

**Social Capital and First-Generation South African
students at Rhodes University**

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By

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ABSTRACT

The post-1994 democratic dispensation was presented with a challenge of how to improve equity of access for the incoming Black majority in institutions of higher learning (Cloete and Moja, 2005; Badat, 2010). Democratization of access to institutions of higher learning led to what has been called a “revolution” in the student demographics of higher education institutions in South Africa (Cloete and Moja, 2005). Many of the new entrants, particularly those entering historically white institutions, are from working backgrounds and are the first in their families to have the opportunity obtain a tertiary qualification – they are ‘first generation’ students. This thesis is interested in the experiences of first-generation working class students as they negotiate the terrain of an elite, historically white, South African university. While a prior body of research on first-generation students has focused primarily on the educational, cultural and economic deficits and challenges that these students experience, the present project was interested in the question of social capital in relation to these students. The thesis set out to explore what social networks these students do and do not have access to, and the various ways that they create, access and take advantage of alternative social networks in order to overcome their marginality in their everyday lived experiences at the university. In depth qualitative interviews with 31 participants were employed to gain an insight into the experiences of first-generation Black working class students at one university. The study finds that while first-generation students are not bereft of social capital, their networks are often inward-looking, based as they are on mutual recognition of markers of marginalisation and poverty which risks restricting these students to the margins of university life.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memories of Bhuti Hlatshwayo (1965-1976), Nokubekezela Theodora Hlatshwayo (1969-2009), Dumisani Josiah Luvuno (1967-2011), Thembeni Lucretia Hlatshwayo (1972-2010) and Jabulile Msimang (1952-2015). We will forever be in mourning for our loss.

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During the course of this thesis, a large number of my research participants kept citing one particular individual who inspired them and was always there to help them. I attempted to contact him and did at some point manage to get into a conversation, however he was busy and we could not agree on an interview time. Then one day, a story broke out in the *Herald*, an Eastern Cape Provincial Newspaper, that Siviwe Mpondo, my prospective research participant, had gone missing for the past couple of weeks, and that the school where he teaches, have been looking for him for quite some time. At the time of submitting this thesis, Siviwe had still not being found. We will continue to keep the Mpondo family in our prayers, and hope the Good Lord keeps him safe.

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1 Chapter One: Introduction

As Black¹ student numbers increase in higher education institutions in South Africa, a significant number of these students enter institutions of higher learning as first-generation students, from low socio economic backgrounds, and are at a high risk of dropping out (Strydom et al, 2010: 2-3). As Strydom et al (2010: 2-3) have pointed out:

Black African students still constitute the majority of higher education drop-outs, frustrating efforts to address equity in the South African workforce as well as the country's critical skills shortage. Given the profile of students entering the system, institutions have very little direct influence over the educational preparation of their students.

The above challenges of first-generation students are further complicated by the declining resources of higher education institutions, which are increasingly accepting both racially and socio economically diverse students who put pressure on their financial and academic resources (Strydom, 2010: 2-3). Of course, not all students who are the first generation in their families to enrol in higher education are working class and/or Black but the present study takes as its focus first generation Black students from rural or township schools because the research project is interested in interrogating and highlighting the social networks that these students do not have access to, and the various ways that they create, access and take advantage of alternative social networks in order to overcome their marginality in their everyday lived experiences at university.

There is a large amount of scholarship on first generation students. In 1975 Tinto proposed a multi-stage analysis of the challenges that saw first-generation students dropping out at American colleges. Tinto identified several aspects of the problem. The first aspect relates to the student's background, socio economic class, family, and schooling history. The second aspect relates to the student's own perceptions and personal goals, particularly the value placed on a college education. The third determining factor identified by Tinto had to do with the integration, both socially and academically, of these students into college institutional cultures,

¹ Although the study does acknowledge the non-existence of race biologically, race, and specifically the racial categories of Black and White are capitalized to emphasize the historical and social consequences of these identities on factors such as socioeconomic status, educational and occupational status, wealth, political power and others (please see Smedley and Smedley, 2005).

and their resultant sense of belonging. Tinto's outline of the varying levels at which the challenges of first-generation students in higher education institutions occur, remains useful. Subsequent scholarly literature on the subject has enlarged our understanding of how each of these levels operate in different social and historical contexts and also how they interact with one another.

One approach has been to compare first generation students with other students in terms of the role that secondary schooling plays in limiting or capacitating them for higher education, their demographic characteristics, and how they make choices about which institution to enrol in and which subjects to enrol for (Berkner & Chavez, 1997; Horn & Nunez, 2000; Hossler et al, 1999, Kojaku & Nunez, 1998; Pratt & Skaggs, 1989; Stage & Hossler, 1989; Warburton et al, 2001; York-Anderson & Bowman, 1991; Billson & Terry, 1982; Pascarella et al, 2004; Terenzini et al, 1996). The central argument of this body of work has to do with the various challenges that first-generation students face in comparison with their more resourced peers and thus the likelihood of them dropping out for reasons ranging from a lack of family income and support to a lack of institutional integration.

The literature on first-generation students which focuses on their persistence in tertiary education, period of degree attainment and early career entry into labour markets and its outcomes suggests that first generation students are more likely to drop out within the first year, are less likely to remain enrolled past the third year, and are less likely to obtain a degree after a five year period, compared to their fellow students (Attinasi, 1989; Berkner et al, 2000; Ishitani, 2006).

In South Africa, the poor previous schooling of first-generation students has been cited as one of the contributing factors resulting in these students being underprepared for the demands of higher education (Hall et al, 1995; Honikman, 1982; Kagee et al., 1997). The research finds these students experiencing high levels of "anxiety and alienation from their lecturers, academic discourse, the evaluation process and the institution itself" (Kagee et al 1997:249). Warren (1997: 1) suggests that the academic difficulties of first-generation students arise from insufficient "familiarity with key concepts and the tools, codes, and conventions of knowledge construction" which may lead to increased anxiety and low self-confidence. These students

moreover are often learning in a second or third language and given the low levels of education of their parents cannot fall back on family support to meet their academic challenges at university (Agar, 1990; Kapp, 1998). This body of research has also looked at how Black working class students respond to diverse challenges such as financial constraints, transport problems and housing-related difficulties, and the stresses of living away from home (Sennett et al, 2003: 108).

Added to the material obstacles that first generation university students face are questions of identity. A body of literature has engaged with the experiences of first-generation students from working class backgrounds whose identities are unsettled as a result of being exposed at university to very different modes of being in the world, compared with their home, family, and community environment. These students must battle with trying to successfully negotiate belonging in both environments and avoid exclusion from either (Bangeni & Kapp, 2005; London, 1989; Lowery-Hart & Pacheco Jr, 2011). Howard London (1989) for instance used narrative analysis to capture the experiences of first-generation college students in Boston, regarding how they felt having to lose a part of themselves once enrolling at colleges, and the amount of pressure that they are under, in living up to becoming the signifiers of the “success” and “privilege” of their families, responsible for lifting them out of poverty and improving their quality of life.

While all students must negotiate the challenges of the transition from high school to postsecondary education (Lara, 1992; Rendon, 1992; Rendon et al, 1996, Terenzini et al, 1994; Weis, 1992), some research has shown that first-generation students have more difficulty in making the transition and especially in meeting the academic demands and expectations required of them at university (see for example Terenzini et al., 1994).

A body of research has argued that for some first generation students their failure to thrive at university is related not so much to academic under preparedness as to challenges of a more social and cultural nature: the university environment is experienced as alien, resulting in feelings of dislocation and an inability to focus on academic commitments (Allen, 1985; Flemming, 1984; Loo & Rolison, 1986; Nettles, 1991; Sennett et al 2003). In this regard, Ishitani (2006) shows that the first two years of first-generation students’ academic lives are

the most crucial, determining either integration into the institutional environment, or continued feelings of exclusion and marginalization, and thus, subsequently, dropout.

The question of race is inextricably bound up with the first generation question with many first generation students being Black and finding themselves at predominantly or traditionally White institutions. In the late 1970s and 1980s a body of research emerged which highlighted the experiences of African-American students in relation to their adjustment and success at majority White institutions (Bayer, 1972; Bohn, 1973; Desionde, 1971; Dixon-Altenor and Altenor, 1977; Gruber, 1980; Kester, 1970; Stikes, 1975; Sedlacek and Brooks, 1976; Astin, 1975, 1982; Tracey and Sedlacek, 1984, 1985, 1987; DiCesare et al, 1972; Burbach and Thompson, 1971; Gibbs, 1974; White and Sedlacek, 1986; Pfeifer and Sedlacek, 1974; Parham and Helms, 1985). This scholarship provided evidence that for Black students, their identification with an institution played a significant role in their retention, in comparison with other students who did not necessarily need to identify with an institution and its culture, to be able to negotiate their social and academic belonging successfully. This work showed that Black students who attended White Colleges tended to be outperformed academically by their White counterparts (Allen et al, 1991; Braddock and Dawkins, 1981; Nettles, 1988; Pentages and Creedon, 1978) and that these students' academic challenges were compounded by an absence of remedial programmes, and very limited informal exchanges with White faculty and fellow students (Sedlacek, 1999). Experiences of racism and difficulties with adjustment faced by Black students suggested the need for support systems (Sedlacek, 1999) and in particular for more Black staff members to whom Black students could turn when facing difficulties.

Subsequent scholarship on Black student experiences in traditionally White American colleges, although acknowledging that racism embedded within university cultures plays a role in the attrition of Black students at these institutions, has focused instead on individual and family factors in explaining why these students do not do as well as their White counterparts on average (Keller, 1988-1989; Loury and Anderson, 1984). Keller (1988) for example argued that that the explanation lay with Black attitudes towards education and therefore proposed that the solution lay not with "the fashionable practice of lambasting the colleges as if they were the central problem" (Keller, 1988: 55) but with the:

.... need to encourage, lift up, and argue with those youths who do not see the urgency of education in a scientific, international, and information-choked world . . . where knowledge is the principal sword and shield against decline, poverty, and inferiority.

Chalsa M. Loo and Gary Rolison's (1986: 64) quantitative research into the challenges facing ethnic minorities at higher education institutions, suggested that:

The sociocultural alienation of minority students was significantly greater than that of white students. On a four-point scale (1 = "a lot"; 4 = "not at all"), fewer minority students than white students felt the university reflected their values ($\chi^2 = 17.29$; $p < 0.001$): roughly 40 percent of the minority students said the university reflected their values "a little" or "not at all." Moreover, compared to white students, minority students reported greater social isolation ($\chi^2 = 10.21$; $p < 0.05$). Black and Chicano students reported feeling less socially integrated into the university ($\chi^2 = 6.18$; $p < 0.05$): 37 per cent of the black and Chicano students "often" felt socially isolated on campus, and one-fourth of the blacks and Chicanos did not feel integrated.

Furthermore, Loo and Rolison's research also found that:

A majority of both ethnic minority and white students (70 per cent) believed that minority students faced greater sociocultural difficulties on campus than white students did. Two major reasons for this were given: first, the cultural dominance of white, middle-class values on campus, pressuring minority students to acquire white, middle-class values and to reject their own, and second, ethnic isolation resulting from being a small proportion of the student body.

Socio-cultural alienation has an academic effect on students who have thoughts of dropping out, not necessarily due to academic challenges and the difficulties they face, but rather due to feeling alienated, disconnected and marginalized from the institution and its culture (Loo & Rolison, 1986: 65-66).

Much of the extant literature on first generation university students has emerged from scholars focusing on the United States. First-generation literature that has emerged from South Africa, has examined how hegemonic institutional cultures play a significant role in alienating, particularly Black and working class students, within especially the formerly White institutions which are often seen as deeply exclusionary and marginalizing in the experience of these

students (Allen, 1985; Flemming, 1984; Loo & Rolison, 1986; Nettles, 1991; Sennett et al, 2003: 109). Research into the experiences of Black South African first generation students, especially those entering formerly White universities, remains limited however. There is also a paucity of empirical research on the determinants of academic success amongst students from disadvantaged educational and socio-economic backgrounds at South African universities (Sennett et al, 2010; Petersen et al, 2009).

The present research takes Rhodes University, a formerly White institution, as its site of investigation. It is interested in Black South African working class students whose first-generation status, it can be hypothesised on the basis of existing literature, might be predicted to cause them to encounter challenges with successfully negotiating various aspects of university life at a historically White university. While both deficiencies of cultural and economic capital have featured in the literature on first-generation student experiences, very few researchers in this field have looked at the notion of social capital in order to understand both what these students might lack or find difficult and how some are able to successfully overcome disadvantage and successfully negotiate their entry into university, including entry into formerly White universities. The present thesis aims to enter this conversation by focusing on the role that social capital plays in the various ways in which first-generation Black South African working class students experience and negotiate their entry into university life at one historically White South African university campus. The study was conducted using qualitative research, using social capital as a theoretical lens in looking at how first-generation Black working class students negotiate their entry into, university.

1.1 The structure of the thesis

1.11 Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides a broad overview and background of the first-generation scholarship.

1.12 Chapter 2: Background and Context

This chapter locates the research study in the Rhodes University context. The chapter looks at the broader higher education debates with specific focus on the policies and structures in place since the early 1990s and the demand for access to institutions of higher learning. The chapter particularly locates the study at a previously white institution through looking at the history of white institutions during the colonial and apartheid period, with a specific focus on Rhodes University. Furthermore, the study also looks at the current debates in higher education, particularly led by students demanding institutional transformation in nationwide protests beginning in early March in 2015.

1.13 Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of social capital as the theoretical lens of the study. The study outlines the history of social capital, its moments of development, and the key debates within the theoretical field. The chapter isolates the key concepts that will be employed in the analysis of the primary interview data, namely trust, brokerage, closure, and network types.

1.14 Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter provides a step-by-step account of the research process employed, the paradigm within which it operates, the data collection process, the data analysis process, the use of NVivo software for qualitative data analysis and how themes were constructed in the analysis of the data.

1.15 Chapter 5: Trust

This chapter looks at the role of trust for first-generation Black working class students, particularly in how they use Kramer's "cognition" to recognize and identify with one another. This chapter also looks at the role of language as a social marker, in how first-generation students use their home language to construct alternative socio-linguistic networks that they can use to not only form friendships and relationships with one another, but to also negotiate their marginality at university.

1.16 Chapter 6: Closure

The idea of closure is explored in depth in this chapter, in looking at the various ways in which first-generation students create and maintain their networks and connections. For first-generation students, experiences such as having participated in traditional initiation becomes of paramount importance to closing of networks in how firmly established traditional ties enforced through the traditional experiences of what it means to be a man, reinforces their relationship with one another and ensures that they are accessible to each other. However, the chapter argues, first-generation student networks and connections with one another could be described as ‘networks of poverty’ (Perri 6, 1997: 6). This leads to the significance for these networks of brokers who are able to connect first-generation students with other much more resourceful networks.

1.17 Chapter 7: Brokerage

This chapter looks at the role that brokers play for first-generation students. What the study refers to as “first-generation student brokers’, are individuals who were first-generation students themselves and who are recognized by other first-generation students and act as their brokers, mentors and support system. They are “middle men” for first-generation students, linking them with other much more resourceful networks the students would otherwise not be able to access, and withdraw benefits from.

1.18 Chapter 8: Formal and informal networks

This chapter looks at the role of formal, institutionally created networks and informal, personal networks that first-generation students create for themselves, and how different networks provide for different returns for the students.

1.19 Chapter 9: Conclusion

This chapter summarises the main findings of the research, such as the ways in which first-generation students use cognition to access and recognize one another, in forming alternative connections that they use to negotiate their marginality and retention at university but how

what they gain from inward-looking networks can also be seen as losses in the sense that they risk being forever excluded from more resource networks unless they have access to brokers who can mediate network membership for them.

2 Chapter Two: Background and Context

The contemporary challenges faced by higher education in South Africa arise in the historical context of the systems of colonialism and apartheid, and their consequences for education in the country. Apartheid as a socio-political project, sought to use education as an instrument of oppression to ensure that Black South Africans remained subjugated and educationally marginalized under White minority rule. Under the apartheid system, racial classifications were used in an institutionalized and concerted effort to classify every aspect of an individual's life. People were classified into one of the four population groups or races: "Whites" referred to people originating from Europe, including both English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking Whites, "Coloured" referred to people of mixed racial descent, "Black African" referred to people of indigenous African origin, and Indian, referred to the formerly indentured migrant labourers from India (Sennett et al, 2010: 107-108). This racial segregation resulted in the White population group experiencing superior educational opportunities and Black Africans receiving the most inferior education. In addition, because of the nature of the apartheid political machinery as an attempt to deploy the Black majority as an unskilled and uneducated labour reserve for the mining industries, farming and others, Black schools, whether located in the rural areas or in urban African townships were characterised by overcrowded classrooms, lack of basic education materials such as books, paper or equipment, and poorly trained teachers (Sennett, 2010: 107). Thus one of the early challenges for the incoming democratic government was to de-segregate the different racially segregated schooling systems that had historically served the interests of one racial group at the expense of the others.

Similarly with higher education institutions, Saleem Badat argues that the apartheid political project of racial separation and the reinforcement of White supremacy, manifested itself in the country's institutions of higher learning:

... higher education institutions were profoundly shaped by apartheid planning and by the respective functions assigned to them in relation to the reproduction of the apartheid social order. It was the fundamental differences in allocated roles that distinguished the historically white and historically black institutions and constituted the key differentiation and the principal basis of inequalities between them. The patterns of advantage and disadvantage, however, are not simply historical. They continue to condition the current capacities of institutions to pursue excellence, to provide high

quality learning and research experiences and equity of opportunity, and to contribute to economic and social development (Badat, 2007: 6).

Nico Cloete and Teboho Moja (2005), in “Transformation Tensions in Higher Education: Equity, Efficiency, and Development” argue that from the onset, the incoming democratic government was preoccupied with forming a new policy framework for higher education institutions (see the National Education Policy Initiative, 1992). Badat (2010: 3) writes that:

The Constitution committed the state and institutions to the assertion of the values of human dignity, the achievement of equality, and the advancement of non-sexism and nonracialism and the human rights and freedoms that the Bill of Rights proclaims; and to “respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights” embodied in the Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The Higher Education Act declared the desirability of creating “a single co-ordinated higher education system”, restructuring and transforming “programmes and institutions to respond better to the human resource, economic and development needs” of South Africa, redressing “past discrimination”, ensuring “representivity and equal access” and contributing “to the advancement of all forms of knowledge and scholarship, in keeping with international standards of academic quality”. The Act also proclaimed that it was “desirable for higher education institutions to enjoy freedom and autonomy in their relationship with the State within the context of public accountability and the national need for advanced skills and scientific knowledge”.

Higher education institutions in South Africa were deeply implicated in the production of inequality particularly during the apartheid era, which led to critical conversations beginning in the early 1990s regarding the role of higher education institutions in post-apartheid South Africa (please see Badat, 2007, 2011; Walker, Greyling, 2007; Letseka and Maile, 2008). Badat writes that (2008: 121):

In apartheid South Africa, social inequalities of a class, race, gender, institutional, and spatial nature profoundly shaped higher education. Given this, South Africa’s new democratic government committed itself in 1994 to transforming higher education as well as the inherited apartheid social and economic structure, and institutionalizing a new social order. Necessarily, the realisation of social equity and redress for historically disadvantaged social groups in higher education, and therefore, the issue of admissions, has also loomed large in policy discourse.

Transformation, according to Malegapuru Makgoba, refers to a process by which the form, shape and/or nature of institutions are completely altered, leading to what Makgoba has termed a “blueprint change” (Makgoba, 1997: 181). This refers to the idea that transformation, as argued by Makgoba, Magda Fourie and others, is distinguished from reformation, in that transformation is concerned with the need to change the essence, substance and actual structure of an institution, rather than being concerned with cosmetic changes (Makgoba, 1997; Fourie, 1999).

Similarly, Badat (2011: 2-3) differentiates between “change” and “transformation”:

Change can encompass ‘improvement’, ‘reform’, ‘reconstruction’, ‘development’ and ‘transformation’. All the terms are associated in some way with the idea of ‘change’, but are not ‘devoid of political and ideological content or context,’ or, of course, contestation. For example, it is not self-evident that what is sometimes defined as ‘transformation’ is also necessarily ‘development’; or that the reform of a university, which may be a necessary element of its transformation, will necessarily result in its transformation... ‘Transformation’, in contrast usually has the intent of the dissolution of existing social relations, cultures, policies and practices, and of recreating and consolidating all of these anew. For good reasons, the processes of dissolution and recreation may vary in pace, be uneven and may not uniformly and necessarily result in an immediate and complete rupture or sweeping and total displacement of old structures, policies and practices (Badat, 2011: 2-3).

Present in the transformation of higher education debate from the outset, was the notion that higher education would be confronted with sets of contradictions that would need to be tackled, most notably the tension between equity and development (Cloete and Moja, 2005: 694). Badat et al (1994) reasoned that transformed and expanded higher education institutions would lead to an increase in access for the previously disadvantaged Black majority who would particularly take advantage of the popular and “cheap” courses such as Biblical Studies and language majors. Two challenges were foreseen as a result. Firstly, the increase in the enrolment of students would result in pressure on institutions of higher learning, which could potentially affect the quality of teaching and the production of knowledge itself (Cloete and Moja, 2006: 694). Secondly, the “cheap” and popular courses would neither serve the objectives of development, nor contribute to inculcating the critical skills necessary not only for students to successfully enter the labour market but also for the production of an educated

citizenry capable of contributing to deepening democracy. As a result, higher education could be transformed from a demographic point of view, but do little to produce the needed skilled employees who would drive the economy (Cloete and Moja, 2005: 694-695) and ensure the survival of democracy.

A policy response to this tension was the formulation of the National Commission on Higher Education (hereafter referred to as the NCHE) which argued that moving from an elite to a mass-based equity focus in higher education planning could potentially resolve both the equity challenges and the needs presented by the development state (NCHE, 1996):

The central proposal of the NCHE was that South African higher education should be massified, and should be steered from the center primarily through goal-directed funding. Increasing participation rates would provide greater opportunity for access (equity) and goal-oriented funding and steering would produce more high-level skills that were necessary for economic growth. This was not a simpleminded "more for all" proposal because the NCHE was quite aware that massification could be a driver for both differentiation (system and within institutions) and efficiency (Cloete and Moja, 2005: 694).

In accepting the framework of the NCHE, the Ministry of Education introduced "Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education" (hereafter referred to as the White paper) focusing on equity for students, staff and among institutions themselves (the White Paper, 1997). The White paper has four significant purposes that it wishes to realize for higher education. The first purpose is concerned with meeting the learning needs and aspirations of individuals and their unique capabilities, which involves the capacitating and empowering of all South Africans so as to ensure that all productively contribute to not only improving individual quality of lives, but also to help South Africa develop and realize its potential. In part this has to do with responding to the injustices of the past, to ensure that all South Africans have an opportunity to play an active role in the economy, and are able to take advantage of the opportunities that they were previously deprived of. The second purpose of higher education, outlined in the White paper, and which is significant for transformation, focuses on the idea of higher education institutions as centres for the production and dissemination of knowledge. This purpose relates to how institutions have the capability and resources to help provide the South African economy with much needed skilled professionals

and scarce skills needed to drive a knowledge and market driven economy as demanded by the 21st century. The third purpose of higher education refers to the notion of the model citizen and one of the critical roles and responsibilities of higher education being to help in the socialization of enlightened, responsible and critical citizens who will not only critique and hold the state accountable, but who will, equally, play a major role in the dissemination of ideas, knowledge and critical thought, so as to help promote the common good and thus deepen and consolidate democracy. Thus equity and the need to increase access to institutions of higher learning became a response to tackling some of these aims.

Between 1993 and 2002, the number of Black South African students matriculating from secondary schooling and gaining access to South African universities increased from 40% to 60%. Despite the increase in the access to universities, overall participation and demand for higher education institutions remains low at 16% in 2005 and at 17.5% for 2010. The state set itself the goal of 20% participation by 2015 (Department of Education 2001: 16; Strydom et al, 2010: 1-2).

Of 938 201 students who registered in 2012 for the 23 public higher education institutions in the country, 78% were Black students who registered for full time programmes (called contact programmes), with females constituting roughly 58% of the total student population (Mtshali, 2013). With regard to the composition of the student body, Cooper and Subotzky write about a “revolution” that occurred in the higher education system between 1994 to 2003, which saw a large increase in the enrolment of African students from 41% to 60%, and if Indian and Coloured students are included as “Black”, the Black student component rises to 74% (2001; Department of Education, 2004).

At some institutions however the apartheid demographics have not changed as much. For example, over 95% of all students enrolled at the Universities of Venda, Zululand and Mangosuthu University of Technology are Black, while the formerly White University of Pretoria and the University of Stellenbosch still have more White students than Black students (DHET 2011: 4-5). At some institutions, the composition of the student body *has* changed radically. For instance, the enrolment of Black students in the historically White Afrikaans

medium universities increased from 10% in 1994 to 60% of the total student population by 2004 (Cloete and Moja, 2005: 697).

The context for the present study is one formerly White university. Rhodes University (hereafter referred to as Rhodes) was founded in 1904 as Rhodes University College (RUC), a colonial institution established to extend British imperial education (Greyling, 2007: 23). Sean Andrew Greyling (2007: 23) writes that the University was founded in the aftermath of the Boer defeat in the South African War (1899-1902) and formed part of a wider project of Anglicisation being pursued by then British High Commissioner, Lord Alfred Milner, part of which was the extension of British-style education:

The establishment of a college of higher education in the Eastern Cape corresponded with this and would strengthen the British imperial connection. Thus the College was founded as a colonial institution. This was further reflected in the naming of the College after the foremost imperialist of the time, Cecil John Rhodes, recently deceased, even though he had had hardly any association with the Eastern Cape during his lifetime. The decision to name the College after him was a lever to obtain funding from the Rhodes Trust to establish the College.

While historically a White, imperial and colonial institution, the limited inclusion of Black students into Rhodes University dates back to the Second World War which saw a significant number of staff members taking leave of their academic responsibilities to join the fighting on the side of the Allies. Returning from fighting against Fascism and Nazism, these academics brought with them a degree of social consciousness and awareness of the dangers posed by the then increasingly popular National Party (some of whose members had sided with Germany in the war). With pressure from the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand, the then Minister of Education, J.H. Hofmeyr announced in Parliament in 1945 that universities could not legally refuse admission to any students based on their race, but universities were urged to maintain an internal policy of racial segregation (Greyling, 2007: 30). At Rhodes this led to Professor Hobart Houghton's 1946 proposal in the Senate to remove the University's restriction on the admission of Black students:

Professor Hobart Houghton proposed two motions in Senate. The first was that the College remove the rule restricting the admission of black students and the second that the College reconsider its admission policy for black

students. The first motion passed with 20 votes for and none against and the second motion passed with 21 votes for and none against. A third motion was added (it is not recorded who proposed it) to the effect that while the admission of black students to Rhodes be reconsidered, Rhodes should generally not accept African and Coloured students for courses offered at Fort Hare. The motion passed with 15 votes for and one against. Senate's action demonstrated a move away from self-imposed academic segregation but with the condition that the College should not draw students away from Fort Hare. This condition fitted in with the accepted norm that black students attend Fort Hare, which was originally set up to cater for 'native' students. Since courses offered at Rhodes and Fort Hare were very similar, the result was a very limited entry of Black students into Rhodes (Greyling, 2007: 30).

The coming into power of the National Party in 1948 had an effect on Rhodes as an institution, which was at the time trying to attain university status (Greyling; 2007; Alty, 1964). The status of "open universities"² was at that time facing a serious challenge by the new political elites who were committed to ensuring that separate racial groups did not interact or engage with one another. Rhodes, facing the challenges of being reliant for 60% of the university's total gross income from the government, had to balance the tension between receiving the necessary financial support from the government, while maintaining institutional and academic freedom (Greyling, 2007; Beale, 1994). The apartheid period for the university was characterised by what historian Paul Maylam has called an attempt to be an "apolitical" and "accommodating" institution towards the apartheid state (Maylam, 2007: 18). The Extension of Universities Bill of 1959 compelled the open universities to request permission from the Minister of Education before admitting Black students. At the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand the anticipated promulgation of this law was met with mass meetings and the respective councils passing resolutions stating their principled opposition to academic segregation (Maylam, 2007; Registrar to the Secretary for Education, Arts and Science, 1957). At Rhodes, in contrast, the response was muted and it was only after the enactment of the law in 1959 that Rhodes offered an institutional response framed as a question of "institutional autonomy" rather than politically challenging apartheid: the then Vice Chancellor, Alty, stressed that "universities should have the right to decide for themselves who to admit as students. 'In our university', he went on, 'we have, for our own reasons, admitted relatively

² "Open" or "liberal" universities referred to universities that admitted all racial groups and did not discriminate against them (please see Greyling, 2007; The Academic Freedom Committees of UCT and Wits, 1957; Shear, 1996). Please note that scholars such as Maylam dispute Rhodes being regarded as an "open university" (please see Maylam, 2007).

few non-Europeans, but none the less, we are jealous of our right to decide these matters for ourselves’.

It was only in the late 1970s that this approach was to shift somewhat with the Vice Chancellorship of Dr Derek Henderson (Maylam, 2005; Greyling, 2007). Prior to Henderson’s term, Rhodes had admitted Chinese students³ since 1963, and later a tiny number of Indian students⁴ joined the student body (Greyling, 2007: 125). Black students required permission from the Minister to attend a “White university”, provided they needed to do a course that was not offered at their “ethnic university”. By 1980, students at Rhodes included 778 Whites, 40 Indians, 30 Coloureds and 8 Africans, with the majority of them undergraduates. By 1982, the African student population increased to 135 alongside 78 Coloured students, 109 Indians students, and 2 879 White students (Greyling, 2007: 126-127).

Today Rhodes remains the smallest public university in South Africa, with a total student population of 7 300 students (Rhodes University, 2015). Of the 7 300 students, undergraduates make up 5 402 with postgraduates making up 1 898. Rhodes is a residential university, with almost 50% of the undergraduate students living in university residences (Mabizela, 2015). In the recent 2013 *Res Quality of Life Survey*, Black Students made up 60% of the total student residence population, Asian students 4%, Coloured students 3%, and White students 29% (Quality of Life, 2014: 2). With regard to gender, female students made up over 68% of members of the residence system, with males constituting 36% and intersex students making up less than 1% of the residential student body (Quality of Life, 2014).

As a residential campus, the residential system features prominently in, especially undergraduate, students’ experiences of University life. The residential system is made up of local residential house committees elected by members of their own houses, hall (a hall consists of several residences grouped together) committees that deal with specific hall concerns and a board of residences consisting of wardens and hall wardens who regulate the entire residential

³ The Apartheid government considered the Chinese group “honorary Whites”, and as a result, they could live on campus with White students, while Indian students were prohibited and lived in an “Indian section” in Grahamstown (please see Greyling, 2007: 125).

⁴ Indian students had received ministerial permission from the government to do pharmacy at Rhodes, as it was not offered at their “ethnic university”, the University of Durban-Westville (Greyling, 2007: 125).

system. Each hall has a Hall Warden who is responsible for the management, running and organisation of the hall and each House is run by a team consisting of the House Warden, sub wardens, senior and head students and a house committee elected by students (Rhodes University Residences, 2015).

The University's Vision and Mission statement proclaims that:

Rhodes University strives to be an outstanding internationally-respected academic institution which proudly affirms its African identity and which is committed to democratic ideals, academic freedom, rigorous scholarship, sound moral values and social responsibility (Vision and Mission Statement, 2000).

And the Rhodes University Equity Policy vision states that:

The University's African identity will be affirmed through: its commitment to the social and economic transformation of South Africa; its acknowledgement of the problems created by the legacy of apartheid; its undertaking to reject all forms of unfair discrimination; its dedication to the implementation of appropriate corrective measures to redress past imbalances; and its success in realising diversity amongst students and staff (adapted from the Vision and Mission Statement, 2000) (Rhodes University Equity Policy, 2004: 2).

In her conceptualisation of institutional transformation, Fourie locates the individual higher education institution within the broader South African context, and incorporates the term, "transition" in her analysis. She argues that transition in the political, social, economic and cultural structures of the country cannot be divorced from the transition and complexities that the higher education institutions are also facing (Fourie, 1999: 276). For Fourie, transition in education institutions gives rise to institutional transformation, and dramatic changes in institutions sometime occur as a result of turbulence inside, or more frequently, resulting in changes from the external (that is, in the state itself as was seen with the post-1994 democratic dispensation). This relationship between the internal and the external is very important to how we understand and appreciate the relationship between higher education and the moral and historical obligations of post-apartheid South Africa, in ensuring justice and inclusivity.

Conversations around higher education transformation have also interrogated the often slippery and difficult to define term of “institutional culture”, as playing a key role in the very identity of the institution that tends to alienate and marginalize those at the periphery of society who have been historically excluded from positions of economic privilege and social status (see Higgins, 2007; Jansen, 2004).

Beginning in earnest in 2015, there has been a rise in student movements located at previously White South African universities in which students, academics and support staff members have been fighting for institutional transformation in a much more public way than had hitherto been the case (see O’Halloran, 2015; Valela, 2015; Daniels, 2015; Open Stellenbosch Collective, 2015; Du Toit, 2015). These movement were sparked by the actions of Chumani Maxwele, a University of Cape Town (UCT) student who on the 12th of March 2015, flung faeces at a statue of Cecil John Rhodes on the campus, in an attempt to make the university community more aware of an institutional culture that marginalizes Black students at UCT (Robins, 2015: 1). Steve Robins reports that Maxwele’s actions triggered protests across the country:

The flinging of poo on Rhodes’ statue on March 12 by Chumani Maxwele, a fourth-year political science student, triggered a series of events that culminated in student protests across the country. Standing shirtless in front of the large, looming statue wearing a bright pink mineworker’s hardhat, Maxwele said he felt suffocated by the overwhelming presence of colonial names and memorials on the campus, and complained that most black students couldn’t breathe on campus because of the claustrophobia produced by English colonial dominance at UCT. “There is no (black) collective history here – where are our heroes and ancestors?” he asked a large group of students and journalists before emptying the container of human waste onto the statue (Robins, 2015: 1).

For the UCT students, the symbolic fall of the statue of arch colonialist Cecil John Rhodes symbolized the need to decolonize the previously White institutions, ranging from the curriculum to who actually does the teaching itself, to values and beliefs (Stuurman, 2015).

Similarly, students fighting for transformation at Stellenbosch University, organized ‘Open Stellenbosch’ in response to experiences of racism at the institution. As one student noted, “the colour of [our] skin is a social burden at Stellenbosch” (Luister, 2015). Open Stellenbosch have

recognised the role of language, that is, Afrikaans, used a tool of power and exclusion against those who are perceived to not be familiar with the language:

Every day students and staff who do not understand Afrikaans are excluded from learning and participating at Stellenbosch University. As black students we are frequently asked, “Why do you come here if you can’t speak Afrikaans?” This question highlights the pervasive and problematic sense of ownership that some have over this University. Stellenbosch - like all universities - is a public institution. This is not an Afrikaans university. It is a South African university which offers instruction in Afrikaans and (to a lesser extent) English. We have personally experienced countless instances of this institutional racism, including being forced to ask our Afrikaans-speaking peers to interpret what “Huis Komitee” members are saying in residence meetings. When we are allocated rooms, we are intentionally paired with other black students. Initiation at our residences involves explicit racism, homophobia and intimidation. It’s telling that we actively discourage our black school-leaving friends from considering Stellenbosch as a place to study. This is in an attempt to spare them the pain and humiliation of being silently subjugated by a passively hostile culture of white Afrikanerdom.

For Open Stellenbosch students, Afrikaans serves as an instrument useful in demarcating those students who are seen to belong at the university, and those who are constructed as not-belonging (Lange, 2015). Du Toit cautions us that the challenge is not necessarily to Afrikaans culture at Stellenbosch but rather what students are challenging is White Afrikaner culture which excludes Afrikaans-speaking Coloured students who are still marginalised by the dominant institutional culture despite the fact that they are Afrikaans speaking:

At Stellenbosch, calculated actions amount to the protection, not of an Afrikaans culture, but of a *white* Afrikaans culture. The term “Afrikaans–Nederlands” employed by the university, which denies the role of the coloured population in the development of Afrikaans, makes it clear that this is the intention. The fact that the majority of Afrikaans speakers in the Western Cape are not white, but that the majority of students at Stellenbosch University are, is proof of the effect of institutional culture (Du Toit, 2015).

Like the Rhodes Must Fall movement at UCT and Open Stellenbosch at Stellenbosch University, Rhodes’s Black Student Movement (BSM) has located itself within this student-led fight for higher education transformation, initially tackling the name of the institution as promoting ontological and epistemic violence against the Black bodies that walk the campus (see Pithouse, 2015). Ntombizikhona Valela (2015). In “The Rhodes to Perdition: Why Rhodes

was never ready for the BSM”, the BSM makes this connection between itself and other student movements:

In the past couple of weeks university students from Wits, UCT and Rhodes have been making a call for the transformation of the institutional cultures at the abovementioned universities. Wits students from the Political Studies Department issued a demand for the change in the curriculum in order to include African and global South thinkers from Frantz Fanon, to Lewis Gordon, to Angela Davis. UCT students are currently engaged in a campaign to have the statue of Cecil John Rhodes removed and Rhodes University students, in particular those belonging to the Black Students Movement, have made a call for the change of the University’s name as part of getting the ball rolling on achieving meaningful transformation.

Part of the BSM’s attempt at disrupting the institutional culture and forcing transformation, has been a tactical approach in responding to the tension presented by the name of the institution itself. In the BSM’s discourse, Rhodes University is referred to “as the institution currently known as Rhodes” as a way of drawing attention to the fact that the institution’s name is not universally accepted and that the expectation is that it ought to, and will, change (see Dennett, 2015).

In “Post-Marikana SA, birthing the new student politics”, Camalita Naicker (2015) locates the BSM within the broader struggles of the post-Marikana youth African state.⁵ For Naicker, Marikana was indicative of a state that does not take the plight of the poorest and most marginalised seriously. Thus the BSM, for Naicker, emerges from that wider political context:

The Black Student Movement has established a political praxis that showed marked breaks with traditional hierarchical student representative structures. This has serious implications for the post-Marikana student, who has seen the failings of the government, the party, and the leader, and who has witnessed popular mobilisations that break with traditional top-down politics; practices which have repeatedly failed to fix the problems of black and oppressed people in this country (Naicker, 2015: 1).

⁵ On the 16th of August 2012, the South African Police opened fire on striking mine workers at Marikana, Northwest of Johannesburg. This left 34 workers dead, 78 wounded and more than 250 people arrested (please see SA History, 2012; Desai, 2014; De Waal, 2012).

One of the key concerns for the BSM is what they regard as the culture of Whiteness that pervades Rhodes as an institution, and which they recognize as playing a key role in frustrating transformation. Jonis Ghedi Alasow, in “Policing student politics: Is there a ‘right’ way to protest?” writes that:

At the institution known as Rhodes there is an implicit assumption that the white middle class acts as the custodian of the university while black people, poor and working class people, queer people, etc., are tolerated as guests. The BSM has been continuously challenging this assumption. At the heart of the BSM’s outlook is an insistence that the university must locate itself in the realities of contemporary South Africa; that the student *imagined* by the institution must be the (South) *African* student. This has translated to – amongst other things – a rejection of the colonial name, the Eurocentric curriculum and the financial exclusion of students from residences during short vacations (Alasow, 2015: 1).

Similarly, Lihle Ngcobozi (2015: 1), in “#RhodesSoWhite: An Insight,” writes about this normative Whiteness that Alasow mentions, particularly in how it becomes connected to structural violence imposed upon the Black bodies who have to “educate” White students on the condition of Blackness at Rhodes:

This “balancing” of the debate demands black students to dislocate themselves from the structural violence imposed by whiteness, white imperialism, capitalism and white supremacy, and locate themselves in the lived oppression of white students at Rhodes University. There are a number of implications that come with this burdensome demand. The most salient of these implications is the implicit demand made by white students to allow white normativity to mutate with ease, comfort and without resistance. This demand suggests further that although black students are in the process of constituting their subjectivity, the students must suspend the project of the humanisation of the self and understand that white students matter, too. This is a distraction. The very methodology of racism and the upholding of white supremacy works to distract the black political project of constituting and claiming black subjectivity. This, in and of itself, is the working of anti-black racism, which has unapologetically found itself comfortable enough to claim its space on the Rhodes SRC page and, by and large, a number of white students on campus.

These events provide the backdrop to the concerns of the present thesis which is an attempt to interpret one aspect of the experiences of first-generation Black working class students at Rhodes University. The thesis is interested in the ways in which the networks and relationships

– in short the social capital – which the participants do and do not have, are and are not able to build, marshal and access, reinforce and re-inscribe their marginality or provide resources for interrupting, overcoming or successfully negotiating marginality. In the following chapter the concept of social capital and its key components are explained in greater detail.

3 Chapter Three: Social Capital

The present study is framed within the theoretical field of social capital, and uses the works of James S. Coleman (1993), Pierre Bourdieu (1986; 1992), and Robert Putnam (1995; 2000) to provide new insights into the experiences of first-generation students at a historically White South African university. The idea of social capital has a contested history, with the term being independently coined at least six times over the 20th century (Putnam, 2000: 19; Ostrom and Ahn, 2003: 3-53). In *Foundations of Social Capital*, Elinor Ostrom and T.K. Ahn (2003) suggested that four key scholars could be identified as having been the forerunners to our current thinking about social capital, namely, Alexis de Tocqueville, Lyda J. Hudson, Theodore W. Schultz and Jane Jacobs.

Alexis de Tocqueville (1840: 106) conceptualized social capital as referring to the civic associations whose primary function is to attempt to hold what he referred to as the “despotic actions of the majority” to account. Tocqueville’s conception of social capital, located within the realm of civic associations and public organizations, is rooted in the communitarian notion that any individual is helpless to preserve her freedom without the help of society (Tocqueville, 1840: 106). Elinor Ostrom and T.K. Ahn (2003: xxv) argued that Tocqueville’s conception of social capital, is concerned with the inherent contradictions within democratic states, in how democratic projects attempt to make equal all citizens of a state, while at the same time promoting liberal individualism. Thus Tocqueville’s role in conceptualizing social capital, was a preoccupation with the formation and maintenance of new forms of social bonds and networks that could buttress the democratic order, so as to make states more just and democratic (Ostrom and Ahn, 2003: xxv).

Lyda J. Hanifan (1916) breaks away from Tocqueville’s conception of social capital seen through the lens of civic democratic organizations and associations, and begins a shift in social capital scholarship to understanding social capital as a public good, that could be used to meet the challenges facing public education, particularly in rural areas. Hanifan (1916: 130), in defining social capital, suggests that:

... in the use of the phrase social capital I make no reference to the usual acceptance of the term capital, except in a figurative sense. I do not refer to

real estate, or to personal property or to cold cash, but rather to that in life which tends to make these tangible substances count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit....The individual is helpless socially, if left to himself....If he comes into contact with his neighbor, and they with other neighbors, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which may bear a social potentiality sufficient to the substantial improvement of living conditions in the whole community (Hanifan, 1916: 130).

For Hanifan then, networks and connections are significant in assisting individuals to negotiate their marginality and ensuring they are not “helpless in society”. Putnam (2000: 21) points to Hanifan’s use of social capital as having helped to shape contemporary interpretations of social capital, due its recognition that social networks and norms of reciprocity can facilitate cooperation for mutual benefit in a society.

In introducing the importance of social capital in comparison to other forms of capital, Theodore W. Schultz (1961: 37-38) suggested that social capital could be contrasted with human capital. For Schultz, factors such as personal investments – for example when people choose to go back to school in order to get promoted at work, moving one’s family away from a dangerous neighbourhood, or choosing to attend a company in-service training programme to acquire new skills -- all form part of what he refers to as “human capital”. These in turn, for Schultz, are a core component in facilitating the creation of social capital. Coleman (1988: 164-165) elaborated on this idea, arguing that human capital essentially creates social capital:

Social capital [comes] about through changes in the relations among persons that facilitate action. If physical capital is wholly tangible, being embodied in observable material form, and human capital is less tangible, being embodied in the skills and knowledge acquired by an individual, social capital is less tangible yet, for it exists in the relations among persons (Coleman, 1988: 164-165).

Thus human capital and social capital cannot be separated from each other. They are interconnected, with one helping to give rise to the other. For example, a group that has trustworthiness, which is seen to be “trust-able” within a network, is able to accomplish a lot

of tasks and be more productive, compared to a comparable group that may have less trustworthiness and trust amongst its members (Coleman, 1988: 165).

In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs (1965) uses the idea of social capital in an attempt to highlight the importance of the various ways in which individuals relate to one another in urban cities. Jacobs is very influential in social capital scholarship because she takes seriously social capital reciprocity and the significance of the networks formed as a result at three different levels: neighbourhood, district and metropolitan city levels, with a particular focus on how urban city planning impacts networks of associations at each of these levels. Ostrom and Ahn (2003: xxvi) suggest that Jacobs' interpretation of social capital is significant in understanding how local levels of associations and organizations have an effect on the performance of democracy at a higher level. Thus for Jacobs, the ways in which urban cities and neighbourhoods and their buildings are planned and constructed, has a direct effect on the types of relationships they promote amongst the inhabitants of those structures. Better city planning would therefore need to be re-imagined to take cognisance of the need to form and maintain social capital networks, rather than undermining these through urban structures which for her, appear to discourage mutual associations and relationships with other people. Jacobs (1965: 56) suggests that:

The sum of such casual, public contact at a local level – most of it fortuitous, most of it associated with errands, all of it metered by the person concerned and not thrust upon him by anyone – is a feeling for the public identity of people, a web of public respect and trust, and a resource in time of personal and neighbourhood need.

For Jacobs, and for other subsequent scholars (see Sampson and Morenoff, 1997; Lynn Jr., and McGeary, 1990; Gephart, 1997; Evans et al., 1992; Case and Katz, 1991), the more the communities are close and share a bond with each other, the less likely is criminal behaviour or the abuse of legal or illegal substances. Thus for Jacobs, social capital is a public good which benefits not only the individuals and members of the communities who have access to those networks and can withdraw from them, but also benefits the broader community as it results in the shared networks and relationships of mutual benefit that would help the community bond

through civic associations and organizations, reduce crime and result in better civil relations amongst members.

Although earlier scholars used the term social capital in making sense of social reality, John Field (2008:15) argues that there is wide consensus that the contemporary relevance and intellectual significance of social capital derives from the 1980s and 1990s, led mainly by three scholars and the debates that they engaged in: Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman and Robert Putnam. These three scholars have been described by M. Foley and B. Edwards as representing “relatively distinct tributaries” in the social capital literature. Their work has shaped the contemporary debates and conversations around social capital (Foley and Edwards, 1999: 142).

Bourdieu (1986), in conceptualizing social capital, was interested in how the different forms of capital, that is economic, cultural and social, not only affect each other in complex ways, but actually produce one another. For Bourdieu, economic capital refers to the physical, monetary or property assets that an individual possesses or has access to. Cultural capital, for Bourdieu (1986: 47), exists in three forms – that is, in the embodied state (physical dispositions and habits of the body), in the objectified state (the possession of cultural goods such as art or other artefacts) and in the institutionalized state (for example academic qualifications, membership of elite clubs, elite schooling). Social capital, for Bourdieu (1986: 51), in turn consists in “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition”. Here Bourdieu is referring to the various ways in which an individual’s membership of a certain school, institution, class, family or organization, provides him or her with access to its accompanying networks of social relationships, and how these offer privileges to those who are embedded in them. Bourdieu breaks away from the traditional, dominant understanding of social capital, which had previously looked at it in relation to the public good. In showing the complex manner in which the different forms of capital produce and simultaneously influence one another, Bourdieu introduces the notion of “conversions” in talking about the transformative nature of capital:

The different types of capital can be derived from *economic capital*, but only at the cost of a more or less great effort of transformation, which is needed

to produce the type of power effective in the field in question. For example, there are some goods and services to which economic capital gives immediate access, without secondary costs; others can be obtained only by virtue of a social capital of relationships (or social obligations) which cannot act instantaneously, at the appropriate moment, unless they have been established and maintained for a long time, as if for their own sake, and therefore outside their period of use, i.e., at the cost of an investment in sociability which is necessarily long-term because the time lag is one of the factors of the transmutation of a pure and simple debt into that recognition of nonspecific indebtedness which is called gratitude (Bourdieu, 1986: 88).

By introducing the notion of conversion in his discussion of the different forms of capital, and their productive ability to reproduce one another, Bourdieu changes the social capital conversation, showing the various complex ways that the different forms of capital not only influence, but produce one another. For example, one's access to economic capital, can lead to having access to a certain class and circles that one would not otherwise have access to, thus resulting in the production of social capital, by providing access to privileged networks and connections. For Bourdieu, access to these kinds of circles and connections (social capital), potentially results in the production of cultural capital: what he has called "the educated language", in which one gets to learn the tastes, preferences, and ways of thinking about the world of the dominant class. Thus for Bourdieu, social capital is not viewed in isolation from economic and cultural capital, but rather in relation to the various ways in which they all simultaneously produce and are produced by one another.

James Coleman (1988) approaches the idea of social capital from an entirely different starting point to Bourdieu, through the lens of rational choice theory. Influenced by the economist and sociologist Gary Becker, whose work on human capital applied the rational choice principles of economics to the study of education, the family and healthcare, Coleman proposes that social capital be understood in the context of the fact that all human behaviour results from individual actors pursuing their own interests (Coleman, 1988: 95). Coleman (1994: 300) thus defines social capital as:

The set of resources that inhere in family relations and in community social organization and that are useful for the cognitive or social development of a child or young person. These resources differ for different persons and can constitute an important advantage for children and adolescents in the development of their human capital.

Elsewhere Coleman refers to “the norms, the social networks, and the relationship between adults and children that are of value for the child’s growing up. Social capital exists within the family, but also outside of the family, in the community” (Coleman, 1990: 334). For Coleman, the connection between the development of human capital and social capital is important, in that the networks and connections that an individual can obtain access to are important. However, and Coleman emphasises this, the self-development and the identity of the person are equally important, in that they should be in a position to create those networks and connections, and have the ability to withdraw benefits from them. Given Coleman’s commitment to rational choice theory, which suggests that all individuals behave to maximise their own individual self-interest, mutual cooperation and relationships that help in establishing a mutually beneficial social environment are understood to arise from individuals acting to maximise their own interests.

Unlike Bourdieu who conceptualized social capital through its productive ability to create and to be created by other forms of capital, Coleman’s conception of social capital is grounded in rational choice theory which sees everyday individual choices having an overall effect on the broader community. His concern is with the lack of civic participation and social connectedness which he sees as having material effects on larger citizenship obligations, such as voting and taking part in political processes.

In his essay, “Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital”, Coleman (1988: 102-105) shows how relationships and connections help establish obligations, expectations and the trustworthiness of societal structures, and how they help with the passing on of information between individuals in those networks, and reinforce norms and implement effective sanctions. As Field (2008: 27-28) notes, for Coleman, closure, that is, the existence of mutually reinforcing relations between different actors and institutions, is not only important for the repaying of obligations, but also for the imposition of sanctions and accountability of network members to one another.

Putnam writes that:

[The] idea at the core of the theory of social capital is extremely simple: Social networks matter. Networks have value, first of all, for the people who are in them. In the language of microeconomics, networks have private or “internal” returns. (Putnam, 2002: 6-7).

Putnam shows how an individual’s social networks and connections play a significant role in their growth and development as a person, as well as their opportunities for professional development (2002: 7). In his seminal article, “Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital" Putnam (1995: 2) suggests that the decline in American civic engagement and lack of active participation in associations is symptomatic of a decline of social capital itself, as a result of the mobility of people, the fact that people are now working longer hours, and the general apathy that people now have with regard to engaging in community activities. For Putnam (1995: 2), networks of civic engagement are significant as they:

... foster sturdy norms of generalized reciprocity and encourage the emergence of social trust. Such networks facilitate coordination and communication, amplify reputations, and thus allow dilemmas of collective action to be resolved. When economic and political negotiation is embedded in dense networks of social interaction, incentives for opportunism are reduced. At the same time, networks of civic engagement embody past success at collaboration, which can serve as a cultural template for future collaboration.

Putnam’s emphasis is on the networks and social connections that an individual forms in society and the effect that this has on the broader community. For him, “social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (Putnam, 2000: 19).

For Putnam (2000: 20), social capital has what he refers to as ‘private good’ and ‘public good’, or ‘externalities’ dimensions. The ‘private good’ dimension refers to the various complex ways in which an individual’s social networks and accumulated connections, their ‘contacts’, constitute that person’s capital. It is ‘owned’ in the sense that a person can make withdrawals from their balance of accumulated capital by taking advantage of the benefits of those networks and relationships, and using them to advance their own individual self-interest. The ‘public

good', is served when individuals seek to extend their 'contacts' and to 'network' with each other, thus enhancing the social connectedness of a community and resulting in other benefits such as economic benefits for the community, and the reduction of crime and other social ills.

In more recent research, taking up the idea of social capital, Ronald S. Burt (2005) showed how social capital complements economic capital in that an individual's social networks, close friends, associations, clubs, institutions and other affiliations can advantage them in terms of access to opportunities and information. Burt (2005), in *Brokerage and Closure*, shows the manner in which one's location in social structures offers competitive benefits for the individual depending on their access to other richer networks and connections and having a hand in the creations of opportunities as a result. Similarly, and significantly given the purposes of the present thesis, Terry-Ann Jones (2008) has used social capital as a theoretical lens for understanding the experiences of Jamaican immigrants in North America, and how networks and associations play a role in how those conceptualised as 'outsiders' negotiate entry into foreign spaces.

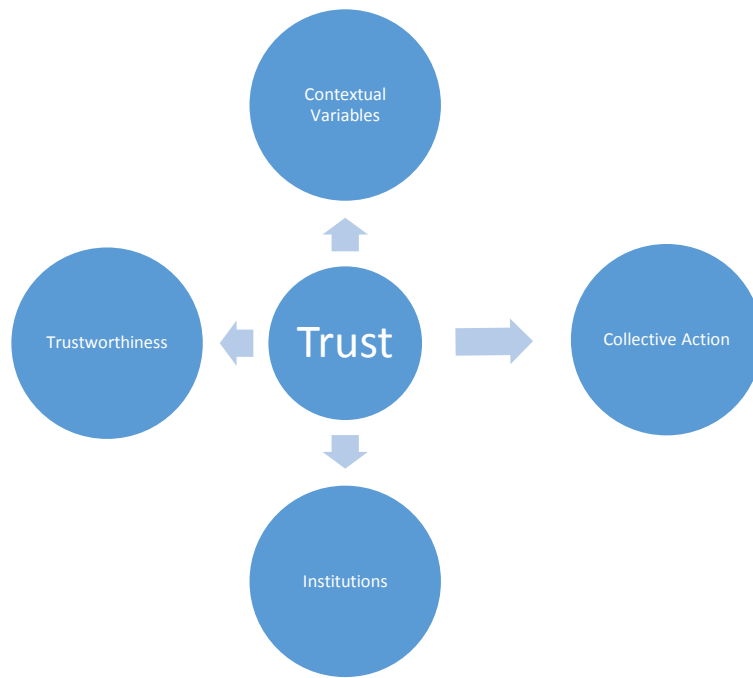
For Bourdieu, it is possible to make up for a lack of economic capital through the accumulation of social and cultural capital, which in turn creates opportunities for the production of economic capital. Coleman, and subsequently Putnam, conceptualized social capital as both a private and a public good, with an individual's private connections and networks potentially having public/communal consequences and effects. Central to understanding social capital, regardless of which of these approaches one adopts as a starting point, are questions of the role played by obligations, expectations and trust in creating the conditions for social capital to be produced, accumulated, and circulated.

3.1 Obligation, trust and sanctions

Obligations, expectations and trustworthiness are tightly bound up with one another (Ostrom and Ahn, 2003; Geertz, 1962; Putnam, 2000; Banfield, 1967; Festinger et al., 1963; Gambetta, 2000; Ostrom and Walker, 2003; Arrow, 1972; Ahn et al., 2001; Clark and Sefton, 2001; Crawford and Ostrom, 1995; Bolton and Ockenfels, 2000; Fehr and Schmidt, 1999). Obligations have to do with ensuring that mutual reciprocity and expectations are respected

and maintained (Coleman, 1988: 166). Coleman (1988: 166) explains that if A does something for B, and trusts B to reciprocate in the future, this immediately establishes an expectation in A and an obligation on the part of B. A can use this obligation to act as a trust 'credit' from B. Should he or she require assistance, this could result in B deciding to disregard this 'credit' and thus not take seriously the obligation. If that were the case it would mean that the social structure inhabited by A and B was not characterised by trust – the individuals who inhabit the network are not 'trustworthy' in fulfilling their obligations. Alternatively, if B were to acknowledge their debt to A, and act on the basis of the obligation that arises, the network becomes more trustworthy – members are more likely to act to assist one another in future, knowing that obligations will be respected rather than flouted. As Ostrom and Ahn (2003: xvii) point out, if B decided to honour the obligation, this would ensure that both A and B are better off than in the absence of this transaction. Trust is central to ensuring a favourable outcome but is also itself an outcome. Every time an obligation is honoured rather than flouted, trust is fostered.

It might be hypothesized that a rationally choosing individual would be loath to be the first to act in a cooperative way, for fear that others might not be trusted to honour the resultant obligation. If individuals believe others can be trusted to honour obligations on the other hand, they will be more likely to act in a cooperative way, because it will be in their interest to do so. By acting cooperatively they in turn act to enhance the trustworthiness of the network – and so on. Trust therefore emerges as being very important for the creation and sustainability of social capital in any network of relationships and interactions. Gaute Torsvik (2000) argues that trust alone is not a form of social capital, but rather acts as an outcome of social capital, being the key link between social capital itself, and successful social action.



Ostrom and Ahn (2003: xvii)

Coleman (1988: 168-169) suggests that norms and sanctions play an active role in creating and sustaining social capital, especially when it comes to social capital as a public good. He argues that norms for instance can inhibit crime and make it possible for pensioners to walk alone at night, just as norms that make schooling a priority and provide effective support and rewards for those who conform helps facilitate the school's ability to perform its tasks (Coleman, 1988: 168). Norms, for Coleman, constitute a powerful form of social capital but they not only facilitate certain actions, they also act as powerful constraints on an individual's choices (Coleman, 1988: 168). Norms are closely tied up with sanctions since norms are only effective in knitting together a network if there are effective sanctions in place for transgressing them.

3.2 Network varieties

3.21 Inclusive and exclusive

In "Social Capital Creation: collective identities and collective action", Roderick Kramer (2009) introduces what he calls 'cognition' -- the ability to identify others in the group who share similar experiences, and whom one therefore potentially has the ability to relate to. Cognition may act as a form of insurance or assurance when the trustworthiness of others in a

network is unknown or in doubt. Where the members of a network enjoy a high degree of mutual cognition this may result in the network being what has been referred to as a ‘bonding’ network while networks that lack the element of mutual cognition have been termed ‘bridging’ networks (Putnam, 2000).

Bridging networks are those characterised by connections and ties that are outward looking. These types of networks usually include individuals from diverse socio economic backgrounds (Putnam, 2000: 22). Mark Granovetter (1973) has referred to these networks as being characterised by weak ties as they are inclusive, lack any shared identities, values or beliefs, and are usually based on sharing a limited common factor such as employment, a university tutorial group or an interest or lobby group.

Bonding networks differ from bridging networks in that they are very exclusive, with their members usually sharing similar identities and common characteristics with each other. These networks tend to be inward looking and aspire to reinforce the exclusive identities shared by members of the group (Putnam, 2000: 22). Examples of bonding networks include ethnic fraternal organizations, church women’s reading groups or youth service societies. Granovetter (1973:1360) argued that bridging networks characterized by weaker ties, are more valuable than bonding networks with their strong ties. Outward looking networks provide their members with ties that go beyond their immediate, narrow identities, and tend to be more interconnected with other networks, thus providing their members with valuable links and prospects for getting ahead.

3.22 Hierarchical and non-hierarchical

Putnam (1993: 173) employed the terminology of ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ networks to describe a different way of categorising networks. Horizontal networks are those in which the connections and relationships that individuals form are with others of similar or equivalent status and power. Vertical networks are networks in which connections and relationships are hierarchical. Such networks usually link unequal agents in a relationship of asymmetrical power and dependence (Putnam, 1993: 173). It is these networks that tend to be outward looking and as a result, are denser and richer in that they attract different individuals who all

are interconnected and have access to other networks and connections. This ensures that vertical networks are beneficial to their members because of the diversity of their members rather than the horizontal connections which attract similar people, from similar backgrounds and consist of individuals having an equivalent amount of power or status.

3.23 Open and closed

In social capital networks ‘closure’ (Coleman, 1988; Burt, 2005) refers to the monitoring and control of networks. A network characterized by closure is one that is well guarded, information is shared within the group, and there are sanctions and rewards attached to exhibiting or failing to exhibit group norms. Burt (2005: 107) writes that:

Closure is about monitoring to detect misbehaviour. Redundant contacts ensure reliable, early warning. A closed network provides wide bandwidth for the flow of stories as packets of people data. Detection is the trust-relevant feature of the flow. The omnipresent hydra-eyes of the closed network make it difficult for misbehaviour to escape detection. The more closed the network, the more penetrating the detection.

In closed networks monitoring serves the function of not only holding the group together as a unit, but also ensuring that the norms and beliefs of the group are protected and rewarded, and if possible, implementing sanctions should there be a violation. Closure is also about control, in that people in a group know that should they violate the group’s norms, they potentially lose the reputation that they have accumulated thus far which discourages them from transgressing. Thus group members work to behave well and uphold the norms of the group publicly so as to be rewarded and regarded as of higher standing.

As Coleman emphasises, closure is closely tied up with the question of trust:

Closure of the social structure is important not only for the existence of effective norms but also for another form of social capital: trustworthiness of social structures that allows the proliferation of obligations and expectations (Coleman, 1988: 171).

The trustworthiness of social structures, particularly in closed networks ensures both that obligations ‘proliferate’ and because sanctions for transgression are both in place and effective, justified expectations of reciprocity also proliferate.

When a network is ‘open’, in contrast, opportunities for surveillance and the imposition of sanctions are limited. As a result, obligations may go unfulfilled, and the trustworthiness of the network may suffer. The extent to which a network is closed or open therefore has a significant role to play in creating and sustaining trustworthiness. Closed networks are closely monitored and controlled which makes members of the group hesitant to transgress the norms of the group, due to fear of one’s reputation being damaged and the potential collective sanctions involved. Conformity to group norms and the fulfilment of obligations are thus higher in closed networks.

On the other hand, closed networks also come with drawbacks of their own. Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) for example point out the potentially negative consequences of closed networks of ethnic entrepreneurs who are often limited in their business pursuits by the very same obligations arising from cohesive ethnic ties that helped them to establish their businesses in the first instance. Ties which arise out of membership of a closely knit ethnic community generate loyalty but also obligations expected of the successful entrepreneur. Such networks are often intensively closed and dense, paradoxically helping the marginalized entrepreneur to get their business established and thriving within the community, while at the same time curtailing the potential of the businesses growing beyond community bounds. Members of these networks are bound by strong ties and are expected to remain inward looking. Sanctions are in place that attempt to reinforce exclusive identities, often as a means of negotiating marginality

To become more outward looking, which is what might be required for a business to grow, is to weaken the ties upon which it was founded in the first place. Such entrepreneurs might therefore be discouraged from venturing outside of the ethnic group and taking advantage of participating in richer, more well-connected networks which could be of benefit both to their individual business and their communities. Although closed networks provide security and the guarantee of support and information being shared and disseminated within the group, the

limitation is that they tend to be restricted and thus act as a limitation on their members' ability to access, and benefit from, other networks.

3.3 Holes, bridges and brokers

Information channels are a central feature of social networks. The acquisition of information is often costly, requiring access to networks and connections from which to withdraw particular types of information (see for example Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955). For example, a person in whose interest it is to follow current affairs might rely on a friend or spouse for quick access to needed information without having themselves to invest time in obtaining the information. For Coleman (1988:168), information networks 'constitute a form of social capital that provides information that facilitates action'. The relations that one has with members of a network are valuable for their potential to provide access to information, short circuiting the need to make expensive individual investments, for example of time, in order to obtain access to information resources. While information circulates within a network, it does not easily flow between networks. Ronald S Burt referred to this phenomenon as one of 'structural holes' between networks. For Burt, 'holes are like buffers, like an insulator in an electric circuit. People on either side of a structural hole circulate in different flows of information' (2001:208). While structural holes are a problem for network members in that they separate sources of information, they also represent an opportunity: for those who might be in a position to 'broker' the flow of information between people and to control the flow of information.

A broker is someone who connects people who would otherwise be disconnected (Burt 1997: 340). For Burt, having access to, and being part of, a dense network of connections, does not constitute social capital in and of itself. Social capital lies in identifying the information gaps in the network, and using it to one's advantage in being able to provide information, and using the network strategically to withdraw benefits from it. This means that Burt's conception of social capital through the structural hole argument, is concerned with the competitive advantage in one being acutely aware of the strengths and limitations of the group, and using them to provide and withdraw from it, valuable information as and when needed. A member of the group who can identify these gaps in the information available in the network, and can

move across the structural hole and exploit it, not only gain a competitive advantage, but they actually ‘monitor information more effectively than it can be monitored bureaucratically. They move information faster, and to more people, than memos’ (Burt, 1997: 343). For Burt, the broker in the relationship, the one who can exploit what he calls the ‘brokerage opportunities’, in identifying information gaps between the groups, and has access to resources and can coordinate across the structural holes of the networks, gains a competitive advantage because of their ability to take advantage of these gaps. This means that the broker becomes important in that they recognise not only the limitations of the information in the group, but they actually seek to be the broker, that is, the bridge in interconnecting often different networks together, so as to ensure the dissemination of necessary information that is required at that time. According to Burt (2000: 355), brokers with contact networks and connections rich in structural holes:

... are the individuals who know about, have a hand in, and exercise control over, more rewarding opportunities. The behaviours by which they develop the opportunities are many and varied, but the opportunity itself is at all times defined by a hole in social structure. In terms of the argument, networks rich in the entrepreneurial opportunities of structural holes are entrepreneurial networks, and entrepreneurs are people skilled in building the interpersonal bridges that span structural holes. They monitor information more effectively than bureaucratic control...They are more responsive than a bureaucracy, easily shifting network time and energy from one solution to another.

Thus for Burt, brokers simultaneously create social capital, and are social capital in networks and connections, particularly in their resourcefulness in accessing much denser and richer networks, while they create and continuously take advantage of the different opportunities that come with bridging networks.

The work of brokers is often aided by technology. Putnam (1990: 168-170) argues that advancements in technology, such as the telephone, the internet and social media have revolutionized the various ways in which we transmit information and communicate with one another. These advancements have led to the creation of ‘psychological neighbourhoods’ and ‘virtual communities’ which have shaped the world into a ‘global village’ in which social networks and connections do not necessarily need to be reinforced physically and through

personal, actual contact. Intimate connections can be made online (Putnam, 1990: 170). Thus Putnam suggests that:

Community, communion, and communication are intimately as well as etymologically related. Communication is a fundamental prerequisite for social and emotional connections. Telecommunications in general and the internet in particular substantially enhances our ability to communicate, thus it seems reasonable to assume that their net effect will be to enhance community, perhaps even dramatically. Social capital is about networks, and the Net is the network to end all networks (Putnam, 2000: 171).

3.4 Social capital and inequality

In “Social Capital and the Cities: Advice to Change Agents”, Xavier de Souza Briggs (1997: 111-117) argues against what he refers to as the ‘kumbaya’ interpretation of social capital. This refers to the traditional manner in which social capital scholarship tends to overlook the disadvantages of social capital (see Putnam, 1995; Fukuyama, 1999; Burt, 2005; Baron et al, 2000; Ostrom and Ahn, 2003; Gauntlett, 2011). Field (2008: 79) suggests this lack of attention to the potential negative implications of social capital limits understanding of social networks and norms as resources.

Field (2008: 82) argues that social capital can promote inequality because access to different types of networks is often unevenly distributed. While some members of a network may be favourably located in proximity to Burt’s ‘structural holes’, enabling them to have access to, and control over, non-redundant sources of information and information flows, others may not be so favourably located. As Foley and Edwards (1999: 677) point out, access to social capital and its ‘value’ depends on an individual’s social location. For Field (2008), actors can use social capital as a means of accessing resources of status and privilege at the expense of others. Brokers are often a prime example -- controlling and monitoring structural holes and ensuring that only certain people have access to external networks, information and opportunities. Such individuals may actually have a self-interest in ‘network poverty’ (Perri 6, 1997: 6): the lack of resources of their own networks elevates their position as providers of resources.

3.5 Conclusion

One of the significant ways in which inequality is institutionalized is through schooling and the passing on of opportunities through class. Field (2008: 84) suggests that those who have the most beneficial connections are able to maximise them to advance their own interest, which in turn, further increases inequality. For example, middle class families are able systematically to draw on their network connections to advance their own children's education and other prospects (Field, 2008: 84). For those who enter new realms of status and privilege that others in their family have previously been denied access to – such as first generation Black working class students entering an elite university environment – these networks are often absent. The role that this absence may play in perpetuating marginality and disadvantage has been little explored in the context of South African higher education transformation.

This is not to say that Black working class first generation university students have no networks but is rather to explore how these students build networks and to ask what types of networks they are and are not able to build. What are the characteristics of their networks and do their connections provide them with valuable forms of capital that they can make useful withdrawals from? If the networks and connections that these students form are exclusive and inward looking, for example, although they may be useful for helping individuals in terms of forming support systems with one another to ameliorate the effects of their disadvantage, they may also tend to restrict and limit their members' ability to access other richer and denser networks. This would result in the members forming 'networks of poverty' that although necessary to their negotiating of entry into a foreign space (that is, members are able to feel like they belong and are accepted by one another), nonetheless ultimately restricts them to the peripheries, excluded from resource-rich networks that could benefit them. To the extent that this is the case, brokers who are able to exploit these gaps in the network? Do brokers use the poverty of such networks to their own advantage and in doing so do they manage to benefit and enrich the network? Or do they have other motivations for their brokerage? These are some of the questions which the thesis explores, drawing on data from in-depth qualitative interviews with first generation Black working class South African students at one historically White South African university.

4 Chapter Four: Research Methodology

This study employed qualitative methods of data collection and analysis within the interpretivist paradigm. According to Lisa M. Given (2008: xxix), qualitative research is designed to ‘explore the human elements of a given topic’ in allowing us to see how ‘individuals see and experience the world’. Qualitative research methodology assumes that individuals play a significant role in the construction of their own social reality, and that the role of the researcher is to interpret the ways in which individuals make sense of that social reality (see Idahosa, 2014; Creswell, 2009, Poulos, 2011; Boeije, 2010). Natasha Mac et al (2005: 1) suggests that:

The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue. It provides information about the “human” side of an issue – that is, the often contradictory behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals. Qualitative methods are also effective in identifying intangible factors, such as social norms, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnicity, and religion, whose role in the research issue may not be readily apparent.

For Mac et al, the strength of qualitative research is the manner in which the method gives us access to the rich social experiences of people through a focus on their contradictory behaviours, stories, experiences and beliefs. Qualitative research methods seek to interpret complex social experiences as experienced, thought of, and reconstructed by the individuals themselves.

Operating within an interpretivist paradigm, the aim of this thesis was to attempt to understand the role that social capital plays in first-generation Black South African working class students’ negotiation of entry into one historically white South African university: Rhodes University. W.L. Neuman (2011: 102) suggests that interpretivism as a research tool focuses on the need to understand social life and the various ways in which people construct meaning making in their natural settings. The use of qualitative research methodology provided the necessary insight into the experiences of first-generation Black working class students, and how they build social networks and what role these networks play in their lives at university – whether inhibiting or facilitating their success.

4.1 Participants

I took ‘first-generation students’ to refer to Black working class South African students whose parents or guardians do not have a post-secondary qualification, and as a result they are the first in their family to go to university. Because I was interested particularly in students who might be hypothesised to have little access to privileged networks prior to attending university, I included in the study only those who had attended public schooling either in a township or a rural area, rather than first generation students who had had access to more advantaged public or private schooling. Participants were therefore those who had not had access to ‘traditional social networks’ that could have been obtained through private schooling, or privileged suburban forms of public schooling.

A further inclusion criterion was that participants had to be in their third year of university study. This was because I wanted to include participants who would have had time to form social capital connections and networks rather than being newly arrived at university.

The research aims to show the various ways in which first-generation working class students lack these social capital networks, and seek to trace the various ways in which they attempt create them through their everyday friendships, circles and choice of associations at Rhodes University. The 26 participants initially interviewed were purposively recruited to include a diversity of first-generation students with respect to gender, language and origin (Seidman 2006:51).

Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Language	Place of Origin
Bontle	Female	Black	SePedi	Limpopo
Dladla	Male	Black	IsiZulu	KwaZulu Natal
Khusta	Male	Black	IsiXhosa	Eastern Cape
Lundi	Male	Black	IsiXhosa	Eastern Cape
Lungile	Male	Black	IsiXhosa	Eastern Cape
Makasi	Male	Black	TshiVenda	Gauteng
Malcolm	Male	Black	SePedi	Limpopo
Mandla	Male	Black	IsiXhosa	Eastern Cape
Mariah	Female	Black	SePedi	Limpopo
Mpho	Male	Black	IsiXhosa	Eastern Cape
Nandipha	Female	Black	IisZulu	Gauteng
Nathi	Female	Black	IsiXhosa	Eastern Cape
Nomthandazo	Female	Black	IsiXhosa	Eastern Cape
Ntokozo	Male	Black	IsiXhosa	Eastern Cape
Phindile	Female	Black	IsiXhosa	Eastern Cape
Precious	Female	Black	IsiZulu	KwaZulu Natal
Quinton	Male	Black	isiSwati	Mpumalanga
Riri	Female	Black	SeSotho	Free State
Sandy	Female	Black	IsiXhosa	Eastern Cape
Sanza	Male	Black	IsiXhosa	Eastern Cape
Siya	Female	Black	IsiXhosa	Eastern Cape
Slindile	Female	Black	IsiXhosa	Eastern Cape
Tyla	Male	Black	IsiXhosa	Eastern Cape
Vusi	Male	Black	IsiXhosa	Eastern Cape
Zipho	Female	Black	IsiXhosa	Eastern Cape
Zolani	Male	Black	IsiXhosa	KwaZulu Natal

Table 1. Participant demographics

As the research process with these 26 participants unfolded, the participants referred to other students who had influenced them and played a significant role in their being able to find ways

of coping at university. These students, whom I refer to as ‘first-generation student brokers’, were first-generation students themselves who played a brokering role by including fellow first generation students in their networks and assisting them with making connections with more resourced networks. Although the participants did not know each other, they often cited the same individuals as being there for them when they needed help with solving a mathematical equation, doing a tutorial or learning how to use a computer. As a result the decision was made to seek out these oft-cited individuals and to interview them.

Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Language	Place of Origin
Rosetta	Female	Black	IsiXhosa	Eastern Cape
Pinky	Female	Black	IsiXhosa	Eastern Cape
Meli	Male	Black	IsiXhosa	Eastern Cape
Ntuthuko	Male	Black	IsiZulu	KwaZulu Natal
Rose	Female	Black	IsiZulu	KwaZulu Natal

Table 2. First-generation student broker participants

House Wardens⁶ of undergraduate residences were approached to assist with the recruitment of participants for the study. In some cases, I was invited to attend house meetings, where I introduced myself and my research project. I left my contact details on the house noticeboard so that those who wished to approach me and participate in the project would know where to find me and could do so confidentially.

I also made use of snowballing as a recruitment method. Jean Faugier (1997: 792), in ‘Sampling hard to reach populations’, argues that snowball sampling techniques are particularly useful for hidden populations, or when attempting to research a sensitive topic. The research on first-generation Black working class and the challenges they face in their negotiation of entry into university is a sensitive topic as it exposes the kind of socio-economic background that the participants come from, the challenges they face at university and the difficulties they have had

⁶ House Wardens are responsible for the general functioning of each individual student residence. They act as the overall authority of the residence. They are supported by subwardens, who are appointed to be in charge of the disciplinary system in each house, house committees that are elected annually and who handle the functions of the residence. Please see <http://www.ru.ac.za/humanresources/supportstaff/wardening/>

to overcome. P. Biernacki and D. Waldorf (1981: 141) note that snowballing is well suited for qualitative research of a personal nature which requires those who are on the inside to locate additional participants for the study. This was made possible for me because my participants had formed networks with one another, and were aware of which of their friends were first-generation students. They offered me the names of their friends and acquaintances who would be interested in being interviewed for the project. I declined the research participants' offer to give me contact details and instead used social media to try and reach them which I felt was less of an invasion because I was not collecting their private contact information. I did this as an attempt to prove to both the then current and prospective participants how seriously I respected their privacy and confidentiality. In an effort to avoid bias in the snowballing, snowballing was supplemented with recruiting the participants from the different undergraduate student male and female residences, local student churches, political societies, sports organizations and others in an effort to ensure that the research attracts as diverse as possible the participants while still remaining within the perimeters.

The number of interviews conducted was determined by the principle of "saturation" – the point at which no new information or themes relevant to the study purpose is emergent from each subsequent interview (Guest et al., 2006; Kuper et al., 2008; Bowen, 2008). Initial coding of the transcripts revealed similar codes kept re-emerging, suggesting that further interviews would most likely offer minimal new insights and would therefore not be justified. The exception was on the question of brokers which was an insight that emerged from the initial sample of 26 participants and which led to the incorporation of a new, smaller set of participants who met the criterion of being considered 'brokers'.

4.2 Interviews

I employed in-depth interviews in an effort to understand the lives and experiences of the research participants. Irving Seidman (2006: 9) argues that in-depth interviews are helpful in understanding not only the lived experience of other people, but also in helping us understand how those people make meaning from those lived experiences. In-depth interviews enabled me to understand and interpret the various ways in which first-generation Black working class

students have used social networks to negotiate their marginality and their entry into an elite university.

26 in-depth interviews ranging from 28 minutes to 2 hours in length were conducted with first-generation Black working class students. The timing and location of the interviews were aimed at accommodating the demanding schedules and commitments of the students who had classes, tutorials and laboratory practicals to contend with. I used on-campus seminar rooms and also the library study rooms as convenient locations for interviewing. Noting the limitations of snowballing as a recruitment method, namely that the sample will become very uniform as it is drawn from one particular circle, I intentionally attempted to introduce as much diversity as possible into the sample while remaining within the main inclusion criteria, which was first-generation Black working class students, who had attended public secondary schools either in a township or rural area. An additional five interviews were held with first-generation student brokers. Four of these interviews were conducted by email and the fifth was conducted by phone as these participants had left the university and were no longer located in the geographical area of the study. The interviews were all transcribed verbatim by the researcher using Dragon voice recognition software

4.3 Ethical considerations

The study followed the ethical procedures as stipulated by the university ethics committee. Permission was solicited and obtained regarding whether the research participants felt comfortable with all aspects of the research process. Participants signed consent forms⁷ and were informed that they were free to withdraw from the interview should they feel their participation would harm them or risk their wellbeing in any way. The participants were also informed that they had a right of withdrawal should they feel at any time during the course of the research project that they no longer wanted to continue being involved in the project, and that they would in no way be obligated to do so against their will. Also, the participants were free at any time during the course of the interview, to not respond to any questions which they

⁷ Please see APPENDIX A

did not feel comfortable answering. Anonymity was of utmost importance to my research, and I informed the participants that pseudonyms would be used in ensuring anonymity and confidentiality (Elliot 2005:142). The recorded interviews were stored safely and anonymized, with only the researcher and the supervisor having access to them.

4.4 Data analysis

Johnny Saldana (2009: 150), in *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* describes multiple coding methods which were employed as a guideline in the interpretation of the data generated by the present study. Saldana defines a code in qualitative research as:

... a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data (Saldana, 2009: 9).

The transcribed interviews were read several times to get a sense of the kind of data I was presented with (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 90). I performed three key procedures during the process of analysing my data. I started with “pre-coding” my data from the interviews to identify elements that stood out from interviews that especially related with my theoretical framework and the study purpose (Saldana, 2009: 16). The process of coding at this stage was aimed at obtaining a holistic sense of the experiences of first-generation Black working class students.

At the beginning of the data analysis process, I performed process coding, together with initial coding, as Saldana has suggested that process coding as a sole coding method is inadequate in opening up the data better for analysis (Saldana, 2009: 77-78). Process coding as a method was chosen specifically for its exclusive focus on observable activity and conceptual action in the data, that is, privileging processes such as ‘negotiating’, ‘speaking’, ‘learning’, ‘struggling’, ‘mentoring’ and others (Saldana, 2009; Charmaz, 2002; Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Process and initial coding offered me an opportunity to reflect deeply on the contents of my data in order to begin to arrange and reduce the data. I generated 34 codes from the 26 interviews, generated through the use of the NVivo software.⁸ Each interview was transcribed and coded individually to

⁸ Please see APPENDIX B

generate new codes. Eventually when some of the coded material began to appear similar to other coded material, they were categorised under similar codes (Saldana, 2009: 18).

For my second cycle coding, I used theoretical coding to develop a coherent synthesis of the data (Saldana, 2009; Charmaz, 2006). Saldana suggests that the main purpose of second cycle coding is to develop a sense of categorical, thematic or theoretical organization of the different codes that were developed during the first cycle of the coding process. During this cycle, I began to identify similarities between the codes and merged those that related to each other, eventually developing categories that fitted into the four broad themes that I maintained and also used during the writing process (Saldana, 2009: 150; Braun and Clarke, 2006: 92). The social capital literature was used to organize the codes into four major themes.

Trust	Closure	Brokerage	Formal and Informal networks
Obligations and expectations	Closing of networks	First-generation student brokers	Formal networks
Recognition	Open and closed networks	Local brokers	Informal networks
Bonding and Bridging networks	Language	Cosmopolitan brokers	
		Liaison brokers	

Table 3: Themes and Categories

5 Chapter Five: Trust

There's this guy from KZN. His name is Lucky. We were on the same level... like my problems would be similar to his problems because we complaining about the same thing, everything was the same; we used to share our problems. Even though we are from different places but we did relate on most of the things. Because we were also from the same class. You know if you in the same class these guys understand. And then me and him were behind. Like I don't know we were not fast learners. So he would see that this guy doesn't understand, and then I'll be okay I see that this guy doesn't understand. Because we used to be asked questions you know, and then we wouldn't answer, me and him. And then I went to him to ask him, hey bra, why wouldn't you answer? And then he said, 'hey brah, I'm so ashamed'. I don't understand sometimes. His problem was also English, not understanding. Because when you come here I think they assume that you all from the same level schools. But yeah we did relate a lot, and we did share the same story. And Lucky he was just like me; he was just like me (Interview, Lundi).

Trust plays a significant role in the social capital literature, particularly in relation to its effects on obligations and expectations (see Ostrom and Ahn, 2003; Geertz, 1962; Putnam, 2000; Banfield, 1967; Festinger et al., 1963; Gambetta, 2000; Ostrom and Walker, 2003; Arrow, 1972; Ahn et al., 2001; Clark and Sefton, 2001; Crawford and Ostrom, 1995; Bolton and Ockenfels, 2000; Fehr and Schmidt, 1999). Although Torsvik (2000) cautions against looking at trust alone as a form of social capital, in Putnam's work he conceptualizes social capital as having largely to do with trust. He argues that networks of American civic participation are significant because they:

... foster sturdy norms of generalized reciprocity and encourage the emergence of social trust. Such networks facilitate coordination and communication, amplify reputations, and thus allow dilemmas of collective action to be resolved. When economic and political negotiation is embedded in dense networks of social interaction, incentives for opportunism are reduced. At the same time, networks of civic engagement embody past success at collaboration, which can serve as a cultural template for future collaboration (Putnam, 1995: 2).

For Putnam, the formation of what he calls 'social trust' is important in helping to facilitate both the 'public' and 'private' goods associated with social capital. Individuals pursue their own self-interest through collaborative efforts and mutual participation and this in turn creates

dense networks that are resourceful and which act as forms of capital from which withdrawals can be made.

Coleman (1988: 166) argues that obligations are central in social capital in that they play a key role in ensuring that expectations and reciprocity are maintained. For Coleman, the complexity of this relationship is explained as when A does something for B, A relies on, or ‘trusts’ that B will reciprocate if called upon to do so. A form of obligation on the part of B is thus created. B now has to decide whether they will honour the obligation, in which case this obligation becomes a ‘trust credit’ for A, or whether B will choose to disregard the obligation, which would indicate that the social structures shared by A and B are not social capital networks - social capital is absent from the relationship.

For first-generation students, trust plays a significant role in their ability to accumulate social capital in that they have to use social markers to identify what one could call a ‘trust candidate’ -- someone, who shares a similar background, knows their experiences and understands what they are going through. This often translates into first-generation students turning to other first-generation students when they set about establishing and maintaining a network. Ntokozo, for example, talks about how he became friends with Sviwe.

Yeah Sviwe was tutoring computer science but he was tutoring another group. So there was this team called F11, it was a team from the foundation class,⁹ so that’s how we met each other. He is also a product of the foundation programme. He’s doing Bcomm 3rd year now. He used to tell me how it was like for him when he first arrived, and I too would tell him about my experiences as well. Especially how I’m struggling and how hard it was for me. But he assured me that I was gonna be okay, and that whenever I was facing any problems he would be there for me. Even now I still utilize him whenever I have challenges (Interview, Ntokozo).

For Ntokozo, it is important for him that his friend, Sviwe, comes from the Extended Studies – or ‘foundation’ -- programme.¹⁰ This not only becomes the basis of the friendship, but it also becomes a social marker that is indicative that Sviwe knows and understands his challenges,

⁹ In the Extended Studies Programme, the students both attend the mainstream classes with other students, and they also attend supplementary classes as extended studies students.

¹⁰ The extended studies Programme is a programme that is designed to help students from previously disadvantaged schools cope with the academic and social demands of higher education (Extended Studies Self-Evaluation Report, 2009; Boughey, 2010; Badat, 2011).

and more importantly, qualifies as a ‘trust candidate’ because he is also a ‘product of the foundation’. Kramer (2009) calls this process of identification and forming of group alliances and allegiances based on similar first-generation status, ‘cognition’. Ntokozo’s prior knowledge about Sviwe as an Extended Studies graduate, ensures that Sviwe immediately becomes accessible to Ntokozo – someone who will know his troubles, and will be able to understand him. Sviwe assumes the role of the mentor and Ntokozo becomes the mentee. Sviwe shares his own experiences when he first arrived at university, and this gives Ntokozo the opportunity to safely relate his own insecurities concerning university. This relationship of trust shared by both of them, becomes an element in a resourceful network, one from which Ntokozo can now withdraw valuable advice and information.

[He] is the one I used to talk to about my challenges and my problems. So when at times I felt I couldn’t cope anymore he would always advise and help me. I would talk to him and he would help me. We actually met through soccer, we both love soccer so that’s what united us and made us friends. So he would tell me that any time I have problems he would help me. Yeah he helped me a lot. Even now I still confide in him whenever I have problems (Interview, Ntokozo).

Ahn and Ostrom (2003: xvii) note the importance of trust existing within social structures, and the influence of contextual variables, networks and institutions on the emergence of trust. For first-generation students, contextual variables include things like membership of the Extended Studies programme or a preference for certain sports which may act as shorthand markers of a shared background, or shared disadvantage or both. In other cases, as will be discussed below, language and cultural identity are critical features of mutual recognition which is in turn an enabling factor for the development of trust in a network.

5.1 Recognition

I had one friend from high school, we never talked in high school. When we came here we became friends. Even though we’re not in the same res, I was always in her res. I had no friends in my res. She also came down campus and we used to help each other with academics, like if I have a problem, I’ll go to her and ask her (Interview, Nathi).

The friends [in extended studies programme], it’s family. People think that, like you get there and you find people in the same situation, like people who

also don't feel, like would don't feel like they belong. You find people who've been to public schools; they don't speak better English, they don't write academically, their academic writing is poor, and the struggle is the same. You kinda blend with them because you understand okay I'm not alone. I'm not the only one. And, there was never a point where we judged each other. We were just there for each other, we would just a crazy bunch together, we always walked together from class to class (Interview, Mariah).

As Mariah comments, the Extended Studies group, is a resourceful network as it offers friendship and support for her, rooted in the shared experiences of the members, who have 'been to public schools', who 'don't speak better English' and who 'don't write academically'. In this way she is able to believe that she is not alone. For Putnam, an individual's ability to return the favour, pay back the borrowed money, babysit the kids for the weekend, or agreeing to keep an eye on a friend's house, all have material consequences for the establishment of reciprocity and trust in social capital networks and connections. For first-generation students, the Extended Studies ['foundation'] programme, having attended similar high schools and having shared backgrounds are 'social markers' which facilitate mutual recognition and acts as preconditions for the emergence of the trust that is so essential to accumulating social capital.

Charles Taylor (1994: 25), in 'The Politics of Recognition', argues that social recognition is connected to the acknowledgment of one's identity, and one's place in society. For Taylor,

The demand for recognition in these latter cases is given urgency by the supposed links between recognition and identity, where this latter term designates something like a person's understanding of who they are, of their fundamental defining characteristics as a human being. The thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Non-recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being (1994: 25).

For those who are marginalised from dominant systems for instance on the basis of language or class, contrariwise, to be recognised can play a significant role in combatting a sense of isolation, dislocation and misrecognition on the part of others.

As Lundi and Lungile explain, for first-generation students, mutual recognition in a context they experience as isolating and excluding, becomes a precondition for the development of bonds of trust. They use social markers to identify potential trust candidates who can become part of a mutually supportive network from which they could potentially benefit.

We were allocated into four mentees for each mentor. So we could relate. It was nice since foundation year it was all black. So the mentors are the people who did foundation in the previous year. So they're all black so we felt like oh yeah you not alone here, because there are some people who've been here, because they would motivate us, because they were doing third year. So like yeah one day I would be there, and it helped knowing that we are not alone. So maybe that's how it is. It's only blacks but they still succeed, because they were telling us that [they were] doing third year (Interview, Lundi).

I become close with Ntsolo because we were both in the foundation phase and we were a bit familiar with each other as we did the same subjects and staying in the same res as well. First year we went out as a res and immediately I saw that things were different. We go out to the bar, the bars we usually see on TV but you buy everything in terms of glass, shot you don't buy actual *nqutu* [quart] is what I was used to in the location. Even the prices where a bit expensive (Interview, Lungile).

Lundi describes the mentoring programme as a comfortable and comforting place because like him, the other participants were 'all black so we felt like [we are] not alone here'. This is not the purpose for which the Extended Studies programme was set up – the purpose of the programme is conceived as assisting students who come from disadvantaged schooling backgrounds to academically and socially cope with the demanding pressures of higher education learning. However, the relative homogeneity of the participants in contrast to the mainstream middle class student means that the programme becomes one where the participants can recognize one another and use this as a basis for building useful networks that offer valuable benefits in the form of a sense of belonging and acceptance, and useful advice. Lungile's, remarks hint at the chasm between the lifestyle of most university students – which he describes as something 'only seen on TV' and his prior experiences. But importantly, this outsider status in the middle class milieu of the university is something he shares with Ntsolo. Their mutual class recognition makes it easier for them to come to trust one another.

For Khusta his friendship with Vuyo, is based on their having attended the same high school which provided Khutsa with grounds for believing that Vuyo would could be trusted not to look down on him or judge him:

Vuyo is the one that I came with the first day that I came here at Rhodes, and then we started becoming closer and stuff. And then I started like to get people to chat with in Joe Slovo¹¹ and make friends in Victoria Mxenge¹² and then sometimes they will come to my room and then we chill, and you watch movies, and we chat or something. So I'm like that, so in terms of that part, I managed to fit in....

First-generation students look for social markers as a means of identifying trust candidates with whom to build a social network. As a result, their networks end up relatively homogenous and comprised of similarly disadvantaged members. Theirs are closed networks that afford them a feeling of inclusion and acceptance that is absent from their experience of the wider university environment. Language plays a significant role in the creation of social capital for these students. As has been widely acknowledged, language is deeply implicated in perpetuating inequalities (Wa Thiong'o, 1994; Cooke, 1988; Judd, 1983, 1987; Walters, 1989; Pennycook, 2014; Holborow, 1999; Crawford; 1999). English, this work has long noted, is not just an instrument of communication, it has a political economy that has embedded within it, socio economic benefits that come with the ownership and access to this cultural capital. This means that for second or third language speakers who have to encounter and negotiate with the language, English becomes a site of struggle over power, meaning and access (Peirce, 1989: 405).

First-generation students finding themselves, often for the first time, in an environment in which English not only overwhelmingly predominates but has the power to exclude, use language as a critical means of recognising those who share this experience and are therefore trust candidates. Languages such as isiXhosa and isiZulu, are deployed by these students as tools for establishing and maintaining connections with one another. For first-generation students, the ability to communicate in their home languages with other students, becomes a

¹¹ Name of a male residence.

¹² Name of a female residence.

means not only of belonging and acceptance, but rather of recognition: a way of knowing who is accessible and approachable to them, and who is not.

It was quite an experience because immediately when I went to res, Joe Slovo House, it had plus minus 105 students but immediately when I saw some of the students [there] where Xhosa speaking, I started to associate myself with them and created a bit of a friendship (Interview, Lungile).

I used to avoid speaking English, [which] was our problem. We were from Nombulelo High School. Basically when we got here, English was a problem. Whenever they're interested in someone, maybe a girl and then they find out she's not Xhosa speaking, they don't approach [because they] avoid speaking English (Interview, Mandla).

I think when you arrive anywhere, you get to see some similar people [like] you, and people that you can get to speak your language with. So what helped me [was that] I met MK. So yeah we used to talk, so I was like at least I can hear someone who speaks Xhosa. So I felt like there is someone who is like me here. Cos he used to say everything is going to be fine, [because] I always complain to him and be like, "Hey bra I'm not used to these things, I don't think I'm going to cope", and he also said, 'I was like you', he made me feel comfortable (Interview, Lundi).

For first-generation students, the ability to speak one's home language provides an oasis of belonging and familiarity, in a testing, unfamiliar environment. For Lungile, isiXhosa is the central marker that he and his friends use to recognize trust candidates that they can then try and associate themselves with. Similarly for Mandla and his friends, avoiding speaking English and choosing to express themselves in isiXhosa is a means of ensuring that they avoid exposing their vulnerability. Mandla and his friends, in common with other first generation students, lack access to what Judd and Cooke have called the 'political economy of English', and its embedded cultural capital (Cooke, 1988; Judd, 1983). By resorting to using isiXhosa they find a mutually recognised and mutually affirming way of regaining their dignity, which is undermined by being in a setting in which their language marks them as inferior. As Mandla put it, 'English was a problem'. This means that language for them, is used as a means of balancing an otherwise unbalanced socio-linguistic order, and through expressing themselves with one another in isiXhosa, they establish a 'safety net' which allows them to be themselves with each other, without the pressure of being judged or having to display their struggle to communicate in English. Like Lungile, Lundi's friendship with MK was influenced by the importance of seeing someone that he 'can get to speak [his] language' with, which is indicative

of familiarity for him. Through this meeting ground of language, which facilitates further engagements with one another, MK becomes a valuable network member for Lundi, whom he can access and withdraw valuable information and advice from.

For first-generation students, sharing a home language that is not the dominant language of the environment in which they find themselves, is important to the formation of networks and connections with one another at university. However, this recognition carries inherently within itself, the acute recognition of feeling excluded from the dominant medium of instruction in the institution, which is English. This means that as much as their home language serves the function of being a meeting ground, it also has the ability to exclude and marginalize. Ntokoza comments on his first days at Rhodes:

You know when I first arrived English was my first major challenge. I really was not used to English. I was not used to speaking it, I was just not used to speaking it at all. Even [in school] English was taught in Xhosa. So things were spoken but I couldn't even hear what was spoken. So [I was] too confused and wouldn't be able to follow the conversations because I just couldn't understand. So I was mostly left behind. But I would ask my friends and they would translate it for me (Interview, Ntokoza).

Ntokoza in his remarks, captures the complexity of first-generation students' relationship with the English language, which robs them of the opportunity to access much more resourceful and richer connections. It is this exclusion that requires them to resort to their own closed ethnic networks which they experience as a refuge from the constant stress of having to communicate in English. But at the same time, there is no escaping that English is the language of instruction and assessment so learning the language becomes necessary to their retention, and success – their respite can only be a temporary solution. Makasi's comments on how he had to challenge himself by putting himself 'in their environment' and learning 'how they do things', and particularly how 'they think', points to the fact that language is a marker for much more than linguistic ability alone:

I challenged myself for a week that breakfast and lunch I was going to sit in a table with the most number of white people. As much as I'm uncomfortable with them, I have to understand what type of people they are. I think it's not the wisest thing to stay away from someone you are uncomfortable with. You have to put yourself in their environment and catch up on how they do things and how they think, which was a challenge because their conversations 99%

of the time I didn't know what they were talking about. Their conversations didn't make sense to me, their jokes didn't make sense to me, but I got to understand them so I don't need to sit with them because I know how they operate, how they think and I began to rely that they are just people (Interview, Makasi).

Thus for Makasi, English as a language is not only linguistic, but it also becomes existential -- in attempting to understand English, he is also trying to grapple with Whiteness, which he experiences as the exotic 'Other'.

For Mariah, Riri and Muzi, the Extended Studies programme, the church and men's religious ministries all respectively play a significant role for them in how they choose to structure their lives as students:

I go to His People Church, here in Geezzle [Grahamstown]. Great church. I feel like I discovered myself through church I think my character has become very solid from going to church and really having a good support structure around me, having people who just listen and not give me advice (Interview, Riri).

For Riri the church plays an important role in her ability to cope at university. The church, for her, becomes her support structure of 'people who just listen and not give me advice'.

Another participant, Muzi, spoke of the importance of 'Men's Ministries' in his life. Men's Ministries is a space in which young men of the church meet with senior members who are married and older, and members of the group share advice with one another. The norms and obligations of Men's Ministry are rooted in religious faith, and act for Muzi, as a means of governing his life, and ensuring that he 'walk[s] with Jesus'. This means that at university, his life is governed according to spiritual faith, with his values constantly enforced and reinforced by Men's Ministries. The latter shape and influence what is regarded as 'appropriate behaviour' for him. This is a very rich network for Muzi, because it gives him access to members of the group who come from varying age groups, different races and diverse class backgrounds. This ensures that Men's Ministries becomes what Putnam has referred to as a 'bridging network': it is dense, resourceful and consists of members from wide backgrounds, and provides access to different forms of information that transcend religion. Thus the ministry acts as a support structure, rich in networks and connections, which Muzi can access and withdraw from should

he require help or encounter challenges.

Networks formed through the Extended Studies programme, and the church, provide access to forms of social capital to first generation students excluded from dominant networks that pervade the institution. They are excluded from (or exclude themselves from) the latter because they struggle to communicate in English or lack what they regard as a ‘posh accent’, or because their working class background and disadvantaged public schooling, all mark them as ‘other’ in a middle class environment. Thus these alternative spaces that they pursue and belong to, act as their sources of alternative networks and connections which they use not only to negotiate their marginality, but to attempt to make sense of their lives and to find ways of coping with challenges, both academically and socially.

5.2 Bonding and bridging networks

Putnam (2000: 22) suggests that there are two types of networks: bridging (or inclusive) networks and bonding (or exclusive) networks. For Putnam (2000: 22), bridging networks are outward looking and are often made up of individuals from diverse socio economic backgrounds. Granovetter (1973: 1350) refers to these networks as being characterised by weak ties particularly with members lacking a shared identity, common ideas, values or beliefs, and often united instead by a common cause or shared objective. For instance, this is seen when Muzi discusses his decision to attend the Career Centre at Rhodes:

I was really not sure about the degree I was studying, umm you know specially the work, the life after university, what am I gonna do with this degree you know? And this guy, my friend, told me that I should go there, you know, sort of have one-on-one chats with the guys. From there, that’s when I started asking, talking to the guy about my insecurities, cos I mean I just chose this degree not knowing what’s what, you know. And other people told me, “Ah you need to do masters, you need to do little bit of PhD to get a job with this degree”, and that’s when it made me so much nervous but ya the guy was really helpful a lot. [He] helped me to, like to see sort of, like my degree as not one-sided view, you know. Like it was sort of in 3D now, if I do this okay I can still branch there and then go into this department. So even the job prospects, with your undergrad degree what you can do and stuff. So from that moment I sort of started also telling him about my other insecurities, you know things of writing CVs, and you know your cover letters and stuff. And then from there he started advising me to come every week to attend and they used to have these programmes where they used to

have CV writings, ya interview skills and stuff, and then those things sort of helped me to enjoy my degree cos I was, you know when you studying and ask yourself, ‘why am I doing this?’ Ya, but also, at that moment for me it was all about I just need money and then along the way, through him he told me that, he taught me that it should be within your passion and stuff. And that’s when I started loving this degree, ya. And now I see more passion than money, I don’t mind going to Ph.D. anymore [laughing] (Interview, Muzi).

For Muzi, the Career Centre becomes a bridging network, one which enables him to make up for his lack of economic and cultural capital. This is important in that Muzi’s connection with his friend, enables him to reach another interconnected network in his network circle, that is, the Career Centre, and helps him access and withdraw benefits from it, in the process reducing the limitations of his high school background in terms of career guidance and advice concerning subject choices, and capacitating him not only with relevant information to help him better make informed decisions at university, but with an approach to education which he had not previously had.

Coleman (1988: 168) argues that information channels could be seen as another form of social capital, because of their role in providing information that acts as the basis for social action. Acquiring information is costly, time consuming and requires access to certain information networks from which relevant information can be withdrawn that would be beneficial to one’s interests at that moment. Brown and Duguid (2000) caution against the over-emphasis on information alone, that is, information that lacks a social context in making it more meaningful and understandable, will result in what they call a ‘social and moral blindness’. This means that for Brown and Duguid, information that arises within a mediated social context allows for the accessing and strengthening of more efficient and wider networks and connections that reinforces our ties to the world and strengthens in the process, our intellectual capital (Brown and Duguid, 2000). In Muzi’s context, the Career Centre serves as a space that could be characterised as a bridging network for him. The Career Centre is outward looking, and is not focused specifically on reinforcing any narrow cultural identities for students. For Muzi, the Centre becomes the ‘bridge’ to access to certain kinds of information that he does not have. He is able to approach the Career Centre, ask for advice, and open up about his insecurities such as not knowing how to draft a CV, how to write a covering letter or how to prepare for job interviews, or what his academic qualifications can be used for. Thus Muzi not only accesses

this connection but actually withdraws from it the information that helps him better understand his academic and career prospects. This weak tie that he has, as indicative of his relationship with the Career Centre, actually benefits him strongly as he now can make informed decisions and be aware of his chances at academic achievements and employment prospects because of accessing this network and choosing to withdraw certain kinds of information that help and empower him with informed decisions – all of which contribute to him ‘now loving the degree’.

Similarly, Nandipha’s experiences of being a Wellness Leader in her residence:

I was actually a Wellness Leader in the residence. We were the first, like we were the first source of information for someone who was going through something in the residence, [something] emotional, or whatever. We were a branch of the Counselling Centre in the residence. So there were two of us: another friend of mine Sne and myself. And we promoted a lot of events that related to HIV awareness, academic awareness ... CV writing day and so forth (Interview, Nandipha).

For Nandipha, she herself acts as a ‘bridging’ connection in her residence in her role as a Wellness Leader. She realized her own challenges as a first-generation student, and decided to act as a source of information for incoming students in her residence who may potentially be facing challenges similar to hers. In deciding to act as a ‘bridge’ – that is, a means for others to access information and networks that might benefit them, she herself becomes a resourceful connection in the social structure in which she and her peers are embedded.

Putnam (2000: 22) refers to bonding networks as those that seek to reinforce very exclusive identities, with their members sharing similar identities and common beliefs with each other. Granovetter (1973: 1360) calls the ties that characterise these networks strong ties particularly because of the strength and conservativeness of the support system consistently enforced and reinforced by such networks. Networks established by first generation students as a means of coping academically and socially at university often evince these strong network characteristics. In response to the alienation they feel, they establish and attempt to sustain strong networks and connections as a mean of negotiating their entry into, and remaining at, university.

Obviously as you are close, you talk about things and then get to realise no man we have gone through basically the same sort of experiences. We sort

of have similar likes and dislikes but obviously he was more into sport but I'm not (Interview, Mpho).

I would say Ntuthuko and Zolani. Cos you know Musa was just like me, he was also lost when he came here, so he was a quiet guy then we used to be like three of us. Zakes, Mus and I. Like, cos there were a few Black guys, cos I remember when we arrived at Rhodes. Few Black South African guys I would put it that way. Who couldn't speak, who speak in this Nguni language. So we used to be together, speak things together, share everything (Interview, Lundi).

It was the first day when we got here so you know how obviously they take people out, you know house comm takes people out when they want to go out. So I'm not a person who goes out. So I checked in the house who's are available, who was there and she was in my corridor. So I knocked on her door, cos I heard she was not going anywhere, so went to the room and introduce myself, my name is Mariah, would you like to watch a movie, cos Allan Gray had a movie night for people who were not going out. So we just, we went to Allan Gray we watched a movie, the very first very few people that were there, so that's how it started and ever since I've come to realize that we are similar in so many ways, it's easy to hold onto a friendship where these common principles and a common...we're in the same type of life or class or so it, it makes me feel really comfortable like she made me feel, comfortable to be friends with. And maybe because with her I didn't feel inferior, I didn't feel like, when I was with her I felt like myself. I didn't feel less of myself, as like I often felt with other people (Interview, Mariah).

For first-generation students, strong ties are carefully chosen connections which act as a support system for those 'who couldn't speak', and often those who 'speak in this Nguni languages'. While characterised by strong ties, these networks are weak from a social capital point of view because they are inward looking, and seek to protect the students themselves against the 'foreignness' and challenges they encounter at university. As Mariah comments, when she was with her friend, she 'didn't feel inferior' as she 'often felt with other people' but was, rather, able to feel 'like myself'.

5.3 Conclusion

Although weak ties are important for getting ahead and giving one access to resource-rich social capital networks (Granovetter 1973: 1360), the strong ties in weak networks that first-generation students form, are important nonetheless in that they help them to know that they are not alone, and that there are people whom they can trust. This plays a significant role in

being able to cope with the challenges that often comes with the ‘first-generation’ student status.

Trust plays a significant role in the creation of networks. First-generation students draw on various mechanisms such as language and membership of the Extended Studies programme, in establishing what Putnam termed “social trust”. Recognition plays a significant role in first-generation students’ network building because for these students, reaching out is a risk, given their vulnerability. In looking for trust candidates they must take care not to expose themselves and risk being further humiliated. Language, particularly the ability to articulate oneself in English, becomes both a marker of their exclusion and an instrument which they are able to use to build a network of mutual support – albeit in the negative sense of eschewing English in favour of interacting in (what is in the university environment) less valued home languages. Recognition results in the creation of strong inward-looking ties. As much as these ties are a source of comfort and solace, their drawback is that they risk reinforcing the marginality and location at the periphery of the institution of their members. In that sense these strong first-generation students’ ties could be seen as networks of poverty. The benefits that they are able to withdraw from these networks are always going to be limited.

Thus for first-generation students, who often do not have easy access to the most privileged and resource-rich social capital networks, the creation of inward looking networks, although limited in that they are made up of individuals with similar identities, personal stories and circumstances, do play a significant role in easing their path at university. For these students, the sharing of mutual experiences, and the recognition that elements of their background and identity are shared with others from similar backgrounds, creates trust and strengthens the ties and bonds that keep them together and help them to cope.

6 Chapter Six: Closure

In my first year of study, I was lucky to meet two young men Meli and Sanza who were very inspirational and motivating. They engaged me as an equal despite my socio background. They inspired confidence in me, by telling me bluntly that life at Rhodes was not going to be easy. Life will not be difficult because you are black and poor, but because there was a very gigantic gap between basic and higher education system. This rhetoric suggested to me that I was not the problem, but I was just a young man from rural KZN who faced a structural problem of the education system (Interview, Ntuthuko).

In the social capital literature, norms and sanctions play a significant role in the creation and maintenance of ‘closure’ in networks and connections (Coleman, 1988, 1998; Bourdieu, 1986; Lin, 1999; Lin & Bian, 1991; Lin & Dumin, 1986; Lin et al,1981; Burt, 1992, 1998, 1997; Marsden & Hurlbert, 1988; Campbell et al, 1986; Boxman et al., 1991; De Graaf & Flap, 1988; Sprengers et al., 1988; Volker & Flap, 1996; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). Norms and their accompanying sanctions are significant in that they help with the formation of trust networks and their protection. These networks have within them, various means with which they can sanction an individual thus ensuring that they conform and subscribe to the stipulated or expected confines of the network. Sanctions play a significant role in first-generation student experiences of higher education. One could refer to ‘self-sanctioning’ as featuring predominantly in how the background of the students themselves, ensures that they tend to be deeply self-conscious and at times, critical of themselves and their socio economic limitations, which has implications for the types of networks they choose to form and be a part of, and the other networks and groups they opt to reject. For instance, Phindile talks about the manner in which she was very critical of herself and the poor background she has, including the passing of her mother which had devastating consequences for her self-esteem:

It used to be hard, I don’t think I actually realize and recognize what it was, I just used to think yoh I’m stupid now, I came here smart but I feel so stupid, I don’t understand simple things, and even my confidence I couldn’t approach lecturers they gonna laugh, they gonna laugh at me properly, in fact I can’t even speak proper English (Interview, Phindile).

This internalized self-doubt, rooted in her background and the loss of her family members, ensured that by the time Phindile came to university, her self-esteem and inability to emotionally cope with challenges, played a large part in her immediately self-sanctioning

herself from being a part of, and accessing certain networks and groups -- as they would only serve to act as a source of reminders about her background, and the material things she lacks. Self-sanctioning and removing herself from accessing and being a part of some networks became a coping mechanism, one which allowed her to form alternative networks that, although not as dense or resourceful, connected her nonetheless to other people who understood her situation and shared her experiences. This is also seen with Bontle, when she talks about her experiences and the students she became close with:

The people who I'm close to, are also the people who did not go to those places [laughing]. And who don't base their lives on the things that they have and the places they can go to. Those people that I'm close to were not those kind of friends. But I also had friends who were like that, but not close friends. So if there was the Res Ball, I wouldn't go because I wouldn't have that outfit. So people who would go, who could go there I wasn't close to. People accepted that I couldn't go (Interview, Bontle).

Similarly with Phindile, Bontle self-sanctions herself in removing herself from certain networks and groups that she feels could put pressure on her as they would expose her socio-economic limitations, and the kind of background she comes from. Furthermore, Bontle also mentions the self-sanctioning of the everyday, such as not attending the res ball, which would have demanded her to wear a pretty dress, make up and spend on her aesthetic appearance. The 'self-sanctioning' of the everyday, in terms of what was accessible for her and what was beyond her, is also important in that it shows the challenges faced by first-generation students and the ways in which they sought to negotiate them, with Bontle in this moment, opting not to attend events such as balls and thus forming an alternative network around 'people who did not go to those places', that is, establishing a network and connection around those trapped outside of the periphery and using the group to cope with this socio-economic exclusion.

According to Coleman (1988), closure refers to the various ways in which friends, associates, organizations, colleagues or neighbourhoods share a bond with one another that is characterised by shared norms and trust. These networks of trust are well guarded, and sanctions and rewards are used as a means of ensuring conformity within the group. This means that dissent or separation from the collective norms and values of the group, is discouraged. In closed networks, sanctions are used as a means of control, to ensure commitment to the network, while

at the same time ensuring that those who violate Coleman (1988) refers to the importance of closure:

Closure of the social structure is important not only for the existence of effective norms but also for another form of social capital: trustworthiness of social structures that allows the proliferation of obligations and expectations (Coleman, 1988: 171).

For Coleman, the closing of a network facilitates what he calls the ‘trustworthiness’ of structures. In a closed network the emergence and operation of trust and mutual obligations are facilitated. Members of a closed network will want to appear trustworthy and reliable to others in the network. The fear of being seen to be breaking away from the network discourages network dissent.

Putnam (2000: 7) argues that norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness play a significant role in the production of social capital. As he puts it, networks of civic engagement ‘foster sturdy norms of generalized reciprocity and encourage the emergence of social trust’ (Putnam, 1995: 2). When a network is governed by norms of reciprocity and is trustworthy, this increases the trust that members have in one another and this then allows for the emergence of benefits such as sharing information, lending each other resources, and performing reciprocal and mutually beneficial favours such as assistance with essays and tutorials. These activities further strengthen network connections, and close and consolidate connections between the members (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000).

Closure has to do with connections and sharing being seen to be finite or bounded and therefore all the more trustworthy and valuable (Coleman, 1988; Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000; Burt, 2005). Members will therefore strive to create and maintain network-exclusive information within the network because there is perceived advantage to be gained through the dissemination and protection of information among group members.

Bourdieu’s (1986) interest is in the various ways in which members of the dominant classes in society invest in acknowledging and recognizing one another, as a means of producing, reproducing and maintaining their class dominance. Dense networks and connections, consisting of individuals sharing similar class interests, taste, rank, and coming from a small

set of elite families are ‘closed’ in the sense that information and resources are maintained, shared and reproduced within the networks. Closed networks help to secure and maintain class dominance because only the elite have access to them, and are able to make capital gains from them.

Bourdieu's conception of capital is productive -- that is to say, the different forms of capital, economic, cultural and social, not only influence one another but can also produce one another. A person with access to economic capital can for example afford membership of certain clubs or associations, which in turn gives them access to the acquisition of forms of cultural capital including behaviours, taste, conversations and manners.

Closed networks that are capable of generating social capital are however not restricted to the ranks of the elite. Those who occupy marginal spaces at the periphery of social institutions do create networks with one another. The question then becomes what form these networks take, how closed they are and what their potential is to allow those who occupy them to more successfully negotiate or even supersede their marginality. For first-generation working class Black students who find themselves in an elite, formerly Whites-only university where the majority of students are middle class, networks are primarily formed and used as a means of negotiating an environment that is encountered as foreign and alienating and a space in which they are a minority.

Lungile describes how the different connections that he has formed at university, and the activities he has chosen to participate in, enable him to literally ‘speak the same language’ as those in his network which therefore provides him with a safe haven in a context in which he is outside of the dominant, most privileged forms of communication and interaction.

Skey was also from the bushes [Xhosa initiation ceremony] when he came here in 2010. Both of us had a bit of a connection and we were staying in the same corridor, doing the same subjects. We were pretty much close. He was my friend. The first person I went to in the morning. We went together to breakfast, lunch [and] supper in the dining hall. He was someone I able to speak my Xhosa with because you would find other people are Zimbabweans, the white people who spoke English and won't be able to understand Xhosa (Interview, Lungile).

Initiation has been described as among the most significant of cultural tenets in the Xhosa culture. (Vincent, 2008: 79). For some Xhosa ethnic groups, initiation is symbolically important in that it serves the function of becoming a rite of passage from being considered *inkwenkwe* ('little boy') who lives a carefree life without any socio-economic responsibilities, to now becoming *indoda* (a 'man') who is a respectable member of the community (please see Pauw, 1994: 321; Weiss, 1966: 68; Vincent, 2008: 79). This rebirth of a new traditional Xhosa man, serves the function of reinforcing a certain cultural hetero-normative manhood, one that accepts and believes in the values, norms and practices expected of this traditional man particularly in that community (Vincent, 2008; Silverman, 2004). Luvuyo Ntombana (2011: 633) cautions against the reductionist interpretation of initiation in focusing only on circumcision. He suggest that the historical roles of *umthetho* ('law'), *isithethe* ('common practice), and *isiko* ('custom rite') not only underpins the practice historically, but influences the various ways in which initiation is understood and influenced in the contemporary Xhosa ethnic groups that still practice the custom. He suggests that:

Umthetho is the law set by the governments, traditional courts, kings and family households. The law is for the common good of all – to promote the peaceful cohabitation of people. Domestic laws guide family life and communal laws guide communities. Each family has its own set of rules (their law) that is most probably different from that of other families... Isithethe is the common practice of the particular cultural group in a given community and is not only what brings the Xhosa together but also a practice that is accepted in a given social context. Therefore, the isithethe that exists in Mdantsane township (an urban township) might be different from the practice in Qumbu (a rural area)... Isiko (custom or rite) is a very religious and spiritual practice, which connects African people to God and the ancestors. Examples of such rites are imbeleko (initiation into life or infant initiation), which is practised after the birth of a child, ulwaluka (initiation) and amadini (sacrifices) that are offered to Umdali (the creator or God) and abaphantsi (ancestors) (Ntombana, 2011: 633-634).

As B.A. Pauw, V.Z. Gitya, A. Mager and others have argued, values and morality play a central role during the initiation period, and for the lives of the young men who graduate, particularly in the manner in which their behaviour is expected to transform and reflect *ubudoda* (Pauw, 1975; Gitya, 1976; Mager, 1998). Gitya (1976: 24) comments on the wise speeches made by older men who have been initiated, to *amakrwala* ('initiates') in advising them that they are no

longer living for themselves, but are rather are now a reflection of their families and community.

The initiation process is very exclusive and secluded as the initiates are completely separated from the rest of the community (Van Gennep, 1960). Initiates are taught forbearance, strength, fortitude and courage, culminating in the initiates learning what M.H. Wilson has called ‘the dignity of manhood’ (Wilson, 1952: 203). As a result of the secluded and shared initiation experiences that they go through, initiates tend to form exclusive bonds with one another. Their experiences play a significant role in the creation of their networks and how they tend to close them. This for instance, is seen with Lungile’s comment in how Skey was also from the bush when they both arrived at university in 2010. Their experience of how to perform their masculinity while exalted in their own cultural setting, enjoys little recognition by the dominant culture in the university setting. This non-recognition of an aspect of their identity that is so central and important to how they perform their masculinity in turn becomes a basis for recognition of, and trust in, one another. But clearly network ties based on this particular form of recognition are going to be limited, closed and inward-looking.

Language acts in a similar way. Scholars such as Judd (1983) and Walters (1989) have argued that language encompasses more than the lexicon of individuals. Cultural capital is embedded within the language itself. Language is both a marker of the cultural capital that Lungile does *not* possess as a second-language English speaker in an environment in which English is preeminent, and a marker of his ability to enter into significant trust relationships with other isiXhosa speakers like Skey. The shared ability to speak isiXhosa opens their worlds directly to one another, providing shared meanings and contexts that are closed off from those who do not share their Xhosa identity for example as young recently initiated men. Here, as much as being Xhosa might signify their marginality in the university environment, Lungile and Skey’s friendship, rooted in a shared cultural identity and language, offers them the belonging that the dominant culture denies them.

Lungile’s comment that he and Skey made sure they ‘went together to breakfast, lunch [and] supper in the dining hall’ points to the way in which everyday places of social interaction, in the experience of first-generation students, can be places of alienation that have to be negotiated

and conquered. Far from the dining hall being an innocent space where people come together to share a meal, to enter into friendly conversation together and get to know one another – thus a space of forming rich and interconnected networks – for first generation students the dining hall can at times reinforce their sense of exclusion. In order to manage this sense of alienation it becomes necessary to firstly, find people like Skey whom one can trust, enter into a shared network with such people and then use this network as a social resource to manage alienating experiences and thus render them less overwhelming. Norms and expectations that are taken for granted by those whose own habitus mirrors that of the dominant institutional habitus render visible the cultural capital of the dominant classes that these students lack. As Mariah put it, this lack results in feelings of being ‘different’ and as much as people may try to ‘bring you in’, you know that ‘you don’t pass’.

[When] we got here the environment, yoh, I see these old buildings I was like no, I’m not going to last in this place. I actually made up my mind right then, nope I’m not gonna. I’m gonna be here for one year and I’m gonna go (Interview, Malcom).

I remember the first meal I had. I spilled food because of the whole fork and knife system. I was embarrassed but you know, people in house comm. can’t really like laugh at you but they just make you feel, it’s different. The people, they try to bring you in, but if you yourself are not ready or you don’t, you know you don’t pass, that’s what holds you back. So I just think I was held back by me. I’m the one who held myself back, because of this fear of being misunderstood or maybe the reality that actually I’m not this I’m that, actually I’m not from this, I come from that (Interview, Mariah).

Even in the dining Hall, going to the dining Hall in first year, cause you can’t sit with anyone, you sit with people from your res. I was so uncomfortable. Even the material they use, like the fork and knife and stuff, in the dining hall, I was so uncomfortable cause I felt like I was gonna be an outsider if I didn’t use them, because everyone was using them. So I was like hhayi lemme just force myself. By using this. So I was so uncomfortable. I didn’t like the dining hall. I didn’t like the fact that we had to go to the dining... Because you know [I] used to eat alone, so when you come now, you have to sit with a group of people, socialize, of which socializing was good but it was hard for me (Interview, Lundi).

The first-generation student literature has shown the various ways in which higher education institutions themselves can be very alienating to such students, particularly in making them feel dislocated and unable to cope socially and academically (Allen, 1985; Flemming, 1984; Loo & Rolison, 1986; Nettles, 1991; Sennett et al, 2003: 109). The outsider status experienced by

first-generation students at the dining hall is indicative of Hanifan's suggestion that without social capital, individuals are 'helpless in society' (Hanifan, 1916: 130). A. Weisberger (1992: 431) in *Marginality and Its Direction*, argues that this feeling of helplessness and social dislocation acts as a set of social coordinates with which the marginalized construct their responses in an attempt to alleviate their ambivalence. This ambivalence is seen with Mariah commenting on her experiences in the dining hall in how although other students attempted to accommodate her, she still somehow felt excluded and uncomfortable. Weisberger (1992: 431) describes this marginality as a 'condition of inequality' in which the marginalised person exists in a relationship of unequal power to those in positions of dominance and is forced to negotiate language, culture, and everyday experiences such as the dining hall -- which are foreign and alien.

Vincent (2015) in 'Tell us a new story'. A proposal for the transformatory potential of collective memory projects,' uses the theoretical approach of new materialism to make sense of the various ways in which institutional culture is felt both through the cultures and practices of the institution, and also through the physical built infrastructure itself. According to Vincent (2015: 36):

The insight of new materialism is that material things also have agency. New materialists challenge the distinction between active/intentional humans and passive/background matter to suggest that floors, tables, paintings, but also the bodies we occupy and the stuff they are made of – the skin, the hair, and so on can be understood as powerful agents that are implicated in the performative production of power.

For Vincent, the old buildings, portraits, chairs, desks, and in this context, the dining hall, not only represent the symbolic alienating institutional culture, but the objects contain within themselves agency which is implicated in the production of power and marginality. For Mariah and Lundi, the dining hall and its social and material relations have agency embedded within them that produces and reinforces their marginality.

For Taguchi (2010: 5), new materialism makes the necessary connection between the alienation felt by the body and its experiences, and the physical environment itself that facilitates and promotes certain kinds of behaviour. In the residence dining hall first-generation students encounter material objects in the form of knives and forks with which they feel unfamiliar and

which act on them to magnify and expose their outsider status in the middle class colonial milieu of the university. N. Puwar (2004; 8), in *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies out of Place*, writes that there is a connection between bodies and spaces,

... which is built, repeated and contested over time. While all can, in theory, enter, it is certain types of bodies that are tacitly designated as being the “natural” occupants of specific positions. Some bodies are deemed as having the right to belong, while others are marked out as trespassers, who are, in accordance with how both spaces and bodies are imagined (politically, historically and conceptually), circumscribed as being “out of place”. Not being the somatic norm, they are space invaders.

First-generation students could be seen as historically White South African higher education institutions’ ‘space invaders’. Their colonial and apartheid history of institutionalized segregation, resulted in them being constructed as fitting for only certain bodies and excluding others (please see Allen, 1985; Flemming, 1984; Loo & Rolison, 1986; Nettles, 1991; Sennett et al, 2003: 109). As suggested by Puwar (2004: 8), the institutionalized and normalized bodies that are historically meant to belong in previously White institutions, has consequences for the experiences of first-generation students in how spaces like the dining hall become the physical material expressions embedded within the agency of the environment itself, that exclude and render first-generation students as outsiders.

One of the ways in which first-generation students respond to their sense of alienation in university dining halls is by drawing on the support staff who work there as an alternative network that they have privileged access to in ways that for example middle class White students would not have. This access becomes a form of capital that these students can potentially make withdrawals from. The cooks, the women who serve the food, and the personnel who collect empty food trays, share a working class background with these students and are, in Taylor’s terms, socially and economically ‘recognisable’ to them and are therefore accessible as potential network members and connections.

What helped me ease better was the people, the staff. I greet them, “Hey hey how are you?” “Ndiright mntanam” [“Am okay my child”]. I was like oh okay these are people I can relate to, similar to me. People that I’m used to like ninjani mama [How are you]? You see? As I went along I was so used to since I’m a talkative person, I try to talk to everyone. You know, in the dining hall especially the staff. They made me feel at home because we spoke

the language that we speak that was perfect for me. Like okay, I'm glad that I can see people [that are] similar to me (Interview, Lundi).

For Lundi, his marginality from the richer and much more connected (middle class) networks in the dining hall, results in him seeking alternative networks among those whom he is able to recognise as 'similar to me' and who also recognise him thus making him 'feel at home' in an otherwise alienating environment. Once again language, and the speaking of isiXhosa, becomes a useful recognition tool, not only facilitating communication, but also social understanding and cultural identification between Lundi and the support staff.

As first-generation working class Black students negotiate their marginality in a middle class historically White university environment they seek belonging and acceptance in what have been termed "networks of poverty" – that is to say, networks that are under-resourced, are themselves marginal and therefore lack interconnections with well-connected and rich networks (Perri 6, 1997: 10-11). These networks may well be characterised by Granovetter's strong ties rooted in for instance cultural identity or language, but they are inward-looking and reinforce exclusive identities, which in this instance, are networks of, and at, the margins as in for example, Lungile's friendship with Skey and Lundi's relationship with the dining hall support staff (Granovetter, 1973: 1350). Although enabling first-generation students to find belonging and acceptance in an alienating and marginalizing space, their membership of these networks reinforces their "first-generation" status, and separates them from the privileged networks of those in possession of the currency of the dominant groups. This results in first-generation students being trapped at the margins, having to resort to networks that lack significant (social, economic, cultural) capital in a currency that can be exchanged for advantage in their present institutional setting. The closure of first-generation networks can work to exclude richer and denser connections that are potentially available to them and which may aid their advancement and serve their interests.

In breaking away from the traditional social capital scholarship of privileging closed networks as being key for getting ahead and succeeding, another school of thought within the social capital literature has shown the limitations of network closure and the manner in which closed networks can act as a constraint on individual and collective growth (see Burt, 1992, 1997,

1998, 2005; Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993; Walker et al, 1997; Fafchamps and Minten, 1999; Massey and Espinosa, 1997; Portes, 1995, 1997, 1998). Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) for example refer to how closed ethnic networks characterised by strong norms of obligation and reciprocity constrain the potential of individuals to access richer and denser connections. While norms and obligations of reciprocity and trustworthiness within closed networks ensure that closed networks have within them rewards and sanctions as a means of safeguarding them and ensuring that members maintain them, in the process, if these networks are not themselves rich and well connected, the closure that maintains them risks also cutting members off from better-connected and richer networks. For Portes and Sensenbrenner, closure of inward-looking, ethnic influenced social ties mean that individuals cannot transcend the communitarian connections that they have formed, and thus feel obligated to maintain these ties even though they potentially impede on their own individual growth or development.

For Burt (2005: 107), closed networks are about monitoring and detecting misbehaviour. They provide, as Burt puts it, ‘wide bandwidths for the flow of stories as packets of people data’.

Within these closed networks detection is heightened:

The omnipresent hydra-eyes of the closed network makes it difficult for misbehaviour to escape detection. The more closed the network, the more penetrating the detection (Burt, 2005: 107).

In closed networks, the behaviour of members is closely monitored so that group norms are maintained, while also policing and monitoring the flow of information between each other. Rather than the individuals in a closed network being seen as resourceful social capital connections for one another, the emphasis becomes one of ensuring conformity to group norms and the fulfilment of network obligations.

Sanza for example comments on his friendships with Ntuthuko and Xolile respectively, and how similar their socio-economic backgrounds are:

uNtuthuko he’s my intellectual friend. He’s an interesting man in the sense that he’s from the rural areas and usually stereotypes that we have about people from the rural areas is that they have no infrastructure so their education is bad, they have issues with the medium of instruction. But uNtuthuko when I met him he proved me wrong. That that is not always the case. He is as intellectually capable as I am. So I look up to him academically...uXolela is also from the rural areas. He’s my res mate. And

my friend as well. He's the guy with whom I share my social background. Because socially we from similar backgrounds. We went to Township schools together. So he is one of the guys with whom I relate with say identically. So I consider him to be my closest friend as well. We met in my first day when I first got to res. I remember we had to introduce ourselves. He's the only one who rose up and said my name is Xolela and I'm from the Eastern Cape, I won't tell you about my school because you will never know it (Interview, Sanza).

Whereas members of privileged class networks might gain instant mutual recognition by introducing themselves as coming from a particular school, Xolela indirectly references this commonly traded form of cultural currency and his own lack of it because *his* school is one that the listeners in this milieu 'will never know'. For Sanza, both Ntuthuko and Xolile share with him a poor background and the fact that they come from rural areas and schools that no one has ever heard of, make them accessible to him, and provide the basis for the formation of a trusted network between them. Their identification with one another facilitates mutual respect and admiration. For Sanza, Ntuthuko becomes the "intellectual friend" whose life acts a counter-narrative to the traditional stereotypes of what people from the rural areas are like. But as is best expressed by Sanza's recollection of when he heard Xolile confirm his insignificance in front of the residence by not naming the school he attended, this friendship with its mutual recognition is a closed one. The members have no expectation of being recognised as anything other than inferior by those who do not share their background. Sanza's recognition of Ntuthuko and Xolile is rooted in a shared struggling background and poor schooling which ensures that their connection is characterised by strong inward looking ties that although strengthening their bond with one another, disconnects them from accessing other (richer and more resourceful) networks of the privileged, and further entraps them in these struggling and marginalised networks.

Sandy's experiences with her friends moreover, point to the policing and monitoring of one another's behaviour that happens in these closed networks:

I had friends that I knew, it would be three of us, and we would just sit by ourselves. And we wouldn't go to any other people, and at some point I was like no man, these people. I would get my tray by the door [in the dining hall] ... I would look around, who do I feel like is clicking in my heart right now, "Oh let me sit in that corner there, laughing making a noise, let me go sit there". And my friends would give me the eye, Sandy why didn't you tell us

that you gonna leave, we were waiting for you, we only ate the two of us, where were you? Why did you decide to sit there on the other side? And I'm like, okay I just saw them sitting there, and thought you will be coming. I just chatted with them and actually enjoyed myself (Interview, Sandy).

As much as Sandy's network of friends who share her background are a resource for her to draw recognition and comfort from, her network is also, as Burt (2005: 107) has suggested, self-monitoring and policing. Sandy's foray to 'the other side' of the dining hall, both literally and socially, becomes a sanctionable act that goes against the expected conduct of the network, resulting in Sandy needing to account for daring to bridge the network and interconnecting with other much more advantaged networks whose resources and denser connections may hold the potential for her to enhance her own capacities for succeeding at university. Thus the group itself becomes Burt's omnipresent hydra eyes that are always looking to detect and police nonconformists. Landolt and Portes (1996) suggest that social capital can become a limitation on the individual's actions and availability -- on the choices that they can potentially make. For Sandy, this is seen in how her limited, inward looking strong ties with her friends, begin to work against her in that they start to restrict and sanction her attempt at transcending the boundaries of her network – and hence of her social position.

Closed networks therefore have limitations when they constrain the potential of their members in contrast to more outward looking networks where ties, as Granovetter argued, may be weaker, but which are able to attract different individuals from diverse backgrounds and combine with much more richer and interconnected networks that an individual can have an access to and withdraw benefits from (Granovetter, 1973; 1982). Thus networks which although characterised by weaker ties (members are more distant from one another and the sense of belonging to the network is not as close) can nonetheless be greatly beneficial to individuals, helping for example in the diffusion of ideas, public information and the offering of technical advice (see Rogers, 1995; Uzzi and Lancaster, 2003; Constant et al., 1996). One way in which the constraints of closed networks of disadvantage which are limited in the quantity and nature of capital that they can offer their members can be overcome, is by way of 'brokers'. Network poverty leads to the need for brokers who are able to connect first-generation students with other resourceful and richer networks and connections that could help them negotiate their marginality at university.

6.1 Conclusion

Network closure plays a significant role in the creation of social capital. The closing of networks ensures that norms of trust and reciprocity are well maintained, with a high degree of sanctions being used to discourage members from breaking away. For first-generation students, the closing of their identity-based networks plays two significant roles. Firstly, these closed networks allow their members to be able to recognize and use one another as a resource to negotiate their sense of being outsiders that they experience at university. But secondly, the closure of these networks may lead to them being “networks of poverty” that act in parallel to the well-resourced and denser networks that these students recognize themselves as being excluded from. These closed networks can become detrimental to first-generation students in how they sanction and police one another from the language they speak, to who they speak with at the dining hall, to who they choose to become friends with. Strong ties may limit members of a network because commitment to the network is valued over the individual’s personal growth and development; and because the network lacks resources that members sorely need. Thus there is a need for first-generation students, to connect with a broker, one who acts as a ‘middleman’ who can link them to the resources that they lack without their having to sacrifice their position as a recognised, trusted insider in their own network, and all the benefits that this status has.

7 Chapter Seven: Brokerage

The culture of the university systematically excludes those that are different to it. For your humanity to be respected you have to assimilate to the institutional culture of the university. A Black student from a township or rural parts of South Africa particularly from the Eastern Cape is constantly told that you are backward because you have a bad fashion taste, you are computer illiterate and you cannot speak English properly, in a nutshell you are not good enough The student then embraces the inferiority complex, “I am not good enough for RU” ... “only those from a particular class can make it in this place”... That exclusion not only devastate one’s family, but the entire village that looks up to the excluded student. Young people in the village or township of the excluded student lose confidence in the education system as a means to an end (Interview, Ntuthuko).

First generation students like Ntuthuko experience an ‘inferiority complex’ and feeling ‘not good enough’ for university. As Ntuthuko points out, there is an overwhelming experience of lack – ranging from computer skills to language proficiency to fashion sense – which fellow network members can do little to ameliorate since membership of first generation networks is based on recognition of shared perceived ‘deficiencies’ as defined by the dominant culture of the university. For these students the role of network brokers or intermediaries with other networks becomes a critical source of access to forms of social and cultural capital which their own network would not in itself be able to provide.

Joseph Galeskiewicz and Karl Krohn (1984) define brokers as transmitters who send and receive information from the different networks that they are embedded in. For Galeskiewicz and Krohn, brokers position themselves strategically in their different networks, and not only receive information from one network (the ‘generator’) but have the ability to control and send that information to other (‘consumer’) networks. Peter Marsden (1982: 202) refers to brokerage as a process ‘by which intermediary actors facilitate transactions between actors lacking access to, or trust in, one another’. For Marsden, brokerage only happens through the involvement of three actors -- two who are sharing a transaction with one another, with the third being the broker, the intermediary creating brokerage opportunities for the two to meet through him or her.

Burt (1997: 340) proposes what he calls the ‘structural hole’ argument in defining brokerage. According to Burt (1997: 340) brokers connect ‘people otherwise disconnected in the social structure’. Brokers are:

... the individuals who know about, have a hand in, and exercise control over, more rewarding opportunities. The behaviours by which they develop the opportunities are many and varied, but the opportunity itself is at all times defined by a hole in social structure. In terms of the argument, networks rich in the entrepreneurial opportunities of structural holes are entrepreneurial networks, and entrepreneurs are people skilled in building the interpersonal bridges that span structural holes. They monitor information more effectively than bureaucratic control.... They are more responsive than a bureaucracy, easily shifting network time and energy from one solution to another (Burt, 2000: 355).

The structural hole argument defines social capital in terms of the information and control advantages of being the broker in relations between others. This means that Burt seeks to reassert the importance of the individual in networks as having critical agency, particularly in how they choose to use and exploit the networks and connections that they have access to. Rather than the network itself being seen to be resourceful and a source of social capital as suggested by Coleman, Bourdieu and others, Burt suggests that it is the individuals who have weak ties with other diverse networks and connections that enable them to have control over brokerage opportunities in the network. For Burt, these individuals, that is the brokers, have access to three strategic advantages over their network counterparts who lack brokerage connections – they have access to a diversity of information, they have early access to that information, and they have a hand in the control of the diffusion of that information (Burt, 2005: 16-17).

As Burt points out, opinion and behaviour are:

... more homogeneous within than between groups, so people connected across groups are more familiar with alternative ways of thinking and behaving. Brokerage across the structural holes between groups provides a vision of options otherwise unseen, which is the mechanism by which brokerage becomes social capital (Burt, 2004: 349).

Brokers are resourceful and innovative in being able to seek out information and opportunities that benefit the network that they belong to. Boissevain (1966) suggests that aside from prestige, support and power, people can reap rewards from occupying a strategic position in communities through being a broker. This means that individuals that belong to, and have connections with, different networks, can occupy a strategic position that will allow them to have access to, and control over, different kinds of information, which they can use to their advantage. Brokers can also act as gatekeepers who move across structural holes and have control over opportunities to make connections with different parties, facilitate information exchange and fill gaps in the network.

Jeroen Bruggeman (2008: 68) suggests that brokering influences the broker's reputation, and that it is important that the broker's information is reliable, diverse and well timed. This means that because brokerage inherently relies on the identification of a gap in the network of connections, and the reliability of the information provided, it thus becomes important that brokers maintain the norms of trust in the network as it allows them to be able to use that trust to link with other networks in the creating and controlling of opportunities.

Bontle, commenting on her mentoring of first year students explains how her own shared experiences with people in her network provided her with the insight which enabled her to more effectively play the role of broker to facilitate members of her network becoming 'varsity girls' – a role which she sees herself as having arrived at and therefore able to shine a light on because of what she herself has been through.

Because we not only speaking about school life, we also speak about life, they didn't cope with a lot of workload. We [are] used to it by now, we like okay bring it on. And now they're not handling it well. So I was just giving them pointers here and there because they are not attending some of the sessions so I only have a few girls instead of everyone. And then we also have the WhatsApp group, we communicate then people just come in, and see what can we do with us and then some of the girls [are doing] the same degrees. But it's a great experience, I see them grow to be being varsity girls and that's nice to watch. I think it's really nice. I love mentoring people. And I like being like a motivational kind of speaker because I think, for the things that I have been through, and the knowledge that I've acquired now. It's easier to do that (Interview, Bontle).

Bontle is able to act as a bridge for other first generation students, linking them with the various knowledges she has acquired – not only academic but also social and emotional – which have enabled her to negotiate her own marginality and succeed in becoming ‘a varsity girl’. The mentoring programme for her, becomes the platform that she utilizes to move across the hole in the formal, conventional university structure and her own identity network, giving the first generation students in her network the necessary information and support they need to themselves negotiate university life. Through the use of social media, Bontle creates what Putnam called ‘virtual communities’ and ‘psychological neighbourhoods’ with her students (Putnam1990: 168-170). This ensures that her connections with her students do not always need to be re-enforced through physical contact. Technology allows her to potentially extend her brokerage agency through taking advantage of social media platforms to understand and mentor the students better, and allowing her and her mentees to be accessible to one another at any time, and virtually anywhere without the need for continual face-to-face contact.

The significance of what one could call ‘first-generation brokers’, that is, students who are first-generation students themselves and who have experienced marginality and social dislocation at university, and who act as intermediaries with information and resource rich networks, featured prominently in the interview responses of the participants in the present study. Participants cited these intermediaries or ‘brokers’ as having played a significant role in enabling them to negotiate their marginality, particularly in making them feel like they belong and can make it at university.

Marsden’s conception of brokerage focuses on the various ways in which brokers can gain power through charging ‘commissions’ as a means of obtaining an advantage through facilitating the exchange. But Roger Gould and Roberto Fernandez (1989) suggest that obtaining commissions is not the only way in which brokers can become brokers or the only manner in which they obtain their power when they create an exchange. For Gould and Fernandez, the idea of a commission is distinct from brokerage: a broker is an actor who facilitates a transaction between two or more actors, regardless of whether the actor obtains a commission or reward from the exchange (see also Gould and Fernandez, 1989; Blok, 1974; Boissevain, 1974; Evans-Pritchard, 1940).

Pinky and Meli, now employed graduates, comment on why at university they decided to act as mentors to other students, despite them not getting paid or being compelled to do so:

I think what made me keen to always try and assist other students in my dining hall was because of my own experience when I got to university. Although I had come here with four of my close friends from high school, adapting to the new environment was very difficult. This was particularly because we were all put in different residences that were very far apart. As a result of this we grew quite distant and varsity started to feel like a very lonely experience. This all changed because of Khanyile, who was the senior student at Canterbury in my first year. Initially we got acquainted because of her having being part of house comm. and sort of looking after all of us first years during o-week (Interview, Pinky).

When I started first year I wished there was someone who would have guided me and gave me advice on how university life was like, which courses to take, what should I do to cope, what challenges laid before me and other things like that. But unfortunately when one is the first person to go to university in the family, one does not have that privilege. You just have to let experience teach you. I mean the whole university thing was just nerve wrecking, especially from someone coming from a rural school. And this is how other people in my situation have felt. Even in res there was not much support for people like us, no one really understands you and where you coming from. Most of the senior black guys were from Model C schools.¹³ o it was rough to say the least. Hence I tried to give as much as I can to these guys (Interview, Meli).

For Pinky and Meli, their own experiences of being first-generation students, socially dislocated from the university and feeling alone, played a significant role in them reaching out to other first-generation students and helping them. Gould and Fernandez (1989)'s suggestion that brokerage extends the conception of 'commission' or 'reward' as argued by Marsden, is limited for first-generation brokers in that rather than pursuing prospective gain in helping the students link with other denser and richer networks, they are driven by their own experiences of marginality in attempting to help students they perceive as sharing similar experiences as them. Meli's comment that university was alienating for "people like us", indicates the level of isolation that he felt when he arrived, and how that played a significant role in ensuring that he later reached out to other students in similar positions.

¹³ Former Model C schools were schools that were reserved for White learners in South Africa during Apartheid, but which attempted, in a limited way, to offer spaces to learners in the late 1980s and early 1990s (please see Roodt, 2011; Mthatyana, 2014; Hofmeyr, 2000; Motala and Pampallis, 2005).

Gould and Fernandez (1989: 92-93) suggest that there are five distinct types of brokerage relationships in social structures that differ from one another, from some brokers belonging in the same networks, to others existing in different networks and having an intermediary role in both networks and filling in the structural holes (see Figure 1).

STRUCTURES OF MEDIATION

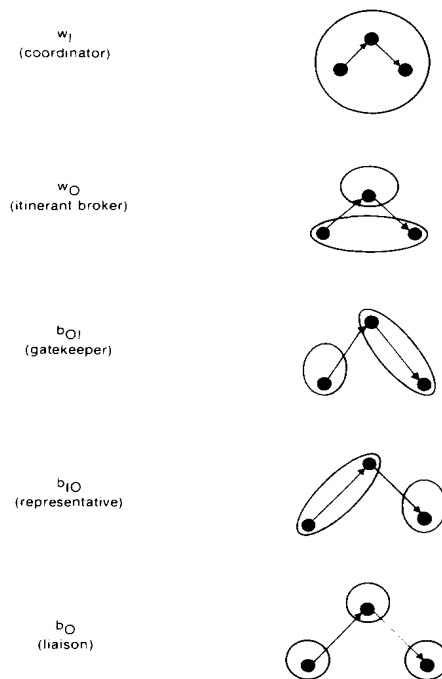


Figure 1 Graphic representation of the five types of brokerage relationships (Gould and Fernandez, 1989: 93).

The first type of brokerage relationship they identify is seen when all three actors may belong to the same group, so that the brokerage relation is completely internal to the group. Because this kind of exchange involves the services of an agent who is a member of the same group as the principals, an individual or organization who occupies this role can be seen as a local broker or coordinator (Gould and Fernandez, 1989: 92). This brokerage relationship is completely internal and the local agents deal directly with the local broker, as the broker is embedded within the same network, and could be said to lack any bridging capabilities with other external networks. For first-generation students, local brokerage is seen for example when students decide to form study groups with one another and attempt to help each other negotiate

challenges encountered. Lundi and his friend Lucky, for example, recognized that they were struggling with the English language, and decided to form a study group with one another to help each other negotiate their shared problems.

There's this guy from KZN. Lucky's his name. Like we used to, we were on the same level, even everything like my problems would be similar to his problems because we complaining about the same thing, everything was the same. We used to share our problems. Even though we are from different places but we did relate on most of the things. Because we were also from the same class Interview, Lundi).

Lundi and Lucky recognise each other as 'lacking' and their bonds based on mutual recognition enable them to overcome their shame and admit their problems to one another. This in turn provides them with the platform from which to seek external help for instance by approaching a tutor. The formation of internal brokerage means that, although lacking any connection with externally resourceful and denser networks and connections, Lundi and Lucky find ways of negotiating their challenges at university. They begin to teach and encourage each other in understanding the taught material, thus enabling them to perform better academically.

Similarly, members of the university's Extended Studies programme are often first-generation students who could be seen as utilising an internally exclusive form of brokerage. The amount of time that the Extended Studies students spend with one another, can result in them feeling dislocated from mainstream university life and forming their own alternative community with each other. This community could be regarded as an internal or local brokerage network that acts as a support mechanism for them. This is seen with Khusta commenting on his experiences in the programme, and how for him, the programme became a family:

Extended studies, is not extended studies, it's BComm family, which is ummm the F comes from Bcomm foundation but we say it's Bcomm family, because I started meeting up with different people from different backgrounds. We started to be very close, as like a class. Like we are that close. Sometimes at the Soc department they would complain because we making noise, being in a meeting with those people because sort of, it reminded me of the class that I had in grade 12 because in grade 12 I started getting close to the whole class, so like crazy stuff. If you would search for me on YouTube you'd find a video of my class, singing in front of the class, just during the free period. Yeah and then we got here in extended studies which was like, [laughing] it was amazing. I like the people that end up

studying with us. Like the different cultures, from different backgrounds and stuff. Before I would normally talk with Xhosa people. I was used to Xhosa people, and here I met with Zulus, Tswana. Even Rahim, he normally called himself Kindian, his mother is a Colored and his father is an Indian, so he called himself Kindian [laughing]. I became kinda close with him towards the end of the year (Interview, Khusta).

The second distinct type of brokerage relationship is seen when the two principal members of the network belong to the same network, while the intermediary, the broker, belongs to a different network. The broker, because he or she is not primarily based within the same network, is regarded as a “cosmopolitan” or “itinerant” broker. First-generation students sometimes rely on a cosmopolitan broker who comes in to offer support or advice to the students. Mariah and Ntokozo comment in this regard for instance on their relationship with their Extended Studies lecturers:

Mr Makatsa. I think in my extended studies he’s my favourite. He is because he understood my computer situation and he was my computer science lecturer. So he could allow me to be me and to be faulty. The way he was patient with me always asking, what is this what is that what is this what is that, and he always motivated us. You know I’m very big on positive things like, I believe in positivity more than anything. So him seeing great in us kinda also helped me and he’ll always tell us about people who made it away in our situation. You know so that also kinda helped me see that it’s, it can happen (Interview, Mariah).

She [Ivy DeVos] used to be my lecturer for accounting. She lectured me 1F because when you first arrive for extended studies you do 1F. You do 101 the next semester. Whereas I did 1F the whole year. She’s been a good mother for me. I wouldn’t talk to her during the lecture, I would wait for the students to leave the lecture and ask to speak to her aside in private. Or rather just go to her office and talk to her about the things I wanted to discuss. And then if I needed help with accounting she would help me. But it wasn’t just about accounting if I needed help with any challenges I was facing she would help me. Even referring me to the places I can go to for help (Interview, Ntokozo).

For Mariah and Ntokozo, their lecturers, Mr Makatsa and Ms De Vos act as cosmopolitan brokers who, although they do not belong to the same network, are accessible to them and are able to ‘refer them to places to go to for help’. Mr Makatsa and in particular Ms De Vos are brokers who are able to move across the structural hole of the networks and to use their richer networks and connections that they have access to, to bridge their students to wider sources of information and help. Thus although they are cosmopolitan brokers who are outside of student

networks, they are still able to facilitate transactions for the students. Similarly, Malcolm's experiences during the ADP extra class sessions:

I remember my first ADP,¹⁴ I went to in first year was stats [statistics] and in class I thought that I understood, and then I came then I was like what's going on [laughing], I don't know, and I was with Thabelo and I actually walked out with him, you need to prepare for those things you need to come prepared, and it's basically, I see it as a revision from your own studying. It's basically, you go to lectures, you go to tutorials, then you do your own studying and then you go to ADPs (Interview, Malcom).

For Malcom, ADP sessions offer him information and academic support from outside of his direct networks and connections. But at the same time his network is present there – there are people like him (like Thabelo) who he can identify with in the programme. The programme itself becomes a useful bridge in helping him understand his courses, and learn the different study techniques that are necessary for success at university. Thus in this context, although the cosmopolitan brokerage relationship does not move across the structural hole in helping Malcom, it is nonetheless a resourceful network that contains valuable academic information necessary for his academic success.

Gould and Fernandez's fifth type of brokerage is seen when the broker is an outsider who attempts to make a link with two or more different connections while being outside all of them. Weiss and Jacobson (1955) refer to this brokerage relationship as 'liaison' brokerage – the broker whose role is one of linkage, while owning neither any allegiance nor network commitment to those with whom they are liaising. For Tyla, his lecturer played this role when he recommended Tyla for an 'informal interview' which enabled him to gain employment. The lecturer acted as a link between him and the fees office where he subsequently worked:

There is a lecturer in the extended studies who came to me and asked me if I am interested. He was teaching us TOF [theory of finance]. So I don't know, I guess he saw from my marks and thought I could be able to handle the demands of the job. So he came to me and asked if am interested, and he said I can go to the fees office for an informal interview. I just went there and then

¹⁴ The Academic Development Programme, offered by different faculties or respective departments to supplement tutorials and lecture attendances. It is designed to help bridge the academic gap between high school and university. Please see the Law Faculty's example of the ADP and its aims: <https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/law/documents/10-students/Student%20Handbook%202013.pdf>

they asked me a few questions, and then they asked if I am interested and willing to cut my holidays to come in and work (Interview, Tyla).

Through his ability to connect the two networks, that is, Tyla and the Fees office, Tyla's lecturer could be said to be moving across the structural hole in the two networks (the fees office has no direct access to Tyla or other members of his network and Tyla and his network have no access to the fees office). The lecturer plays a key role in facilitating Tyla's employment through recommending him and linking him with the fees office thus providing a bridge between the two while not himself being a member of either network.

7.1 Conclusion

Brokers who are able to move across the holes in different networks, thus play a crucial role in ameliorating the disadvantages of closed networks of first generation students. The first-generation participants in this study spoke of the significant role that different kinds of brokers have played in their university life, from first-generation brokers who assumed the role of the mentor in recognizing them and choosing to mentor them, to the lecturers who became liaison brokers in connecting them with employment opportunities that allowed them to afford and do things they previously were not able to do.

Formal and informal networks have played a significant role for first-generation students in how they have used them to access brokerage opportunities, and also to create alternative networks and connections in negotiating their marginality at university.

8 Chapter Eight: Formal and Informal Networks

Some networks are formal, that is, institutionally created such as the Extended Studies programme, residential mentoring programmes and others. Others are informal networks (that is, friendships, relationships, acquaintances, and associations that individuals seek and attempt to maintain of their own accord). These networks play a significant role in ensuring that first-generation students are able to negotiate their marginality at university, and that they begin to access and at times create their own networks which help them in accessing friendships and relationships rooted in belonging.

8.1 Formal networks

Putnam (1995: 2) argues that communities that have well established civic engagements and what he calls “social connectedness” produce better results with regard to faster economic development, better schools, effective government and lower crime levels. For Putnam, strong social bonds shared by members of the community with one another, have material consequences for the broader community in terms of the public socio economic benefits that accrue into the broader community. He notes that:

For a variety of reasons, life is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social capital. In the first place, networks of civic engagement foster sturdy norms of generalized reciprocity and encourage the emergence of social trust. Such networks facilitate coordination and communication, amplify reputations, and thus allow dilemmas of collective action to be resolved (Putnam, 1995: 2).

According to Putnam, civic engagement and public participation foster the different norms and obligations that rely on reciprocity and encouragement amongst members of the community to be maintained and consistently reinforced. This in turn, ensures that networks are better coordinated, communication is consolidated and shared amongst the members of the community, which leads to the amplification of the reputation of the members, in that it becomes in their interests to fulfil their obligations to one another so as to avoid potential sanctions. Putnam’s conception of social capital through civic engagement and public associations, is indicative of the importance of formal networks whose resources produce

benefits for their members. Granovetter argues that weak ties, that is, the formal networks and connections that are inclusive, diverse and that transcend personal identities, are actually more useful than strong ethnic-based, or family-orientated ties (Granovetter, 1973: 1360). For Granovetter, these weak ties are very useful in that they tend to attract a large number of individuals from different 'races', diverse class background and different genders, who all collectively bring with them, rich and dense networks that are interconnected to other resourceful networks. Wellman et al (1996) suggest that computer-supported social networks play a significant role in the creation and maintenance of these weak ties in social capital networks, particularly in their ability to transcend time, distance and space. This means that for Wellman et al, computer-supported social networks such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter and others, facilitate the re-conceptualization of social capital. In the past, social capital used to be created and maintained through physical, personal contacts and connections with people, however with the introduction of social media platforms, new and old networks are created and/or recreated, and often sustained on such mediums, without the burden of physical contact.

For first-generation students, their relationship with formal networks and their ability to access and withdraw capital from them is complex and multifaceted. First-generation student responses to, and relationship with, formal university networks and structures could be categorised into three possibilities. Firstly, they simply do not know about some of the networks and connections that the university provides for them. Secondly, they may know about them and use them, but feel excluded from them. And thirdly, they know about, and take advantage of, these connections and actually use them as alternative sources of social capital that they access and are able to withdraw from.

For some students, accessing formal networks is a challenge because they do not know that certain university centres and offices exist. This means that the first-generation literature's suggestion that first-generation students are marginalized and trapped at the peripheries of higher education institutional spaces (both socially and academically), extends to their lack of information in knowing about the different university centres and offices that exist, and the ones that they can contact in searching for help. This is seen in how for them, the first couple of weeks at university is characterised by an existential questioning of whether they actually made the right decision to come to university, whether they really belong at university and

whether they will manage to negotiate their marginality and cope with the academic and social commitments that are confronting them. For instance, Precious and Mariah commenting on their experiences when they first arrived at university:

It's just me cos I knew no one...like okay I'm here... I don't even know places, I just don't know where to go or what not. So I was like for the first two weeks, I was always in my res., I'm not a person who goes out and what not. So people in first week would go out and, they were enjoying it. So I was always in my room (Interview, Precious).

Just looking at the environment and you look at where you come from and who you are, you just feel like, like this can't be me that isn't really me. So it was just that reflective thing that, I just felt like, I didn't belong before I even interacted with anyone else (Interview, Mariah).

These feelings of marginality and social dislocation play a significant role in ensuring that first generation students become trapped in their own marginality and not only cannot access institutional support mechanism and bodies, but end up not knowing about their existence at university.

In other cases first-generation students do access and take advantage of the opportunities for support and assistance provided by formal structures and networks. However, they feel excluded and marginalized from them. Thus these networks, rather than helping them negotiate their marginality, end up paradoxically reinforcing their status as marginalized. This is seen with Riri in how for her, in contrast to some of the experiences reflected earlier, the Extended Studies programme became a marker of social exclusion and marginality from the broader university community:

I hated it [extended studies], I used to hate it. I never understood it. I didn't get it why I was in foundation, they gave us the lecture and said it's not a bridging course but a foundation course, giving it a fancy name does not help, and I got 38 points and I needed 40 points for mainstream. Foundation is for black people. I've never seen a white person in foundation phase and I hate the term "for previously disadvantaged people", who said I was previously disadvantaged? What makes me disadvantaged because it's nothing but the colour of my skin because I was never disadvantaged? I don't know how apartheid feels because I wasn't there. The foundation programme was tedious. I get bored very quickly. I had a fixed timetable for the whole year. I got bored in three months (Interview, Riri).

For Riri, although she had access to the Extended Studies programme in her first year, she felt excluded and marginalized as it brought, embedded with it, the “previously disadvantaged” label that she felt not only acted as a social marker for her, but actually undermined her as it assumed that she could not cope with the social and academic challenges of university. For Riri, the programme played a significant role in separating her from feeling like she belonged in mainstream university life and re-inscribed raced assumptions about who is and is not capable of academic success. Similarly, in Lundi’s experience being in the Extended Studies programme made him feel like an “outsider” at university:

We didn’t like it because we were all Black. That was a question, why are we all Black? Are we the only one failing, if that’s the criteria? Or whatever that they take. We didn’t like it [because we] kept on wondering why we are all Black, all of us Black? And we seeing none of the other races. Where are the other people? Like whites, Indians and stuff? We didn’t like it because we were so isolated it was like [we were] still in grade 12, because the lecturer knows everyone by name. And you know that whole thing of asking questions in class? We felt like we were in in grade 12. We didn’t like it at all. And who are we to complain [because] it was like we were outsiders (Interview, Lundi).

For Lundi and Riri, the Extended Studies programme, as a formal network, rather than helping them cope with the social and academic challenges of higher education, rather becomes a way of limiting their potential, and socially excluding and separating them from the rest of the university community. Thus, according to Lundi, rendering them ‘outsiders’ who could not offer dissent from or critique the status quo. Rather than helping to provide them with what they need to be integrated into university, in their experience, the Extended Studies programme reduces them to grade 12 students, constructing them as secondary school students who are not quite university students -- as ‘outsiders’ who are yet to ‘enter’ university.

But some first-generation students are able to access formal networks and to extract benefits from them. This means that for some first-generation students, these formal networks have played a significant role in their negotiation of entry into university, and thus they feel they have grown both academically and socially through having access to, and being able to withdraw capital from, them. For instance, Ntokozo commenting on his experiences with

mentoring¹⁵:

It was one of the things that was really good. The mentors themselves were some of the most helpful people because they were approachable, and they would tell you that should you need advice, you have their numbers and you can contact them. Plus they really motivate you during the meetings...Remember I told you that I struggled with the computer? She would make time out of her own schedule to meet with me and tell me, "Let's go to the Jac Labs" so she can teach me things. I remember one day when I didn't know how to underline the document, I used to literally drag the mouse across not knowing what I was doing. So I used to just sit and realize I didn't know what I was doing so I would call her, she'd come and we would sit down together and do this. She would really help me. She didn't just tell me she would show me and make me understand. And try to motivate me (Interview, Ntokozo).

For Ntokozo, the mentoring programme played an important role in his academic development at university, for instance helping him to learn how to use a computer. For a large number of first-generation students, challenges with a computer loom large as their socio economic class and their previous public schooling background ensures that it is only at university that some of them have their first access to a computer. Vusi similarly comments on his experience with his mentor:

The mentoring programme was great. The guy that was my mentor I knew him. I didn't personally know him but from a distance...It was [that] guy who inspired me. He came from eNyaluza [local public township high school], and he came to Rhodes. He did one of the most difficult courses at Rhodes, if I could say in my opinion, not difficult but one of the most challenging courses at Rhodes. He majored in Computer Sciences with no background in computers. He did the foundation course, did Maths, Stats, Computer sciences. Pushed computers. Did computer 2 even. He did his second year and his third year in IS [Information Science] and Stats. He was very smart. Through all odds I could say he persevered. Even though he didn't do computers in high school. That foundation course helped him even though he didn't do computers up to second year level. He was my mentor. He was my mentor. He was a very very good guy (Interview, Vusi).

¹⁵ Mentoring is a formal programme provided by the university under the Extended Studies programme. It consists of a senior student who attended the Extended Studies. The senior students is allocated a group of students who they mentor, advise and guide during weekly meetings.

For Vusi, his tutor's background plays a significant role in that it enables him to be able to access and recognize him as a mentor who knows and understand his challenges. This shared, similar background acts a mechanism of social cognition, in how it allows Vusi to use various social markers or what could be considered "trust candidate characteristics" such as the tutor's public high schooling in one of Grahamstown's educationally struggling schools, the tutor's lack of computer knowledge before he was admitted to Rhodes, and his desire to register and succeed in computer science – all come together to allow Vusi to know and understand that he too can be able to successfully negotiate his marginality. These social markers facilitate social trust. To have a mentor who evinces these characteristics makes it possible for Vusi to access and make withdrawals from the formal network of mentors provided through one of the university's structures.

8.2 Informal Networks

Tocqueville (1840: 9) argues that when people acquire trust together with the necessary skills, they are able to act collectively through voluntary participation in different associations and organizations in obtaining collective goals. This means that for Tocqueville, voluntary associations and organizations that individuals form independent of outside structures, play a significant role in ensuring that they achieve their desired goals. Social trust plays a significant role in underpinning informal, voluntary networks in how individuals use various "social markers" in looking at the different "trust candidates" that they have access to, and deciding which one "qualifies" to be a trusted potential member of a social capital network. Putnam (2000: 1333-134) suggests that voluntary civic organizations and associations are significant in that they help facilitate stronger social bonds rooted in trust, reciprocity and honesty between members of the network and thus have benefits not only for the members of the network itself, but for the broader community. As the networks themselves are not enforced and regulated, it thus becomes easier for the individuals to choose which network they want to access, and which one to disregard. Thus they have the liberty to construct anew, their own personal networks and connections that they feel could potentially help them in achieving their desired goals. This for instance, is seen in how for first generation students, similar cognitive social markers are used as means of constructing their own networks and connections:

The people who I'm close to, are also the people who did not go to those places [laughing]. And who don't base their lives on the things that they have and the places they can go to. Those people that I'm close to, they are not those kind of friends. But I also had friends who were like that, but not close friends (Interview, Bontle).

For Bontle, her connection is formed with students who like her, lack the economic and cultural capital that most students at the university enjoy. This is seen in how for her, the students that she became close with, are also the ones who could not afford expensive trips to nearby towns, or attending residence hall balls, which demanded her looking a particular way, which was inaccessible for her.

Farr's suggests that social capital be reconceptualised to include "sympathy" as significant (Farr, 004: 10-11). Before first-generation students are able to trust one another and expose their vulnerability to each other in pursuing belonging, they first need to detect and obtain some form of sympathy. This for instance, is seen with Lungile's comments on his friend, particularly in how the first-generation status indicative of marginality, with the challenges that come with the label, are important in facilitating sympathy and social trust between him and his friend:

We had the same experiences, me and my friend because we were always together, studied the same subjects, went to the dining hall and you'll find that it's always English, English everything, including email. I've never studied computers. I've never used a computer in my life. I only started using it here at Rhodes and more especially holding a conversation in English because I was from the locations and there you find that you are taught English in isiXhosa and they translate. You do not grasp those concepts and stuff, you don't even speak it because there's still perception [in the location] that if you speak too much English, you are associated with those model C schools. You making yourself better. (Interview, Lungile)

Lungile and his friend are able to sympathise with one another's experiences and social position which facilitates the generation of social trust. They both know and understand what one could call the "political economy of the township", that is, the linguistic dialects and cultural attitudes found in different locations in South African townships, ensures that they are able to sympathize and trust one another with their vulnerabilities.

This sense of belonging is at times, expressed through religious affiliations. Shared spirituality

can play a role in the generation of mutual trust. Many of the participants reported that religion plays a significant role not only in facilitating their sense of belonging, but also in the complex manner in which religion does become at times a means of ensuring continuity and what one could call some level of ‘normalcy’ in a marginalizing space. This for instance, is seen with Riri, Muzi and Zipho commenting on the role of religion in their lives:

I go to His People Church. Great church. I feel like I discovered myself through church also because church was very emphasized at home you know when you tell parents its tough they tell you to go to church, “God first and everything else later”. It taught me to accept what happened in my childhood and move and get in touch with my girl side, get in touch with my feelings and not be numb any more, grow a lot I think my character has become very solid from going to church and really having a good support structure around me (Interview, Riri).

I became part of the Grahamstown Baptist Church. And that’s where I also got baptized. Now am a full member of the church, and it’s so nice, the friendship that they form is are genuine, and you learn a lot, about the sort of programmes that young people like us across different aspects of your life, your religion, your social life, your relationship, also they have programmes that help you with academics, because most of the people that are there are lecturers. So I started loving the church. I go there often, every Sunday (Interview, Muzi).

With Men’s Ministries ... they have it once per every month on Mondays. So it’s like the young guys, young adults and married couple, people, and you know the pastor and you know like everyone who is a man within the church we have sort of like a ministry where we watch sort of Christian movies or something like that or like any movie that sort of we can relate to if we have problems and stuff. And then we talk about those difficulties..... So the ministry sort of helps you to keep going and also with issues like any issues about you know relationships that you might be facing or like social aspects of your life within the university. (Interview, Muzi).

What we do is, everybody gets there and then the guy who leads, Brian he is the pastor at Baptist church, his wife bakes muffins for us and then we have tea or coffee... Brian obviously does the bible study and then we talk, “I don’t quite understand this part”, “What was Jesus was saying?” And yeah, “What do you think this means” or “I was reading somewhere in the bible and it links you know what I mean”. I like a discussion and it’s not serious. It’s a nice environment where you can laugh and share what you think and at the same time grow because that is what we are there for, to grow the knowledge of what the word says... It is a great environment and then we leave and come back the following week (Interview, Zipho).

For first-generation students, religion plays an important role in easing their way in a foreign environment, providing them with some sense of belonging, and familiarity. Religious networks can provide access to interconnections attracting diverse individuals, each bringing in different networks which first-generation students can then potentially withdraw benefits from. For instance, Riri's His People Church, Muzi's Grahamstown Baptist Church and Zipho's religious prayer group, contain within them, diverse individuals from different classes, genders and racial backgrounds. They bring with them a potential plethora of interconnected networks and connections that exposes the students to a diversity of what one could call "socio-spiritual" advice and information which plays a significant role in facilitating how these students negotiate their lives at university. Muzi's Grahamstown Baptist Church for instance has within its network academic staff members who are available as a potential source for information and help. The church connects individuals who would not have otherwise moved in the same circles. It creates opportunities for those who lack economic and cultural capital to enter a social space where they have access to, and may be able to take advantage of, productive information- and resource-rich networks. Thus the church becomes the rich and productive alternative network that allows first-generation students to make up for their lack of economic and cultural capital, through accessing resourceful social capital networks.

8.3 Conclusion

For first-generation students, formal and informal networks play a significant role in facilitating Putnam's social trusty, bonding and reciprocity. This is seen in how for first-generation students, their relationship with formal networks could be seen as falling into three categories – that is, firstly, some of them do not have access to formal networks precisely because their marginality and social dislocation precludes them from knowing or being aware that certain formal structures exist, which they can access and take advantage of. Secondly, they do know and have access to programmes and centres, however they feel excluded and marginalized by them. And thirdly, for some first-generation students, the formal networks that they have access to have contributed greatly to their social and academic development at university, and they thus owe large parts of their growth at university to these programmes and centres. First-generation students have shown the various ways in which they have a complex relationship

with formal, institutional networks, and how they strive to attempt to at times use them in negotiating their marginality and withdrawing benefits from them.

For informal networks, Tocqueville's suggestion of the importance of voluntary, civic organizations that individuals form for themselves, have inherent in them, trust and social bonds which ensures that these connections and networks are used to achieve collective goals. This is seen with first-generation students, in how they have sought out and formed their own networks in an attempt to negotiate their marginality, and retention at university. This is seen in how these networks are informed by language, similar shared backgrounds, the role of religion, and others in how they become used as rich, alternative source networks that they can have access to and potentially withdraw from. Although formal networks are there and by their very structures are constructed to attempt to make student experiences better at university, first-generation students have shown how ultimately they resort back to their own alternative networks in attempting to negotiate belonging and familiarity, despite the efforts of formal networks such as the Extended Studies programme, mentoring, or others, in reaching out to these students.

Although first-generation students form their own alternative, informal networks, some of the networks formed reflect what Perri 6 has called the 'network poverty' in how they often made up of Granovetter's strong ties that are inward-looking, tending to reinforce exclusive, marginalized, identities (Perri 6, 1997: 10-11). However there have been other networks, such as religion and specifically the role of the church as a resourceful and very dense network and connection for first-generation students, which has embedded in it, weak ties that connect the students to individuals from different racial and class backgrounds, who bring with them, rich and interconnected networks that the students have access to and could potentially withdraw from. Thus for first-generation students, social trust and recognition plays an important role in how language, formal and informal networks collectively influence the various ways in which they attempt to negotiate their entry and retention at university.

9 Chapter Nine: Conclusion

The thesis took Rhodes University, a formerly White institution, as its site of investigation. It was interested in Black South African working class students whose first-generation status, it can be hypothesised on the basis of existing literature, might be predicted to cause them to encounter challenges with successfully negotiating various aspects of university life at a historically White university. While both deficiencies of cultural and economic capital have featured in the literature on first-generation student experiences, very few researchers in this field have looked at the notion of social capital in order to understand both what these students might lack or find difficult and how some are able to successfully overcome disadvantage and successfully negotiate their entry into university, including entry into formerly White universities. The thesis aimed to enter this conversation by focusing on the role that social capital plays in the various ways in which first-generation Black South African working class students experience and negotiate their entry into university life at one historically White South African university campus.

For first-generation students, although weak ties are important for getting ahead and giving one access to resource-rich social capital networks (Granovetter 1973: 1360), the strong ties in weak networks that the students form, are important nonetheless in that they help them to know that they are not alone, and that there are people whom they can trust. This plays a significant role in being able to cope with the significant challenges that often come with the ‘first-generation’ student status.

Trust plays a significant role in the creation of networks. First-generation students draw on various mechanisms such as language and membership of the Extended Studies programme, in establishing what Putnam termed “social trust”. Recognition plays a significant role in first-generation students’ network building because for these students, reaching out is a risk, given their vulnerability. In looking for trust candidates they must take care not to expose themselves and risk being further humiliated. Language, particularly the ability to articulate oneself in English, becomes both a marker of their exclusion and an instrument which they are able to use to build a network of mutual support – albeit in the negative sense of eschewing English in favour or interacting in (what is in the university environment) less valued home languages.

Recognition results in the creation of strong inward-looking ties. As much as these ties are a source of comfort and solace, their drawback is that they risk reinforcing the marginality and location at the periphery of the institution of their members. In that sense these strong first-generation students' ties could be seen as networks of poverty. The benefits that they are able to withdraw from these networks are always going to be limited. Thus for first-generation students, who often do not have easy access to the most privileged and resource-rich social capital networks, the creation of inward looking networks, although limited in that they are made up of individuals with similar identities, personal stories and circumstances, do play a significant role in easing their path at university. For these students, the sharing of mutual experiences, and the recognition that elements of their background and identity are shared with others from similar backgrounds, creates trust and strengthens the ties and bonds that keep them together and helps them to cope.

Network closure plays a significant role in the creation of social capital. The closing of networks ensures that norms of trust and reciprocity are well maintained for the students, with a high degree of sanctions being used to discourage members from breaking away. For first-generation students, the closing of their identity-based networks plays two significant roles. These closed networks allow their members to be able to recognize and use one another as a resource to negotiate their sense of being outsiders that they experience at university. However, the closure of these networks may lead to them being “networks of poverty” that act in parallel to the well-resourced and denser networks that these students recognize themselves as being excluded from. These closed networks can become detrimental to first-generation students in how they sanction and police one another from the language they speak, to who they speak with at the dining hall, to who they choose to become friends with. Strong ties may limit members of a network because commitment to the network is valued over the individual's personal growth and development; and because the network lacks resources that members sorely need. Thus there is a need for first-generation students, to form connections with a broker, one who acts a ‘middleman’ in linking them up with other much more resourceful networks and connections that they lack.

Brokers who are able to move across the holes in different networks, thus play a crucial role in ameliorating the disadvantages of closed networks of first generation students. The first-generation participants in this study spoke of the significant role that different kinds of brokers have played in their university life, from first-generation brokers who assumed the role of the mentor in recognizing them and choosing to mentor them, to the lecturers who became liaison brokers in connecting them with employment opportunities that allowed them to afford and do things they previously were not able to do.

Formal and informal networks have played a significant role for first-generation students in how they have used them to access brokerage opportunities, and also to create alternative networks and connections in negotiating their marginality at university. For first-generation students, formal and informal networks play a significant role in facilitating Putnam's social trust, bonding and reciprocity. For first-generation students, their relationship with formal networks could be seen as falling into one of three categories. Firstly, some of them do not have access to formal networks precisely because their marginality and social dislocation precludes them from being aware that certain formal structures exist, which they can access and take advantage of. Secondly, those who do know about, and have access to, formal programmes and centres, however feel excluded and marginalized by them. And thirdly, for some first-generation students, the formal networks that they have access to have contributed greatly to their social and academic development at university, and they thus owe part of their ability to cope at university to these programmes and centres.

First-generation students also seek out and form their own networks in an attempt to negotiate what, in their experience, is the alienating environment of the university. The recognition that provides the basis for trust relationships in these informal networks include language, similar shared backgrounds and dispositions, and the role of religion. Although formal networks are there and by their very structures are constructed to attempt to make student experiences better at university, first-generation students often ultimately resort back to their own alternative networks in attempting to negotiate belonging and familiarity, despite the efforts of formal networks such as the Extended Studies programme, mentoring, or others, in reaching out to the students. One exception is the church with ties formed through religious groupings of various kinds acting as resourceful and very dense networks of connections for first-generation

students. These networks tend to be characterised by weak ties that connect the students to individuals from different racial and class backgrounds, who bring with them, rich and interconnected networks that the students have access to and can potentially withdraw benefits from.

First-generation students are not bereft of social capital. They do have trusted allies at university and they are able to insert themselves into networks with ties to others that benefit them in finding their way at university. On the other hand, these inward-looking networks, based as they are on markers of marginalisation and poverty, risk restricting these students to the margins of university life, never fully benefiting from the richness and diversity of the university experience and the resources that are on offer, perpetually restricting themselves, and being restricted to, networks that lack the ability to transcend their current experience and offer entry into different circles, different life worlds and new ways of seeing and being seen in the world.

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APPENDIX A: Consent Form

I _____ agree to participate in the research project of Mlamuli Hlatshwayo on students and social capital in higher education institutions.

I understand that:

1. The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for an (M.Soc.Sci) degree at Rhodes University. The researcher may be contacted on 0713098593 (cell phone) or Theodora.mlamuli@gmail.com (email). The research project has been approved by the relevant ethics committee, and is under the supervision of Prof. Louise Vincent in the Politics Department at Rhodes University, who may be contacted on 0466038353 _____ (office) or l.vincent@ru.ac.za (email).
2. The researcher is interested in the experiences of third year Rhodes University students who self-identify as Black and working class and who are either from a township or rural background.
3. My participation will involve being interviewed at my convenience for duration of about one hour per interview.
4. I may be asked to answer questions of a personal nature, but I can choose not to answer any questions about aspects of my life which I am not willing to disclose.
5. I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study, or consequences I may experience as a result of my participation, and to have these addressed to my satisfaction.
6. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time should I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.
7. The thesis and academic publications which arise from this research may contain information about my personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours, but these will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible for me to be identified by the general reader.
8. The researcher has assured me that confidentiality and anonymity of data will be his priority.

Signed on (Date):

Participant: _____

Researcher: M.N. Hlatshwayo _____

APPENDIX B

Name	Sources	References
Attributes	6	9
Fitting in	20	55
Struggling & working hard	20	35
Brokerage	0	0
Approachable	1	1
Mentoring	2	3
Similar background	3	3
the idea of a university	3	4
Class	10	21
Cell phone	1	1
Computers & Laptops	9	14
Funding	4	5
Employment	3	15
Friendship	25	96
Relationships	3	6
First year as critical	2	4
Help-seeking	1	1
Mentor	1	2
Higher education in SA	2	3
Less extracurricular activities	2	2
Marginality	3	4
Motivation	1	5
Self esteem	1	1
Social Capital	1	2
Turn-taking moment	1	2
Working while in College	2	3
Manners & Behaviour	5	7
Race	4	8
Foreign Other	3	3
White People	12	14
Residence	15	46
Digs	4	7
Dining Hall	12	20
Serenading and Serenaded	13	19
Sexuality	1	1
Speaking	3	3
Accent	3	3
English	13	32
Native languages	11	20
Sports	3	5
Support Systems	16	54
Community Engagement	10	22

Extended Studies	15	40	
Mentored and Mentoring	16	40	
Religious faith	11	34	