factor is the degree to which a student is able to integrate socially and academically at the university. This means that the degree to which students feel they fit- in academically and socially will

affect their desire to remain at the university. The second factor relates to their commitment to the goal of achieving a degree. The third factor relates to how devoted they are to the university (Lourens, 2002). The focus of this article was on predicting the success of these students however the theory underpinning the study emphasized retention and does not provide an explanation of how to achieve success, how to become socially and academically integrated into the university.

In addition to the theory used, the study by Lourens (2002) found that out of 4 848 first year students, only 21% were able to successfully transition to the next year of study. The predictors found were the type of course the student took and the grade 12 average. This was found using logistic regression and classification tree analysis. It was found that students who took visual and performing arts as well as health care/sciences or industrial arts were successful (Lourens, 2002). The problem here is that there is no explanation for why these factors predict success. This is the problem with quantitative studies (http://classroom.synonym.com/problems-research-quantitative-qualitative-methods-4418.html). They provide various variables that could lead to success however fail to give reasoning for this, particularly reasoning given by the respondents themselves as opposed to interpretations made by the researcher.

Another South African study investigating factors which contribute to the success of first year students, focused on profiling successful accounting students, used quantitative methodology including an ANOVA, frequency tests, chi- squared tests and linear regression. The profile of a successful accounting student was found to be a student taking B.Compt, also studying part- time, a student who passes first year accounting the first time, and a student who is between the ages of 17 and 30 years of age (du Plessis, Müller, & Prinsloo, 2005). Similar to the previous study, there was a lack of discussion as to the reasons these variables lead to success, most likely due to the study's quantitative nature.

Another study investigating factors which lead to success for first and third/ forth year students, particularly education students was conducted by Fraser and Killen in 2003. The perceptions of both

students and lecturers were taken into account in this study. The argument put forward by these researchers is that a plethora of studies have investigated the influence of grade 12 aggregates and/or entrance exam results on academic success in first year however inconsistent findings have ensued. Thus, these researchers focused on looking at post- enrollment variables as possible predictors of success. The first year student respondents perceived students' interest in the course as the primary contributing factor to success, and gave 'the availability of bursaries' the lowest mean ranking. Senior student respondents and lecturers agreed that self- motivation was the primary contributing factor to success, while both groups gave 'the availability of bursaries' the lowest ranking. The study found that there were five factors which were perceived differently by first year students and lecturers. These factors were ranked differently in terms of their level of importance for success, with more than a 20 unit difference. For example, effective written communications skills were ranked by lecturers as 14th in terms of their importance while the first year students ranked these skills as 41st in importance. Another example is with 'the reason for doing a specific course' which was ranked 20th by lecturers and 45th by first year students. Findings additionally showed that senior students and lecturers ranked six variables differently, also with more than 20 unit differences. This included 'regular attendance at lectures' which was ranked 8th by lecturers and 37th by senior students and 'dedication to a career goal' which was 34th by lecturers and 6th by senior students (Fraser & Killen, 2003). What's interesting in this study is that there are significant differences between the perceptions of lecturers, senior students and first year students on factors that contribute to university success. This suggests that there is a lack of communication between lecturers and students regarding how to succeed and thus, suggesting a lack of faculty support. Lecturers have particular expectations of students and if there is a lack of communication, students do not know what is required of them and that suggests that success would be slim in such circumstances. This is an important study for the argument being made in this paper,

particularly in relation to one of the theoretical frameworks used, Bourdieu's Social Reproduction theory.

The theory utilized in Fraser and Killen's study is the achievement motivation theory developed by Weiner in 1979. This theory was used to explain the reason students' idea of the amount of control they have over their academic success is different to the lecturers' idea. Weiner argued that the external or internal causal reason students ascribe to their academic success or failure will affect the emotions, expectations, behaviour as well as perceived control. For example, if a student fails and that failure he/she ascribes to personal, stable reasons such as lack of ability then that students motivation levels will decrease and so will their sense of control. If a student ascribes their failure to a lack of effort or an external cause such as a lecturer however, this will not occur. This study found that the students attributed their success to their effort however their failure to their lecturers and this was interpreted as a means to maintaining their sense of self- esteem (Fraser & Killen, 2003). It seems too simplistic to state that one failure or one success can lead to subsequent motivation levels and shifts in locus of control. Furthermore, the focus of this theory is on the individuals' efforts and thus, there is victim-blaming occurring here. The current study shows that universities can actually provide students with more than they are now which can contribute to their academic success.

Brüssow (2007) conducted a PhD study and the paper consisted of two articles. The first titled 'the phenomenon of undepreparedness: Shared perspectives'. The researcher argues in this article that underpreparedness is a reason why higher education institutions in South Africa have high attrition rates and low graduation rates. Underpreparedness is defined as a lack of knowledge of what is expected of students at university as well as a lack of academic literacy skills (i.e. reading, writing and mathematical skills as well as English proficiency). The results presented in this article were from a questionnaire completed by 32 respondents. 87.5% of the respondents agreed that underpreparedness is one of the

greatest problems faced by higher education institutions. These respondents stated that about 40% to the majority of the first year students are underprepared, particularly in the natural sciences and mathematics. The respondents did argue that underpreparedness is far less a problem in courses with rigorous selection processes. The focus of this study was on factors which lead to the failure of underprepared students. The respondents regarded a lack of reading and writing skills, using a surface learning approach, ineffective study skills, language barriers, lack of self- efficacy, lack of intrinsic motivation, and a lack of support structures at the university (Brüssow, 2007). As will be evident in the articles to come, the factors regarded as contributing to academic success or failure are relatively exactly the same as the factors found or discussed in many of the studies.

The second article in the PhD paper by Brüssow (2007) that will be presented is titled 'Learning Facilitation Framework to scaffold underprepared students'. The article presents a framework that was developed to explain teaching and learning strategies which may assist in supporting underprepared as well as at- risk students. Brüssow (2007) found six strategies which should assist underprepared students. The first strategy is conceptual learning which entails memorizing information by changing the information based on one's understanding. Having prior knowledge, motivation to master, and a positive attitude towards the subject are regarded as essential for conceptual learning to develop. Conceptual learning is regarded as a necessary skill for academic success. The ways suggested to develop it are, stimulating curiosity through tasks given, creating a participatory environment, and asking students questions. The second strategy is active/ interactive learning is said to result in a deep-learning approach. Active learning involves being a participatory learner who can study independently and promotes understanding and memorization of subject content. It is suggested that interventions should require both the lecturers and the students to be accountable for the academic success of the students. The argument is that an interactive and facilitative learning environment is motivating to underprepared students. The third strategy is reflective learning which is important for underprepared

learners because the author argues that they need to develop metacognitive awareness and this is said to occur as a result of three different types of reflection. Content reflection refers to thinking about the learning experience, including the thoughts and feelings attached to those experiences. Process reflection entails thinking about the actions resulting from these thoughts and emotions. Lastly, premise reflection which refers to looking into the causality of feelings and resulting actions. This reflectivity results in inquisitive students which makes them active participants in the learning process. It also promotes independent thinking and interaction with their lecturers. The forth is cooperative learning refers to interactive learning involving the lecturer and student or a student and student in a social setting. Cooperative learning involves support, facilitation and an exchange of ideas. This socially interactive learning engenders conceptual learning. Assisted learning is argued by this author to be a more effective learning approach than when learning is done alone. This is apparently linked to the use of more metacognitive strategies in collaborative learning. This is different to the reason that Vygotky gave for the value of assisted learning. Vygotsky's learning theory was the other theory used in the current study however this will be elaborated on later. The fifth strategy is experience- based learning, which is learning through contextualization. This means using what the students know or have gone through to assist them in creating new knowledge. This is said to help compensate for the lack of prior knowledge. Lastly, the sixth strategy is constructivist learning refers to learning for the purpose of understanding the content being learnt. The theorist used here is Giambattista Vico, who stated that the only means to learn is to create understanding for oneself. Students are then said to be able to link the learned concepts to related concepts as well as connecting the new information to previously held knowledge (Brüssow, 2007). Constructivist learning is essential in university because a study conducted by Miller and Bradbury (2011) showed that students need to be able to answer three types of questions in examinations and tests including questions that only require facts, questions which require being able to link concepts and questions which require being able to create knowledge using prior knowledge

learnt (Bradbury & Miller, 2011). The strategies in this article are very similar to those taken by the REAP in terms of assisting underprepared students however what the REAP showed was that universities are not incorporating this sort of teaching in their instruction and thus, many learners are falling through the cracks. Universities are looking to students to have the capacity to succeed on their own. The assumption is that because students qualify for admission to higher education, they have the necessary skills to succeed just as they had done before. The problem here however is that the skills it requires to succeed in high school and the skills that it requires to succeed at university are very different (Bradbury & Miller, 2011) and this fact has been overlooked. Currently, universities are looking for ways to improve success rates, particularly of black students from disadvantaged backgrounds but this may actually mean transforming the way in which students are taught entirely. Brüssow (2007) found that the expectations of lecturers and students differ and so does their understanding of what it takes to succeed. This means that the people who are assessing students have not disclosed to their students what it is they expect from them and what they need to succeed because it is the lecturers who determines this. Just as Bourdieu argued, that universities assess students on skills they have not taught them. Thus, putting students at different levels of advantage where some learners were fortunate enough to attend schools that transmitted these skills to them and some were not. This is actually what makes students educationally disadvantaged, not their education background but coming into an institution that does not teach them what they require of them to succeed but yet assesses them on those things (Bourdieu, 1986).

The study conducted by Bradbury and Miller (2011) investigated student failure and success by looking at the lack of/ possession of academic literacy and underpreparedness. These authors argue that instead of looking at students' answers, it is important to look at the type of questions students are being asked and how successfully or unsuccessfully they are answering the different types of questions. The sample is this study consisted of first year psychology students were categorized into three groups, the DS- high

(i.e. students from disadvantaged schools with 60% or higher marks), the DS- pass (i.e. students from disadvantaged schools with marks between 50%- 59%) and the DS- fail (i.e. students from disadvantaged schools who achieved less than 50%). The sample showed that the majority of students from disadvantaged school failed (141/318= 44%), while 32% passed and only 10% achieved 60% or higher. The results were based on their overall course performance. The authors stated that in their course assessments three types of questions are asked: factual questions, relational questions and conceptual questions. Factual questions are simply questions which require a reproduction of facts learned in the course material. Relational questions are questions that require students to compare concepts or theories etc. by finding relationships or differences between them. What is required of students here is that they demonstrate an understanding that facts are relative and they need to be able to discuss this relativity of facts and how some facts support one another or contradict one another and how others may make it difficult to explain a phenomenon. This requires that they be able to explain how information is combined or structured to create an understanding of certain phenomenon. Conceptual questions require students to be able to define concepts or theories however to go beyond that by questioning those concepts/ theories and suggesting new arguments and ways of thinking about the respective phenomenon and creating new knowledge. Relational and conceptual questions require engagement with the knowledge that students have learnt. The results showed that the DS- high group (n= 33) answered all three question types appropriately with an average of 88% for factual questions, 85% for relational questions and 76% for conceptual questions. The DS- pass group (n=103) achieved an average of 88% for the factual questions, which means they have little difficulty reproducing what they learned; however they achieved an average of 39% for the relational questions and only 17% for the conceptual questions, which shows great difficulty with engagement with learnt knowledge and argumentation. The DS- fail group achieved an average of 42% for the factual questions, which suggests a lack of studying; an average of 7% for relational questions and only 1% for conceptual questions which

means that they also had even greater difficulty engaging with the learnt material however the extremely low results show that the material was not known to begin with and thus, prevented them from being able to engage and they do not know how to engage with course material (Bradbury & Miller, 2011).

The findings from Bradbury and Miller (2011) study not only help in creating an understanding of what is expected of students in the social sciences, and most likely in many disciplines as well, however it supports the argument made by Bourdieu (1976) which states that universities ask students to do what they do not teach them to do. The findings from this study show exactly that because had these students all been taught how to engage with the different types of questions by their lecturers then the majority of students would not have failed or struggled with them but they did. This means that what these lecturers were doing was assessing students on either their intellectual ability or the cultural capital they already possessed from school, meaning whether they had been taught to engage with these questions in high school. This suggests that what had occurred during the year was an impartation of factual information however a lack of teaching of how to engage with that knowledge and information, which suggests that teaching did not really take place in this course because the majority of students lacked the skills they needed to succeed. This calls to question the type of lecturing that occurs at university and is exactly what the REAP was premised on, the need to impart these critical analysis, and argumentation and engagement skills to its participants.

Another study was found which focused on student engagement. This study was conducted by Strydom, Mentz, and Kuh (2010) however the purpose of this study was to adapt an international student engagement instrument for utilization in South Africa. The adapted version is called the South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE). The authors argue that student engagement has been reported by international studies to improve learning and academic performance. Student engagement refers to

the effort and time that students spend on academic activities as well as their utilization of resources and learning events and academic services (Strydom, Mentz, and Kuh, 2010).

Potgieter & Webb (2004) conducted another study investigating the success of a developmental programme in improving students' marks but focusing on engineering and science students. These scholars additionally mention that students from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly Black students from disadvantaged educational backgrounds, are less likely to succeed at university if they are not supported. The theoretical backing of this programme is from the works of Davis, Maher, and Noddings in 1990 and Treagust, Duit, and Fraser in 1996 who support the use of cooperative learning for underprepared students from disadvantaged backgrounds as this type of learning allows for an active learning of knowledge. This is the second article cited in this paper which mentions the positive effects of using cooperative learning. According to these scholars, the notion behind this approach is that students work in small groups and equally participate in these discussions. In these groups, students are responsible for teaching each other and thus gain team work skills and effective learning methods from each other (Potgieter & Webb, 2004). Although there were increases in students' mathematics results, the issue here is that yet again responsibility is placed on students to ensure their academic success. Cooperative learning is similar in some ways to Vygotsky's socio- cultural theory in that other people are seen as important in assisting students in learning however nothing is mentioned about more competent peers being placed in the groups because according to Vygotsky, that is how students who struggle to understand concepts, are able to understand them. The notion of students requiring assisting to learn, particularly difficult content, is not necessarily supported by universities as these institutions value autonomy, and Potgieter and Webb (2004) agree with the latter statement.

Downs (2005) conducted a study designed to measure the success rate of a Science Foundation Programme (SFP) for biology at the University of KwaZulu- Natal, targeted solely at Black students from

disadvantaged backgrounds. This programme was guided by theories developed by Vygotsky and Slavin. These students are regarded as academically able however simply underprepared for university. This is the exact same understanding of these students that the REAP had and the understanding similarly developed using Vygotsky's theory. The purpose of the programme was to provide students with the academic skills, resources and self- confidence they needed to succeed. The focus was on helping students develop deep- learning through skill- based learning. A quantitative analysis method was used, repeated measures ANOVA and regression, which was used to compare marks from 1995 to 2000. The findings showed that the students in the SFP programme performed better on the practical aspect of the assessments than the theoretical. When taking theoretical assessments, SFP students performed better on the multiple choice questions however struggled with the short questions and essay questions. Similarly, to the study by Bradbury and Miller (2011), this researcher found that these first year students have difficulty with higher cognitive and language skills meaning these students lack the ability to develop academic arguments, that their biological language is poor and misunderstand basic biological concepts (Downs, 2005). What is disconcerting here is that this academic development programme did not manage to equip these students with the skills necessary to do higher level tasks, which has proven problematic because these SFP students were able to pass the first year mainstream biology course however with lower marks than other students in the course. According to the author, the SFP students were given biological conceptual knowledge during the SFP programme however due to their poor performance on the theoretical aspect of the examinations, the author argued that these SFP students' cognitive and language skills were not developed in the foundation programme. According to the author, the first year lecturers stated that the SFP students lack summarizing skills, lack the ability to identify key concepts, lack discussion skills, essay writing and comprehension skills as well. This means that they lack deep- learning skills. These findings are corroborated by findings from other studies, according to Downs (2005), which show students not able to develop proper critical thinking and

problem- solving skills perform poorly. The assessments in the SFP programme have the same type of questions as those used in the mainstream courses however the type of teaching in the SFP and the mainstream courses are different as the SFP facilitates active learning (Downs, 2005).

Burch, Sikakana, Yeld, Seggie and Schmidt conducted a study in 2007 also on academic developmental programmes. The purpose of this study was to compare the retention and success rates of two programmes, the academic development programme (ADP) and a problem- based learning (PBL) programme, both focusing on at- risk medical students at the University of Cape Town. The academic development programme was introduced in 1991 and discontinued in 2002. The problem- based learning programme is a first year programme that all at-risk medical students took from 2002 and those who required support were identified in the first semester and undergo an intervention programme for a year before returning to continue their second semester. The academic results of the students showed that the at- risk students of thr PBL programme performed better in all five courses than the ADP students and its retention rates were also better. The better results are attributed to improved quality of education at school level after South Africa was democratized. This study additionally found that at-risk students gained knowledge, clinical reasoning and clinical skills in the PBL problem. The discourse surrounding the at- risk students is that these are students who were disadvantaged educationally at school level due to attending under- resourced schools however the fact that they were accepted into a medical programme even from such backgrounds demonstrates that they are extremely motivated, very resourceful and inherently talented students. Compared to their peers from advantaged backgrounds, these students are regarded as representing the best candidates from all the students with similar backgrounds (Burch et al., 2007). This argument is in agreement with the REAP and Vygotsky's view of underprepared students.

The argument made by Sikhwari (2014) is that is academic self- concept is an important predictor of academic achievement. Academic self- concept is defined as the "attitudes, feelings and perceptions relative to one's intellectual or academic skills" (Sikhwari, 2014, p. 20). This study had three hypotheses. The first was that academic performance determines self- concept. It is theorized that experiences of academic success or failure have a huge impact on students' self- concept. The second was that the level of self- concept determines the degree of academic achievement. The third hypothesis was that self-concept and academic achievement influence each other. The results show that there is a link between self- concept and achievement. In addition, there also a correlation found between motivation and achievement. The author argues that self- concept and motivation have an interdependent relationship to academic achievement. Thus, the recommendation is that interventions should focus on improving academic self- concept and motivation levels (Sikhwari, 2014). Yet again students are regarded as having the problem or a deficit, something that prevents them from succeeding. This is a problematic explanation because several studied including this current study have found that underprepared students are motivated but simply lack the skills to achieve their academic goals.

The theoretical framework used in this study is called the Self- determination theory of motivation. This theory is used to understand individuals' motivation. According to this theory, motivation is multidimensional, not only in terms of level but also kind. According to the theory, motivation is influenced by feelings of self- efficacy and competence, a sense of autonomy and the value one places on significant others. The theorists argue that there are three different types of motivation: intrinsic, extrinsic and amotivation. Intrinsic motivation is created when a person does something for its own sake and is regarded as the best form of motivation. Extrinsic motivation refers to motivation created by external factors such as rewards or punishment. Amotivation occurs when there is no self-determination, when there is no motivation (Sikhwari, 2014). This theory does not explain how motivation links to academic achievement.

The argument made by Fakude (2012) is that there are few studies which investigate factors which contribute to academic success amongst undergraduate students. This author chose to focus on factors which lead to poor academic performance at a particular South Africa university. This was a qualitative study which used semi- structured interviews to collect the data and content analysis to analyse the data. The sample consisted on ten undergraduate students from various disciplines. The problem here is that the sample did not consist of students necessarily who had experienced poor performance. The factors found include lack of financial support, unavailability of lecturers when students need to consult, students at this particular university spent more time on political activities as opposed to their studies, spending more time on social activities than their studies, the university admitting more students than they can accommodate which makes attending lectures difficult and impersonal, students have difficulty with English which is the language of instruction, the freedom they have at university, peer pressure, negative attitudes towards certain lecturers, problems adjusting to university, laziness, lack of help-seeking, level of difficulty of academic material, and not aiming to achieve high marks (Fakude, 2012). What's positive here is that this information was derived from the students qualitatively. This is because these are the people who are actually studying and thus, know what affects them and what they need. Instead of finding strategies that promote success, this study investigated success by looking at what leads to failure. Thus, failing to assist in truly exploring how struggling students can be assisted and what it takes to get there.

There are few studies which examine the impact of psychosocial factors on success. The first study cited was conducted by Sommer and Dumont (2011). This study hypothesized that psychosocial factors such as motivation, self- esteem, perceived stress, academic overload and help- seeking behaviour, which form part of the Peterson et al. model, determine academic performance however this is through adjustment to university. These authors argue that many studies have been conducted studies on the influence of academic abilities and behaviours on academic success such as proficiency in English,

academic reading and writing skills, attendance or non- attendance to lecturers etc. however argue that few have considered the impact of psychosocial factors on academic success. This is a quantitative study that tested the model developed by Peterson et al. in 2009 and used the pearson product- moment correlations to analyse the data. The study, like the study by Peterson et al. (2009), found that the influence of psychosocial factors mentioned above on academic performance is partly mediated by adjustment to university. They additionally found that adjustment and academic overload significantly predicted academic performance. Students who were found to adjust well to university and were thus able to cope with the academic, personal and emotional demands of university and felt a sense of belonging, perform very well academically (Sommer and Dumont, 2011). The problem here is that adjustment only partially explains academic performance which means that other factors also play a role and thus, it is important to understand those factors as well. It may be possible to assume that if students are equipped with the academic skills they need to succeed then psychosocial factors such as self- esteem, motivation will increase, perceived stress will decrease, the ability to cope with academic workload will increase and possibly help- seeking behaviour as well. It is possible to argue that academic skills are a stronger predictor of academic performance than non- academic factors. The findings in the current study allude to this as the REAP students spoke about the improvement of various psychosocial factors due to their improved marks which were a result of acquiring new academic literacy skills in the REAP programme.

The second psychosocial study was conducted by Sommer in 2013. This study was conducted to investigate the influence of psychosocial factors such as academic motivation, help- seeking behaviour, self- efficacy, self- esteem, perceived stress, academic overload, test anxiety, and perceived social support on academic performance and student adjustment. This study also linked academic performance and adjustment. Three different path models were tested, a direct model, mediated model and a model with both direct and mediated. This was another quantitative study. Self- efficacy was

found to positively influence academic performance. This suggests that students who believe in their academic abilities perform better. The findings show that academic workload, amotivation and perceived stress however negatively influence academic performance. Further, test anxiety leads to poor academic performance. The study found that a partially mediated model better explained the relationship between the psychosocial factors, and adjustment and academic performance. The model explained 26% of the students' adjustment and 29% of the students' academic performance (Sommer, 2013). The problem is that this study found a model which only partially predicts academic performance and thus, leaves room for other possible explanations. It may also suggest that university support porgrammes may need to combine both academic skills with psycho- social development if they desire to improve success.

Leader (2010) conducted a study which attempted to replicate the results found in international studies which reported that there is a correlation between self- efficacy and academic achievement. Also, the aim was to investigate the relationship between academic achievement and identity processing styles of first year students. The theory used developed by Erik Erikson in 1968 which argues that during late adolescence teenagers experience a developmental phase called "identity confusion" which refers to feelings of uncertainty which is linked to their development of a career- related identity. Further, another concept developed by Erikson was moratorium, which is a phase a person goes through when they are unable to commit to responsibilities. This theory influenced this study's focus on identity processing styles because first year students are typically in late adolescence and thus, relating their development stage of identity with their academic preparedness to determine whether they will succeed. The author argues that such studies have only been conducted overseas and not in South Africa. The sample framework was first year students from various faculties at Wits University. This was a quantitative study that used three questionnaires and multivariate correlation analyses, ANOVA and ANCOVA were used to analyze the data. The study found that there is a weak and negative relationship

between informational identity processing style and academic achievement. Informational- oriented students are regarded as people who value independence and individualism in terms of working at university. This findings suggests that these students are at- risk. Further, there was no significance found in the relationship between self- efficacy and academic achievement (Leader, 2010). The findings in study were not useful at all in contributing to understanding how to assist underprepared Black university students.

McKenna (2010) argues that the graduation rates of Black students are less than their other ethnic counterparts, particularly White students. And in agreement with Bourdieu, argues that student effort, intelligence, determination and English proficiency level do contribute to success however the greatest contributing factor is argued by McKenna (2010) to be the academic literacy the student possess which were acquired from school and home, and how congruent this literacy he/she possesses is with the academic literacy requirements of the course the student chooses (McKenna, 2010). The current paper is in agreement with McKenna (2010) however the argues that due to the mandate placed on higher education institutions in South Africa by the government, it is the responsibility of higher education institutions to equip students with these skills in order to facilitate their success. The latter argument being is supported by Boughey (2010).

Boughey (2010) argues that university initiatives such as academic development programmes were initially created to assist Black students because they were seen as underprepared as they lacked the necessary skills, language proficiency and conceptual background needed for success at university. This author further argued that scholars have realized that the problem is not with the students but rather the universities themselves. According to Boughey (2010) even though academics have been aware since the 1980s that the problem is not with the students but the institutions have continues to regard students as the problem. This is the argument made by Boughey (2010):

> The idea that success in education is dependent on factors inherent to the individual such as intelligence, motivation and aptitude may appear to be commonsense. When these constructs are interrogated, however, we can come to see how other structural factors might be involved in denying success to some groups of students. How does the way we teach and assess privilege some and disadvantage others? How does the way institutions are organized privilege some and disadvantage others? (Boughey, 2010, p.)

This author is in agreement with Bourdieu's ideas and thus, the argument made in this paper. This author asks whether foundation/ extended programmes are all that are needed or should changes be made to the mainstream curriculum and teaching.

Another scholar is in support with the previous argument and the argument being made in this paper. An argument made by Kioko (2010) is that even though foundation/ extended degree programme are developed to facilitate the success of underprepared students due to their educationally and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, there have been arguments that the academic difficulties experienced by many students can be ascribed to the universities themselves. Kioko (2010) argued that if this is the case then foundation programmes are not sufficient for facilitating success but rather that universities need to regard these student problems as issues which need to be addressed at an institutional level as well if efforts are going to be effective (Kioko, 2010).

Petersen, Louw and Dumont (2009) argued that adjustment to university is regarded as a factor that influences performance outcomes. The sample used in the study consisted of first year students from educationally and economically disadvantaged backgrounds however who were successful. The study found that adjustment played a role in their academic performance however it was not a direct relationship. It additionally found that psychosocial factors such as help-seeking, academic motivation, self-esteem, perceived stress, and perceived academic overload also affected academic performance, to a small degree (Petersen et al., 2009). The positive aspect of this study is that they selected successful students for a study about academic performance. This quantitative study failed to find substantial

influencers on academic performance and thus, fail to adequately contribute to the literature on factors determining success. This provides reason for a qualitative study, such as the present, to further investigate these factors from successful students however qualitatively seeing as quantitative survey assumptions fail to assist.

The study by Malefo (2000) investigated the interaction of family environment, stress and coping strategies and academic performance of Black female university students at a former White university. This study found that these students' academic performance was influenced more by their background circumstances than by cognitive factors (Malefo, 2000). This is exactly the argument made by the REAP founders, who used Vygotsky's notion that if you have two groups of students, one group that comes from disadvantaged backgrounds and the other from more privileged backgrounds, and both these groups achieve average marks, what Vygotsky (1978) argued was that what this tells us that students from privileged backgrounds' marks reveal that average marks are all they can achieve because they have been equipped with the necessary skills for university. What it tells us is that students from disadvantaged backgrounds, according to Vygotsky, is that they have the potential to perform better if they are assisted because they did not receive quality education and were not equipped with the skills they required for university and thus, did not perform to their full potential (Vygotsky, 1978).

The study by Archer, Chetty, and Paul Prinsloo (2014) is in agreement with the current paper by regarding it imperative to assist in university initiatives in preventing attrition and improving throughput by exploring the behaviours of successful students in order to determine what is required to succeed. In this article Bourdieu's work is cited however only succinctly and only regarding the importance of habitus on student success. The authors argue that in Bourdieu's theory habitus plays a role in student success. Habitus refers to students' habits and traits which determine their behaviour (Archer et al., 2014).

The theory in the used Archer et al. (2014) study was developed by Subotzky and Prinsloo, which they regard as a socio- critical model for student retention and success. Student retention and success are viewed as the result of a complex, interaction of factors. According to this model, student success and retention are a result of three interconnected levels. The first level is individual which includes academic characteristics, attitude, other personal characteristics and circumstances. The second level is institutional which entails the "quality and relevance of academic, non-academic, and administrative services" (p. 66). The third level is supra- institutional which refers to "macro-political and socio-economic factors" (p. 66- 7). These theorists argue that most interactionist models present student success as resulting from students' successful assimilation into the university culture however they believe that it is more intricate than that, particularly in developing countries such as South Africa. They do however argue that a far greater role is played by student agency on academic success (Archer et al., 2014). The issue with this theory is that it does not explain how these three levels interact to create success. Furthermore, it does not elaborate on exactly which characteristics and factors these three levels are actually referring to. They fail to explain which individual attributes and what they mean by quality and relevance of institutional services.

Many of the South African studies that have been cited in this paper focus on first year success and thus, create the impression that if students can succeed in first year or know how to succeed in first year, they can succeed in the remaining years, however it is known that the level of difficulty increases each year. The factors perceived by lecturers in the Steenkamp et al. (2009) at the respective university that inhibit success in first year include lack of understanding of the language of instruction, lack of high school background in accounting, difference in the tuition of accounting in high school and first year, insufficient preparation for assessments and class attendance. The fact that this study investigates both factors that lead to failure and those that lead to success suggests that there is an idea that the prevention of conducting factors which lead to failure, will allow for success. The factors the

respondents perceived as inhibiting success include a lack of English classes at Stellenbosch University was reported by the majority of respondents as the main reason for their failure, students also felt they do not have sufficient time to study, the level of difficulty of the accounting module as well as a lack of enjoyment thereof were also factors mentioned by students, and similar to their lecturers, some students felt that no prior background in accounting was also a contributing factor to failure. Other factors seen as inhibiting success include lecturer- related problems such as boring teaching and student- related factors including lack of self- discipline, lack of motivation, lack of help- seeking behaviours, not taking a module seriously, negative attitude towards the subject, and making preventable errors (Steenkamp et al., 2009).

In the Steenkamp et al. (2009) study, factors mentioned as contributing to success include diligence, regular practice, and attending class. Having taken accounting in high school; natural ability; motivation; additional resources such as tutorials, extra classes; and asking help from peers and mentors are also all regarded as contributing to success. What can be seen here is that students perceive both individual effort as well as faculty support as necessary for first year success (Steenkamp et al., 2009). Lecturers in this study did not mention themselves as a contributing factor to the success of students and this is highly problematic if students regard their lecturing styles as problematic then it should be that lecturers are not assisting students as effectively as they think they are and according to Bourdieu they are part of the reason students are failing.

There are a few studies cited here which have notions similar to that of the REAP, and both Bourdieu's and Vygotsky's theories, which are utilized to make the argument in this study. There are additionally many studies cited above which investigate success factors by studying the effectiveness of academic development programmes, which are similar to the REAP. Further, the majority of the studies cited here utilized quantitative methodologies to investigate university success factors. These methodologies

proved to be limiting in terms of explaining how the factors lead to success and thus, do very little in contributing to ways in which to assist struggling students. Many studies focus on the students as the problem and the argument being made in this paper is that such explanations are not appropriate and fail to understand the extent of the problem in higher education in South Africa. Another revelation was that many of the studies cited found focused on first year students and the problems they face, and how to assist them. This is understandable as international and national studies have both found that the first year of study is experienced as very difficult for many students (Cross, 2009). The problem is that some students fall through the cracks, they pass first year however continue on without the academic skills necessary to do well and to be able to receive admission into postgraduate studies. Admission to postgraduate studies and success there allows students access to good positions in their places of work and thus, social justice and redress will occur, which is the ultimate goal. This is the reason the current study used post- graduate students and graduate for the sample of the study, as they not only succeeded in first year but all their undergraduate years and succeeded well enough to continue further. Also, there seems to be quite a bit of victim- blaming occurring in these studies cited here. In addition, the fact that there are so many articles on academic development programmes suggests that students do need extra support from universities particularly if they did not attend privileged schools, and the results from such studies show that these underprepared students have a lot of academic potential and thus, need not fail (Boughey, 2010; Burch et al., 2007; Downs, 2005). This is also why investigating success factors from students in an academic development would have positive effects. There is also a lack of qualitative research designs, which is problematic because it creates a top- down approach to understanding success. This means that these researchers develop questionnaires and students only have the choices they are given in those questionnaires and thus, the students' understandings of why they pass or fail is not taken into consideration, unlike the approach taken in the current study. Using a qualitative approach is also how the current study deviates from the majority of South African studies

cited here. Many studies cited here looked at improving success by studying how students fail and thus, do not contribute to what strategies are needed for success. Various scholars were also found who are in agreement with the notion that to determine factors which lead to success, successful students need to be investigated (Archer et al., 2014). The gaps found in these South African studies provided guidance for the methodology and rationale of the current study.

1.4 Research Aims and Rationale

The objective of this study was to interview some of the students who participated in the REAP programme. This was because all the students had average academic results (between 58- 65%) when they were accepted into the programme in their second year of study, yet by their third year all of them were achieving excellent marks. Thus, all the students were eligible for postgraduate study and are currently either studying for their honours or masters degrees or working. The success of these students is noteworthy considering their background of educational and economic disadvantage. The REAP emphasized imparting cultural capital to these students through the extra lessons on knowledge taught in their various courses, the teaching of academic writing skills through essay writing classes, and exposure to other sources of information such as museums, monuments, conferences etc. These students were given capital they had not possessed before and now, similar to their White and Indian counterparts, they possessed cultural capital which appears as natural competence.

There is a lack of focus in higher education literature in South Africa on successful university students from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly successful black female students. The discourse surrounding disadvantaged university students is that they are ill- equipped for university (Boughey, 2007; Downs, 2005; Miller, Bradbury, & Pedley, 1998; Bradbury & Miller, 2011), that many of them dropout (Bhorat, Mayet, & Visser, 2010; Breier, 2010; Letseka & Maile, 2008; McGhie, 2012; Strydom, Mentz,& Kuh, 2010) or fail their modules (Akoojee, 1997; Kioko, 2010) and do not graduate in the

appropriate time (Cosser & Letseka, 2010; Kaburise, 2014; Letseka, Breier, & Visser, 2010; McGhie, 2012). In addition, it is stated that they experience problems of alienation and maladjustment at university and other higher education institutions. Thus, it was imperative to conduct a study on disadvantaged Black university students who were able to succeed against the odds and who did so with excellence, so as to find out how it is they had done this. In addition, according to findings by the Department of Education, the graduation rate of students at university in South Africa is only 15% (Fakude, 2012; Leader, 2010; Sommer & Dumont, 2011). Further, White students constitute more than double the number of graduates compared to Black students (Letseka & Maile, 2008; Sommer & Dumont, 2011). This suggests the importance of finding ways to improve the success rate of Black students.

Thus, the objective of this study was to explore the recollections (i.e. memories) of successful black female university students from disadvantaged backgrounds (i.e. former- REAP students) of their learning histories from school through university. This was done utilizing qualitative research methodology which was episodic narrative semi- structured interviews. Narrative interviews allow people to organize events in the sequence in which they occurred and thus, allow for links to be made between events (Murray, 2009). This story- like approach is important as many South African studies simply list factors and fail to discuss processes that lead to success, which this narrative approach will enable this study to do.

Chapter Two- Theoretical Frameworks

2.1 Social Reproduction Theory

Pierre Bourdieu was a prominent French sociologist who proposed a theory on the social class inequalities in the academic performance of university students in France, called the Social Reproduction Theory. Important to the theory is the concept of Cultural Capital (Goldthorpe, 2007).

Definition

Bourdieu described cultural capital as having three forms: an embodied form, which refers to the characteristics of the mind and body; an objectified form, which refers to cultural capital in the form of cultural goods such as books, pictures, paintings, instruments, dictionaries, machines, etc.; and the institutionalized form, which is the evidence of the possession of cultural capital, in the form of an academic qualification (.i.e. a certificate of cultural proficiency) (Bourdieu, 1986).

The embodied form of cultural capital

According to Bourdieu (1986), most of the features of cultural capital are embodied in the person. What he meant by this is that cultural capital becomes an integral part of the person through the processes of internalization and assimilation, through striving, effort and time spent learning and traning (Bourdieu, 1986). This form of cultural capital may include knowledge, information, a wide variety of skills, good habits, a taste for highbrow art and events (DiMaggio & Mukhtar, 2004).

The most important aspect of this form of cultural capital is the learning of basic cognitive skills which are further developed in school and university into technical skills which are important in the workplace (Barone, 2006). This internalized cultural capital leads to the formation of a habitus (Bourdieu, 1986). A habitus, another one of Bourdieu famous concepts, is a variety of socially constructed traits that people possess which determine their position and conduct in the world (Goldthorpe, 2007).

According to Bourdieu (1986), since the transmission and acquisition of cultural capital do not occur publicly it becomes symbolic in that it is not known as cultural capital, but rather as 'natural competence'. People with large amounts of cultural capital benefit greatly, materially and symbolically, because their cultural competence is viewed as scant in society and as a result their abilities are highly valued (Swartz, 1977). According to Bourdieu, the students from middle- and lower- class backgrounds are thus most likely to occupy less prestigious positions in society because their cultural capital is not as valued and rare (Bourdieu, 1986).

An example of the latter could be a car. Since upper- class people are quintessentially the owners of the means of production and thus, have abundant wealth, a parent might buy a child a new car. A mechanical engineer, on the other hand, might want to teach their child how to design and construct a car since they possess the scientific knowledge and technical skills needed to do so. This may advantage the child one day in a mechanical engineering university course, for example (Bourdieu, 1986).

The objectified form of cultural capital

Cultural capital is objectified in material objects and media such as books, articles, paintings, monuments, instruments etc. These objects can be transmitted in their material form as economic capital or symbolically as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). According to Weiniger and Lareau (2006), Bourdieu argued that these material objects only become cultural capital if the person utilizing them has a certain level of embodied cultural capital with which to comprehend and us e them. For instance, an

engineering textbook is an “objectified” form of cultural capital because it requires prior training in engineering for a person to understand it.

The institutionalized form of cultural capital

In this instance, embodied cultural capital is materialized as an academic qualification. A degree/ diploma symbolizes a university’s or other tertiary institution’s verification of a person’s cultural competence, formal knowledge, preferences, behaviour, and attitudes (Bourdieu, 1986; Grayson, 2010). This qualification gives value to a person in the labour market and allows for good monetary returns (Bourdieu, 1986).

His theory

Bourdieu argued that through socialization, upper- class/ dominant- class parents teach their children important habits, behaviours and values (which Bourdieu called class ethos) and they teach them important skills and give them knowledge and information (which Bourdieu called cultural capital), all of which are important for success in school and life (Swartz, 1977). These practices require substantial economic means and cultural knowledge which lower- class people do not possess, according to Bourdieu (Jæger, 2009). Thus, students from lower- class backgrounds only gain cultural capital later in life, during their schooling careers and end up lagging behind those who possessed it from a very young age (Goldthorpe, 2007). The early domestic transmission of cultural capital is one explanation Bourdieu gave for the problem of class- based inequalities in academic achievement (Jæger, 2009; Swartz, 1977). He argued that the education system imparts very limited cultural capital to its students and then, assesses them in ways that place students from upper- class backgrounds at an advantage by basing the criteria for excellence on the abilities and knowledge- base of the upper- class students. Thus, the upper- class students achieve better grades and go on to occupy prestigious occupational positions in the labour market and remain part of the upper- class. Thus, social reproduction occurs (Swartz, 1977).

Critics have argued that Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction is too radical and based on unsound evidence and argument (Goldthorpe, 2007).

Several literary sources support this theory, for example, Luzeckyj, Scutter, King, Brinkworth (2011) conducted a comparative study on first-in-family students and non- first-in-family. They asserted that first-in-family students are disadvantaged at university because they do not possess the cultural capital that those who have immediate family members who have been to university (i.e. non-first-in-family students) have. Stolle- McAllister (2011) additionally stated that a study conducted on students in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programme found that the imparting cultural capital to these students contributed to their success. Further, a study conducted by Merenluoto (2009) found that when cultural capital was measured as parents' educational background, interest in cultural activities and previous school success, there was an association between the time it took the respondents to graduate from their master's degrees and the level of cultural capital they possessed.

Research suggests that family background matters for academic achievement (Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). Bourdieu (1977) argued that the behaviours, attitutudes and preferences of the upper class are extremely valued by schools. Very importantly, even though lower/ working class children may acquire certain skills and knowledge which render them able to succeed in school however this class of children are argued to never have the same "natural familiarity" to the school system as the upper and middle class children and thus, making them more susceptible to failure (Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). Formal knowledge, resources and credentials have also been used to define cultural capital. Cultural capital originally referred to socialization into highbrow culture, which includes attendance to theatres and museums, interest in classical music and art, and the reading of literature (Bourdieu, 1984; Kalmijn & Kraaykamp, 1996). Bourdieu argued that socio- economic advantage is thus transferred

through generations. Bourdieu argued that exposure to highbrow culture enabled upper and middle class children greater chance of excelling in higher education, thus reproducing their socio-economic advantage. Prieur and Savage (2011) contend that the term "cultural capital" has been used in multiple places and has meant multiples things, however that due to the fact that highbrow culture plays a lesser role in society today, the use of cultural capital to reflect modern society remains feasible. Originally, Bourdieu argued that children gained habits, skills and attitudes from their family backgrounds, which are directly proportional to their scholastic success. In addition, he argued that they gained knowledge and abilities as well as cultural taste, and that the latter has a more implicit impact on school performance (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979). In his book, *Reproduction*, Bourdieu (1970) argued that the assessment criteria in schools advantages upper and middle children by valuing knowledge and skills they acquired outside of school and making it seem as if it were 'natural competence' (Prieur & Savage, 2011) and thus, undervaluing the knowledge and skills learned in school as requiring much effort and being too academic, thus lacking naturalness. Bourdieu argued that the habits and tendencies inherited from the family are important contributors of school success. According to Weininger and Lareau (2006) anything may become capital facilitates the appropriation of society's cultural heritage however if it is unequally distributed and thus, excluding some people from being advantaged. According to Weininger and Lareau (2006), social privileges originate from the institutionalization of evaluative criteria, whih favours what children from upper and middle classes know and can do.

It is possible argue though that to dispute Bourdieu's theory would be to ignore what transpires in countries like South Africa where the segregated education system of the Apartheid era was developed to deliberately impoverish Black people by limiting their opportunities to social mobility through the provision of poor quality education and to keep White South Africans privileged by investing much into their education. Many Black schools continue to function as they did under Apartheid and thus, many

Black students lag far behind their advantaged and non- Black counterparts and continue to occupy lower status jobs and positions (Giliomee, 2009; Sennett, Finchilescu, Gibson, & Strauss, 2003).

The other explanation Bourdieu gave for class- based differences in academic achievement was that the culture in affluent homes is congruent to the academic culture in schools and universities (Lareau, 1987). He argued that upper- class students possess equivalent ways of speaking, styles of interaction and familiarity with the knowledge taught and the manner of pedagogy in schools. Thus, they enter into the schooling systems well prepared to succeed. On the other hand, students from middle- and lower-classes enter the education system with difficulty because the culture of their schools is completely different to the culture in their homes and thus, many fail to succeed or fail to do as well as their upper-class peers (Goldthorpe, 2007). In South Africa, many working- class parents send their children to middle- class schools in the hope that they will receive good education that will enable them to gain access into higher education and to build better lives for themselves. Yet, many of these students are unable to succeed at school because their social habits and dispositions as developed through life- long exposure to the culture of the poor in their homes and communities are not aligned with the culture of middle- class schools (Fataar, 2013).

2.2 Empirical works utilizing/testing Bourdieu's theory

There is a plethora of international research which has been conducted either to test Bourdieu's theory or to use the theory to explicate the persistent class- based and ethnic inequalities found in academic achievement in primary, secondary and tertiary levels. As will be made known below however, class-based inequalities in academic performance in South Africa has been explained in many different ways however not using Bourdieu's theory. Thus, the current study is providing an explanation/ understanding from a different perspective. These studies form part of the debate on the effects of cultural capital on academic achievement (Jun & Hampden- Thompson, 2011).

International Literature

A profuse number of international literature shows that social class differences in academic achievement can be explained by social class differences in cultural capital (Barone, 2006; Flere, Krajnc, Klanjšek, Musil, & Kirbiš, 2009; Grayson, 2010; Hansen & Mastekaasa, 2006); Jæger, 2009; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Strayhorn, 2010). This provides verification for the use of Bourdieu's social reproduction theory to make the argument and explain the findings in this study.

2.2.1 Findings from primary school studies

Lee and Bowen (2006) studied the effect of five different kinds of parental involvement in children's schooling (at home and at school) on the scholastic achievement of elementary school children in a small town in Southeastern America. According to these researchers, parental involvement in schooling is a type of parental cultural capital because it allows parents to gain information that is necessary to assist their children in their academics. The results revealed that parents from all ethnic, socio-economic and educational backgrounds were in involved in their children's education. The difference, however, was in the level of involvement and the kind of involvement. Parental involvement in school activities and parental educational expectations had the greatest influence on academic achievement (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Generally, European American children performed better academically than African American and Hispanic American children in this study. This was found to be a result of more cultural capital (.i.e. more congruent parental involvement) (Lee & Bowen, 2006). The researchers stated that cultural capital theory partially explains social class and ethnic differences in academic performance (Lee & Bowen, 2006). The major problem with this study is its lack of statistical evidence. It was a quantitative study however there are no tables, coefficients or percentages. Thus, the results cannot be

trusted. However, it does suggest that there is a link between levels and types of cultural capital and educational success.

Dumais (2006) conducted a study on elementary schoolchildren however she had a different perception of cultural capital. She hypothesized that teachers would view upper- class students as more competent than students from other classes because they possess more cultural capital (.i.e. they participate more in high- brow culture and take up more extracurricular activities such as dance, art etc.). Her findings however led to the rejection of this hypothesis because the effect of this type of cultural capital on teachers' rankings of students' abilities was not significant instead teachers seem to have ranked the students based on their actual performance and gave lower- class students with more cultural capital higher rankings (Dumais, 2006). The hypothesis and the findings in this study suggest that the researcher misinterpreted Bourdieu's conceptualization of cultural capital. This study shows that Dumais understood cultural capital as something distinct from academic ability. It was understood as a way of being that can confer an upper- class student favour with his/ her teachers who value the cultural tastes, characteristics and styles of the upper- class. According to Lareau and Weininger (2003), this is the dominant interpretation of cultural capital in the literature and a very false interpretation at that as Bourdieu stated himself that "ability and talent is itself a product of an investment of time and cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 17). Nevertheless, this study suggests a link between cultural capital and academic achievement.

In a study conducted by Roksa and Potter in 2011, cultural capital was defined as more than simply participation in high culture activities, to include different parental practices. The purpose of this study was to determine whether the influence of parental practices on children's educational success is dependent upon parents' social class of origin or current social class. The data was derived from a nationally, representative study consisting of children between the ages of 0- 12 years of age. This study

also found that educational achievement differs across social class backgrounds. Children from stable middle- class backgrounds were found to perform better in reading comprehension and mathematics than learners from stable working- class homes. Children with parents who have changed social classes perform grades between the two categories above. Children from new middle- class families performed similarly to children stable middle- class families, once parental practices and other family characteristics have been taken into consideration. This study found different parenting practices across social class backgrounds. Middle- class parents engage more in concerted cultivation than working- class parents. Parental practices etc. were found to only partially explain social class differences in the academic achievement of the respondents (Roksa & Potter, 2011). This study also shows that cultural capital does affect academic achievement even in primary school and prior.

A recent study conducted by Huang and Liang (2014) in order to investigate the relationship between the three types of cultural capital and academic performance in science and mathematics. The study used TIMSS 2011 data, which was gathered from 60 countries on fourth and eighth grade learners, in addition to their own surveys which they gave to the respondents and their parents. Cultural capital was measured using indicators such as parents reading frequency, parents' level of education, parents' reading attitudes, parents' expectations of their children's education, and parents' possession of books. The findings show that parents' expectations of their children's education have the biggest effect on learners' science and mathematics marks. The authors interpret this as suggesting that embodied cultural capital is the most influential out of all of them. Parental reading time and attitudes were also significant predictors of achievement in science and mathematics however only in one third of the countries measured. Furthermore, institutionalized cultural capital (i.e. parents' education) and objectified cultural capital (i.e. parents' book possession) were also found to be significant predictors of achievement however to a lesser degree than embodied cultural capital. Thus, suggesting that all three forms of cultural capital positively affect mathematics and science marks in primary and high school

(Huang & Liang, 2014). These are rather interesting findings considering the study cited above which argued that cultural capital only affects non-objective evaluative subjects such as English, History and Social Science as teachers have greater leeway in terms of how they assess work, which is more subjective than objective. These results provide further justification for the use of Bourdieu's theory because they show that the theory provides good explanation for the reasons students are able to succeed academically, irrespective of the country they are in.

2.2.2 Findings from secondary school studies

Jæger (2011) studied a large set of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth- Children and Young Adults of six to fourteen year olds in Denmark. He used the following common indicators to measure cultural capital: frequency of museum visits and the watching of theatre performances in a year, the number of books a child possesses and frequency of reading, participation in extramural activities such as sports, art and engaging in a hobby. These types of cultural capital were found to be positively associated with students' reading recognition, comprehension and mathematics scores. The mean within- family correlations (siblings) and the within- individual (over- time) correlations between cultural capital and academic performance ranged from .26 to .43 and ranged from .31 to .52, respectively. He found that different aspects of cultural capital have different effects on the academic performance of students from different socio- economic backgrounds. Participation in highbrow culture and positive reading habits had greater effects on the academic performance of students from upper social classes. Students from schools in middle- and lower- class areas benefitted more from reading habits and extramural activities. He also found that the influence of cultural capital on academic performance was smaller than is generally reported because he controlled for confounding family and individual characteristics effects (Jæger, 2011). It has been suggested that other factors such as cognitive abilities, economic capital and occupational aspirations may also explain social class

differences in academic performance (Barone, 2006). Flere et al. (2009) showed evidence that intelligence is as good a contributor to academic success as is cultural capital.

Tramonte and Willms (2009) conducted a study on the effect of cultural capital on the reading scores on a standardized test, the 2000 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA); the sense of belonging at school; and occupational aspirations of fifteen year olds in 28 countries. They used two measures of cultural capital: 1) Possession of high culture products such as artwork, classical music, musical instruments etc. and participation in high- brow cultural activities such as going to the theatre, museums, and to the ballet etc. 2) Discussions between parents and children about cultural, political, and social matters and about school as well as books that children have read. These measures of cultural capital had significant effects on the reading scores of students in all 28 countries however on average, discussions with parents yielded greater returns for students than participation high- culture (R= 15.4 and R= 12.3, respectively) (Tramonte and Willms, 2009). The results from this study show a link between two different types of cultural capital and test scores. With regards to Bourdieu's cultural capital, the question is, in what ways do participation in high- brow culture, possession of cultural goods and discussions with parents about cultural issues translate into academic marks or abilities? Information about these processes is wanting in this study as in many studies in this review. A theoretical explanation of the processes that link cultural capital and academic performance is needed. Since many of the studies in this review are quantitative studies that can only test theory, more qualitative studies that can inductively explain cultural capital are needed to contribute to the knowledge in this area.

Another high school study was conducted on people in Japan by Yamamoto and Brinton in 2010. The study used data from the 1995 Social Stratification and Mobility Survey which is a national survey which examines cultural capital acquisition, socio- economic status and academic outcomes in Japan. The authors found that embodied cultural capital positively affected the academic results of the respondents

when they were in the ninth grade, whereas objectified cultural capital was found not to. It was additionally found that embodied cultural capital affected the final grades the respondents attained in high school. The interpretation made by the authors is that embodied cultural capital improves motivation and learning skills (Yamamoto & Brinton, 2010).

Wildhagen (2010) conducted a meta- analysis on the academic impact of cultural capital. The study showed that many studies demonstrate that cultural capital has a positive impact on academic performance and educational attainment. Studies suggest that participation in highbrow culture influences high school performance. Studies also showed that cultural capital has a greater impact on the number of years students spend in school than parents' involvement in highbrow culture. Wildhagen (2010) mentioned that quantitative studies that measured cultural capital as skills and habits (i.e. embodied cultural capital) valued by schools found a positive correlation between cultural capital and academic achievement. Very importantly, findings from various studies showed that having highbrow cultural capital had more of an impact on marks in subjects such as English, Social Studies and History because assessment is more subjective however not on Mathematics marks, which are dependent on correct answers (Wildhagen, 2010). The studies in this review were all quantitative and on studies which measured cultural capital mainly as participation in highbrow culture. This differs from the view held by the current study about cultural capital as the possession of skills, knowledge, behaviour and habits valued by schools and the importance of understanding findings from the perspective of the respondents.

A Slovenian study conducted on high school students to examine the effect of cultural capital and intelligence on academic achievement. Cultural capital was measured in this study as frequency of participation in highbrow culture (visiting the theatre and exhibitions), parents' education level, frequency of reading, and frequency of artistic activity. The study found that cultural capital is a

statistically significant predictor of academic achievement. It was also found that there was no interaction effect between intelligence and cultural capital on achievement meaning that they have independent impacts on academic achievement (Flere, Krajnc, Klanjsek, Musil, & Kirbis, 2010). Although this study does not associate cultural capital to social class/ ethnic inequalities in academic achievement, it does show a link between cultural capital levels and scholastic performance. Thus, suggesting that these results still suggest a explanation for such inequalities.

Andersen and Jæger (2015) quantitatively investigated whether cultural capital has greater influence in high- achieving schools in affluent areas than in low- achieving schools in poor areas or whether cultural capital is better for cultural mobility for people in low- achieving schools. This study was conducted on data from Sweden, Canada and Germany. Cultural capital in this study was measured using four indicators including cultural possessions, cultural communication, engagement in reading and educational resources in the home. This means both embodied and objectified cultural capital have positive impacts on academic performance. The main finding showed that cultural capital has a positive impact on academic achievement. Secondly, they found that cultural capital has a greater impact in low-achieving schools. These results were true in all three countries (Andersen et al., 2015). These results suggest that when cultural capital is acquired by students from disadvantaged backgrounds, the effects are greater for them. Thus, supporting the argument in this paper that students from disadvantaged backgrounds have academic potential and that with assistance they have the capability to do well.

Kraaykamp and Van Eijck (2010) conducted a study on the impact of all three types of cultural capital possessed by parents on their children's academic attainment. The respondents provided self- reported information from the age of 12 to 15 years. The findings showed a strong intergenerational transmission of cultural capital. The researchers found that cultural capital is transmitted by type, for example, institutionalized cultural capital in the form of very educated parents in this study was transmitted

through them providing their children with educational resources enabling them to perform well in school. Parents who participate in highbrow culture frequency were found to have children who are interested in it. Further, parents with a wealth of cultural possessions were found to have children who value cultural possessions. Very interestingly, the findings showed that the main manifestation of cultural capital is embodied cultural capital (Kraaykamp & Van Eijck, 2010), which has been defined as manifesting itself as natural competence (Prieur & Savage, 2011; Swartz, 1977).

Jun and Hampden- Thompson (2011) conducted a study to examine the relationship between cultural capital and academic performance in high school. PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) data was used which consists of information on people from 22 developed countries. Cultural capital was measured in this study as participation in high- status culture, home educational resources, and cultural communication and books. The study found that all forms of cultural capital in this study, embodied and objectified, have positive significant effects on mathematics, science and reading marks (Jun & Hampden- Thompson, 2011). This is another study showing that cultural capital is not simply effective in subjects that give subjective leeway to educators, but that cultural capital can have an impact on objective subjects as well, suggesting that cultural capital is more than knowledge of highbrow culture but also abilities and skills that have been learned (Bourdieu, 1986).

Gaddis (2012) conducted a study on the influence of cultural capital on scholastic achievement and included habitus as a possible mediator. The dataset was from data collected on adolescents who participated in the Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America Programme in the 1990s, majority of whom came from disadvantaged backgrounds and few from middle- class homes. Cultural capital was measured in this study as participation in high- status culture such as attending plays, visiting museums, cultural lessons and reading habits. Gaddis (2012) found that cultural capital positively affects the GPAs of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. According to the study, habitus is a complete mediator

between cultural capital and academic achievement. Further, cultural capital indirectly affects learners' GPAs. The author argues that cultural capital must alter learners' perspectives of their academic abilities and their attitudes towards school because they may gain more knowledge about how the education system operates and they may realize that their peers who they though were academically gifted were simply more diligent and more exposed to cultural knowledge valued by schools (Gaddis, 2012).

A study was conducted in South Korea with the purpose of assessing the correlation between family socio- economic background, cultural capital and educational achievement. This study used data from PISA 2000, which was an international standardized test with an emphasis on reading and a focus on 15 year old learners. With regards to the impact on academic performance, this study found that parents' objectified cultural capital is a predictor of their children's academic performance in Korea but interestingly found a negative effect of children's embodied cultural capital on their academic performance. They found that parental objectified cultural capital mediates the relationship between family socio- economic status and children's academic achievement (Byun, Schofer, & Kim, 2012). The former finding suggests what Bourdieu argued about social class influencing children's academic performance, through cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Dumais (2002) conducted a study using a nationally representative data from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) about eighth grade learners to determine the influence of cultural capital on the educational performance of school boys and girls. The results from this study showed that female pupils and learners from higher socio- economic backgrounds engage more in cultural activities. Furthermore, a significant positive relationship was found between cultural capital and the marks achieved by the female learners in this study, even though it was a relatively small significance (Dumais, 2002).

2.2.3 Findings from studies of undergraduate students

A focus group study was conducted at the University of York in Canada by Grayson (2010). He investigated the differences in the cultural capital of high achieving Chinese and Canadian students and low achieving Chinese and Canadian students in the School of Administrative Studies. He used the following indicators of cultural capital: participation in highbrow culture, parental involvement in schooling, mathematical, verbal, writing, and problem- solving skills. He purposefully selected high achieving and low achieving students who had entered the university with relatively the same academic grades in order to control for level of ability. He found that the high achievers had more cultural capital than the low achievers; that Chinese high achievers had more cultural than Canadian high achievers and that Canadian low achievers had more cultural capital than their Chinese counterparts. Grayson (2010) suggested that differences in these types of cultural capital may have been due to social background differences.

A study that tests cultural capital in conjunction with other factors was conducted by Strayhorn (2010). He tested the effects of socio- economic status, academic preparation for college and social and cultural capital on the educational performance of African American and Latino American male college students. In this study, social and cultural capital had a greater influence on academic performance than college preparation (14% for African American males and 6% for Latino American males). The strongest predictor of academic success was socio- economic status for African American males. The greatest influence on the academic performance of Latino males was involvement in pre- college programs (explained 29% of their grades). This study also showed that involvement in college organizations such as student government positively affected African American males' grades (Strayhorn). The very small percentages of influence of these factors on academic achievement demonstrate that there are other explanations for class- based inequalities in academic achievement besides cultural capital.

Recent research reveals that class- based academic inequalities occur in the UK at all levels of the education system (Wakeling, 2009). Wakeling (2009) showed that at the tertiary level, social class difference is evident in the proportion of students from private and public schools getting accepted into prestigious universities. In 2006/ 7, Oxford University accepted 10% of the students from the National Statistics Socio- economic (NS- SEC) classes 4, 5, 6 and 7 and Cambridge University accepted 12% of their first years from those lower social classes. This shows that there are class- based achievement disparities in the UK because acceptance to a prestigious university requires excellent grades (Wakeling, 2009). This then means that the majority of the lower- class students do not perform very well in high school.

A nationally representative, longitudinal study was conducted by Kaufman and Gabler in America to examine the relationship between the participation of male or female college students in various extra-curricular activities and their likelihood of attending a four year college or university. The sample consisted of learners in their eighth grade; who were surveyed again every two years for six years. Cultural capital was measured with indicators such as music, dance training, highbrow culture participation however only the former two indicators were found to be linked to college/ university attendance. In addition, cultural capital positively influenced attendance to an elite college/ university (Kaufman & Gabler, 2004). The link was not made in this study between academic performance, cultural capital and university attendance. Thus, not assisting the readers in understanding how cultural capital leads to university attendance.

2.2.4 Findings from studies of postgraduate students

Wakeling (2009) conducted a meta- analysis on class- based entry into postgraduate studies. Two national studies showed that 34% and 30% of students in postgraduate studies were from working- class homes. It was explicated that this occurred mostly in courses with a large number of working- class

students. He also found class- based inequalities in the number of students transitioning from Masters programmes to PhD programmes in Norway (Wakeling, 2009).

Merenluoto (2009) conducted a study to assess the relationship between cultural capital and academic achievement in masters' degree courses. The study consisted of 499 respondents from six different disciplines at the University of Turku in Finland. This is yet again another quantitative study assessing the effects of cultural capital on achievement; the positive aspect of this is that this provides greater objectivity on the utility of Bourdieu's theory as well as allowing for generalization. Based on their level of cultural capital and educational achievement, the students were classified into four groups. *Inheritors*, who are graduates with parents who had the highest education in the sample (i.e. institutionalized cultural capital); who value high- status culture and who valued the importance of cultural activities in their home and at university (i.e. embodied cultural capital). Then, there was the *Disinterested*, which consisted of students whose parents also had a high education level, however this group does not value cultural activities and had the lowest previous schooling grades than the other groups. The *Independents* is a group which consisted of students with parents with low level education and they have little interest in cultural activities however their previous schooling grades were high. Lastly, the *Interested* group with parents with low level education but students who valued cultural activities at home and during their studies, however their previous schooling achievement was not the highest. These groups were also linked to the time students graduated their masters as well as their age at the time. The study found that the higher the parents' education (i.e. institutionalized cultural capital) the younger the students are when they graduated from their masters. In addition, the study showed that the greater the appreciation of highbrow culture in the childhood home, the higher the number of credits received. Previous schooling success was also linked to a younger graduation age as well as higher marks at university as well as more credits received. It was also found that students who valued literature and visiting art exhibits achieved higher grades during their masters' courses even though they

took longer to complete the degree (Merenluoto, 2009). The study allows for an understanding of how cultural capital leads to academic success because in masters courses writing abilities are important, this includes the ability to make good academic arguments and add additional understandings from knowledge gathered outside of school (Bradbury & Miller, 2011; Brüssow, 2007).

De Graaf, De Graaf and Kraaykamp (2000) conducted a study on the association between cultural capital and educational attainment. Educational attainment was measured as the highest level of education, from primary education to the attainment of a PhD. Some hypotheses were tested including 1) "Parental participation in highbrow cultural activities, like attendance at theaters, concerts, and museums, positively affects children's educational attainment; 2) Parental reading behavior positively affects children's educational attainment more than does parental participation in beaux arts activities; 3) The impact of parental cultural capital is stronger for children from higher social origins than for children from lower social origins; Parental cultural capital mediates the effects of parental social origin on educational attainment; 4) The impact of parental cultural capital is stronger for children from lower social origins than for children from higher social origins; 5) The effects of parental cultural capital are additional to the effects of parental social origin on educational attainment" (De Graaf et al., 2000, p. 98- 9). The main finding was that parents reading behaviour has a greater impact on the academic performance/career of their children than their involvement in high- status culture. The understanding here is that parents who read frequently have greater cognitive and linguistic skills which advantaged them in school and thus, allows them to transfer those skills to their children. Also such parents probably create an intellectually stimulating home environment and they are probably more aware of what they children need to do well in school. They also probably have books at home for the children to read or to promote interest in reading in their children. The second main finding is that differences in parents' cultural capital, in terms of type of cultural capital, have a greater impact on children from lower and middle social classes than on children from upper classes. The interpretation by the authors is

that learners from upper social classes are less affected by their parents' cultural capital than children from lower classes. The findings additionally showed that parents' cultural capital has a greater impact on their children's educational careers than their financial resources (De Graaf et al., 2000). This is not the first study cited here to find that cultural capital is more academically beneficial to lower and middle class children than upper class children. This finding is contrary to Bourdieu's social reproduction theory and consistent with the cultural mobility theory developed by DiMaggio in 1982 (De Graaf et al., 2000).

The critique possible with all the studies is the lack of explanation as to how cultural capital actually leads to academic success. What are the processes that lead to this success from all these different forms of cultural capital such as involvement in cultural activities/ highbrow culture or parents' possession of book or even their reading frequency. Other forms of cultural capital are more understandable in terms how they affect academic performance such as students' frequency of reading. What the REAP did was it broke down its understanding of the different forms of cultural capital and it providing understanding of how participation in highbrow culture can have academic benefits such as facilitators having critical discussions with REAP students about the museums or exhibits or conferences they visited. Thus, not only solidifying the historical or artistic or academic information in their minds but also teaching them how to develop arguments about such information and allowing them to learn from their peers (Peace Kiguwa, personal communication,

2.2.5 Other explanations of class- based inequalities in academic achievement

Other explanations for social class inequalities in academic achievement do exist, according to the researchers that conducted most of the studies presented in the literature review above. International research has found that poverty and dysfunctional school and neighbourhood environments can also explain part of the reason why students from lower- class backgrounds achieve lower academic results than their middle- and upper- class counterparts of similar ability (Massey, 2006). Thus, this study is

interested in finding out whether the transmission of cultural capital was solely responsible for the improvements in the marks of the students in the REAP project or whether other factors related to the REAP project were also responsible.

South African Literature

South African research mostly studies the influence of quality of education, school conditions and poverty on academic achievement (Bhorat & Oosthuizen, 2006; Legotlo et al., 2002; Mji & Makgato, 2006; Pon, 2012). Thus, this study will contribute to the South African literature on the impact of internal factors, such as cultural capital, on academic performance.

2.2.6 Findings from primary school studies

Spaull (2012) found that the South African education system has a dualistic nature. One part of the system is comprised of affluent, very operational schools and the other part of the system is made up of poorer, less functional schools, majority of which are Black schools. He found that the performance of South African primary schoolchildren on standardized tests such the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) III, Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study (PIRLS), is considerably low even in comparison to poorer African countries such as Swaziland, Kenya, and Tanzania. The reason for this is that the scores of the children from wealthier primary schools are dramatically lowered by the scores of children from poorer primary schools when averages are calculated (Spaull, 2012).

Spaull (2012) found that a large proportion of primary school students are performing well below the appropriate grade level in reading and mathematics: upper- class primary school students achieved 52% for reading and 44% for mathematics and middle to lower- class students achieved an average of 27%

for reading and 17% for mathematics on the SACMEQ III. He found a bimodal distribution of scores based on the SACMEQ III which separates performance according to socio- economic status, language and school (Spaull, 2012). Thus, showing that class- based inequalities exist in the academic performance of students in South Africa.

2.2.7 Findings from secondary school studies

One of the major issues in South Africa is the persisting poor performance of many Black South African students from disadvantaged backgrounds on the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations (Organization for Economic Co- operation and Development [OECD], 2013). Studies have found that the mediating factors between social class background and the poor academic performance are related to the poor quality of education in Black township and rural schools as well as poor home environments (Legotlo, Maaga, Sebego, van der Westhuizen, Mosoge, Nieuwoudt, & Steyn, 2002).

Many poor Black public schools have a lack of textbooks, teaching aids, computers for students and administrative staff (Legotlo et al., 2002), an absence of libraries, non- standard classrooms, an absence of sport facilities (Bhorat & Oosthuizen, 2006) and some under- qualified teachers (Pon, 2012). Above all, students complain about teacher absenteeism (Legotlo et al., 2002), impatient teachers who refuse to explain subjects that they do not understand and one teacher admitted to not comprehending certain modules in the curriculum and thus, does not teach or explicate those subjects (Mji & Makgato, 2006). Whether purposefully or not, the South African government is partly responsible for the poor academic performance of Black South African matriculants because these schools depend on fiscal support to function however barely receive any.

Grobler and Myburgh (2001) studied the impact of internal factors, such as time- concept and self-concept, on academic achievement. They found a positive correlation between the self- concepts and time- concepts of 1 436 low and high achieving grade eleven students in Johannesburg. Their study

revealed that a student's self- concept (high or low) influences the amount of time they engage in schoolwork. They also found differences in the time- concepts of students from different cultural groups. High achieving English and Afrikaans- speaking students in their study saw time as linear and finite meaning that they recognized that they are constantly under a lot of pressure to meet deadlines for assignments and tasks. Thus, they manage their time very well, are future- oriented, are less anxious about the future and more content with the present and past unlike English-, Afrikaans-, and African language- speaking low achievers (Grobler & Myburgh, 2001). They also found that of the 183 African students in their study, only 28 were high achievers (15. 3%). This was a considerably different achievement disparity than that of the other cultural group. Grobler (2005) found, in a different study, that the time- concepts of parents and children were the same. This suggests that a specific concept of time is transmitted to children. Thus, time- concept meets the requirements of what Bourdieu regarded as cultural capital.

2.2.8 Findings from studies of tertiary students

The story of the dualistic nature of the South African education system is exacerbated by the government's attempt to rectify the class- based (ethnic- based) inequalities in the matriculation results by manipulating (.i.e. increasing) the results of the Black South African students so that the averages allow them access to university study (Stephen, Welman, & Jordaan, 2004). This is a huge mistake in that it only sets Black students up for failure at university (Smith, 2014). Research has shown that many Black students are unable to cope with the academic demands of university courses and as a result either drop out or fail and complete courses of three or four years in five to six years (Jama, Mapesela, & Beylefeld, 2008; Onsongo, 2006).

According to the findings in Stephen et al.'s (2004), many Black South African students enter university lacking the cultural capital require to succeed in this academic environment. These researchers

conducted a study investigating the importance of English Language proficiency for university success and some of the personal and social factors that influence the development of proficiency in English (Stephen et al., 2004). They studied 122 Black students and 43 Indian students in the Department of Human Resource Management at a university they left anonymous. Indian students performed significantly better than Black students both in matric (M = 35.07 as opposed to M = 32.94) and in the final year of study (M = 19.37 as opposed to M = 13.9). These final year results were substantially influenced by the students' competence in English (r = .49 for Black students studied in 1996, r = .51 for Black students in 2001/ 2 and r = .89 for Indian students). 54. 5% of the Black students in the sample were from rural areas and took English as a second language in high school.

Factors which hinder the development of English Language proficiency include: 1) rural home environment (where English is rarely spoken and is understood literally), 2) English teacher's English proficiency (most Black teachers are under- qualified, young and inexperienced, teach students in their vernacular and give them English notes), 3) the use of rote memorizing techniques which necessitates no comprehension of subject content and disadvantages these students in university environments where comprehension and application of knowledge are important for success), 4) the lack of critical thinking abilities due to their rote learning background, 5) difficulties with verbal comprehension (disadvantaged Black students have very limited comprehension of the English language and technical concepts), 6) lack of proficiency in their home language (if disadvantaged Black students were competent in their home language they would be able to use those skills to understand English, however most are not), 7) slow reading pace and level (the capacities to rapidly read and comprehend content are essential for success at university), and 8) the lack of academic writing skills (disadvantaged Black students typically lack the ability to write coherent, organized arguments and to discern between unimportant and important arguments) (Stephen et al., 2004). A low socio- economic background

means that students may come from under- developed neighbourhoods, attend subpar schools, rarely read or come in contact with English through media (Stephen et al., 2004).

Onsongo (2006) conducted a study examining the influence of academic support programmes on the pass rates of first year Engineering students at WITS University. Between 1986 and 2004 only 50- 60% of the first year students have managed to pass the year. Most students, particularly Black students, drop out in the first year of study. Thus, the Engineering department established two academic support programmes, the Special Programme (SP) and the Extended Engineering Curriculum (EEC), to reduce attrition rates and increase graduation rates. The programmes were designed to help students improve the knowledge, abilities and skills of students in specific subjects. The SP syllabus, for example, included Mathematics, Mechanics, Communication skills (designed to enhance English comprehension and verbal and writing abilities in English), and Physical Science. A trend in the pass rates showed that the two programmes have been successful in improving the pass rates of first year students. For example, in 1998 the pass rate was 40% and increased to 60% in 1999 after the introduction of the SP support programme. The average graduation rate was 33% for White students, 17% for Indian students and 8% for Black students from 1986 to 2000. Of the 16 students in the SP and returning students of 1999, 8 graduated in 2004 and the students from the 2000 SP group 6 graduated in 2004 and 13 were still studying in 2006. The success of these programmes was measured by their ability to generate pass rates similar to those prior to 1994 with a larger student body comprised mostly of Black students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Onsongo, 2006). It is safe to say that though Bourdieu's theory is not acknowledged in this study, the programmes were focused on enhancing the cultural capital of these students for success in the field of Engineering.

This study reveals the need for programmes that compensate for the academic disadvantages of students from lower- class backgrounds. Programmes that improve the skills and abilities of students to

a level appropriate for success in university courses. Much like the REAP project, these academic support programmes were successful in improving the students' results however what is not known is whether the programmes raised the skill and ability levels of the individual students to the extent to which they would succeed autonomously beyond the programmes.

2.3 Theoretical frameworks incorporated into the data analysis

The students who were accepted into the REAP programme were accepted because they were achieving between 58- 65% which was viewed as an indication of their potential. Unlike students from more affluent backgrounds, these students came from disadvantaged schools with scarce educational resources, under- qualified teachers and poor quality of education. Thus, it was believed that their being able to achieve average marks at university meant that with assistance these students could excel in their studies and gain access to postgraduate study. The students were assessed at the onset of the programme and found to be lacking in cultural capital. Thus, the focus of the REAP programme was on helping these students develop the appropriate cultural capital conducive to success at university, through the assistance of different lecturers and staff at Wits University. For this reason, the reflections and recollections of the former- REAP students were analyzed with reference to the theories by Bourdieu and Vygotsky.

2.3 Socio- cultural Theory

Vygotsky's Socio- cultural theory will be used to analyze the data, with specific focus on the concepts of the Zone of Proximal Development and Internalization which have both been used to explain educational transformation (Bradbury & Miller, 2010).

2.3.1 What is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)?

According to Vygotsky (1978), children have two levels of development that need to be considered when attempts are made to determine their mental capabilities: the actual level of development and the level of potential development. He argued that when cognitive tests are administered to children they are only measuring the actual development levels of those children which are cognitive abilities which they have already mastered. The average marks that the former- REAP students achieved in second year were only a measure of their actual development levels and much like Vygotsky, the REAP facilitators felt that the university tests did not render a means of determining what the students' potential developmental levels were. According to Vygotsky (1978), the best way to determine potential mental development would be through the examination of a child's performance on tasks that they are unable to do on their own but which they can do with the assistance of a teacher or a more competent peer. He argued that with assistance some children can outperform other students of the same level of actual development. The zone of proximal development is indicative of those abilities that are in the process of developing, that a child will only possess and be able to use independently in the future (p. 33). The REAP facilitators (.i.e. lecturers) held this same idea that the potential of the former- REAP students for further mental development was far greater than that of middle- and upper- class students with the same grades. This is because middle- class and upper- class students received good foundational education, had unlimited resources and good teachers in high school but the former- REAP students were educationally disadvantaged in high school and thus, were not given the opportunity to fully realize their potential.

2.3.2 Studies using Vygotsky's theory

Finding studies which empirically test Vygotsky's theory has been proven to be quite a challenging task in that the majority of studies either adapt the theory or descriptively make argument about education or simply conduct reviews of other descriptive literature. This will be seen in the articles cited below.

Hausfather (1996) argued that cognitive development theories on education focus on the individual when explicating cognitive development. In addition to these theories, Hausfather (1996) argued that schools have the exact same understanding of cognitive development processes. This scholar argues that there is a social component to cognitive development and uses Vygotsky's socio- cultural theory to make these arguments. This scholar argues that contextual factors are not taken into consideration when education research is conducted. The scholar stated that according to Vygotsky's theory, cognitive development is a dialectical relationship between the individual and the social environment. According to this theory, the social environment facilitates development in such a way that after receiving assistance with tough tasks, children become able to do those tasks on their own. Another important argument made by the scholar is that according to Vygotsky higher mental functions are the product of social interaction. According to this scholar, Vygotsky's biggest influence in education has been his zone of proximal development, which he stated that the zone of proximal development occurs when there is learning in the context of a child learning from a more competent person, which results in many internal developmental processes. Very importantly to the reason why Vygotsky's theory is being used in the current study, the scholar argued that according to the socio- cultural theory intellectual abilities are the product of the way in which learners interact with others in the zone of proximal development. The argument is that teachers need to assist learners by helping them create meaning of content and knowledge in a way that allows them to make it their own (Hausfather, 1996). The latter idea is similar to what Brüssow (2007) regarded as constructivist learning, which is said to be essential for academic success at university. The arguments being made by Hausfather (1996) using Vygotsky's theory are important because they support the argument in this current study that lecturers are essential in facilitating success at university and that learning is not an individual process but requires facilitation.

Borthick, Jones and Wakai (2003) used Vygotsky's socio- cultural theory which argues that learning is a "socially enabled developmental process" (Borthick et al., 2003, p. 107), to develop a learning/teaching

approach which gives both cognitive and social aspects of learning equal importance. This learning approach was designed specifically for accounting and business subjects. This learning approach was additionally intended to create learning experiences that occur within the zone of proximal development. The authors argue that they can use Vygotsky's theory to develop an approach that assistance students develop skills with the intention of teaching them to work independently. The objective is for the students to become able to develop abilities to perform difficult tasks that they initially learn with assistance from a teacher or together with more competent learners. Vygotsky's idea is that learners develop cognitive abilities when they internalize what they have learned from more capable others. According to these scholars, there is empirical evidence that shows the positive impact of collaborative learning. For example, Schwartz (1995; as cited by Borthick et al., 2003) found that students are able acquire abstract knowledge more effectively in collaborative problem- solving than individually. Furthermore, Palincsar and Brown (1984; cited by Borthick et al., 2003) found that reciprocal teaching leads to better academic performance as opposed to answer locating. The learning approach design had six phases. Phase one involves identifying learning objectives stating what the learner will be able to do or the skills they will have once they have mastered the abilities the objectives represent. This zone of proximal development approach to creating learning objectives motivates students to gain understanding of key concepts because it enables them to achieve the learning objectives that have been set. Phase two entailed arranging the learning objectives in a manner that enables students to gain the abilities they need to perform the tasks in the next learning objective. According to Borthick et al. (2003), the difference between traditional learning approaches and the zone of proximal development (ZPD) approach is that learning is viewed as an additive process where students add new knowledge to the knowledge they already possess. In addition, traditional approaches lead students through textbooks using topics. The ZPD- approach is different in that it views learning as a developmental process where "learners continually reorganize their knowledge structures, revise

beliefs, master new representation systems, and create new representations" (to Borthick et al., 2003, p. 114). Further, this developmental learning process occurs as a result of participation in socio- cultural interaction rather than through memorizing definitions and methods. Phase three involves creating opportunities for students to perform tasks that will enable them to gain the skills/ abilities they are expected to learn. This is due to Vygotsky's central notion that students develop mental functions through the internalization of the performance of the abilities/ skills they are learning. This means that these functions develop when students take in what they are doing in order to gain the skills they are learning. In Phase four, these scholars state that educators need develop strategies that for facilitating the learning of their students. The difference here is to create instruction which is supportive of students' performance as opposed to instruction which directs students' performance. Some of these strategies include making invisible processes visible, coaching to lead students to excellent performance, scaffolding to support otherwise not doable performance with the intention of reducing support as mastering increases, and giving tasks that operate within the zone of proximal development etc. Phase five involves the educator selecting the context in which the students are to learn certain skills and the material that enable the students to perform tasks to develop those capabilities. Traditional approaches to selecting source material is argued to have been to select or create texts which decontexualize the information being taught because this is regarded as the best way to allow students to the principles they need to learn, whereas the ZPD- approach contextualizes the information in order to facilitate meaning, understanding and learning. Also, the ZPD- approach creates a socially interactive learning environment that allows students the ability to perform extremely well. Finally, the sixth phase requires that educators observe whether learners have obtained the expected level of mastery. Various assessments of mastery are proposed including learners' participation in discussions, practice question performance, examination performance, and their ability to progress successfully to a new task etc. When a student is unable to master a skill etc. the argument is that the educator should develop a way

to assist the student by changing the assistance being given or improving the students' zone of proximal development but if a student masters something better than expected, the scholars propose that the educator either remove assistance, thus maintaining mastery or changing the learning context in order to promote a higher level of mastery (Borthick et al., 2003).

Chapter Three- Literature Review

3.1- Factors which contribute to the failure, dropout rates and the success of university students

Higher education literature shows that students all across the world struggle to make the transition from high school to higher education (Cross & Carpentier, 2009). In South Africa however, this transition is more difficult for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, majority of who are Black students (Sennett et al., 2003). The level of difficulty, the workload and the pace of higher education courses require substantial and specific forms of cultural capital which many students but particularly Black students from disadvantaged backgrounds do not possess (Bradbury & Miller, 2011). Thus, many of these students perform poorly academically in comparison to students from all other racial and socio-economic groups. They also have higher dropout and failure rates in comparison to all other students (Letseka, 2009; Strydom, Mentz, & Kuh, 2010). The Council of Higher Education also found that the graduation rate of White students in South Africa is 50% higher than that of Black students (Moloi, Mkwanazi & Bojabotseha, 2014). Thus, Black students from disadvantaged backgrounds are a major concern for higher education institutions and the South African government particularly because the government's higher education directives were intended to give these students greater opportunities so as to redress previous social injustices inflicted by the apartheid government (Bozalek & Boughey, 2012; Stephen, Welman, Jordaan, 2004).

The socio- political transformation that occurred in South Africa after the 1994 democratic elections resulted in former- White universities becoming more accessible to non- White students (Peterson, Louw, & Dumont, 2009). It is commonly noted in higher education literature however that increased access to higher education has not resulted in increased epistemological access for many disadvantaged Black students which has led to the poor outcomes mentioned above (Cross & Carpentier, 2009). Epistemological access means access to knowledge and participation in the academic community of practice (Coughlan, 2006). The White Paper 3 which was a document drafted to promote the transformation of higher education by improving the success and graduation rates of Black and female students. Despite this, the Department of Education conducted research that found that university dropout rates increased and student retention rates decreased.

Thus, much research on higher education in South Africa has sought to find explanations for this lack of epistemological access in order to reduce failure and dropout rates amongst this group of students. One explanation refers to the fact that Black students are English second- language speakers. This is a major problem because in most higher education institutions English is the language of instruction, of most textbooks and other reading materials and of tests and examinations (Maher, 2011; Stephen et al., 2004). Thus, in order to gain knowledge at university and other tertiary institutions students need to have very high levels of proficiency in the English language. This is what separates disadvantaged Black students from first- language English- speaking students from more affluent backgrounds (Pretorius, 2008; Onsongo, 2006; Stephen et al., 2004).

This lack of proficiency in English is one reason why disadvantaged students are linguistically and cognitively underprepared for higher education (Miller, Bradbury & Acutt, 2001). This underpreparedness is another reason why these students cannot gain epistemological access. Underprepared students are defined as students who are either unable to gain admission to tertiary

education or those who are ill- equipped for success at higher education institutions. In terms of being ill- equipped, the literature refers to their lack of academic literacy. This means that these students do not possess the appropriate reading and writing skills necessary for success or excellence at tertiary (Maher, 2011; van Schalkwyk, 2007).

Academic literacy refers to a particular style of learning, reading and writing (Bradbury & Miller, 2011; Maher, 2011). Learning is typically on the surface- level in high school whereas at university learning is on a much deeper level (Case, 2008). Assessment at university and other higher education institutions is not designed to elicit a reproduction of course content but rather to lead students to critically engage with the content, to understand it and to answer questions accordingly, and to develop their own ideas and orientations towards topics. Many students from disadvantaged backgrounds fail tests, examinations and assignments because they are unable to answer assessment questions in the manner expected by lecturers (Bradbury & Miller, 2011; Maher, 2011).

The problem with this situation however is that these students are not taught how to answer questions in this way (Jackson, Meyer, & Parkinson, 2006). If they were, they would be able to. And this is exactly what Bourdieu's problem with higher education institutions is (Swartz, 1977). Yet many White and Indian students are able to excel at university (Rushton, Skuy, & Fridjhon, 2003) and it is important to ask why this is? Well, White and Indian South Africans tend to be wealthier and thus, can afford to send their children to the best schools in country where they receive good quality education, are taught by highly qualified and experienced teachers (Pon, 2012), have unlimited resources at their disposal and where learning is prioritized and taken seriously (Coughlan, 2006; Soudien, 2007). Many Black South Africans however are poor and can only afford to send their children to nearby township or rural schools where many teachers are insufficiently qualified to teach (Soudien, 2007), schools which are under-resourced (Bhorat & Oosthuizen, 2006) and where frequent teacher absenteeism is a major problem

(Mji & Makgato, 2006) and thus, Black students receive poor quality education (Legotlo et al., 2002). The latter is the legacy left by the Apartheid government (Lam, Ardington, Branson, & Leibbrandt, 2013).

It is also possible that non- Black students inquire lecturers about assessment criteria (Peterson, Louw, & Dumont, 2009) and thus, know how to answer test and examination questions and how to formulate assignments. This is related to Bourdieu's idea that the culture in affluent homes is congruent with the culture in universities (Lareau, 1987). Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are unlikely to speak up when they do not understand course content because of problems with communicating in a second language and feelings of inferiority (Steyn & Kamper, 2011). The latter relates to the importance of identities in facilitating or impeding the development of academic literacy (Mckenna, 2004).

How students see themselves can hinder epistemological access (Case, 2008; McKenna, 2004). Situated learning theory states that knowledge is disseminated within a community of practice (CoP) such as a university or discipline and can only be understood through competent participation in that community. And in order to competently participate in the CoP students need to adopt the ways of being, ways of working, the discourses, the norms and rules of their discipline (Vandeyar, 2010; van Schalkwyk, 2007). They need to identify with the CoP and become fully committed to the CoP which will give them a sense of belonging (Jawitz, 2009; Yuval- Davis, 2006). This involves assuming an academic identity (AI) because "learning is characterized as the acquisition of a specialist discourse and as involving the development of new identities" (Case, 2008, p. 328). Yet there are several factors that have been found to hinder the development of an AI. These include perceptions of one's abilities, prior experience, conflicting identities, lack of a sense of belonging, comparisons with others etc. (Lieff et al., 2012). McKenna (2004) stated that "learning is not a skill acquired through the desire to succeed and practice, but involves complex social interactions and power differentials that engage the identities of the learners" (p.273). Learning thus comprises of students' entire university experiences not just what occurs in the classroom.

In the context of deprivation, educationally disadvantaged students also experience social, financial, familial etc. problems (Steyn & Kamper, 2011) which only exacerbate their difficulties with learning.

The awareness of the educational disadvantage experienced by many disadvantaged students led to higher education institutions establishing academic development (AD) programmes including extended degree programmes, and tutorials to help these students gain epistemological access (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007). Universities such as Wits University are also developing and introducing new curricula that include the development of academic literacy into mainstream courses and are recognizing that changes need to be made in the way in which learning is facilitated (Coughlan, 2006). “Yet, despite these well- intended and sometimes costly efforts, results have often been disappointing… [dropout rates continue to rise and lecturers continue to complain about academically illiterate students]” (van Schalkwyk, 2007, p. 955). And learning continues to alienate students because affective aspects of learning are not taken into consideration (Steyn & Kamper, 2011). Thus, further research is needed to inform institutional policies on other ways in which students can be assisted and retention rates and graduation rates improved.

Jama, Mapesela and Beylefeld (2009) developed a theory attempting to explain student retention rates of non- traditional students, specifically in South Africa. These scholars first discuss other theories of student retention. The first theory discussed was developed by Spady in 1970. According to this theory student dropout is the result of the interaction between the student and the university environment. What this means is that the student’s characteristics such as skills, attitudes and interest come into contact with the university’s expectations, demands and influences. According to this theory, the way in which the student interacts with the university determines whether student will become assimilated in the academic and social culture of the university, thus, influencing their retention. The second theorist cited was Tinto who developed the integration theory. This is the most popular student retention

theory. In a similar vein, Tinto proposed that students drop out of university as a result of not integrating properly into the academic and social systems university environment. Tinto's theory furthered Spady's interaction idea by stating that the interaction process which occurs with the lecture halls affects whether students are able to integrate socially and academically at the university. The third theory cited was Bean's psychological theory of student retention. According to this theory, students' backgrounds need to be taken into consideration when attempting to understand their integration into the university system. According to this theory, students' own attitudes and behaviour determine their retention because these factors affect how satisfied they are with the university. In the retention theory developed by Jama et al. (2008) regard the university life of a student as consisting of circles of progression. The first circle in which the student begins their university career is the pre- entry circle. These scholars argue that for non- traditional students this circle represent the backgrounds from which these students come from, backgrounds which provide limited resources and support to assist these students with integrating into university. These backgrounds include educational backgrounds which have insufficiently prepared these students for university. These scholars argue that high schools in South Africa are more concerned with improving matriculation results than they are with equipping learners with important academic skills. In addition, non- traditional students find themselves coming from disadvantaged backgrounds but unaware of the financial aid schemes available to them and unaware of how finances will affect them in this first circle of university life. The second circle refers to the initial entry circle which represents the period when students first arrive at university. These students have to adjust to the social aspect of university as they arrive because they have to adjust to the new environment, which is bigger in magnitude than what they are used to. They also need to adjust to the great diversity of the student body, which is something most non- traditional students were not exposed to in previous schooling years. These scholars argue that even though universities have orientation programmes before classes start, these programmes are short, hurried and overwhelm

students with information and typically, only residential students are able to attend these programme and not commuting students. Further, financial aid problems begin to affect these students as some students are not able to secure financial support and thus, have food and accommodation issues. Another social problem students experience as they arrive at university is adjusting to being far away from their families and being on their own, which some have never experienced. The third circle represents the teaching and learning experience. In this circle, students are exposed to different teaching methods, assessment methods, classroom settings, lecturers from different cultural backgrounds, and academic material that differs for each subject. In this circle, if students still don't have financial aid then they struggle obtaining textbooks, have difficulty attending classes, or commute for so long that they are exhausted in lectures. Commuting students also have a lot more home responsibilities which interfere with their study time. According to these authors, the problems faced in this circle leave students demoralized, lacking self- esteem and self- confidence, and as a result, poor academic performance. According to the authors, poor academic performance has an important determining effect on the final circle of academic integration. The final circle refers to the period in university when students choose what they want to specialize in. This is the stage when students learn specialized/ professional skills. Here, they apply the academic language, the critical thinking skills and theoretical skills so that they can develop these expert skills. Finances continue to play an important role in this final stage of students' academic careers as students may need money to buy equipment and money for travelling, perhaps to conduct research. In addition, students still have a social aspect that affect them because in this phase the authors argue that students need social support to succeed in this important academic period. These scholars additionally stated that students need role models in their disciplines in this period. If students do not have role models and support, the authors argue that they may perform poorly academically, and failure or attrition (Jama, Mapesela & Beylefeld, 2008). What's great about this theory is that it is specific to the students who are found to experience the most

problems at university. Further, this theory is very detailed about the processes and factors that may lead to poor performance. It seems to be a more holistic presentation of the problems faced by non-traditional students at university and the factors that may lead to dropping out.

McGhie (2012) stated that extensive South African research shows that Black university students are ill-equipped and underprepared and this leads to them performing poorly and/or dropping out. It is also found that Black students are the group that drops out the most, particularly in their first year of study. According to McGhie (2012), a lot of research has found that success in first year determines success in subsequent years. Thus, this researcher's study was focused on finding factors which lead to success in first year. One of the theoretical frameworks used in this study was also Vygotsky's socio- cultural theory. This study's argument and this theory are in line with the current study's argument and theoretical framework. The sample consisted of both students who failed some modules or completely and students who succeeded in first year. It was found that students who failed experienced more academic problems which they dealt with than students who succeeded. In addition, the researcher found that academic problems had the greatest impact on performance than other factors including financial problems, accommodation problems, lack of family support, peer pressure, problems related to lecturing styles etc. The findings showed that different combinations of problematic factors have different consequences, that students handle problems better than others, multiple types of problems has a very negative effect on students. The researcher found that there are factors that lead to success and this includes the kind of challenges students face, their severity, and the assistance they receive affects whether they succeed or not. What's different about this is that this study went beyond mentioning the factors responsible to explaining what leads to these factors having an effect on student performance. Furthermore, successful students took responsibility for their learning from the beginning of the year and worked hard to overcome any academic challenges they faced and thus, became successful. The findings showed that students who failed struggled to adjust to university and failed to

master the techniques needed to engage with their academic work. It was found that the problems faced by students who failed increased as the year progressed but the opposite occurred for the students who succeeded. A very important finding which supports the argument in this study was that support not only from family and peers but also from the staff, department and institution. It was found that both failing and successful students had the same problems with the institution, thus removing the idea that only failing students blame the university but suggests that perhaps the university does fail students in general however the successful students were found to seek out assistance from lecturers etc. more than students who failed. Successful students stated that there is a power dynamic that exists in the relationship between the students and the university and thus, removing itself from the learning experience of students (McGhie, 2012). The researcher argued that universities need to alter their "institutional and organisational forms, identities and cultures' in order to become more supportive of its students and in that way assist more students to be successful in their studies" (McGhie, 2012, p. 192).

Another South African study conducted by Zewotir et al. (2011) investigating the academic, demographic and social factors that predict student success, failure or attrition. The data used was obtained from the university records of 71 954 students at the UKZN, which includes their race, gender, year, faculty, subjects, financial aid etc. This was a quantitative study which used multi- level logistic regression. The study found that Black students drop out more than White students in the Faculties of Health Sciences, Education, Management Studies, Science and Agriculture, while Indian students drop out more than White students in the Faculties of Humanities, Development and Social Science, Engineering, Science and Agriculture but less in the Faculties of Education, Health Science, Medicine and Management Science. White and Indian students do not drop out at different rates in the Faculty of Law. The findings showed that female students drop out more often than male students. In addition, students with bursaries in the Faculties of Health Sciences, Engineering, Education and Management

Studies drop out more than students with scholarships in those faculties. Students with loans drop out less often than students on scholarships in the Faculties of Science, Agriculture, Education and Health Science. Furthermore, students in on campus- residences are less likely to drop out for students in Faculties of Medicine and Health Science, Engineering, Development and Social Science, Humanities. Also, students who are repeating a year are more likely to drop out than those not repeating. The researchers also found that students participating in academic programmes are more likely to drop out than students not in such a programme, particularly in the Faculties of Humanities, Engineering, Development and Social Sciences, Management Studies, Science and Agriculture. Lastly, the students' math and English marks in matric influenced their likelihood to dropout, with lower marks making it more likely (Zewotir et al., 2011). The problem with this study, similar to the majority of quantitative studies cited in this paper, is that how these factors lead to success or failure is not sought and thus, these results barely provide the readers with any useful information if the purpose is to reduce university dropout. Further, similar to many studies cited in this paper, this study regards retention as the same as success. This is problematic because as the authors stated the government required universities to improve success rates in order to redress social and income inequalities created by the apartheid regime (Zewotir et al., 2011). Thus, focusing on simply assisting Black students to remain at university and to pass means that the mandate from the government is not fulfilled. This is why the current study is not only a qualitative study that explains the reasons that various factors lead to success and why the current study used a sample consisting of Black female students who achieved excellent results, sufficient to obtain scholarships to study in post- graduate programme, which are not only competitive to get into but also require good marks.

Financial problems have been identified to present huge problems for students at university. A study conducted by the HSRC examined student retention rates at seven higher education institutions in South Africa. Breier (2010) reported on the findings from the study focusing on students from the University of

the Western Cape (UWC). The sample consisted of 20 353 students, and 10 265 students were studying at UWC. Of the respondents from UWC, only 1 327 students graduated, while 7 113 students were still studying and 1 825 students dropped out in the year of the study. The results from the study found that despite the wide availability of financial aid and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, students are excluded from university for financial reasons. 68% of the respondents reported that they had been excluded in 2002, 23% of the respondents were excluded for financial and academic reasons and only 18% of the respondents were excluded solely for academic reasons (Breier, 2011). These results suggest that perhaps the reason that Black students constitute the majority of students who drop out from university is because they come from poor backgrounds and are unable to find financial aid to put them through university. This means that discourses about Black students do not inform anyone about what these students are capable of or what their behaviour is, but may reflect the impoverished backgrounds they come from.

Stephen, Welman and Jordaan (2004) conducted a study to assess the effect of English language proficiency on the academic success of Black and Indian students. These scholars argued that a lot of research finds that White, English- speaking students from urban backgrounds quintessentially achieve the highest marks whereas Black, second language English students from poor backgrounds achieve the worst results. Further, these scholars argue that Black students have the toughest time transitioning from high school to university. The authors hypothesized that in order for Black students to succeed academically at university they need high levels of English proficiency. These scholars argue that reading proficiency is a predictor of test performance. In addition, most Black students matriculate high school have taken English as a second language, making them ill- prepared for the level of English they encounter at university. These scholars further argue that Black students from poor backgrounds are unable to articulate their thoughts meaning that they will need help with their academic literacy skills when they reach university. The sample consisted of 54 Black students in one group and in the second

group were 43 Indian students and 68 students. Of the 54 Black students, 40, 7% either dropped out of university or were not allowed readmission. Also, only two students graduate in minimum time, while four students completed in four years and rest took up to six years to graduate. There was a lot of repetition of modules which occurred in this group. In the second group, it was found that Black students who passed their English module at the end of the year, performed well in their other subjects. It was additionally found that the Indian students in the second group performed better than the Black students (Stephen, Welman and Jordaan, 2004). If such extensive research exists about the difficulty in the transition from high school to university for all students and if it is well known that the kind of surface learning that occurs in high school differs from the in- depth learning that is required at university (Bradbury & Miller, 2011) then why is academic literacy teaching incorporated into mainstream classes.

Van Dyk (2005) conducted a study to determine the effect of the lack of academic literacy on student success. Very importantly, this scholar argued that many students with high academic potential are at risk students because they lack academic literacy. The lack of academic literacy is one of the main reasons for failure at university. At the University of Pretoria an academic literacy test (the Test of Academic Literacy Levels) has been administered to first year students since the year 2000. The purpose of this test is to determine students' level of academic risk and to place these students in the appropriate support courses. The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of this test by assessing the baseline scores of at- risk students and their endline scores after a year of undergoing academic literacy intervention. The findings showed that there was an improvement in the scores of the students. They improved in academic vocabulary, reading comprehension and numerical comparisons, register and text type (i.e. coherence and cohesion), in scrambled text, dictionary definitions, interpretation of graphs and text editing. In all these areas of English proficiency, these at- risk students performed better than they had at the beginning of the year and in some areas they even performed

better than all the other first year students. The average performance at the baseline was 41% and it improved to 58% at the endline test (van Dyk, 2005). The argument made here that at- risk students are actually students with high academic potential students is in line with the notions of the REAP and Vygotsky's theory. The results from this study are very important because they show that truly students performing poorly simply need to acquire certain skills in order to perform better or even well. This additionally suggests that truly students are not disadvantaged by their backgrounds but are disadvantaged by the unequal assessment which occurs at university, where various students have the skills needed to succeed and other don't and instead of being taught what they need to take assessments, students are simply given knowledge and tested on skills they arrived with at university (Bradburh & Miller, 2011; Bourdieu, 1986), which means truly students are not learning anything at university because it is the skills that matter in the workplace and rarely the knowledge (Daggett, 2005).

Wadesango and Machingambi (2011) investigated the extent of student absenteeism from lectures, the reasons behind it and the effect this has. This study used a mixed method research design with a sample of 126 students from three different South African universities. The authors argue that research has shown that when students are absent they miss a lot of vital information as well as explanations and examples simplifying complex concepts. Research also found that students who are absent often suffer academically. Various studies have shown that student absenteeism leads to poor academic performance and thus, may lead to dropping out. Several reasons were given for absenteeism including part-time work or other work- related commitments (65%), catching up on or completing tasks or assignments (67%), disliking lecturers (58%), lacking interest in a subject (58%) and hanging out with friends (40%). Some of the reasons given for disliking lecturers included poor lecturing styles, boring lecturers, lecturing showing certain students favouritism, and lectures taking too long. The authors argue that this is problematic because lecturers are expected to promote lecture attendance, throughput and retention. This is what their jobs entail so they should be able to do that. The authors

additionally argue that it does not make sense that students do not like some lecturers or subjects because there should be a very conducive teaching and learning relationship. This means that lecturers may be contributing to low pass rates and low throughput rates (Wadesango & Machingambi, 2011).

The Human Science Research Council (HSRC) conducted a students' pathways study on graduates and drop- outs from 2000 to 2002 at seven higher education institutions in South Africa. The sample consisted of 34 548 respondents, with 20 353 drop- outs and 14 195 graduates.The objective of the study was to investigate factors leading to student success, throughput, failure, attrition and graduation. Letseka (2009) reported on the main findings of this study. There were four main reasons why students in this study dropped out were a lack of finances, academic failure, poor or no career guidance, institutional culture, and personal or family reasons. 80% of the respondents reported leaving university because they were failing some or all their subjects, there was also a disjuncture between the course being studied and the abilities of these students. In terms of institutional culture, senior academics stated that student failure is regarded by lecturers as someone else's problem, either the student or academic support services; for students, this related to feelings of not fitting in, feeling frustrated with how the administration handled student problems etc. Some students mentioned being distracted by personal lives or having part- time or full- time which took time away from their studies (Letseka, 2009).

Bharuthram (2012) argued that reading is one of the most important tasks students come across at university yet students entering university are not prepared for the level of reading comprehension, analysis, critique and synthesis they encounter at university. South African primary and high school pupils have low literacy levels and reading issues. The scholar argued that research has found that it is not language proficiency that improves reading comprehension but reading more does. Higher education institutions and a lot of research studies have reported that many students cannot read at the expected level. Many studies have found that if the reading comprehension and language proficiency of

students is not improved, they are at risk of failing. Several studies have found that there is a strong correlation between the ability to read complex academic texts and academic performance. A study was cited which found that students who failed mathematics achieved 50% or less reading comprehension, and that their math marks improved as their reading abilities improved. At university, students are expected to read additional texts in order to strengthen what they learn in lectures and broaden their knowledge base. Students must be able to comprehend academic texts in order to succeed at university (Bharuthram, 2012).

De Jager and Bitzer (2013) argued that first year academic performance and retention is an important concern to higher education institutions worldwide. Thus, at Stellenbosch University in South Africa, a support group was created for students in a first year Financial Accounting class. This study was conducted to assess the students' perceptions and pass rates. This study utilized a mixed method research design suggesting that qualitative data is necessary to supplement quantitative data. Similar to scholars cited above, these authors argue that success in first year allows for further success in the remaining years. These researchers argue that even though research has found factors which lead to poor academic performance, in a subject such as accounting this is not sufficient, there needs to be specific strategies to improve student learning. The belief at this university was that collaborative learning plays an important role in academic success, especially when two or more students study together. The students' perceptions were mixed at first because they felt that they were being singled out from the rest of the students by being placed into this group however subsequent to two semesters in the support programme, they were glad to have been part of the support group. Students' perceptions were different according to race however. The fact that the group was small was found to be positive because it made it more comfortable for students to ask questions and to participate. Further, small group tutorials were offered to these support group students where they received assistance from second year students. The study found that 55% of the students in the support group

passed the Financial Accounting subject. Even though this pass rate is low, the researchers argue that this proportion of students would have performed worse without the assistance (De Jager & Bitzer, 2013). These findings do not necessarily mean that lectures need to be smaller in order for struggling students to succeed because this is most likely not feasible. What it does suggest however is that perhaps the aspects of small groups that are positive affecting performance should be incorporated into mainstream classes in order for struggling students to not feel singled out and embarrassed by that, which may have negative effects. It seems that these findings show that these students have the ability to succeed however lack the academic literacy to do so. Thus, the way students are taught and what they are taught should perhaps be altered to make learning and success possible for struggling students (Kamper & Steyn, 2011). Further, the fact they were accepted into university shows that they are capable of doing well but due to the differences between high school and university, they were simply not equipped at school for learning at university level. So perhaps, high school curricula in South Africa also need to become more aligned with higher education skills and ability requirements.

Kamper and Steyn (2011) argued that higher education is a challenge for Black students and thus, their study was focused on finding out what assets Black students view as helpful and supportive factors for them at university. The problem with a study such as this, and many like it, is that they categorize Black students as one homogenous group as if Black students do not have different family, cultural, religious, and socio- economic backgrounds and thus, by doing this, creates assumptions that all Black students struggle when that is not the case and when efforts are not being made to understand the exact backgrounds of Black students who constitute the group of students who struggle. These researchers cited studies which have found various reasons for the failure or lack of retention of Black students. These factors include financial problems, language barriers, institutional culture such as “prevailing ideologies and westernized expectations of the student population” (Kamper & Steyn, 2011, p. 4), and maladjustment to the university. What is important about this study and makes it supportive of the

argument being made in the current study is that it uses what these researchers call an asset- based approach which looks at what every person is capable of and how those capabilities can be used to help them deal with academic problems. The theory used in this study was Chickering and Reisser's (1993) student development theory. In this theory student development is determined by seven "vectors" which represent higher levels of functioning however are not stages students go through as students go through them at different rates or simultaneously. These vectors include developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose and developing integrity. Also, Chickering and Reisser's (1993) identified seven primary institutional influences on student development including institutional objectives, institutional size, student- faculty relationships, curriculum, teaching, friendships and student communities, and student development programmes and services. These authors wanted to investigate how the learning assets the Black students view as positively affecting their academics together with these 14 factors theorized by Chickering and Reisser's (1993) could assist in providing support to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This was a qualitative research study. One of the assets the respondents mentioned included an academic literacy module which is compulsory for students who fail an exemption test administered at the start of the year. In this class these students are taught English language skills as these are students who come from schools where English is a second language. Thus, disadvantage them when they arrive at university and English proficiency is a prerequisite of passing. The second asset mentioned was inspiration which respondents referred to as visions and goals that lead them to work harder in order to reach their goal of obtaining their degree. The third asset discussed was sport facilities as respondents mentioned that physical activity is good if the mind is to function well. Another asset mentioned was role models as these respondents stated that in their communities people who attend university are admired. In addition, these respondents feel that having people who set a good example is important to them. The fifth asset

is perspective and refers to students meeting many people from different backgrounds and cultures and how this develops into students gaining a broader perspective. Another asset discussed was peace which referred to the kind of learning environment university provides which is conducive to effective learning. Safety was also mentioned by the respondents as important to them as they feel that the security guards make them feel protected on campus. Another asset was regarded as group studying. These scholars argued that these assets are definitely linked to Chickering and Reisser's (1993)'s vectors and institutional influences, although this was investigated, simply an argument that these scholars "trust that this student development and support matrix could be a valuable tool in conceptualizing, researching, planning and executing student advancement and study support at HE institutions, especially for students from deprived and challenged backgrounds." (Kamper & Steyn, 2011, p. 24- 25).

Focus in higher education literature needs to shift from what it is that disadvantaged students cannot do to a focus on disadvantaged students who are able to excel at university and to find out how this is. In addition, the focus on factors that contribute to success needs to shift to processes that lead to success. This is the reason the current study is investigating learning histories as a better understanding of the link between various factors, backgrounds and academic performance will ensue.

3.2 Research question

What are the participants' recollections of their learning histories from school through university?

Chapter Four- Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study had a qualitative research design. Qualitative research quintessentially explores, describes, reports and interprets the distinct and common experiences of respondents (Biggerstaff, 2004). Since this study intended on exploring the recollections of the participants of their learning histories at school through university this was an appropriate method to use.

4.2 Sample and Sampling procedure

The sample consisted of the former- REAP students who agree to participate in the study. The aim was to invite twelve former- REAP students from all four cohorts. These cohorts consisted of students from the School of Human and Community Development (SHCD), Wits School of Education (WSoE), the School of Social Science (SoSS), Wits School of Arts (WSoA) and the School of Literature, Language and Media (SLLM) however it was only possible to recruit former- REAP students from the first two cohorts who

were from the School of Human and Community Development and the School of Literature, Language and Media and only seven female students were available to participate in the study.

At the time the study was conducted, 2014, six of the seven students were studying at Wits University, thus it was possible to interview them at the university, one student was studying at Stellenbosch University, thus a Skype interview was conducted and one student was currently working in Pretoria, thus, the interview had to be conducted in Pretoria.

These students were contacted and invited to participate in the study via email. Along with the invite was an attached information sheet with information pertaining to the nature and purpose of the study, the risks and benefits of participating in the study and the fact that the interviews were to be audio-recorded. The participants were asked to make a decision about participating in the study subsequent to reading the information sheet. The names, surnames and email addresses of the students were obtained from the REAP database.

4.3 Data Collection Procedure

Before the study commenced, ethical approval needed to be obtained from the Ethics Committee at Wits University. A pilot study was conducted to test the interview questions (see interview schedule in the appendix A) to see if they would elicit answers to the research questions and if the participants would be able to understand and answer them. The pilot study was also be used as an opportunity to practice interviewing. These two aspects were subsequently amended before the actual study commenced.

The study was conducted using interviews. The interviews were conducted face- to- face. The participants were given informed consent forms to fill in before the interviews began.

The interviews were conducted in a building far from the SHCD, WSoE, SoSS, WSoA and SLLM buildings in order to protect the identities of the participants as the REAP facilitators are lecturers in these Schools and might have seen which of the thirty- two REAP students participated in the study which would have compromised the anonymity of what they said in the interviews. The interviews were all audio-recorded and written consent was obtained for this. The interviews were one hour long so as to ensure that the participants had sufficient time to answer all the interview questions. Each participant was interviewed once because time is not a resource readily available to postgraduate students and working individuals. After all the interviews had been conducted, the recordings were transcribed and analyzed by the researcher.

4.4 Data collection method

Narrative interviews were the method of data collection in this study. Participants were encouraged to talk about their past experiences through the telling of stories. Thus, the narratives studied as "stories of experiences" (Squire, 2008). Experience- centered narratives assume that stories have order and meaning (i.e. plot) and are linked accordingly, are reconstructions of experiences and that they show change (Bates, 2004; Squire, 2008).

The reason for the use of this method was because Wengraf (2011) stated that the telling of stories is the best way in which past experiences can be conveyed and understood. Through stories people can tell you all about how things happened. Narratives are regarded as the main way in which experiences are made meaningful. It has also been argued that experiences have narrative structures (Flick, 1997). Thus, for a study interested in participants' recollections of their past experiences of school through university this method was deemed appropriate.

Narrative interviews do not involve probing while a story is being told. According to Wengraf (2011), there should be no interruptions, no challenges and no comments. It should be mentioned however that no amount of effort and no special technique can prevent researchers/ interviewers from influencing a participant's story. Thus, narratives are co- constructed in the interview context (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004; Schegloff, 1997).

The specific form of narrative interviewing that was used in this study was episodic narrative interviewing. It enables the elicitation of stories of particular events/ situations in a person's life. Episodic interviews require the use of an interview schedule and thus, a number of stories will be told (Bates, 2004). A self- developed interview schedule was utilised in this study (see appendix A).

4.5 Data Analysis

The most appropriate data analysis method for this study was regarded as the thematic content analysis because the focus of thematic content analysis is on the content of the participants' answers, which was important for answering the research question in this study (Reissman, 2005).

4.5.1 Advantages of using thematic analysis

As a student researcher this method was perfect for me because it was relatively easy and quick to learn. It is also easy to understand so readers will not struggle with trying to make sense of the interpretations of the data. It is also a very flexible analytic method meaning that the range of things that could be said about the data were wide. This method also highlights similarities and differences of the experiences of the participants. Thematic content analysis also allows for social and psychological interpretations to be made about the data which is a feature which was very relevant to the purpose of

this study. Part of the purpose of this study was to critically analyze the influence of social structures in society on the experiences of the participants of university.

Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a step- by- step guide on how to conduct thematic content analysis.

- **Step One: Familiarizing yourself with your data**

Familiarizing oneself with the data begins when the interview recordings are being transcribed into written form. This will help the researcher develop a comprehensive understanding of their data. This step also involves repeatedly reading through the entire dataset until the researcher is familiar with the breadth and depth of the content. The researcher needs simultaneously search for meanings and patterns and jot these down for coding purposes.

- **Step Two: Generating initial codes**

This step involves developing an initial list of ideas about the content of the data and what is interesting about them. This step involves the development of initial codes from the data. Firstly, coding should involve looking for as many potential thematic patterns as possible. Secondly, the surrounding data should be kept if it is relevant so that context is not lost. The researcher can code an individual participant's data as many times as she likes. No data is devoid of inconsistencies or paradoxes and these should be included in the coding as well.

- **Step Three: Searching for themes**

In this step the codes are organized into potential themes and the data extracts from which the codes are derived are collected within the potential themes. It will be helpful to use visual representations

such as mind- maps or tables to help organize the codes into themes. At this stage the researcher should start thinking about the relationships between the codes, between the themes and between the main themes and the sub- themes. At the end of this step, the researcher will start to have an idea of the importance of the individual themes however should not discard any of the others as yet.

- **Step Four: Reviewing Themes**

This step involves the refining of the themes that have been developed thus far. Some themes may need to discarded, others combined and others separated into different themes. There are two criteria for what makes a theme: internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity. This step also involves two levels of reviewing and refining. The first level involves reviewing and refining the data extracts of every theme to make sure that they form a coherent pattern. At level two the researcher has to validate her themes by rereading the dataset and seeing if they accurately represent the meanings in the dataset and then, she may also add extra codes that may have been missed earlier. At the end of this step, she should know what her themes are, how they fit together and what story they tell about the data.

- **Step Five: Defining and naming themes**

Now, the researcher needs to find out what each theme is essentially about. She needs to organize the data extracts into coherent and internally consistent explanations of the themes. She needs to conduct and write a detailed analysis of each theme and relate them to the research questions. At the end of this step the researcher should be able to describe what the individual themes are about and what they are not about. The researcher needs to also begin thinking about names for the themes for the final analysis. Names need to be succinct, catchy and descriptive of the nature of the themes.

- **Step Six: Producing the Report**

This step involves the final analysis and write- up of the report. The point of the write up is to tell the complex story of the data in a manner that shows the reader that the analysis is valid. The write- up of the analysis should give a brief, coherent, non- repetitive and an interesting explanation of the story that the data tell. The researcher needs to provide enough data extracts to show that the themes are prevalent. She also needs to provide extracts that encapsulate her argument. Her argument should then be related to the research question(s).

4.6 Reflexivity

One of the ways in which this study will validate the data and analysis reported will be through continuous reflexivity throughout the study. The researcher has already begun using a reflexivity journal. Reflexivity involves a critical analysis of every step that a researcher takes in the research process. Reflexivity entails honestly discussing in the research report the ways in which the data that was produced was influenced by the researcher, his/ her interests, orientation, ideas, beliefs, judgments, prejudices, biases, identities (.i.e. gender, nationality, ethnicity) etc. and by the research process (Whiting, 2008). Analytic reflexivity also involves reflecting and reporting on how the data was influenced by the subjectivities of the participants. It also involves critically questioning the interpretation of the data and this will be done in this study (Speer, 2002).

4.7 Reliability and Validity

Morrow (2005) argued that there are quality criteria that transcend paradigms and can be used to critique any qualitative research study. She identified five such criteria: social validity, subjectivity and reflexivity, adequacy of data and adequacy of interpretation. Social validity refers to ascertaining that your study has social value. The rationale in this proposal testifies to the fact that this study is going to be contributing to higher education literature. Subjectivity refers the acknowledgement that the data

collection methods, data analysis methods and data are subject to researcher bias because the researcher is the instrument of data collection and data analysis. Subjectivity involves the realization that a researcher is actually a co- constructor of the data and the way to deal with this is through reflexivity. The methodology section in this proposal includes some reflexivity about my being a co-constructor of the narratives of the participants and this will be further discussed in the final report. Morrow (2005) suggested dealing with biases by asking peers or research teams for their interpretations of the data. Thus, the researcher will consult her supervisor regarding her interpretations.

The adequacy of data requires making sure that the dataset is full of rich descriptions. Thus, this study will utilize the reflections and tasks that the participants gave to the REAP facilitators during the programme as extra sources of data. The adequacy of interpretation requires immersing oneself in the data by repeatedly listening to the audio- tapes and rereading the transcripts as well as having a theoretical framework with which to interpret the data (Morrow, 2005). This study has two theoretical frameworks with which the data will be interpreted and the researcher will also immerse herself in the data.

By using these strategies the researcher was able to allow the readers to determine for themselves whether the findings are valid and reliable.

4.8 Limitations

The first limitation is that total anonymity of the participants is not possible in this study due to the fact that there were only thirty- two REAP students and those who know the students very well may be able to find out from the students themselves or other students who the participants are however they will be anonymous to the all other readers and audiences. A second limitation is that the perspectives of the facilitators about the REAP programme, changes in the students and the pedagogical practices of the

REAP will not be used. These perspectives may have given greater understanding of the participants' experiences of the REAP programme. A third limitation is that this study has a very small sample derived mostly from Wits University which means that this sample is not representative of all successful university students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Thus, it cannot be claimed that the experiences of these students can be generalized or that the factors gathered from their recollections are the only factors that contribute to excellent performance by educationally disadvantaged students.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

The purpose of psychological research is to increase and contribute to professional knowledge about people, behaviour and other phenomena and to utilize this knowledge to help better people's lives, organizations and society (American Psychological Association [APA], 2010). In doing research, a researcher is responsible for ensuring that the human and civil rights of participants are protected (APA, 2010).

I will give informed consent forms (APA, 2010) to the participants with all the information regarding the nature, intent, benefits, and risks of the study and the use of an audio- recorder. They will be aware that they have a right to refuse to sign the consent form if they change their minds about participating in the study. During the interviews the participants will be aware that they are permitted to stop the interview at any point. I will also ensure that the identities of the participants are kept confidential by leaving their names, surnames, and other identifying characteristics out of the research report and any other documents or presentations. I will store the data collected in a coded computer document so that only I will access to it. Complete anonymity and confidentiality cannot be ensured because the REAP facilitators have built close relationships with all the students and all the students with each other so some students might reveal who is participating in the programme or they themselves might disclose this information, however none of the actual readers of the report or any other audiences will know

who the participants were. Thus, the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants' identities will still be ensured to a certain extent. However complete anonymity and confidentiality of the content of the interviews will definitely be ensured and participants will be made aware of these issues.

The information in the report will be as accurate, as truthful and as honest as it possible. The data from this study will also be readily available in the appendix of the research report for researchers and individuals who wish to assess the results of the study (APA, 2010). The data will deleted once I am finished using it possibly after publishing in a journal or presenting at a conference.

Although the questions in the interview schedule are not sensitive, they are personal because they do require participants to disclose information regarding their personal experiences which for some students may have been difficult. Thus, the participants will be informed that they need not answer any questions they do not wish to answer and that nothing will happen to them if they do not. If a participant experiences emotional or psychological distress during the course of the study he/ she will be referred to a mental health professional for assistance at the Counseling and Careers Development Unit or the Emthonjeni Centre on WITS campus which provide free mental health services to all students. The researcher will however try by all means not to let that happen.

4.10 Dissemination of Results

The results from this study may be published as a masters' research report. They will definitely be presented at a conference and may be published in an academic journal.

Chapter Five- Coding of the Data

5.1 Introduction

The process of analyzing the data utilizing the thematic analysis method began as the interviews were being transcribed. The interviews were self- transcribed as this enabled the researcher to become familiar with the data. This facilitates the actual coding process. The next step entailed the reading and re- reading the transcripts in order to identify patterns/ recurring concepts across the various transcripts. Patterns were regarded as initial codes and were demarcated using colour.

5.2 Coding

To begin the coding process, the data was separated into information pertaining to the positive and negative learning histories of the participants. It was found that the data could be further separated into different sections of the participants' learning histories. Thus, the data was separated into the participants' learning experiences in primary and high school; their learning experiences in their first year of university; their learning experiences in their second year as well as their third year of study which is the time period in which they participated in the REAP programme; and their current post- graduate or work experiences. The participants' post-graduate experiences were not included into the analysis however as they mainly speak to what transpired after the participants graduated and in the interest of the research objective what is of concern is the factors which led to the participants graduating from their under- graduate studies and accessing post- graduate programmes. The different sections of the participants' learning histories were divided into positive and negative experiences and these were demarcated using colour highlighters. Different colour highlighters were utilized to demarcate the different codes. It was here that very interesting data began to emerge and preliminary themes were established.

Based on the questions solicited during the interview process, the data was coded per section of the participants' learning histories. Across the positive and negative experiences of their school histories, the participants' transcripts had similarities pertaining to discussions on the school teachers and their teaching styles, the resources available in the schools, psycho- social impact of various experiences in school/ home and the participants' academic performance. What was recurring across the data sets was the definition of a good school. The majority of the participants (i.e. six out of seven participants) determined that a good school consists of great

teachers and a plethora of resources. The opposite was regarded as a poor school. According to Braun and Clarke (2008), a code is developed through determining what is interesting about the data. What was interesting with this section of the data was that six out of seven participants articulated that their school teachers had a huge impact on their perception for a school subject/ school in general and as a result, their academic performance.

Once a pattern was found, data extracts were then collated under the potential theme. When collated, it became apparent that this data could be identified as a theme as the data was internally homogenous and externally heterogeneous (Braun & Clarke, 2008). A mind- map was utilized to assist in clarifying what it is that the data was articulating about the school histories of the participants. The method of analysis which was utilized was data- driven, meaning that the data informed the themes instead of theory or questions informing which themes were found.

Repeatedly reading through the transcripts enabled discovery of patterns across the data. These patterns suggested the existence of potential themes which may inform the research aim. Each transcript was highlighted in colour. The colour highlighters were the codes. Initially, the data was coded based on positive and negative experiences in each section of the participants' learning histories. These codes were then read repeatedly in order to identify themes. Once all the transcripts had been coded in this way, data extracts were appropriated and combined under one potential theme. Selecting data extracts also entailed maintaining the contextual data such as the researcher's questions. Below is an illustration of the coding and data extraction process.

Figure 1: Example of coding and extraction process

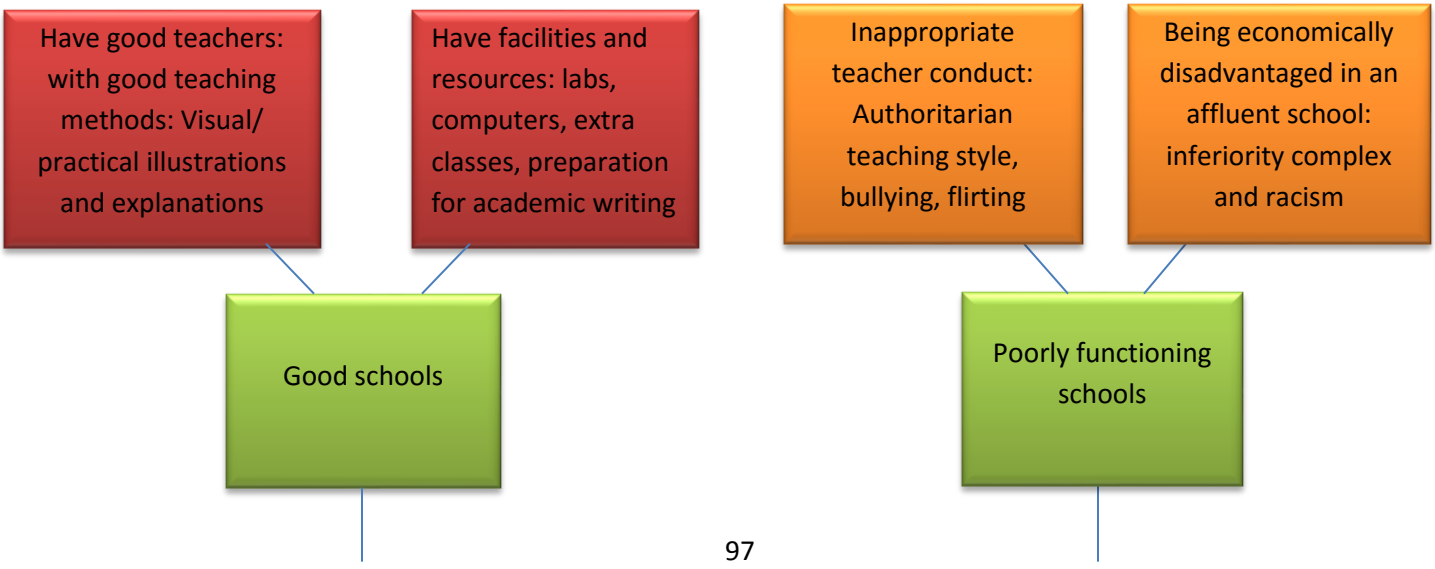
Code	Data extract
Positive learning experiences in school	*Interviewer: And uhm 'because you say that she was very energetic, wow! You say she was very energetic, uh like do you regard her as like being a good teacher?* *Participant 7: Yea, she was a good teacher. If I actually- Most- I think all of my teachers- Most of my teachers were really good teachers. Like, They uhm kind of inspired you to want to work for yourself rather than follow you around with punitive measures if you don't do what they want you to do. [Ja.] So- Like, They did set limits and sometimes I did step over them, but I- I do appreciate their influence. They seemed to generally care about their students. [Mm.].*

Negative learning experiences in school	*Participant 1: …I went to two different primary schools. [Mm] And then, the second one, well maybe it's because I didn't stay that long and I couldn't really adjust so much to it, [Okay] but I didn't- I didn't like it so much there. The first one I stayed until grade six, the next one, grade six to seven. I started in August grade six [Okay] until grade seven, so, uhm, they didn't give you an opportunity to spread your wings and want to learn [mmm] because the teachers were- they were oppressive, I'd say.*

Subsequent to the coding and data extraction process, I began to search for themes. This process entailed searching for relationships between the coded data. This meant that I was searching for similarities across the central codes of positive and negative experiences. This process also involved refining the initial themes and discarding data/ themes which seemed irrelevant to the research aim. When searching for themes, I looked specifically at themes which pertained to factors which the participants felt contributed to their academic success, both in school and university, but particularly at university level and in the REAP programme in their second and third year of university.

The codes which had been created were made into the initial primary themes. These primary themes included: positive and negative school experiences, positive and negative first year experiences, positive and negative second year experiences, positive and negative third year

experiences. In the positive and negative school experiences theme six sub- themes were identified: good schools, poorly functioning schools, good teachers, inappropriate teacher conduct, experiences of being disadvantaged in an affluent school and psycho- social factors affecting academic performance. In the positive and negative first year experiences four sub-themes were identified: good lecturing styles, poor lecturing styles, excellent academic performance and adjusting to university life. The positive and negative second year learning experiences; and positive and negative third year learning experiences were combined into one primary theme and five sub- themes were identified: psycho- social factors affecting academic performance, achieving lower marks, the kind of people who join academic programmes such as the REAP, benefits of participating in the REAP, and the impact of the social support received in the REAP. Below is a visual illustration of the initial thematic mapping process.



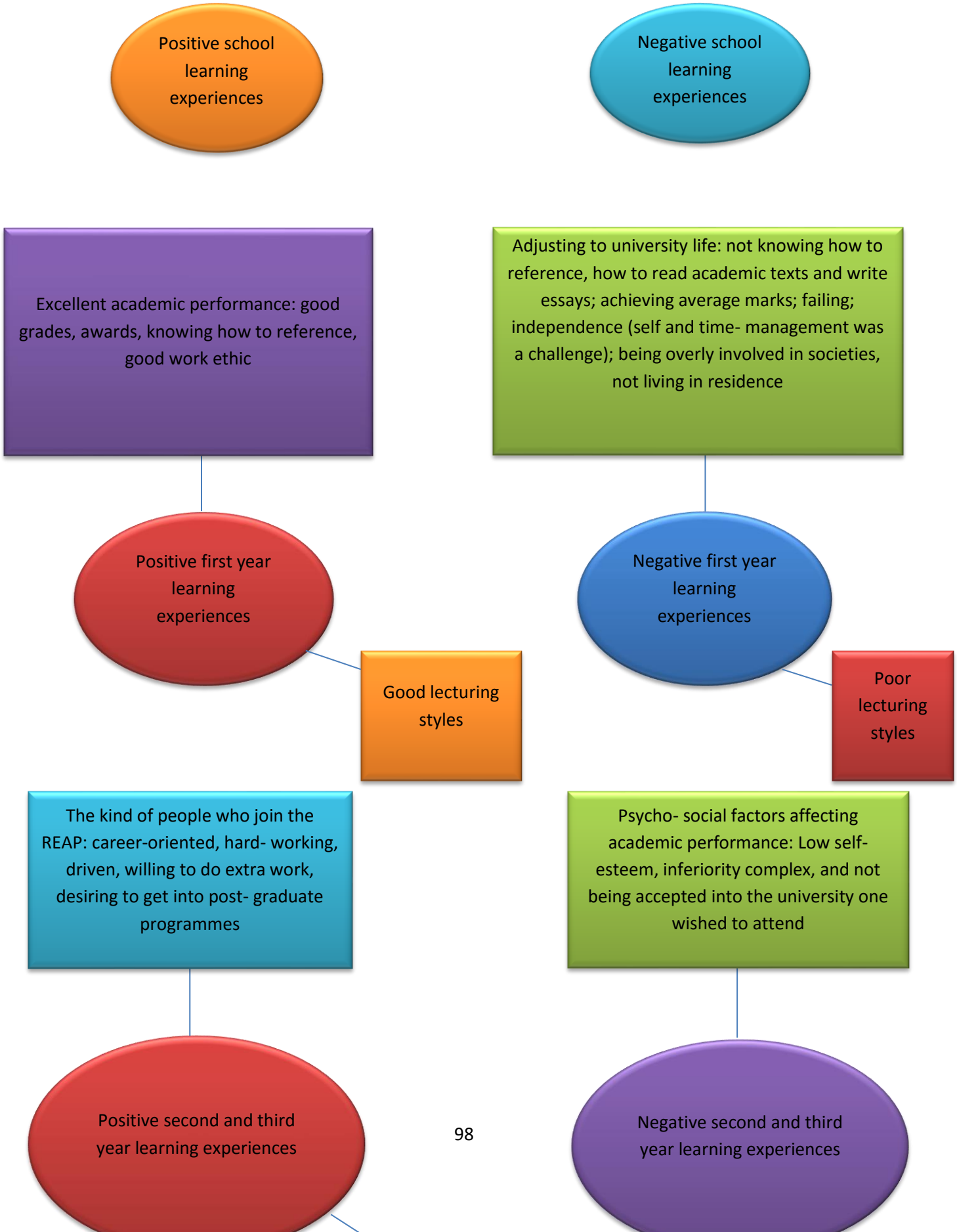

Positive school learning experiences
Negative school learning experiences
Excellent academic performance: good grades, awards, knowing how to reference, good work ethic
Adjusting to university life: not knowing how to reference, how to read academic texts and write essays; achieving average marks; failing; independence (self and time- management was a challenge); being overly involved in societies, not living in residence
Positive first year learning experiences
Negative first year learning experiences
Good lecturing styles
Poor lecturing styles
The kind of people who join the REAP: career-oriented, hard- working, driven, willing to do extra work, desiring to get into post- graduate programmes
Psycho- social factors affecting academic performance: Low self-esteem, inferiority complex, and not being accepted into the university one wished to attend
Positive second and third year learning experiences
Negative second and third year learning experiences

Figure 2: Initial thematic mind mapping

5.3 Naming and defining themes

This process entailed further reviewing and refining the themes which had emerged. Themes were combined and some themes were discarded as they did not correlate with the objective of identifying factors which contributed to the academic success of the participants. In the first two primary themes which were positive and negative school learning experiences, five sub-themes were discarded. Thus, only one theme remained. Braun and Clarke (2008) stated the importance of discovering data which is interesting and informed the research aim. The theme

selected as both fascinating and relevant was the teacher theme. In both of the primary themes there was a teacher theme. The two positive and negative teacher themes were combined into a single theme referred to as the *influence of teachers on the perceptions the participants had of school and school subjects and as a result, their work ethic and academic performance.* This theme encompasses both positive and negative influences and the emotive experiences the participants had in their respective schools, which most of them attributed to their encounters with their teachers. The majority of the participants regarded the schools they attended as either good schools or poor schools based on the teaching methods and conduct of the teachers they had. This was not the only factor mentioned as determining whether the school was a good or poor school however this factor was linked to the participants' willingness to work hard and achieve good grades in school and had an influence on their desire to further their education. This theme also informs the research objective as it demonstrates an important factor which contributed to the participants' ability to access higher education irrespective of whether they attended under- privileged or privileged schools.

The second category of primary themes included positive and negative first year learning experiences. The sub- themes here were also combined under two themes which were referred to as *the process of adjusting to university* and *the significance of effective lecturing styles on students' academic performance*. These two themes encompass both the positive and negative aspects of each theme and describe the feelings the participants had regarding adjusting to university life in first year; the frustration of having lecturers who do not explicate the coursework well enough; and the enjoyment of being in a class with a lecturer who engages well with the work and his/ her students.

The third category of primary themes was a combination of positive and negative second and third year learning experiences. The sub- themes here were also combined into three themes which were named: *the formation of an academic identity*, *acquiring academic literacy*, and *the importance of the social capital gained in the REAP*. These themes include the positive and negative aspects of the second and third year learning experiences of the participants. The themes encompass everything the participants spoke about regarding the kind of people who would join the REAP programme as not many second year students who are aware of the existence of the programme applied to join it; they also refer to the aspects of the REAP which the participants felt benefitted them the most in their under- graduate years, but also in their post- graduate studies.

5.4 Reliability and validity of the thematic analysis process

The first step in the process of determining the validity and reliability of the themes entailed determining the coherence and significance of the data extracts under each theme. Examples of the data extracts and themes are presented below to enable the readers to view the adequacy of the data and adequacy of the interpretations made by the researcher (Morrow, 2005).

Theme	Data Extracts
1. The influence of teachers on the participants' perceptions of school and school subjects	**Participant 1:** Interviewer: *Okay, so, uhm, I know like the REAP programme spoke about like- The whole programme is about helping students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds educationally, So would you say that you are one of them? Do you fall Under that category?*

	Participant 1: *Educationally, no I wouldn't. [No.]* *Interviewer: But in any other sense?* Participant 1: *Uhm, ja, I wouldn't like to (battle) so much, I guess. Uhm, a lot happened and- Personally, yes, but that, educationally, no. [Mm] They offered everything, well I think, everything they could.* Interviewer: *At your previous school?* Participant 1: *Yes, at my high school. [Okay] I think they could offer us at that point because they always brought in- They'd always ask us, are we happy? [Oh.] and they'd bring in new teachers, even though a lot of teachers resigned because of the behavior at school, [Oh.] but they tried their best. [Ja]* Interviewer: *Ja, okay. So, uhm, can you tell me a little bit about Like the schools that you went to?* Participant 1: *The schools?* Interviewer: *Ja, just like-* Participant 1: *Uh, what would you like to know about them?* Interviewer: *Just like, I don't know, where were they situated, are they private, public? [Okay.] Okay, you said good things about them already. I just want to know like what kind of schools they are and stuff?* Participant 1: *Okay, they've all been public. [Okay] Uhm, (I think)) they're still called multiracial schools. [Okay] Ja, all three of them because I changed primary schools. I went to two different primary schools. [Mm] And then,* *the second one, well maybe it's because I didn't*

	stay that long and I couldn't really adjust so much to it, [Okay] but I didn't- ((clears throat)) I didn't like it so much there. The first one I stayed until grade six, the next one grade six to seven. I started in August grade six [Okay] until grade seven, so, uhm, they didn't give you an opportunity to spread your wings and want to learn [mmm] because the teachers were- were- they were oppressive, I'd say. Interviewer: *Really?* Participant 1: *Mmm.* Interviewer: *English school or Afrikaans school?* Participant 1: *English- English school. [Wow] So they'd tell you, you will not do this, you can't do this, leave it, you know. [Oh, wow.] So then my high school even though they tried their best, there were some teachers who wouldn't let you ask questions in the class. She was the maths teacher. [Oh!] She'd bel- belittle you [((Interviewer gasps))] if you asked a question in Math. [Wow!] But otherwise, in general, I think the school was okay. I was- I was happy with (the way it was run.)* **Participant 2:** Interviewer: *Okay, Uhm, okay so the schools that you went to were actually good so can you tell me like about one thing that you remember about one of your classes, like any one of- in high school. Any- Literally you can talk about anything.* Participant 2: *Uh, let me think, my favourite*

	subject, Biology. I- I remember that whole liver experiment and they were showing us- They had actually said we should bring a liver and they were showing us the different parts because we were learning about the liver and the teacher came with a real one. So, she said we must come with different livers and then, she also came with one and then she was showing us everything that she was teaching us. So like- this is where what is, this is how what looks like because it becomes a bit different in the picture so she had us seeing it for real. I think that was the one thing I really liked about my biology. She was very practical. Everything else that we- because I remember this other time when we did the heart, she brought a cow's heart and she had to show us the different things and how what looks like and everything so, ja, that was biology for me. And then, physics, because I wasn't really interested in physics, ah, gosh, but when we did- It was always- I always had those wow moments but not because I was like interested but it was like, oh okay so this is how chemicals react, you know, when we had those experiments but I mean it's not something that I liked so I didn't really enjoy it as much. Interviewer: *Oh, wow.* Participant 2: *Ja.* Interviewer: *Okay, uhm, let me just see. So how different- what I know is that learning in that way, learning from the books and then seeing the things practically helps a lot [Mhm], like [Mmm] ja, so- uhm, what am I trying to say uhm,*

	it's fine. Participant 2: *I know research I did it, gosh interviews ((laughs)). It's okay I understand.* Interviewer: *Uhm, wait what am I trying to think of now, just uhm, did you do well in Bio? Oh, wait forget the well, did it help you understand?* Participant 2: *[It did.]. It did, so much. I think for my final in matric, I uh- My heart was so broken. I didn't get a distinction, I got a seventy- eight…*
2. The process of adjusting to university	**Participant 6:** Interviewer: *Okay, cool. Uhm, so how different was this from- your experience in first year from school?* Participant 6: *Independence, [Okay.] uhm, no one running after you, [mm] you having to really care about your work. Uhm, managing myself was tough because I was so used to being managed. [Right.] Ja, so managing myself it really- like grappling with the- being responsible [mm] to handle the degree of freedom [Right.] which I was given. Ja. [Ja.]* **Participant 5:** Interviewer: *Then, uhm, can you tell me then just a little bit about like first year at varsity? Anything, everything, it doesn't matter, boyfriends, girlfriends.* Participant 5: *First year at varsity? I was very scared. [Mm.] Uhm, Even though, you know, I'm from Pretoria, and Joburg is not that far, [Mm?] I got a flat, and I was living by myself. [Oh, in first year.] Ja, so [That's very scary.] the first night in*

	my flat I was terrified that, you know, something might happen, and who am I going to tell [Mm.] and what if this security guard gets my key, or, I don't know, you just think all these things because of the kind of place we live in. [Mm.] But ja, uhm, it was very scary to be alone like that, [M.] and then, I only had one friend from hi- uhm, high school who came with, and she was on another- on the other side of campus so [Oh!] I was virtually on my own. [Mm.] Uhm, Obviously, you know, you have those first few weeks where you don't know what you're doing, you don't have any friends, [Ja] and you're lame, and you read everything on time, uhm, pre- read, and all of that. [Ja.] Uh, But ja, I very quickly got into the rhythm of things. [Mm.] Uhm, It was just- I think I did try to work very hard, and it was easy because I lived alone so when I switched off the TV I studied by myself, [Ja, ja.] which I found very helpful [Mm.] 'cause I was never a library kind of student [Mm].
3. The significance of effective lecturing styles on students' academic performance.	**Participant 5:** Interviewer: *Mmm, okay, uhm, you already said that. Okay…what advice would you give to like academics who are interested in curriculum transformation?* Participant 5: *Academics?* Interviewer: *Ja, 'because that's what the whole programme is about, mos, uhm, REAP. It's a research project that tries to- it incorporates what you guys do [Ja] in the REAP into the curricula.*

	Participant 5: *Well, I think for Psychology in particular, it's not a very practical subject. We just read, and we see examples of it, and we're like, 'Oh, okay, I get it,' and then, you write a test, [Right.] and then, it's over. [Ja.] And we never, we never discussed things [Mm] or contextualized things which I think would help people in understanding a lot better. Uhm, Like, I don't know if you've been in one of, uhm, what's her name? Uhm, Enid's classes?* Interviewer: *This is my first year at Wits.* Participant 5: *Your first year at Wits. [Oh, sh*] Uhm, Enid is the Neuro- psychology lecturer. [Okay.] She's amazing at contextualizing things, and giving examples. She'll never just say, 'Okay, we're doing perception- Okay, she obviously must say we're doing perception, she's not going to start with, 'This is the cornea, you see like-' no, she starts with a story of like, I went to the shop, and a man came 'round the corner, I didn't see, and I got scared.' [Mm] And she makes it very funny, [Okay.] but Neuropsych is one of the things I did well in, I think, [Mm?] because of the kind of examples she gave us. [Mm?] Uhm, Ja, so more teaching like that needs to happen.* Interviewer: *I like that 'cause you're like act- actually the second person to say that about Neuropsych, that uh, not to say that it's good, she didn't get into that, but then, she spoke about it was the subject she did well in. So I suppose it has a lot to do with the teaching method or [Ja.] teaching methods. [Okay.]*

	Participant 5: *When most people get there they put on the slides, you take your picture of them, you take your notes, [Mm.] and that's not enough. [Mm.] Not if you want to teach in a meaningful way. [Mmm] [Okay.]* **Participant 3:** Interviewer: *Anthropology?* Participant 3: *Anthropology is easy.* Interviewer: *Really?* Participant 3: *Ja. [Oh!] ((Titters)) Uhm, And then- 'Cause I did Anthropology and I did Psych [Psych isn't- Psych is easy as well, in first year. It was just learning.] It was who? It was Enid. [Mm] Oh, ja, it was Enid and what's her name? The other Indian chick? [No, uh, this is my first year at Wits.] Oh this is your first year. There was this other Indian chick. I remember in first year nhe, another learning point. I was in her class and we wrote a test and I failed it. [Mm] In Psych, mmm. Then, I was like, 'Fine, calm down, calm down.' And then, I switched classes [Oh, you did?] in the second block. Like they were just doing Psych. So like the Psych- first year Psychology class was very big, [Yes, oh, yes.] so they would split it in half, [Mm] and say that, 'People with surnames from this to that, go to another venue, [Okay.] and they'd- they had, I forgot her name and then the other class had Enid. And then after I failed that test, I switched to Enid's class. And I think I got an eighty for the second test. [Uh?] And then I was like, 'You see that teacher, that one, that*

	lecturer, that one, not working for me.'
4. The formation of an academic identity	**Participant 5:** Interviewer: *…my assumption coming into all of this was that you guys needed the programme in order to- [Mmm] to- to, you know, get into post-grad, whereas with you, and I suppose others as well, it's not the case, this is just extra.* Participant 5: *Ja, but also the thing with that, the kind of people we had in our group are people who want to excel, [Mm] and people- they weren't struggling. [No, no, no, I don't agree- don't disagree with that.] Like maybe uhm I think It takes a certain kind of person to say look, 'Every Friday I'm going to be at REAP and I'm going to do extra readings and write extra essays- 'Cause I want to do well. Ja, [Mmm] I don't think the average person who's failing has- not doesn't have the scope, but has too many other problems to think about joining a programme like REAP. [No.] So even if that was the point, [Mm] there wouldn't have been much uptake from the people they want to help. [Mm] I think it's for kids who have vision and are focused and do want to do better [Mm] just to get that first from a B. [Mm]* **Participant 6:** Interviewer: *Uhm, first question, what made you apply to the REAP programme?* Participant 6: *I just wanted a laptop. I'm joking. ((Interviewee laughs)) I'm joking. You're not*

	going to (believe) that. [No, it's not-] Interviewer: *I actually am because most people give that answer so-* Participant 6: *But it's a joke. [It really is a joke.]* Interviewer: *Oh, for you it's a joke.* Participant 6: *I applied to REAP because it had taken me a really- It had taken me much longer than the average person [mm] to finish their degree [Okay], their undergrad and I felt that I needed some assistance [mm] and it came at the perfect time because I- I was doing well but I knew that I could do better. [Okay.] And [this opportunity came up-]* Interviewer: *So why-* Participant 6: *So I was doing the RE programme and the director sent about emails, [mm] saying, 'You know, there's this REAP programme'. I think we were the second group to do the REAP programme [Oh.]. And uhm, at the time my boyfriend was like, 'you know I-'He advised me, 'Go for it. 'I thought, 'Ag, it will be extra work, but I was like you know what, for once in my… let me get some assistance, you know.' And I got some assistance and I didn't think I'd get in and I did get in and it was the best surprise that we got free laptops [mm] 'cause at the time I was struggling with having university resources [mhm] and it taught me a lot about commitment. So it was on one level, personal development, on another level academic development and on another level, it was just uhm challenging myself to take on extra, ja.*

5. Acquiring academic literacy	**Participant 4:** Participant 4: *It was mainly in my- It was Critical Social Psychology really that, I think, made me start thinking more about race [Mm], and REAP, actually, [Mm?] because we used to talk about these things. Things that I probably would not have reflected on. Like you would see it, and then, you just carry, but then, in REAP you got to reflect more, and then, you got to uhm, what's the word, uhm kind of make sense of it more. You were encouraged to go and make more sense of it and be able to articulate it better than you would have without the resources that- the extra resources that, I think, REAP provided you [Mm] with. Ja, I don't know if that makes sense?* *Interviewer: It does. [Okay.] What do you mean by extra resources? How-* Participant 4: *Uhm, I guess- I remember we were given this thick little book- Okay, I don't know why I said thick little, that's like contradictory, [Ja.] but we were given this thick book uhm which had- It was like a dictionary, basically. It was like a thesaurus. [Uh?] Ja, and basically, the different ways you can use different words, for instance, to explain something. And so we'd use that sometimes to- I can't remember what we'd use it for, but it was very useful.* Interviewer: *And like a normal thesaurus?* Participant 4: *It's not like a normal thesaurus, but oh, it's got like Fanon theories it's like a thesaurus. It's got like pictures, and all these*

	things that make it a little bit more fun. [Okay.] Uhm, So, I think Jill Bradbury, I don't know if you know her, she gave it to us. She's the one that got it for us. And I think that also helped in helping us make more sense of something or make more sense of a concept. Like you know, you have an idea sometimes, but you can't make people understand that idea because you don't have the words, [Mm] and I think that's what I also lacked. I didn't have the words, and also I didn't have the theory. So theory and also, I guess, the words [Mm] or the terms helped and I think those are the things that REAP kind of gave us. [Okay.] Ja. **Participant 7:** Participant 7: *First year and second year, I got six As, and one B and one C. I think the year I did my best at was third year; I got all As. [Wow!]* Interviewer: *And do you think that REAP kind of con- contributed to that?* Participant 7: *((Pauses and hesitates)) [You can't say.] Probably, it's hard to say, [Mm] but ja, it definitely- I won't say it's uhm- it's a factor that stopped it, there were points where it was difficult to go to REAP because I was- I had to work on an essay [Okay.] and it's due the same day. [Mm] Uhm, You know I'm a procrastinator, but I will say like definitely being in REAP did help me to think [Mm] and learning how to think is something that's very useful for the kinds of, you know, academic tasks we have to do. [Mm] Uhm,*

	So it probably did contributed to that…

Morrow (2005) stated that when determining the quality of qualitative research, especially studies with a more interpretivist approach, one method to use is to look at "*the extent to which participants' meanings are understood deeply*" (Morrow, 2005, p. 253). Morrow (2005) explicated that in order to gain a deep understanding of participants' meaning it is necessary to know the context of their experiences, the culture in which these experiences occur, and it is essential that rapport exist between the researcher and the participants. In terms of this study, the researcher built rapport with each of the participants through the use of small talk in the beginning of the interview and also through the use of a very open- ended first question. The question asked was, "What made you decide to apply to the REAP programme?" All the interviews began in this way. As stated in the interview schedule, this initial question allowed the participants to take the interview in whatever direction they wished. It enabled them to speak as freely and openly as they desired and in this way, allowed the participants to feel comfortable and relaxed in the interview.

In terms of having the context behind the meanings made by the participants, the researcher asked very open- ended questions and probed subsequent to any answers which were unclear due to a lack of background or context. Here is an example of the sort of probing which occurred during the interview process which provided the researcher with context for interpreting the participant's meanings:

Interviewer: Okay. Uhm, I wanted to ask you about the fact that you said you took longer.

Participant 6: Oh, yes, so I'm twenty- three now, [mm] I finished school when I was seventeen [Oh, okay.]. In my first year I was eighteen so if I had graduated in record time I would have graduated when I was eighteen, nineteen, twenty, but I graduated and finished my degree when I was twenty- two.

Interviewer: Twenty- two?

Participant 6: And-

Interviewer: But you- At the point when you applied you were doing okay?

Participant 6: Ja. I was like third year or fourth. So I fourth year in uhm varsity, but I was third year proper. [Okay.] And I felt like I had- I had never reached out to get assistance [mm] and I really wanted to make it count because it was my last year.

This extract provides evidence of contextual information which the researcher can utilize to understand the reason why this particular participant applied to the REAP. Morrow (2005) also refers to re- contextualizing the information given in the interviews by assessing the contextual factors in the interview which may affect what the participants disclose and choose to withhold. This quality criterion also links to reflexivity which is another method qualitative researchers utilize to ensure that their analyses are credible or trustworthy. Reflexivity entails honest and critical reflection regarding the influence that the researcher had on the interview process as well as the influence that the researcher's orientation, convictions, biases, identities such as gender, nationality, ethnicity etc. had on the interpretation of the data. Firstly, thinking about the fact that the researcher is in the same age group as the participants, I think the

participants found it very easy to talk to me as there were no power differences in that sense. I think this age factor played a role in making disclosure of feelings regarding university and REAP experiences easy and open. One participant did ask whether any of the REAP facilitators will have access to the interview data and I assured the participant that no one would have access to the information they disclose as I knew that my supervisor and any other readers would solely have access to anonymous transcripts and anonymous extracts in the research report. This reassurance enabled the participant to share information concerning a negative experience they had during their university years. Gender, ethnicity and nationality were of no hindrance in the case of this study as the researcher and participants had the same identities in that respect. It is also important to reflect on the orientations held by the researcher as they definitely had an impact on the way in which the researcher understood the data and selected themes from the analysis process. Firstly, the researcher was thinking of ensuring that the information in this report has academic discourse in it. This explains why the names of some of the themes reflect discourses within much of the higher education literature however this does not mean that the data was 'cheery- picked' to fit these discourses. The discourses were able to appropriately describe the meaning of the data within those themes. To ensure that this was the case, the data extracts under each theme were thoroughly and critically analysed.

In terms of understanding participants' meanings through the understanding of the culture in which their experiences occurred, the use of South African higher education literature with a similar research focus assisted in contextualizing the data within the current cultural context of higher education in South Africa.

Morrow (2005) stated that no data set is devoid of contradictions and inconsistencies and thus, this sort of data should not be excluded from the analysis. Within some of the themes, there is one or two participant whose meanings do not coincide with the meanings of the rest of the participants and this data is important in my eyes as it shows that there was difference in the perspectives/ experiences of the participants and presenting this data in the report will provide a sense of trustworthiness as readers will see that not all the data neatly fit into the themes that emerged and this data was not discarded as a result, but was utilized critically to show that multiple meanings existed however that most of the participants made very similar statements regarding various aspects of their learning histories.

Morrow (2005) also stated that another important factor for determining the validity or rigor of qualitative analyses is through the acknowledgement of the co- construction of meaning by the participants and the researcher. I made sure that every extract maintains the surrounding contextual data, which is inclusive of the questions I asked and the probing I did as well as the places where I laughed or made gestures as I was aware that these things impacted on what the participants said and this is evident in the data. The participants would typically elaborate on a remark they made if I reacted to it in some way, however some participants were able to return to what they were initially saying and focus on answering the question that I had asked. The fact that the participants would elaborate on their stories based on my remarks or reactions as well as the fact that I asked the participants various questions regarding their learning histories and probing questions regarding statements they made means that the meanings given by the participants of their experiences were co- constructed. Co- construction does not take away from the accuracy of the meaning, in this case I think what I did was give

the participants' meanings order by asking questions related to certain periods of their learning histories and by providing a particular lens from which to view their experiences. I acknowledge that this is the data was co- constructed, but as I mentioned this influence I had on the data does not take away from the truth of the participants' utterances and meanings.

In my proposal I also mentioned a few other criteria for determining the rigor of a qualitative research paper which Morrow (2005) stated cut across paradigms and thus, can be used to assess any qualitative study. Apart from reflexivity, adequacy of data and adequacy of interpretation, Morrow (2005) also included social validity and subjectivity as measures of rigor. Social validity refers to the social value of the research. This study has much to contribute to higher education literature in South Africa on the subject of factors which contribute to the success of university students, particularly Black students, as the focus of transformation initiatives in South African universities has expanded to include finding means of improving the success and retention rates of Black students. The analyses in this report went beyond factors which have already been alluded to in other South African studies on the subject, such as financial difficulties and issues around Black students being second- language English speakers, to focus more on the participants' academic experiences. It will become more apparent in the rest of the report that the participants' academic experiences are not devoid of social, emotional and psycho- social influences and this is both an interesting and significant finding from this study. Subjectivity involves the acknowledgement that the researcher influenced the data in the study and the analysis as I was the instrument utilized for collecting the data and the instrument used to analyse the data. In my proposal I mentioned that to counteract any biases on my interpretation of the data, I would ask my supervisor to review the analysis process,

themes and the interpretation of the data and the feedback from this review will be utilized to either amend the interpretations or will provide support for their accuracy. This will act as a kind of inter- rater reliability measure.

5.5 Further explication of the initial phase of the analytic process

The objective during this phase of the analytic process was to find information pertaining to any factors which the participants related to their academic success in their undergraduate studies. Having interviewed the participants and transcribed the data myself I was aware of much of what was in the dataset and the ideas put across by the participants. I was also aware of the similarities and the differences which existed across the datasets. My intention was to let the data speak for itself. This means that the analysis was data- driven as I allowed the data to inform my understanding of the subject at hand instead of looking at the data from a very narrow theoretical perspective. This enabled me to find nuanced ideas regarding factors which contribute to the success of Black students in university.

During the thematic analysis process I was focused on viewing the participants in a holistic manner, finding data which alluded to this, and its importance to understanding the current academic status quo in higher education institutions in South Africa. It was important for me to consider the individuality of the participants by taking into consideration their differing educational backgrounds, socio- economic backgrounds and the differences in intelligence, academic skill levels and personality types. Despite these differences and various experiential differences however all the participants in this study achieved good final year marks and were as a result accepted into various post- graduate programmes. Thus, my question in this analysis

process was how were they able to succeed academically in a culture where many Black students do not complete their degrees on time, drop out and where there is a lack of racial and socio- economic diversity in post- graduate courses?

The second phase of the analytic process focuses on understanding the themes and their associated data through the lens of the theoretical frameworks which have guided this study from the onset: the Social Reproduction theory developed by Pierre Bourdieu and the Socio-historical theory developed by Lev Vygotsky as well as through the use of recent higher education literature. This allowed for deeper understanding and interpretation of the data. Using theory to understand the data also allowed for contextualization of the findings, particularly looking at the South African society and the participation of the participants in the REAP.

Chapter Six- Analysis and Discussion of the findings

This chapter presents and discusses the findings from the study, with reference to the theoretical frameworks guiding this study and the current higher education literature, particularly South African literature.

6.1 Introduction

The findings will be presented according to the themes which emerged from the coding process. The coding process resulted in the emergence of six themes. These themes best describe the meaning of the relevant data in this study.

The influence of teachers on the participants' perceptions of school and school subjects and as a result, their work ethic and academic performance

It is well known that the differential quality of education in South African schools has a major impact on the educational outcomes of its pupils. Former White and Indian schools continue to produce better academic results than former Black schools (van der Berg & Burger, 2003). Much of the literature in South Africa has emphasized the impact of the teacher- pupil ratio on the academic outputs of pupils in South African schools. Research has formerly suggests that the larger the number of pupils in a class, the lower the performance of those pupils (Department of Education, 2009- 2010). Prevailing research however, is revealing that what is of importance is the quality of teaching which occurs (Bhorat & Oosthuizen, 2006; van der Berg, 2008).

The majority of the participants in this study attended former White or Indian schools. Based on the statements made by the participants when asked about the schools they attended, it is clear to see that these participants ascribe much of their work ethic, enjoyment of their school subjects and school as well as their academic performance to the teachers they had. These findings suggest that teachers play a fundamental role in the performance of their pupils. Below are quotes which substantiate the latter statement:

Extract One

P 1: I went to two different primary schools. [Mm] And then, the second one, well maybe it's because I didn't stay that long and I couldn't really adjust so much to it,

[Okay] but I didn't- ((clears throat)) I didn't like it so much there. The first one I stayed until grade six, the next one, grade six to seven. I started in August grade six [Okay] until grade seven, so, uhm, they didn't give you an opportunity to spread your wings and want to learn [mmm] because the teachers were- were- they were oppressive, I'd say.

T: Really?

P 1: Mmm.

T: English school or Afrikaans school?

P 1: English- English school…

P 1: Well, the one teacher I loved was my English

teacher, [Okay] grade eleven, not twelve because she- even when I thought I didn't put an effort, she would always recog- uh, Is it recognize? [Ja] my efforts, whatever [Mm] and acknowledged my efforts, yes, you know. She always had a board of top five and I never knew how I made it, but somehow I'd make it in the top five ((Interviewer laughs)). [Sho] So, uhm, ja, those are the three teachers I can actually say I loved during high school, [Uh.] in my high school years.

Extract Two

T: Okay, Uhm, okay so the schools that you went to were actually good, so can you tell me like about one thing that you remember about one of your classes, like any one of- in high school. Any- Literally you can talk about anything

P 2: Uh, let me think, my favourite subject, Biology. I- I remember that whole liver experiment and they were showing us- They had actually said we should bring a liver and they were showing us the different parts because we were learning about the liver and the teacher came with a real one. So, she said we must come with different livers and then, she also came with one and then she was showing us everything that- she was teaching us. So like- this is where what is, this is how what looks like because it becomes a bit different in the picture so she had us seeing it for real. I think that was the one thing I really liked about, about my biology [teacher]. She was very practical…

P 2: I think mostly in high school what really motivated me and a lot people was whether you liked the teacher [mm] and the course [mm] and how well you're doing and obviously that will motivate you to do more.

Extract Three

T Can you tell me about one thing that you remember about one of your classes in high school? Anything.

P 7: Uug (1.2) uhm, (0.75) I used to hate Math. ((Interview laughs)) I really did. Uhm, But my Maths teacher was just one of those people who was just too energetic about life that you couldn't really hate the subject very thoroughly so I did well, but I absolutely hated it. I hated it with such a passion. And I much- I much preferred the languages and I liked English and also Afrikaans a bit. And I think in grade eight my English teacher, we started doing film, uhm film studies, and she got me really interested in Media and things like that and from- from that grade eight that's when- that's when I decided I wanted to like pursue an undergrad in Media, or Film, or Drama. So that class was quite Influential in my life, I guess.

Ono and Ferreira (2010) argue that the Department of Basic Education's initiatives to improve the quality of teaching in South African schools have not been effective as the training which is given to teachers, including unqualified teachers, is brief, inconsistent, and partitioned. It is given in the form of workshops, seminars, short courses and conferences. These researchers concur with the finding from this study, that poor quality of teaching (i.e. lack of knowledge and competence in the subject) results in the poor academic performance of learners (Ono & Ferreira, 2010). What distinguishes the finding in this study is that the extracts cited above demonstrate that teaching quality is not simply about the competence of teachers in the subject content, but concurrently, about the manner in which they teach. They also show that poor teaching is present in former White and Indian schools. This suggests that it is crucial that

teachers not only receive professional subject training, but also training in teaching methods which inspire and motivate learners, and which ignite interest in the subjects they teach.

The pace of adjusting to university

The majority of the participants in this study spoke about the difficulty of adjusting to university life, with many of them mentioning becoming responsible for their work, the increase in the workload, and the academic skills required as three very challenging aspects of university. Others mentioned prioritizing social aspects and not consulting with tutors and lecturers in first year as factors which affected their performance. Unlike in high school, academic work requires more time and more effort and seeking help is crucial to understanding what it is that lecturers expect from students and it is to this lifestyle that students have to adjust.

Extract One

T: And then, uhm, can you tell me about your first year at university?
P 1: What do you want to know about it?
T: Whatever, whatever you want to talk about, [it doesn't matter.]
P 1: [It was a bit difficult.]
So, uhm, it was different. What made it- … Okay, the one thing that was striking- that struck me was just moving from, uhm, just being dependent [mm] to now being independent, doing your things yourself, no one checking if you're doing your work and no one checking if you're doing your- if you're studying [mm] because I came and I stayed here [mm] alone. Uhm, Also, the amount of reading was a big jump for me [mm] because at school all we read were the three prescribed texts, literature [mm] and then, the textbooks that we had [mm] and if you didn't read for the class, they wouldn't know because we were like thirty- seven in a class [mm], they wouldn't ask everyone.

[Okay.]

Extract Two

T: Okay. Uhm, let me see. And how was your experience of like, being at university different from like school?

P 2: Shu! Wow, I got here and I thought twelve years of my life at school is like a joke. ((interviewer grunts)) Honestly, I thought what was I doing in high school. I honestly felt like it was joke. It was like a huge gap [mhm], a huge gap from high school to varsity [Uh], sho. And then, the one thing I regretted was that I wish they had taught me in high school was referencing. It was very hard [Okay.]. During first semester I lost marks for referencing, easy marks and everything. And I thought, Oh my gosh, why is this so hard? But above everything else, I think it's a big shift, from high school to [university] university, there's just a major gap where you have to now do things that you never did back in high school and, ja, especially referencing [mhm] and then, getting used to the environment and trying to juggle the fact that you don't have a teacher that's telling you or a bell that tells you that time's up ((interviewer giggles)), you know. You have to keep your own time, you have to be on time so time management as well, you know, I had to learn all those things [mmm] that- ja. [Mhm] And I think, academic wise, the amount of work. The amount of work was a lot and uh, it took me a couple of weeks to try and adjust and Social Sciences, the readings, I thought to myself, my gosh, so many things to read, okay, but-

Extract Three

T Then, uhm, can you tell me then just a little bit about like first year at varsity? Anything, everything, it doesn't matter, boyfriends, girlfriends.

P 5: Uhm, Obviously, you know, you have those first few weeks where you don't know what you're doing, you don't have any friends, [Ja.] and you're lame, and you read everything on time, ((Both laugh)) uhm, pre- read, and all of that. [Ja.] Uh, But ja, I very quickly got into the rhythm of things. [Mm.] Ja, 'cause I mean in uhm,- you know a lot of varsity students in the first semester we- I wouldn't say we, but a lot of people struggle with like writing essays, [True.]

and referencing and things like that, whereas at Cornoll I learned to write an essay like that in grade ten, [Wow!] as part of my history research project.

Extract Four

T: Uhm, And then, is there anything else you can tell me about your second year? Because I mean in first year, like you said you were very motivated and my assumption is, 'cause first year was not that hard, you most likely did really well or-

P 4: I don't know actually. Did I do well? I think first year was fun primarily because I just- I think I had- I was more of a social being in first year. As I went higher I stopped being social, [Okay.] but academically I think it got better as I went higher and I think that's because I was less social.

Extract Five

T: Okay. Well, it's still good. Uhm, can you tell me about your first year?

P 6: Ooh, my first year, my first year was tough…

T: Okay, so, your first year how did you do?

P 6: In my first year, I failed forty percent of my coursework [Okay.] and I passed sixty percent. [Oh.]

T: But you were able- still able to go forward?

P 6: Yes, I was, [Okay.] on the condition that I carry those- the ones that I failed [forward.]

T [For next year.]

T: Okay, cool. Uhm, so how different was this from- your experience in first year from school?

P 6: Independence, [Okay.] uhm, no one running after you, [mm] you having to really care about your work. Uhm, managing myself was tough because I was so used to being managed. [Right.] Ja, so managing myself it really- like grappling with the- being responsible [mm] to handle the degree of freedom [Right.] which I was given. Ja. [Ja.]

T: But you- At the point when you applied you were doing okay?

P 6: Ja. I was like third year or fourth. So I fourth year in uhm varsity, but I was third year proper. [Okay.] And I felt like I had- I had never reached out to get assistance [mm] and I really wanted to make it count because it was my last year. Well, I was taking third

year courses and second year courses, but I was in my fourth year at varsity. [Mhm] So I thought it was an excellent opportunity to uhm get guidance, you know, [mm] 'cause I always felt there's this stereotype amongst students like if you don't get the work then you're stupid. [Ja.] Ja, so for years I was playing under the stereotype and I wouldn't do well so I was like you know what ((Interviewer titters)) doing things differently, let's try this out. [Ja.]

T: Okay, and uhm, was it just academics that contributed to your, I don't know if I can say, inability to finish on time or-?

P 6: Do you know? It was uhm life stresses. [Mm] It took me a while to adapt. I had an inferiority complex.

A plethora of international and local higher education literature describe the difficulty that first year students have with adjusting academically to university, irrespective of race and socio-economic background (Davidowitz & Schreiber, 2008; Petersen, Louw & Dumont, 2009; Sennett, Finchilescu, Gibson & Strauss, 2003). This research also suggests that Black students struggle the most to adjust psycho- socially and emotionally to university and that this negatively affects their academic performance, as adjustment has been found to be crucial to academic success at university. Research shows that first year students, particularly Black students, lack cultural capital, struggle with the pace of the courses at university, the amount of work, and the level of difficulty and thus, many fail their first year (Bradbury & Miller, 2011). The findings in this study clearly support this literature, however this study contributes by suggesting that an additionally important factor is the pace at which students become accustomed to university life and the work. In the last sentence in extract five, the participant stated that it took her longer to adjust to university because she had low self- esteem. This suggests that it is not only academic underpreparedness that affects the pace at which students adjust to university, but also psycho- social factors. Peterson et al. (2009) found that psycho-

social factors such as academic motivation, help- seeking, perceived academic workload, perceived stress, and self- esteem contribute immensely to adjustment to university. Mentorship programmes have been put in place to facilitate student adjustment to university, particularly for Black first generation students and an essential element of social support needed by first time students (Sadler & Erasmus, 2005) however Black students continue to struggle academically. This suggests that other measures need to be made to facilitate students' academic, psycho- social and emotional adjustment to university.

The significance of effective lecturing styles on students' academic performance

The emphasis in the higher education literature in South Africa is on what students can and cannot do (Osongo, 2006; Pretorius, 2008) yet little attention is rendered to the important influence that lecturers have on students' ability to understand their course content and very importantly, the students' ability to do tasks they are given (Jackson, Meyer, & Parkinson, 2006).

Extract One

T: And you don't- you don't get any of that?
P1: And the one thing that
frustrates me the most, that frustrated me last year was
that we'd have uhm, okay ((sighs)) so we'd have- there were
new courses, there were courses that were introduced last
year. We'd have Demography and then, we'd have master's
students join us, fine, but the assignments that we were
given, the same assignments that master's students got
we got as honour's students and every time we'd ask for
help, they'd tell us, 'No, we can't help you. Go and do
it for yourself'. [Wow!] And then marks come back and we're
like, 'But this is at master's level. We don't know', you

know. [Ja.] And their marking, you never know what they want when they mark. I remember last year I had an assignment, I went to consult and they told me what to do and I did exactly just that, and this man said, 'You all did horribly', I'm like, 'But what do you want, [I asked you] you know.' Their marking is as though they're marking from their perspective and not from the general view of whatever it is their asking, [Okay.] you know.
Uhm, They're marking from what they want. [Mm] They want it answered in this way, that's just how you're going to give it to them. (Uhm, And I can't do that. For me, that's very difficult). I remember last year one of our lecturers would ask for definitions, and, because I- to understand things I draw pictures, [Okay] to remember and understand, so I actually told her the definition from the drawing that I made and she said, 'No, that's wrong.' She wanted you to give it as it is in the textbook. She doesn't want to know if you understand it. She doesn't want to see your understanding. She just wants it as it is, (you know). [Wow] So that's what's frustrating, [Ja.]…

Extract Two

T: Really?

P 3: Ja. [Oh!] ((Titters)) Uhm, And then- 'Cause I did Anthropology and I did Psych [Psych isn't- Psych is easy as well, in first year. It was just learning.] It who? It was Enid. [Mm] Oh, ja, it was Enid and what's her name? The other Indian chick? [No, uh, this is my first year at Wits.] Oh this is your first year. There was this other Indian chick. I remember in first year nhe, another learning point. I was in her class and we wrote a test and I failed it. [Mm] In Psych, mmm. Then, I was like, 'Fine, calm down, calm down.' ((Interviewer laughs)) And then, I switched classes [Oh, you did?] in the second block. Like they were just doing Psych. So like the Psych- first year Psychology class was very big, [Yes, oh, yes.] so they would split it in half, [Mm] and say that, 'People with surnames from this to that, go to another venue, [Okay.] and they'd- they had, I forgot her name and then the other class had Enid. And then after I failed that test, I switched to Enid's class. And I think I got an eighty for the second test. [Uh?] And then I was like, 'You see that teacher, that one, that lecturer, that one, not working for me.'

Extract Three

P 5: Uhm, Like, I don't know if you've been in one of, uhm, what's her name? Uhm, Enid's classes?

T: This is my first year at Wits.

P 5: Your first year at Wits. [Oh, sh*] Uhm, Enid is the Neuro-Psychology lecturer. [Okay.] She's amazing at contextualizing things, and giving examples. She'll never just say, 'Okay, we're doing eeer perception t- Okay, she obviously must say we're doing perception, she's not going to start with, 'This is the cornea, you see like-' no, she starts with a story of like, I went to the shop, and a man came 'round the corner, I didn't see, and I got scared.' [Mm] And she makes it very funny, [Okay.] but Neuropsych is one of the things I did well in, I think, [Mm?] because of the kind of examples she gave us. [Mm?] Uhm, Ja, so more teaching like that needs to happen.

P 5: When most people get there they put on the slides, you take your picture of them, you take your notes, [Mm.] and that's not enough. [Mm.] Not if you want to teach in a meaningful way. [Mmm] [Okay.]

Extract Four

T: Uhm, okay, let me just see. Then, uhm, can you tell about a particular learning experience at university? Like writing an essay or a lecture, test, exam, TUT, anything, like.

P 7: … Uhm, I remember I think it was second year. [Okay.] Uhm, So I struggle with visual- spacial kind of things. [Okay] Uhm , So I find it difficult to kind of see objects like that, like that are three- dimensional. [Okay.] Uhm, we had- There was this model, I think, for Cognitive Psychology, that I like needed three- dimensional objects to (do) and I struggled to understand the theory because I couldn't see the objects. And uhm, it took me a very, very long time and I didn't understand it until uhm I asked Jill about it. I think we were having a REAP session and Jill explained it to me and I had been in like- trying to understand that model and the lecturers were like- for like weeks, weeks and I couldn't see it until she- she explained it to me and that model ended

up being in the exam and if I hadn't asked her about it, I know I wouldn't have understood it. [Mm] So that's something that stands out for me.

T: And uhm did you try and ask like your lecturers or anyone else besides Jill, before Jill?

P 7: I don't think I asked my lecturer. Like I wasn't- I didn't really involve myself with my lecturers in second year. I think I only started in third year and even then it was with drama- the Drama Department.

A South African article by Breytenbach (2014) indicates the importance of lecturing which contextualizes the content, and provides students with practical examples. This researcher stated that many South African students do not have first- hand experience and practical knowledge of the fields which they study, thus, making this form of teaching more effective. Breytenbach (2014) also refers cultural and cultural dimensions as influencing teaching and learning. Culture is regarded as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or society from those of another" (Breytenback, 2014, p. 5) and cultural dimensions are defined as "aspect[s] of culture that can be measured relative to other cultures" (Breytenbach, 2014, p. 5). She mentions six different cultural dimensions which have been found in particular societies and which influence the style of teaching and learning in those areas: collectivism and individualism; indulgence and restraint and monumentalism; large and small power distance; long- term and short- term orientation; strong and weak uncertainty avoidance; and masculinity and femininity.

Only a few of these dimensions will be highlighted as they are relevant to the theme at hand. According to Breytenbach (2014), in collectivist societies students are expected to accept without question the information and knowledge which is given to them, whereas in an individualist society students are encouraged to have and express their own opinions. Whereas she referred to different societies, it seems possible to apply these cultural dimensions to the differences in high school and tertiary level education in South Africa.

In the first extract, the participant subsequent to participating in the REAP programme learned that lecturers in the Faculty of Humanities expect students to understand their course content instead of simply reproducing it (Bradbury & Miller, 2011). There is more of a collectivist culture in high school education where learners are assessed based on how well they can reproduce the information they learn whereas an individualist cultural is fostered in tertiary education in South Africa. Breytenbach (2014) mentions the importance of lecturers' cognizance of the cultural differences in their classes and states that it is in such cases that contextualization and being explicit are important lecturing approaches. Extract two and three refer to the same first year lecturer who facilitated the academic success of her students through the contextualization of the course content she was teaching as opposed to the ineffective summarization of the course notes and reproduction thereof by the lecturers. In the transcripts (Appendix D) it may also be seen that the participants stated that the REAP method of lecturing was effective because the information was contextualized which further supports the importance of this teaching strategy as the REAP was a major contributor to many of the former- REAP students' academic success and ability to access post- graduate studies.

Another relevant cultural dimension is that of large and small power distance. In the fourth extract, the participant explained that she did not consult her lecturers regarding her lack of understanding of the model they were given, but felt more comfortable seeking assistance from one of the REAP facilitators. This finding suggests a problem in the way in which lecturers relate to their students within the classroom and outside. This participant stated that she did not involve herself with her lecturers and this is likely to do with the problematic power dynamics at play within a lecture room.

The higher education literature is currently noting the importance of what is called student- centered learning as this is regarded as facilitating academic success as well as deep learning, which is the style of learning required at university level, particularly in the Humanities (Kember, 2009). It is stated that

lecturers' approaches to teaching influence students' approaches to learning (Kember, 2009). In a study conducted by Bradbury and Miller (2011) it was found that many first year students in the Humanities struggle with answering test and examination questions as required by lecturers and this problem has been ascribed to students' high school backgrounds, being second language students and other individual factors whereas this study suggests the importance of examining lecturing styles as they impact on how students learn.

O'Neil and McMahon (2005) describe student- centered learning as involving a mutual respect between the lecturer and student as well as a relationship where the lecturer is a facilitator and a resource. Baeten, Kyndt, Struyven, Dochy (2010) argue that for the kind of deep learning that is required at university to occur, it is important that lecturers are involved in the students' learning process, are focused on their students' understanding the information than transferring it and are willing to transform the thinking of their students. This clearly requires that lecturers relate closely to their students than is typically done at university.

This finding suggests that in order for lecturers to teach effectively they need to be aware of the educational and cultural backgrounds of their students and tailor their teaching accordingly. They also need to become facilitators of the understanding of knowledge by students instead of simply transmitters of information.

The formation of an academic identity

An interesting theme emerged from the study: the construction of an academic identity. The majority of the literature on academic identities is inclined to focus on the academic identities of university lecturers and professors etc. and the impact that this professional academic identity has on their performance within their communities of practice (Jawitz, 2009; Kogan, 2000; Lieff, Baker, Mori, Egan-Lee, Chin & Reeves, 2012) however the findings in this current

study suggest that academic identity is as crucial a construct to university students' academic success as it is to that of their lecturers and professors. This finding supports other research findings of a similar nature (Anctil, Ishikawa and Scott, 2008; Reeves & Brown, 2008).

The participants in this study described themselves as goal- and career- oriented, hard-working, and driven individuals, which they felt explains their desire to join the REAP. They also expressed feelings regarding the influence that their homes, schools, universities and the REAP had on the construction of their academic identities and as a result, their excellent academic performance. Social theories of identity construction explicate the process of identity construction as influenced primarily by the communities to which people belong, and in addition, by self- perception and the perception of others of the respective individual. This theme suggests that the communities these students belong to including their families, neighbourhoods and schools have had a major influence on their success at university. In addition, it suggests that higher education institutions play a key role in the formation of students' academic identity and thus, their academic success. Taylor (as cited by Henkel, 2005) refers to this kind of community as a 'defining community', which provides its members with a language with which to comprehend the world and themselves. In addition, a defining community expresses its values and beliefs through its discourse and thus, the members come to understand their experiences through it (Henkel, 2005).

Extract One

T: Okay. Okay, let me ask you another question, how do you see yourself now like as a university student?

P 1: Ja, from who I was before I started Wits so the difference between, I don't know, perceptions I see- how I saw myself then and now. [Ja.] Uhm, it has changed. I'm more, I'm a lot

more confident now. [Ja.] I am a lot more vocal. I used to be quiet. [Mm?] I'd only speak when I'm spoken to. Mmm, I'd say, the biggest thing Wits has done for me was uhm, you could say, (make me) more critical. I'm a bit more critical in my thinking, a lot more critical. [That's the only thing?] That's the biggest thing. I'm a lot more critical in my thinking. I question before I do something. Mmm, Apart from my academic work and my subjects, uhm, I volunteer a lot at CCDU. I've always- Sho, I started in 2011 and I learned inter- and intra- personal skills. [Okay.] I can say I never thought I could lead anything, but now I can confidently say, 'Put me in a leadership position and I will do it. [Hmm] Uhm, I don't shy away from things that I used to, you know. I'm- I feel I'm confident. I'm actually confident in my thoughts. You know, I'm confident enough to voice them. [Mm] And ja-

Extract Two

T: …so the first question, very importantly is, why did you apply to the programme?

P 2: Like I said I just saw here's a programme- I think they had people coming to us. I remember I was in a Politics class and they had people coming to us, explaining the REAP. So they said it's going to help you to achieve- if you're in the sixties and sixty-fives it's going to help you achieve even beyond that so I was like, 'Okay, maybe here's something that can get me something else to kind of help me with my academic progress', so I thought, 'Why not try it out?' you know and I think that was the only reason why I applied. It was basically the only reason why I applied. Because at that time I was really driven to- I want to get to third year, I want to do my honours…

Extract Three

T: ((Giggles)) Okay, mmm and then, your work ethic in first and second year?

P 3: I was very diligent 'cause I was studying at home. I didn't have anything else to do. But then even when I've now moved to res [Mm] (I think) it was that thing of, we can now pull the all- nighters because we're on campus. [You're on campus.] So, I think I've been- had good diligence.

T: Uh? Throughout?

P 3: Ja.

Extract Four

T: Okay, uhm, can you tell me about like what made you decide to apply to the programme?

P 4: They said that- Ja, they did. [Mm] Uhm, But I think for me it was primarily because I knew what my goals were, I've always known what I wanted to do. Uhm, The political stuff was like (sidelines) 'cause I liked things, but uhm, I've always wanted to do Psychology, in all honesty, [Okay.] so I knew that I needed to get good marks and REAP, for me, because that- that was the promise ((giggles)).

Extract Five

T: …my assumption coming into all of this was that you guys, uhm- the programme- you needed the programme in order to- [Mmm] to- to, you know, get into post- grad, whereas with you, and I suppose others as well, it's not the case, this is just extra.

P 5: Ja, but also the thing with that, the kind of people we had in our [REAP] group are people who want to excel, [Mm] and people- they weren't struggling. [No, no, no, I don't agree- don't disagree with that.] Like maybe uhm I think it takes a certain kind of person to say look, 'Every Friday I'm going to be at REAP and I'm going to do extra readings and write extra essays- ['Cause I want to do well.] Ja, [Mmm] I don't think the average person who's failing has- not doesn't have the scope, but has too many other problems to think about joining a programme like REAP. [No.] So even if that was the point, [Mm] there wouldn't have been much uptake from the people they want to help. [Mm] I think it's for kids who have vision and are focused and do want to do better [Mm] just to get that first from a B. [Mm]

In a study conducted by Anctil et al. (2008) on high- achieving university students with impairments found that a positive academic identity is constructed through perseverance, which influences the development of competence in one's field of study, and competence then influences decision- making

pertaining to one's career choice and perseverance then also increases chances of self- realization and thus, leads to the formation of a positive academic identity. These researchers also argue that a positive academic identity facilitates academic success at university. The current study corroborates the findings from the Anctil et al. study.

Acquiring academic literacy

Subsequent to conducting an analysis on the data it became apparent that the participants in this study felt that participating in the REAP was mainly beneficial because they were taught how to read and write academically (i.e. acquiring academic literacy skills) which are skills they did not possess prior to the REAP. Most of these participants felt that possessing academic literacy helped improve their marks and gain access into the post- graduate programmes of their choice.

Extract One

T: Okay so, the aspects of the programme that you feel benefitted you the most? Like the REAP programme, what would you say those were?
P 1: the aspects of the programme?
T: Mm
P 1: I'd say the essay writing, the essays…
P 1: Uhm, I became a lot more open- minded to topics and things that are prevalent [Mm] in South Africa. I realized that race is still a big issue in South Africa, and we could never look beyond race, it would take I don't know how long, ((Interviewer titters)) for us to look beyond, is she Black or is she White? [Mm]

Extract Two

T: And then can you tell me about the REAP?
P 3: What about the REAP?
T: Anything. Everything…

P 3: Uhm, I mean it assisted us in different ways. We would come in, like, maybe with our essays and we would read- like if we had an essay due, we'd come in and brain storm on those essays. [Okay.] How can you approach (this)- uhm this kind of question? [Mm] How can you argue it? Like the different views and opinions that are (around it)? [Mm] So I think that helped me more especially with my- with my essays, my essay writing. [Mm] And we also kind of prepped for exams. Like, how could- how can you, what's the word? Like if you're given- Like we'd go through past papers, (that stuff), [Mm, okay] and if a question is like this like how can you, [Answer it. Mm] an-, I almost said attack it, ((Both laugh)) answer it, kind of thing…

Extract Three

P 4: This was REAP. I think it was a space where uhm critical thinking was encouraged and fostered, which I think is something that when you're doing humanities is what you need ((Both laugh)) especially when you're writing those essays, and stuff, so, uhm- And that's something that I think I never had [Mm, before] before I came to Wits. In high school you- we didn't really have to think critically about anything, [((laughs))No.] maybe English, English a little bit. [Ja, okay, in grade eleven and twelve] Ja. ((Both laugh)) So- But like, ja, it wasn't that much so I think it was training you to think critically, so ja.

T: REAP? 'Cause you say before you came to Wits. So was it REAP specifically or was it Wits?

P 4: I think [uhm, in general?] Wits- Wits- Wits says- Wits says think critically, but they don't tell you how, I think, [Mm] so I didn't really know how, but I think REAP kind of did help me to get to that, how do I think critically, [Mm] because again with that little book it made you also look at the words now and think about the words and say, 'This is how he's [Freud] organized these words. This is what he means,' [Mm] kind of breaking it down even though it's a bunch of stuff to read, but you break it down and you understand it better. So, I think, REAP helped that- with that because- ja, it helped, [Mmm] 'cause Wits just said, 'Think critically', but then, they don't expand on how you go about that, [Mm] but I felt that for me REAP kind of helped me to know how to do that. [Mm] Ja.

Extract Four

P 4: [Ja.] REAP was a preparation for master's
because when I look at it, the way we sit in class right
reminds me of how we used to sit when we were in REAP. [Mm]
The way we had to interact with the rest of the class
reminds me of how we had to interact when we were in REAP.
[Mmm] The way you have to read now and apply your reading
to what you discuss [Mmm] is the same way so I think it's-
it was good preparation for me. [Okay.]

Extract Five

T: …what aspects of the
programme anyway do you think like benefitted you?
P 5: What aspects helped me? [Ja.] Well, I think for the most
part it was very stimulating to uhm to talk about
psychology in a- in a social way. [Oh, okay, okay.] You
know, aside from the textbooks or whatever we talked about
what that means for us and people living in the world that
we live in. So it was- I don't know, I just loved engaging
with other people on issues and ways to deal with them and
all of that. [Mm] What it taught me practically was uhm we
wrote a lot [Mm] so I suppose to be a better writer [Hmm]
especially where Psychology is concerned, [Mm] and uhm
what else uhm just to think more critically about the
world and the work we're engaged with, [Mm] and how
to engage with my reading material more critically [Mm]
'cause a lot of it you just read, and ingest the stuff,
and regurgitate, [Mm] and not actually think what is
being implied here or whatever. [Mm] Ja, so, ja, it was
just very intellectually stimulating. [Ja.] Ja.

Extract Six

T: Let me see, okay and then uhm, so I assume that this
whole- 'cause uhm, I think the REAP taught you how to
think, just like, outside the box, critically and all of
that, so uhm, is that the only thing that you feel uhm
benefitted you academically?
P 6: No, my marks went up. They taught me strategies to work.
[Oh.] I mean I would do work two days before it's due, but
still get like eighties, [Oh, wow!] do you know what I
mean? So- and it's not like, oh I'm gifted, I just had- I

was shown tools and I put them those tools together- [(edited it) into a strategy.]

T: [Oh, wait,] the eighties, is it with the strategies from REAP?

P 6: Ja, with the strategies- I remember for an assignment, my friend was preparing like a week in advance [Mm] and how, I was like, you know what, it's Saturday, this thing is due on Monday, this is a crisis, you know, and I handed it in and I was so surprised when I got my mark, it was eighty, and then the other one was seventy- five, and then the other one was eighty- two. So [Mm, mm] I used the strategies, even though I still sucked at time management, I used the tools given to me in REAP, put them into strategies that made me successful.

Extract Seven

T: Oh, cool. Uhm, Okay then do you ever like use your Skills and stuff like knowledge, like anything that you Learnt during the REAP, like in your work?

P 7: Okay, be more specific.

T: Uh, Okay, let me see. 'Cause like with the other students that I interviewed like they spoke about like how Jill maybe taught them how to like, what is it? to- to make your point in say your introduction, things like that. Just like the little, you know, argumentative skills. Anything like that that you learned from- from the programme, that you feel like you're still implementing in your studies currently.

P 7: Yea, well- Hello.
Ja.

P 7: Can you hear me?

T: Ja, I can.

P 7: Okay, uhm what I definitely learnt from REAP is like how to think for myself, to have my own opinion about things, my own ideas. Like, not just like ideas that are free- floating and not grounded in anything, [Mm] but to use theory and to use, you know, things other people have studied, or have said in the past to kind of make up my own mind about something. [Mm, mm] I think from REAP I learnt that, you know, my opinion is important, like my thoughts are worthwhile and. Ja, so being able to have that original thought, that original way of like understanding the world, that is not just free- floating, but founded in theory [Mm].

In these extracts the participants express that the following academic skills and strategies taught to them in the REAP assisted in improving their academic performance and competence: essay writing skills, academic reading skills, critical thinking skills, learning skills, strategies on how to approach exam and test questions, and argumentative abilities/ or abilities to formulate their own opinions (i.e. voice). At university level all these skills, particularly in the Humanities, are crucial (Bradbury & Miller, 2011; Brady, 2013; Scholtz & Allen-ile, 2008; Weideman, 2003). According to Weideman (2003), an operational definition of academic literacy includes the comprehension of language, comprehending academic discourse, the interpretation of texts, to use of the information to produce information (i.e. voice), meaning- making, all of which are academic reading and writing skills. Weideman (2003) also regarded critical thinking as a component of academic literacy. Critical thinking entails analyzing content and forming an opinion accordingly. It also involves thinking outside the box and questioning established knowledge and ideas. It is this sort of thinking that enables transformation (Lau & Chan, 2015).

Research conducted at Wits University by Bradbury and Miller (2011) shows that many first year students fail tests and exams because they do not know how to answer the questions the way in which they are expected to. Students are expected to answer questions by critically engaging with the questions rather than reproducing the information in their texts (Bradbury & Miller, 2011; Maher, 2011). The findings in the current study show that the knowledge of how to approach particular test and exam questions facilitates the achievement of high academic marks.

Theorists such as Neil Murray regard proficiency in the English language, academic literacy and professional communication skills as three very important literacies that university students need to succeed (Brady, 2013).

Of particular importance and linked to Bourdieu's Social Reproduction Theory is participant four's statement that although required to think critically by university lecturers, this skill is not a skill which students possess entering university and is not taught to them by lecturers or tutors. In addition, the fact that all these skills and strategies were taught to these participants in the REAP and are skills which they found beneficial, suggests that these are not taught to students in mainstream classes, which is problematic as academic literacy is one of the most important contributing factors to success at university, particularly in the humanities. It is thus crucial that university transformation initiatives address the lack of teaching of academic skills in order to improve the graduation and retention rates of university, particularly Black students.

The importance of the social capital gained in the REAP

The last theme that emerged in this study pertained to the REAP facilitators (as well as tutors) providing more than academic assistance but also providing social support through their building of interpersonal relationships with the students, having an open- door policy and having consultation sessions with each student to monitor their progress etc. Many of the participants felt that this was another beneficial aspect of the REAP.

Extract One

T: And then, did they check up on you guys, like your marks And stuff?

P 1: She would, actually. [Interviewer giggles] She'd call us in position and she's always be so difficult concerning my marks.

T: I think she wanted you to do better,

Extract Two

P 2: But there were
times where it really helped us. [Oh, okay.] Let me just
think what really helped.
T: [(Ja, it really helped. ((giggles)))]
P 2: … I think for
me the important thing that I'll never forget about REAP
was the fact that it was able to take us from the academic
side to the social. It could deal with the social side of a
man, you know, the social aspects because they would come
and ask how you are [Ja.] and I think the social aspect of
it was really good because the values and the morals that
they would teach you [Ja.] were things that you could
take and go out with them.
T: Like what?
P 2: Like for example, you know that whole thing that you need
to- even if you're happy, because I remember Zimitri would
say this a lot. She'd say, 'Even if it's the hectic season
where every assignment needs to be submitted but you need
to have- you need to take time out [mhm] and you need to
de- stress.' And I remember you would have diary entries
and I think it was the first time in my life where I
[mhm] thought, Okay, a journal is very important. [Mhm]
Because we would come in and write about the week, how we
are feeling [mhm] and after that it really felt like,
wow, a weight off my shoulders. [Ja]… So, that really helped me.

Extract Three

P 3: So that- And it
just gave you that motivation of, (well, get something off
my back, [Mm] going to go to Jill now [Mm] and tell her
that, 'You know what, this question A is not working out,
[Mm] what do we do?' [Mm] Kind of thing instead of you
suffering in silence while everyone seemed to have gotten
the Psychoanalys- Eish…

Extract Four

T: Okay, uhm, difficulties, academic difficulties?
P 6: Yoh, academic difficulties. [Ja.] In- with my experience?

T: Ja.
P 6: [Eish ( )]
T: [Prior, this is] prior to the REAP.
P 6: Prior to the- Failing man. Failing, [Mm] you know when you fail [Mm?] you feel like you, yourself are a failure. [Okay.] And even in areas where, you know, there is potential, because you failed it- it like reinforces the disbelief that a, you're not good enough and b, who the hell do you think you are, no one in your family has ever succeeded so who do you think you are either. [Mm] So like it re- it reinforces the self- doubt. [Mm] Ja.
T: So how did you get over that?
P 6: Uuuhm, I really must say it went back to Gene, when Gene was like, 'You know what, you can do this', [Mm] I got-
T: In that one session?
P 6: In that one session, ((Interviewer titters)) [Wow!] that one session really determined the rest of my work throughout my university career. Stop being lazy- [Okay.] I thrive on pressure. [Okay.] I feel like it brings out another side of me, [Okay.] but like my motto was, even if my work is late, it was- it will always- I will always hand in work of high quality. [Okay.] Ja.

Extract Five

T: Uhm, okay, I'm trying to think, because I mean you- Obviously you can't actually say that like, we already spoke about, that REAP- REAP uhm made, you know, that difference in your academics, but uhm was there any point like in- when you started REAP, any point where you felt like, 'Okay, now I'm- I think I'm doing better or, I don't know if anything like that ever happened?
P 7: [Hello!] Well, it's probably because- Can you hear me? [Ja.] Well, it's probably because I never really struggled, [Mm] struggled academically. [Mm] I like- I've always sustained an A – average. [Mm] I think I ended up cumming that degree. [Mm] So I've never really struggle academically, but I'm REAP did make a difference with that Psychology course that I spoke about earlier, the one with the model that I couldn't understand [Mm] because I can't see 3D things uhm so that's that. I can definitely say that without being in REAP, having Jill, having Peace, really did mean something. I think, the greatest impact I felt, you

know, of REAP, the one thing I've been able to take away is that relationship with Jill and Peace because that has proven to be the most important thing I've taken out of REAP because after Wits I went to UCT and then after UCT I went to Stellenbosch, which is where I am now and to get into all these programmes [Mm?] and to get all the scholarships that I got uh funding for, like I needed referee, two who really knew me and really understood how I work and you know, could comment on my strengths and my weaknesses [Ja] and Jill and Peace were those people for me, who kind of knew me and knew what I was capable of [Mm] and where I struggled. [Mm] And for me it's not in the content of what we did, but like the process of being in relation to those people who ended up being like mentors so that is something I consistently, you know, bring into every university I go to and ja, I keep them updated. I send them little emails saying, 'Hey, this is where I am. This is how I'm doing. (So often, I think). And I think that tome has been more important than any other thing that I did with REAP.

T: Okay, uhm, can you tell me about UCT? Just how that experience was for you, ja.

P 7: Uhm, Academically? [Mm!] The first block was really difficult. Uhm, it- [This is Honours?] Yes, honours. Ja, I think it was the transition from undergrad to honours, [Okay] or the transition from undergrad to postgrad, and also the transition between universities and trying to settling. [Mm] Uhm, So the first block was really hard. And I remember I used to call Peace and Jill almost in tears going, 'Oh, my god, this is so difficult, I don't know. I'm struggling,' and they used to really like, you know, calm me down and be like, 'Okay, what's happening?' And I'd tell them and they'd be like, 'You know, you can do this. You are an A student. [Mm] You are struggling right now, but just give yourself more time. But it's the first semester, ja, mostly, the first semester, but especially the first block was really difficult and it took me a while to kind of settle into a rhythm, uhm but I don't think it was not just purely academic, I was going through some personal things as well [Okay.] uhm that made the process a bit difficult, uhm. But ja, again having Peace and Jill like, you know, kind of, I know this is going to sound corny, but, you know, having people who believe that you can do something on days when you're

> just like, 'You know what, I'm going home, I can't do this anymore'. Having people to like, you know, encourage you like that. [Mm] That was really helpful for me and I ended up cumming that degree as well and I think it was because I didn't really give up there because I kind of felt like, 'I can't really give up now because these people think I can do this and these people are very intelligent people and they've been doing this for years, so they must be right'. So they were really helpful, [Mm] academically for me, uhm uhm in honours.

The findings in this study support the findings in a study conducted by Dufur, Parcel, and Troutman (2013) which suggest that social capital from home and from school has positive effects on students' academic performance however unlike this study, participants in the current study ascribe their success to social support received at school than at home. Furthermore, the fact that these findings show that the social support received from the REAP facilitators was instrumental in the academic persistence, motivation and success of the participants supports Conley (2013) theory that academic, psycho- social and social aspects of students all play a role in their academic performance and thus, should all be addressed by university interventions. Much like the statements made by participant 7, a study conducted by Rayle, Kurpius, and Arredondo (2006) showed that being comfortable at university, social support and self- belief predicted the academic success and persistence of first year female university students, with social support being the strongest predictor of academic persistence. A study conducted by Gasman and Palmer (2008) found that African American universities are distinguished from White university by the supportive, nurturing and family- like environment created by the lecturers. The results of this kind of environment have been the facilitation of academic success, self- confidence, adjustment, satisfaction, cultural awareness of

underprepared Black students. The participants in their study stated that their lecturers and the administrative staff were accessible and supportive to them, that they built supportive relationships with their students and mentored them. These participants stated that it was not only their demonstration of care regarding the students' academic performance but also concern regarding their personal well- being that fostered the students' academic success. This study's findings corroborated many other findings regarding the supportive nature of Black American universities and university staff and its link to the students' academic success. This suggests that it is possible for lecturers to provide students with social support and to relate more personally to their students and that this is especially beneficial to underprepared students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Chapter Seven- Conclusion

Recollection of their learning histories from school through university

Through the recollections of the participants the findings which emerged indicated that not only do academic, social, psycho- social and emotional factors influence academic performance in university, but so does ones schooling background. In school, all of the participants felt that their teachers had an immense impact on their academic performance at the time as well as their love for the subjects which they were studying, and that this enjoyment also influenced their academic performance. The participants mentioned the teaching methods used by these teachers as effective as well as the way in which they treated their pupils. From this finding it

has become possible to conclude that quality of teaching not only refers to how good the teachers are at teaching the subject but also the way in which teachers teach, the way they conduct their classes and treat their pupils.

Then, when inquiring about the participants' first year of study, it became evident that much like in other studies, most of these participants struggled to adjust to university life. They struggled with the workload, the amount of reading, academic writing including referencing, and adjusting to taking responsibility of their studies including managing their time correctly. The latter has been found in many other studies and is well known in the literature however this study contributes by stating that there was a difference between the time in which these participants adjusted to university life and its pressures and it is that difference that separated the two students who were already achieving high marks when they began participating in the REAP and those who were achieving average marks or failing.

Another theme which emerged indicated that it is essential for lecturers' performance to be evaluated as the way in which they lecture affects students' academic performance. This is an important factor as in the literature it is commonplace to place the responsibility of student failure upon the students without questioning the people who were impacting the knowledge. The participants in this study mentioned the same lecturer in their first year of study who had contextualized the psychology content and thus, made it easier to comprehend. In addition, they mentioned having done well in this class and not doing well in another lecturers class due to their different lecturing styles.

This study also found that as much as the development of an academic identity and the influence thereof on the productivity and performance of academic staff is the focus of much of the lecture on academic identity, this construct has as much significance on students' academic performance. Students with an academic identity are students who are career- oriented, goal-driven, focused, confident, and hard working as a result. This study showed that the participants in this study were able to succeed in university due to possessing these traits but also due to the influence that the REAP and Wits University on their developing an academic identity.

Very importantly and related to the theoretical frameworks in this study is the theme of acquiring academic literacy. It is well known today that students entering university are academically under- prepared for university meaning they do not know how to read academic texts or write academically, nor do they know how to reference or answer test and examination questions the way in which lecturers expect. Thus, for these participants it was the assistance of the REAP that enabled them to develop these skills and to learn additional study strategies which facilitated their essay writing and facilitated them in answering examination questions as some mentioned that these were not skills they were taught by the university lecturers however they were still expected to display them.

Lastly, a finding which seems unrelated to the purpose of the university staff and impossible to achieve, is the idea that social support given by lecturers to their students would have a major impact on their ability to cope with adjusting to university, to different levels of university, academic pressures, academic difficulty and would enable them to persevere and thus, to

succeed at university. This was shown by the effect that the social support given by the participants in this study had on their academic performance and also the support from findings from studies on Black American universities where staff members mentor and support their students.

All these factors, although based on a small qualitative study, are important to consider as they stem from views given by high achieving students

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Appendix A: Interview Schedule

Introductions and rapport building will occur first. Then, the opening question will be an open-ended question in order to get the interview going in a direction chosen by the participant instead of the researcher. The opening question will be: What made you decide to apply to the REAP programme? The interview will not rigidly follow the structure of this schedule however all questions will be asked.

1. Tell me about the schools you attended.
2. Can you tell me about one thing that you remember about one of your classes in high school?
3. Was that different to your experiences in other classes?
4. What do you remember about school in matric?
5. Tell me about your first year at university.
6. How was it different from your experience of school?
7. Can you tell me about a particular learning experience at university (writing an essay, a test, a lecture, a tutorial)?
8. What social activities on campus did you participate in as an undergraduate student?
9. Tell me about the friends that you've made at university.
10. Did you ever study with your friends or work together on assignments etc.? Why was that?
11. Tell me about your second year at university.
12. Can you tell me about a time when you were having learning difficulties during your undergraduate studies? What were those difficulties?
13. Can you tell me about any other difficulties you've experienced at university?
14. Tell me about your work ethic during first and second year.

15. Did it help you succeed in your work?
16. Tell me about the REAP programme.
17. What do you remember about the first time you went to programme?
18. What did you like about the programme?
19. Which aspects of the programme do you feel benefitted you the most? Why do you say that?
20. Are there any other aspects on the programme that you feel had an impact on your academics and you or your life, in general?
21. What advice would you give to academics who are interested in curriculum transformation – what aspects of REAP do you feel could be improved?
22. What were the negatives of participating in the programme?
23. Tell me about the field trips that you went on as part of REAP and what do you think you learned from those trips?
24. When did you start noticing a difference in your academic performance? How did you feel about that?
25. What do you think contributed to the improvement in your performance?
26. Tell me about your third year at university.
27. Would you say you excelled in your academics in third year?
28. What did you do to achieve the results you achieved?
29. Tell me about being selected for postgraduate studies. What was that like for you?
30. Tell me about your current studies/ your job.
31. What is/ was postgrad like for you? Why do you say that? Or What has working been like for you thus far? Why do you say that?

32. Do you ever use the skills and knowledge you learned in the REAP programme to do your tasks or projects at work?
33. How do you see yourself now as a university student/ a working individual?
34. How does this perception compare to how you saw yourself in undergrad?
35. What does being a Black postgrad student mean to you?
36. How is that different to how you perceived yourself as a Black student in undergrad?
37. What are your future plans?

Appendix B: Information Sheet

Purpose of the study: As part of the requirement for a Master's degree at WITS University, I have to conduct a research study. This study is interested in the learning histories from school through university of the students who participated in the REAP programme.

What will the study involve? This study will involve carrying out narrative interviews with each of the participants. The interviews will be held in a private room on campus far from the SHCD, SoSS, WSoE, WSoA, SLLM buildings where REAP facilitators work. Each participant will be interviewed once. The interview will be approximately two hours long to ensure that every topic and question of concern is dealt with. The interview will be recorded using an audio-recorder.

Why have you been asked to take part? You have been invited to participate in this study because you were one of the students who were accepted into the REAP programme. You took part in the activities and received academic assistance in this programme. You are also currently studying for a postgraduate degree at the University of the Witswatersrand or Stellenbosch University or currently working. Thus, the experiences you had in the REAP programme and your learning histories in general are of great value to this study.

Do you have to take part? No! Participation in the study is voluntary. You are free to decline to participate, nothing will happen to you if you do. If you do chose to participate in the study you will be given an informed consent form to sign along with this sheet and at the beginning of the interview. If you had agreed to participate prior to the interview however you do not wish to participate in the study any longer for whatever reason you have the right and freedom to withdraw your participation. If you are still prepared to participate in the study then

you will receive a copy of this information sheet and the informed consent form so that if you feel you were mistreated in any way or you feel that the researcher did not keep the promises made in this information sheet then you have right to complain to the Faculty of Humanities. You also have a right to withdraw from the study after you have signed the informed consent form and during or after the interview. Withdraw beyond the interview itself can only be done two weeks after the interview. Withdraw in the study will result in the destruction of all the information you gave in the interview and beyond that.

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential? Yes! I will make every means possible to ensure that no one knows that you were part of this study. As mentioned above, the interview will take place on campus however far from the SHCD, SoSS, WSoE, WSoA, SLLM buildings. The transcript of the audio- recording of the interview will be kept in a computer document requiring a password so that I can be the only person with access to it and after saving the recording on my laptop the audio- recording will be deleted from the audio-recorder. When the research report is written up all identifying features such as your name, surname, gender, age, the course you are and were studying etc. will not appear. If anything is used from the interview with you, it will be kept anonymous. Any information used from the interview with you will be completely anonymous. Complete confidentiality cannot be promised however because the REAP group was very small and close- knit and thus, someone who knows you are participating in the study may inform other former- REAP students and/ facilitators.

What will happen to the information you give? The audio- recording will be in my possession throughout the study as I will save it on my laptop and delete it from the actual audio-recorder so that no one besides me will listen to it. After I have transcribed the recording I will

keep the transcripts in a computer document that requires a password that only I will know. After the completion of this research project and any subsequent projects such as presenting at a conference or publishing in an academic journal, the audio- recording and transcripts will be destroyed.

What will happen to the results? The results will be presented in the master's research report. They will be seen by my supervisor, two readers in the faculty and an external examiner. The results may also be presented at a conference and published in an academic journal.

What are the possible risks of participating in this study? There should not be any negative consequences as a result of participating in this study because none of the interview questions are sensitive or extremely personal. However, if talking about some of your recollections of past experiences may make you uncomfortable or distressed and you are aware of this then you have a right to refuse to answer those particular questions and the following questions will be asked. You are not forced to answer any questions in the interview, you may refuse to answer as many as you wish and there will be no negative consequences for doing so.

What if there is a problem? At the end of the interview I will talk to you about how you found the interview and how you are feeling at that moment. If you are feeling distressed then I will remind you that there is information in this information sheet regarding places where counseling is given on campus to students free of charge: the CCDU (Counseling and Careers Development Unit) and the Emthonjeni Centre. Specifically you may contact…

Who has reviewed this paper? Apart from my supervisor, two readers in the psychology department have reviewed this paper because they needed to give me ethical approval and to examine the quality of it before I could begin with the study.

Any further queries? If you need any further information, you can contact me: Tebogo Fish on my cellphone 0764958184 or via email at 974230@students.wits.ac.za or you can contact my supervisor via email at Peace.Kiguwa@wits.ac.za

After reading this information, if you agree to participate in this study then please sign the informed consent form on the next page.

Appendix C: Participant Informed Consent Form

I _____ agree to participate in Tebogo's research study.

The purpose and the nature of the study have been made clear to me in writing.

I know that participation is voluntary.

I give permission for my interview to be audio- recorded.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without any negative consequences, at any time, whether before it starts or after it has begun.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within two weeks of the study which means that the information will be deleted.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the research report by the withholding any identifying characteristics.

I understand that anonymous extracts from my interview may be quoted in the research report and any subsequent publications if I give permission below:

(Please tick one box)

I agree to quotation/ publication of extracts from my interview ☐

I do not agree to quotation/ publication of extracts from my interview ☐

Participant's signature_____ Date_____ 2014

Appendix D: Participant's Consent Form for Audio-recording

I _____ have read the participant information sheet for the research study being conducted by Tebogo Fish. I understood and signed the information sheet. I understand that the interview will be audio- recorded. I understand that my name and any other identifying characteristics will not appear in the research report and any other areas where the information I give in the interview will be used in order to protect my identity. I also know that the interviewer is the only person who will have access to the audio- recording and that the audio- recording will be deleted at the end of the study or if it occurs, after the conference presentation or publication of the journal article.

_____

Participant's signature:

_____

Date:

Appendix E: Participant's Transcripts