

Investigating the emotions evoked within student activists when singing struggle songs: A study of student protests at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this is my own work, every idea and quote has been referenced to its original author. This work has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated the emotions evoked within student activists when singing struggle songs during university protests. The study made use of a qualitative exploratory research design to get an in-depth understanding of students' emotional experiences. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with five student activists from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg campus). The data collected was analysed using thematic analysis. This study found that the spiritual aspect of these songs evokes negative and positive emotions within student activists. The negative emotions experienced were anger and pain, while the positive emotions were pride and hope. The reflective space that these songs provided for students allowed them to acknowledge their emotions. This provided catharsis to the students' anger and pain. The positive emotions evoked by the singing of these songs allowed for the recognition of previous victories. This gave them hope and reminded them of their ability to achieve desired results in their environment as they protested. The study recommends that future research looks into the perception of struggle songs held by those at whom the songs are directed.

*Keywords:* Emotions, protest actions, struggle songs, student protests.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

In this chapter a background of the study is provided. This background includes a description of the research problem, the research objectives and research questions of the study. The importance of this study is discussed, and a brief description of the methodology chosen for this study is outlined. The limitations of this study are discussed and the chapter ends with a structure of the dissertation which includes an outline of topics discussed in each chapter.

### **1.1. Background**

The history of student protests in South Africa goes as far back as the early 1970s (Heffernan, 2015). Black African students used to protest against the apartheid government on educational matters. These students were on university campuses as well as in high schools (Heffernan, 2015). In post-democratic South Africa, there are still student protests on university campuses across the country (Glenn, 2016). In South Africa, protest actions are coupled with the singing of struggle songs, sung by those participating in the protests (le Roux-Kemp, 2014). Struggle songs have been described as a powerful expression of emotions; they are usually employed to communicate a sense of frustration over various matters (le Roux-Kemp, 2014). Furthermore, it has been said of struggle songs that they are concerned with people's experiences and their emotions (Van Schalkwyk, 1994, as cited in Gray, 1999). Some emotions evoked by struggle songs are anger, pain, and hope (le Roux-Kemp, 2014). The purpose of this study was to investigate the emotions evoked within student activists when singing struggle songs during protest actions at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg). This is an area that has not been studied in South Africa, especially with regards to university student activists.

### **1.2. Research Problem**

Physical acts of violence and vandalism have been observed during student protest actions throughout the years in South Africa (Mpofu, 2017). Protestors in universities have attacked police vehicles with rocks (Tuition Fees Protests [Journal Article], 2016). Damage has also been caused to university property and university resources during the 2015–2017 Fees Must Fall protest actions (Mutekwe, 2017). It was highlighted by Mpofu (2017) that although student protest actions are justified, some of the methods used to demonstrate these protests are unlawful. The physical damage to university property and resources during the



2015–2017 protest actions cost close to R800million (BusinessTech, 2018). Protest actions also found expression through the singing of struggle songs originally sung by liberation movements to fight the South African apartheid system (Makalela, 2018). Struggle songs were modernised by protestors in the 2015–2017 protest actions to make them relevant for their period and context (Makalela, 2018).

The protest actions of 2015–2017 displayed the frustration that students felt towards the conditions they had to live under, resulting in emotions such as anger and rage (Mpofu, 2017). Not much research has been conducted on the singing of struggle songs (le Roux-Kemp, 2014). The researcher hopes that by studying these struggle songs and the emotions they evoke, one might gain a better understanding of the feelings and experiences of students. It is hoped that this study into students' emotions could result in improved understanding of the students' concerns and grievances and hopefully some of the destructive behaviours that have been witnessed in the past during student protests might be averted.

### **1.3. Research Objectives and Research Questions**

#### **1.3.1. Research objectives**

- To explore the emotions evoked within student activists when singing struggle songs during campus protests at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- To explore how student activists at the University of KwaZulu-Natal define struggle songs that they sing during protests.
- To explore why student activists at the University of KwaZulu-Natal sing struggle songs when protesting.

#### **1.3.2. Research questions**

The research questions for the study were the following:

- What emotions are evoked within student activists when they sing struggle songs during campus protests?
- How do student activists at the University of KwaZulu-Natal define struggle songs that they sing during campus protests?
- Why do student activists at the University of KwaZulu-Natal sing struggle songs during protests?

#### **1.4. Importance of this Study**

This is an exploratory study that seeks to add to existing research and literature on the role that struggle songs play in contemporary struggles of university students in South Africa and the province of KwaZulu-Natal in particular. It is hoped that this study will assist in creating a better understanding of the challenges facing university students, which will hopefully assist in designing more useful interventions to avoid the kinds of losses (e.g. financial) we have already experienced. Studying struggle songs was important as these songs are used by students to express their lived experiences at university. This was important in understanding their challenges and the emotions they experienced as they deal with those challenges.

#### **1.5. Brief Description of Methodology**

This study made use of an exploratory qualitative design (Brink, 1998). Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with five student activists from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg). Purposive sampling (Tongco, 2007) was used to sample participants. The student activists were selected because of their participation in student politics and protest movements during the period 2015–2017. The data obtained from interviews was analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

#### **1.6. Delimitation of the Study**

This study investigated the emotions evoked within student activists at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg). The findings and interpretations of this study are therefore limited to the student context in that area and cannot be generalised to the entire student population.

#### **1.7. Structure of the Dissertation**

Chapter One gives a brief introduction of the topic and also covers the objectives of the study. The importance of this study is provided. An outline of the methodology is set out and the delimitation of this study is detailed.

Chapter Two discusses the relevant literature looking at struggle songs and the emotions evoked. This chapter is divided into three sections determined by the research objectives of the study.

Chapter Three is a discussion of the theoretical framework chosen for this study. The social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), structural ritualization theory (Knottnerus, 1997) and Black consciousness theory (Biko, 1978) are discussed and applied in this study.

Chapter Four is a discussion of the methodology used in this study. The research design is described and discussed, and information about the participants is provided. Information about the data collection method and the data collection process is furnished. Furthermore, this chapter also discusses the thematic analysis method used in this study. The credibility, dependability, conformability and transferability of this study are discussed, as well as the ethical considerations.

Chapter Five presents the findings of the study. The findings are presented in themes that answer the research questions of the study.

Chapter Six is the discussion chapter which was generated from the findings of this study, the literature reviewed and the theoretical framework.

Chapter Seven is the conclusion chapter of the study. In this chapter the summary of the main findings is presented, a discussion on the limitations of the study is provided, the implications of this study are highlighted and the recommendations for future studies are supplied.

## **1.8. Conclusion**

In this chapter a background of the study was provided. This was followed by a problem statement and then the objectives and research questions for the study were presented. A brief discussion of the importance of the study and the methodological decisions taken followed. A delimitation of the study was presented, which was followed by a brief description of how the dissertation is structured. The next chapter is a discussion of the relevant literature reviewed in this study.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the emotions evoked within students when they sing struggle songs. The first section of this literature review defines the role of music in society. There is a specific focus on the role of music in the African community. This is in line with the second objective of this study. The second section defines struggle songs in South Africa and discusses the singing of struggle songs during protest action. This aims to unpack the third objective of this study by exploring the reasons these songs are sung. The last section discusses the emotions evoked by the singing of struggle songs during protests.

### **2.1. Definition of Music**

Music has been defined as a form of art used by people to express their emotions and to give meaning to their experiences through the qualities of sounds and the relationship between those sounds (Arellano & Slobada, 1994, as cited in Munyaradzi & Zimidzi, 2012). Music has also been defined as “a language of emotions” (Davies, 1994, as cited in Munyaradzi & Zimidzi, 2012, p.193). It is therefore evident from these definitions that music is created for the emotions it evokes. This study explores the emotions that student activists try to express through the struggle songs they sing. It is through music that student activists express their emotions regarding matters that they protest about in their environment (Makalela, 2018). Therefore, as music is a language of emotions”, understanding the experiences of students through the songs they sing will provide insight on how they feel about the issues they are confronted with.

The concept of music has been found to be complex in understanding because it is influenced by various attributes, such as one’s culture and society (Munyaradzi & Zimidzi, 2012). In the Western context, music is generally defined as an art in which tones and sounds are ordered in succession, in combination and in a timely relationship (Janzen, 2000). These tones and sounds are ordered to produce a composition that has a unifying progressive vocal sound, with instrumental sounds that have rhythm, melody and harmony (Janzen, 2000). Music is therefore ordered, structured and less flexible. The Western definition of music gives a more technical approach to music. Janzen (2000) also explains that the Western definition of music includes the presence of performers in front of an audience. In the African context music is however understood to originate from a group of people whose rhythm, bodily movements, sounds and words form a conversation (Janzen, 2000). This provides a less structural but more flexible approach to the understanding of music. In terms of their

audience, the African performers aim to convey a certain message to their audience (Janzen, 2000). Therefore this study aimed to observe what message was being conveyed in struggle songs.

From the Western and African perspectives there are noted commonalities in the definitions of music, for example, the relevancy of sound and the concept of rhythm (Janzen, 2000; Munyaradzi & Zimidzi, 2012). There is also the commonality of audiences from both these perspectives. The contrast, however, is that in the Western context the focus is on presenting a pleasant performance to an audience, whereas in the African context music is more about communicating with the audience. Furthermore, Barz (2011) found that African people believe that messages are portrayed more effectively through music. Music therefore has a deeper purpose than simply performing to an audience. It can therefore be said of struggle songs that they carry messages which the students aim to convey. The messages conveyed provide insight into the lived experiences and emotions of the students. To understand the students' lived experiences, it was further essential to understand how these songs are defined in their context.

## **2.2. Role of Music and Songs in Society: Overview**

The ability of music to evoke emotions in its audience is one of the main motivations why people continue to produce and listen to music (Tay & Ng, 2019). People from all cultures across the world make music when they are feeling emotional (Unwin, Kenny & Davis, 2002). Cotter, Silvia and Fayn (2018) found that music and emotions are closely related. Similarly, Eerola and Vuoskoski (2011) are also of the view that music evokes powerful emotions and that people value music because of its ability to evoke emotions (Juslin & Västfjäll, 2008). Music has therefore always had a role to play when groups of people meet in a state of heightened emotions, such as at a protest march (Unwin et al., 2002). In the United States of America, civil rights activists used music to unite gatherings, inspire change, and build morale (Unwin et al., 2002). Social movements have therefore often relied on music to express protest and build solidarity because of its emotional and intellectual appeal (Unwin et al., 2002). Although singing is important to a number of people from different cultures, not much attention has been paid to the impact that singing has on human emotion (Unwin et al., 2002). Although struggle songs have an impact on human emotions, there is not much research on the emotions evoked by the singing of struggle songs. According to Eerola and Vuoskoski (2011), the most common goal of musical

experiences is to influence people's emotions; music is therefore used to change emotions, release emotions and express emotions (Eerola & Vuoskoski, 2011).

People can display various emotions in a single song by using different pitches and tones expressed in the different verses of a song (Smith, 2012). It is therefore possible for a person to experience and express a range of different emotions in a single song. The struggle songs that student activists sing have the ability to evoke a range of different emotions. These can be observed in struggle songs that contain both lyrical contents of negative experiences as well as positive lyrical content in different verses within the same song. The six primary emotions (anger, sadness, fear, surprise, joy and disgust) can be expressed vocally through the songs people sing (Smith, 2012). People usually sing songs that contain meaningful words for them, words that communicate both the cognitive and emotional content of the song (Smith, 2012). This then poses the investigation of the cognitive and emotional content communicated by student activists when singing struggle songs. Smith (2012) deduced that singing a song or hearing a song being sung triggers emotions within people that are appropriate to the words that are communicated in that particular song. Thus if the words in a song speak of sad experiences, then people listening to that song are also likely to experience the sadness communicated by that song. Tay and Ng (2019), although agreeing with the relationship between songs as described by Smith (2012), argued that the relationship is not as clear cut. There could be a difference in emotions between the people listening to the song and the people singing it. These relationships could be negative, positive or neutral (Tay & Ng, 2019). A positive relationship means that the emotions expressed in a song are the same as the emotions experienced by those who hear the song, a negative relationship means experiencing a different emotion to what is expressed in the song and a neutral relationship means not experiencing any emotions to the song being sung (Tay & Ng, 2019). When understanding the emotions expressed in struggle songs by student activists, one gains insight into their experiences as they sing the songs, and the emotions they may be trying to communicate with those who hear the songs.

### **2.3. Music in Africa**

To the African people, any experience is made more real by music and song (Biko, 1979, as cited in Gray, 1999). For every occasion or gathering there is music, regardless of the emotional state people are presenting with. Music is not only used as a medium through which people express how they feel; it has also become a means of addressing social and political issues (Allen, 2004). This has been demonstrated by the singing that occurs when

students meet to protest over issues that prevail in their environment. Most African artists are also expected to use their platforms and influence to address significant political issues through their music (Allen, 2004).

According to Janzen (2000) music also serves a spiritual purpose to the Africans. It is through music that people here on earth make a connection with the spiritual world. This connection allows for communication in which those on earth can send their pleas to their higher power in the spiritual world (Omojola, 2010). An understanding of the spiritual purpose of struggle songs to student activists will provide insight into the meaning of songs to the students and the emotions thereby evoked.

#### **2.4. Music, Politics and Protest in Africa**

In the African context, music has been used to address forms of marginalisation (Nkoala, 2013). Through the influential nature of music, people have created a platform to generate social action (Perullo, 2011). Music has therefore been used as a tool to incite people into action in order to address what they deemed to be unfair in their society. This social action is created when there is perceived social injustice and conflict; music has been used as a means to address injustice and bring about social change (Perullo, 2011). Since music is used to address marginalisation and generate social action, it is also important to consider how people feel as they address those issues through the songs they sing. The feelings and emotions of student activists were therefore explored to gain insight into their experiences as they also used struggle songs to incite social action and to address marginalisation.

In several African states music has been found to shape the countries' politics (Nyairo & Ogude, 2005). Africans have therefore mostly used music to address political affairs. A study by Perullo (2011) found that musicians are mostly implicated in the politics of the societies they are living in. Similarly, Allen (2004) found that in an African context, music is used to engage in political matters. Musicians, through their music, express their thoughts and emotions on the politics of their own country. Musicians use their music to motivate and influence listeners as music can generate strong emotional responses in its audience (Allen, 2004; Perullo, 2011). Musicians therefore, through the music they produce, have an ability to encourage protests and even strengthen people's views of politicians or those in authority (Perullo, 2011). This idea was observed in this study by exploring how the emotions

expressed in struggle songs can make others aware of the issues at protest actions and perhaps influence participation of other students.

By composing political songs, composers are provided with the opportunity to shape others' views on different social issues (Perullo, 2011). It is through these songs that composers are given a voice to express themselves and make others receive the message that they are trying to convey through these political songs. Perullo (2011) also found that these songs usually address significant events that take place in society, especially those that speak to the conflict of different political parties, lack of human rights and social injustices. Political songs are therefore a mirror, or reflection, of what is taking place in their society. It is through these songs that a picture of the composers' lived experiences is painted. This can be said of the struggle songs that students sing during protest actions. By investigating the emotions that are evoked within student activists, one can get a picture of their lived experience and acquire a deeper understanding of the issues in their society.

## **2.5. African protest and music**

According to Bratton and van de Walle (1992) protest actions in various African countries started as a result of corporate demands by groups of people who sought to improve physical conditions within their specific conditions of functioning. Studies on student protests on the continent focused mainly on the impact of student participation in higher education (Koen, Cele & Libhaber, 2006). The gap which was identified in the literature, and which this study attempts to address, is the emotional experiences of students as they participate in these protests. The most common cause of protest action in African states was as a result of the government of those states making decisions and implementing various measures that affected students on different university campuses (Bratton & van de Walle, 1992). Similarly, as with the 2015–2017 university students in South Africa, a decision made by governing authorities on a proposed fee hike caused protest action countrywide.

Bratton and van de Walle (1992) provide a few examples of protest action in various African countries which took place between the years 1989–1990: In 1989 Zimbabwean students protested against corruption which they believed was caused by members of the elite groups. The students also had complaints over the government's measures to suppress their manner of addressing their grievances (Bratton & van de Walle, 1992); in 1990, students in Gabon became involved in protest action over a shortage of lecturers, limited resources and poor facilities (Bratton & van de Walle, 1992); in that same year students in Côte d'Ivoire



took part in protest action over grievances they had due to electricity cuts while preparing for examinations and Kenyan students raised concerns over issues they had on the state of their educational institutions (Bratton & van de Walle, 1992). The studies on student protests mostly highlight the causes of protests and areas of concerns brought forth by the students. There is, however, a gap in the literature on the actual emotions experienced by the protestors as they communicate their concerns.

The protest action by students in the above-mentioned African countries communicates that all was not well in their academic institutions of learning. The students were communicating their grievances over the conditions they were struggling to function under. The nature of protest action is not to cause violence; the response of the governing authorities is what leads to the acts of violence (Bratton & van de Walle, 1992). Some of the common responses to silence or suppress the protestors were intimidation, detainment of protestors without trial, and violent actions from police by the use of stun grenades and teargas (Bratton & van de Walle, 1992; Naicker, 2016). The crux of student protest in universities across Africa was the frustration that the students felt about the conditions in their institutions of higher learning and the failure of the authorities to meet those demands.

The nature of the concerns raised by protestors from different institutions in various African states is similar to those raised by students in the 2015–2017 protest action in South Africa (Mpofu, 2017). Bratton and van de Walle (1992) describe how the nature and purpose of these protests is not to cause violence. It was, however, observed that violent actions took place in the 2015–2017 South African student protests (Mpofu, 2017; Mutekwe, 2017; Nyamnjoh, 2015). Exploring the emotions of students during protest action is likely to provide an insight into the shift that happens in the process, which is the shift from non-violent protest to retaliating and responding to violence. These emotions are usually expressed by the struggle songs students sing during these protest actions. Similarly, a study by Mutonya (2004) indicates that throughout protest action, music has played a significant role as people took action by being a part of protests. The study particularly focuses on how music in Kenya has played a significant role as a mode used by people to express their concerns over political matters. It is through music that people express their wishes, identities and aspirations (Mutonya, 2004).

## **2.6. Struggle Music in South Africa**

### **2.6.1. Defining struggle songs in South Africa**

Struggle songs are often referred to as liberation songs as they are symbolically linked to the struggle for democracy in South Africa (Gray, 2004). They have also been described as revolutionary songs as they are characterised by their constructive militancy (Pring-Mill, 1987). Furthermore, Schumann (2008) has referred to struggle songs as protest songs as they signify the resistance that Black people mounted against the system that oppressed them. Additionally, struggle songs have been described as freedom songs (Mtshali & Hlongwane, 2014) as they provide the narrative of the different phases of the anti-apartheid struggle. Lastly, struggle songs have been described as political songs by Groenewald (2005) as they have been used effectively to bring about democracy. Struggle songs can therefore be defined as songs that were sung during the apartheid era by anti-apartheid activists and during movements to bring about change, and they are still sung today during protest actions, political rallies and events (Gray, 2004; Groenewald, 2005; Mtshali & Hlongwane, 2014; Schumann, 2008).

Struggle songs are characterised by the manner in which they address social and political issues (Gray, 2004). They are used as a form of communicating messages and propaganda where artistic value and expressions are not a priority. The songs are generally sung in a group setting, and do not have an identifiable author or composer (le Roux-Kemp, 2014). The songs are therefore formed and constructed by a collective that sings mostly about South African history during the liberation struggle (Gray, 2004; le Roux-Kemp, 2014). Struggle songs are often accompanied by a dance such as toyi-toying, and chanting (Groenewald, 2005; le-Roux Kemp, 2014). They are also a sub-genre of political discourse being used as a medium to disseminate political complaints or comments (Al-Sowaidi, Banda & Mansour, 2015).

### **2.6.2. Role of struggle songs in South Africa**

South African struggle songs were initially adapted from traditional church songs (Gray, 1999; Mtshali & Hlongwane, 2014), and communicated that all was not well in the nation (Groenewald, 2005). From the 1960s to the 1990s there was a change in the content of struggle songs; the songs no longer simply communicated that all was not well in the nation, but were also used as a strategy to accelerate socio-political change (Groenewald, 2005). The

songs were used by members of the oppressed groups as weapons against their oppressors (Groenewald, 2005).

According to Byerly (1998), struggle songs have three main objectives in the South African context. The songs serve a symbolic, practical and tactical purpose. Symbolically, the songs facilitate the process of personal revelation, re-asserting distorted identities caused by suppressed roles (Byerly, 1998). The symbolic nature of music serves as a vehicle to reconstruct and take back what has been taken by force and to re-evaluate what has been unlawfully created. In that sense, struggle songs can be used to retrieve identity, to express identity and to preserve identity (Byerly, 1998). In order to understand the symbolic nature of struggle songs sung by student activists at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, one needs to explore the way they feel about the personal revelation they receive from the songs that they sing.

Practically, the songs facilitate the process of social recognition. The practical objective serves the purpose of communication (Byerly, 1998). This communication is within and across barriers created by years of forced separation of people from different ethnic backgrounds (Byerly, 1998). This purpose is achieved through communication between people from within the group and others from outside the group. This also allows for a cognitive re-assessment and review in order to realise who was within the group, who was outside the group and who still needs to be in the group (Byerly, 1998). In terms of this study, when exploring this practical objective as described by Byerly (1998), the emotional and cognitive messages that were sent out by student activists when singing these songs were observed. The study also looks at their desired results as they communicate their issues through protests and songs.

Tactically, the songs assert political resistance (Byerly, 1998). The purpose of the tactical objective is to mobilise social change and to create a shift that will make a difference. This is done through the concrete intentions of invoking peace, or threatening war, or through abstract intentions of reflecting and recovering a past, and projecting and prophesying a future by presenting ideologies to others (Byerly, 1998). For this study, obtaining insight into the student activists' desired result to make a difference in their environment was explored by observing the students' affective process as they tried to mobilise social change.

## **2.7. Struggle Songs and Student Protest: Past and Present**

### **2.7.1. Student protests**

South African students have been engaging in student protests since the early 1970s. Student protests in South African universities have been instigated by the academic exclusion of marginalised students from tertiary institutions due to outstanding fees and unsuccessful academic performance (Koen et al., 2006). The 2015-2017 Fees Must Fall protest movement has been described as the most distinctive protest post-apartheid (Badat, 2015). The protest was triggered by an announcement of a 10.5% fee increase. This sparked the movement giving the students an opportunity to address their grievances over proposed tuition/fee increases, student debt and various concerns around financial aid (Badat, 2015). The announcement regarding fee increases in the year 2016 evoked the response that led to the biggest student protest movement since the dawn of democracy. The underlying grievances brought forth were issues that were not addressed since most African countries had obtained their freedom from the colonisers. At the core were matters related to decolonisation of the university curriculum, the accessibility of university staff to students, including the staff demographics, and the displacement of marginalised students by the university culture (Badat, 2015; Naicker, 2016; Nyamnjoh, 2015). This displacement was further explained by Carolissen and Kiguwa (2018) that, Black students in institutions of higher learning continue to experience their rights as conditional and restricted. Black students therefore feel like they do not belong and thus the structures in these institutions continue to remind them of their displacement.

The 2015 university protest took place at every institution in South Africa and there was a demand for a zero percent fee hike for the year 2016 (Badat, 2015). The demand was for 'free decolonized education'. In most institutions, protest demonstrations took to the streets with students attempting to march on different key public buildings (Badat, 2015). In this study, an exploration of the students' emotions during these protest actions provides an understanding of their experiences as they actively took part in the protests.

The 2015–2017 student protests demonstrated the emotions that students felt about the setting of their current university and the decisions that were made (Nyamnjoh, 2015). Some of the emotions felt by these students included the frustration that they felt over the issue of transformation (Naicker, 2016; Nyamnjoh, 2015). Students at the University of Cape Town expressed the resentment they felt about the manner in which history was remembered

and celebrated, calling for the removal of the Cecil Rhodes statue (Nyamnjoh, 2015). The expressed frustration was that in a so-called democratic country there was still not much transformation in the university space. This lack of transformation looked at how the university spaces excluded a group of students from marginalised communities (Nyamnjoh, 2015). According to the protestors there was a collective pain that they were expressing in these protest actions and this pain speaks to the struggle for equality, restitution and reparation (Nyamnjoh, 2015).

Nyamnjoh (2015) speaks of the collective black pain that students who participated in the 2015–2016 protests at the University of Cape Town felt as a result of the lack of transformation. This pain was caused by the feeling of their hope being deferred. There was invested hope in the dedication to end apartheid and victims had dreams to reactivate their humanity (Nyamnjoh, 2015). The students were therefore raising their voices so as to communicate their impatience as they believed that the structures that are in place continue to ‘trap’ Black people in a life where they remain disadvantaged. Feelings of anger and frustration were experienced by the students as a result of the continuous non-inclusivity of Black people in different spaces. This current study explores these emotions further, including the frustration, the collective pain and possible exclusion of marginalised students from institutions of higher learning.

## **2.8. Emotions Evoked by Struggle Songs**

Struggle songs have been described as songs of hope and consolation (Nwoye, 2018). Similarly, Bensimon (2012) found that songs sung in a collective group are a powerful force as they evoke strong emotions such as hope, pride, love, joy, dissatisfaction, anger and rage. Some of the emotions that are evoked by these songs help raise morale, strengthen group solidarity, provide a space for protestors to release negative emotions and empower them individually as well as in a group (Bensimon, 2012). People in social movements who engage in protest action experience a range of emotions directed both at their fellow protestors and the targets of their grievances (Kemper, 2001, as cited in Bensimon, 2012).

Emotions directed at fellow protestors are expressed to establish solidarity, loyalty, friendship and intimacy, and an emotion that can be evoked is love (Bensimon, 2012). These emotions serve to strengthen each other as protestors work together to reach a common goal. In terms of the emotions directed to figures of authorities, these consist of common emotions that can be evoked in the group as a collective (Bensimon, 2012). These emotions could

represent how the group felt as a collective towards those to whom they are expressing their frustrations. Some of these emotions include rage and anger. Similarly, Nwoye (2018) found that struggle songs are used to express the frustrations that protestors feel towards those they believe are responsible for the grief they experience. Furthermore, it has been found that struggle songs sung at movements' meetings evoked feelings of togetherness which brought strength and solidarity to the movement (Bensimon, 2012). In addition, the songs generated emotions of excitement and passion at these meetings (Goodwin & Pfaff, 2001, as cited in Bensimon, 2012). These songs have been used over the years as powerful media through which people express deep and powerful sentiments (Turino, 2008, as cited in Bensimon, 2012). Music has been found to be a vital ingredient in the moulding of emotions within social movements, contributing to the formation of collective identities, and songs have been found to provide access to feelings and thoughts that are shared by a collective which are essential in forming the collective identity (Eyerman & Jamison, 1998, as cited in Bensimon, 2012).

A study by Kruger (2007) also found that the Ngano songs (also described as struggle songs), in the Venda culture were used to narrate different emotions. These songs were sung by women to express their emotions about the oppression that they experienced in their homes and communities (Kruger, 2007). Similarly, as members from a marginalised group, student activists sing struggle songs to express their emotions over decisions made to exclude them from institutions of higher learning. The women in the Venda community were oppressed by the system of patriarchy; as a result they expressed their emotional turmoil (Kruger, 2007). The emotions usually expressed are those of hopelessness, anger, despondency and desire for retaliation (Kruger, 2007). Furthermore the performances of the songs were found to provide a cathartic experience that provides a space for emotional expression and self-discovery (Kruger, 2007). It is through these songs that the women could make meaning of their situations. Additionally, when understanding struggle songs Debuyser (2015) found that the songs were sung to mourn the loss of broken promises and hopes deferred. Similarly for the 2015-2017 Black students, there were promises made to marginalised groups in a democratic state which never became a reality. According to Debuyser (2015) these songs have the ability to evoke emotional memories of all that has been left behind and voicing collective hopes for the future.

The discussions on the emotions evoked by the singing of struggle songs indicated how empowering the songs are to those singing them. The agony experienced by those

marginalised is also communicated in these songs. On South African campuses it is the singing of the protesting students that usually makes people aware of a protest action taking place. The gap in literature is on the emotions experienced by those singing these songs in the university community.

## **2.9. Conclusion**

This chapter reviewed and discussed the literature around the topic of struggle songs and the emotions they evoke. The definition of music was discussed, which included an overview of music and song in society. This overview provided a discussion on the effect of music on human emotion. Music in the African context was discussed and this section looked at music, politics and protests in the African context. South African struggle songs were defined and their roles were discussed. Additionally, there was a discussion on student protests and struggle songs. The chapter ended by addressing the emotions evoked by struggle songs.

## **Chapter 3: Theoretical Frameworks**

There are three theories that have been chosen as the theoretical frameworks for this study. These theories are: Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986), Knottnerus' Theory of Structural Ritualization(1997), and Steve Biko's Black Consciousness Theory (1978). These theories will be discussed in this chapter.

### **3.1. Social Cognitive Theory**

The social cognitive theory understands people to be actors and producers of their environment (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005). According to this theory a person's behaviour changes through their personal sense of control, in that they believe that they can take action to solve a problem (Bandura, 2012). In the case of this study, this idea is demonstrated when student activists take to the streets during protest action. Student activists take action as they bring forth their concerns to figures of authority and sing struggle songs during protest actions. This theory also provides an agentic conceptual framework which can be used to make an analysis of the determinants and psychosocial mechanisms through which symbolic communication is an influence of human thought and emotion (Bandura, 2001). The symbolic communication in the case of this study refers to the singing of struggle songs. This theory is therefore relevant as it provides an understanding of the determinants and psychosocial mechanisms through which the singing of struggle songs influences student activists' emotions and the reason they sing these songs during protest action. There are two constructs that underpin the social cognitive theory: perceived self-efficacy and outcome expectancies (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005).

#### **3.1.1. Perceived self-efficacy**

Perceived self-efficacy refers to personal action control or agency (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005). People who believe they can cause events may lead more active and self-determined lives. This 'can do' cognition mirrors a sense of control over one's environment - it reflects the belief of being able to master challenging demands by means of adaptive action (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005). In the case of this study, this concept of perceived self-efficacy helps us to understand the belief that student activists have to manage the difficulties they experience in their environment in order to change their situation. This is observed in how they take action by taking part in protest action on their campus and singing struggle songs. Self-efficacy makes a difference in how people feel, think and act (Bandura, 2001). The expression of emotions through the singing of struggle songs by student activists



indicates their belief in their ability to change their environment by expressing their frustrations and how they feel in music and song. Perceived self-efficacy represents the confidence that one can employ the skills necessary to cope with stress and mobilise one's resources as required to meet the situational demands (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005). This is evident in how student activists express and communicate their grievances through the singing of struggle songs.

### **3.1.2. Outcome expectancies**

The construct of outcome expectancies is described by Luszczynska and Schwarzer (2005) as beliefs about the consequences of one's action. These are the beliefs an individual has about a behaviour or action that may lead to a certain outcome (Maddux, Sherer & Rogers, 1982). In studying student protest, this theory is used to understand the outcome expectancies of student activists as they take action in protests and sing struggle songs. One's behaviour may evoke specific emotions in oneself or in others, and bring about changes that may prompt certain responses from others (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005). Together with self-efficacy they influence goal setting and goal pursuit (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005).

The social cognitive theory therefore understands individuals as self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting and self-regulating (Bandura, 2001). Individuals are understood as being active agents of their environment and not passive individuals who just receive whatever their environment presents to them (Bandura, 1986, 2001b, as cited in Bandura, 2001). This agency is understood in terms of socio-structural influences, where people are producers as well as products of their environment (Bandura, 2001). This concept of humans being active agents of their environment is understood through their capabilities to symbolise, self-reflect and through vicarious capability. These capabilities are discussed below.

### **3.1.3. Symbolising capability**

Symbolising has the ability to provide individuals with a strong tool to understand, create and control the environment that speaks to every aspect of their lives (Bandura, 2001). Cognitive factors partly determine which environmental events people observe, what meaning they will ascribe to these events and the effects these events will have on them (Bandura, 2001). For example, in the event of a fee increment announced by the government, it was through the use of the cognitive factor of reasoning that the student activists reacted. They reacted to the effect that this decision would have on them and others in their environment, and as a result they took to the streets in protest. The meaning people ascribe to

various events through their thought processes evokes certain emotions in them, and this meaning is often conveyed in a particular way for future use (Bandura, 2001). Through their own thought processes, emotions and the lived experiences of others, people form symbols. These symbols enable them to process and transform short-term experiences into cognitive models that guide their judgement and action (Bandura, 2001). These symbols are also used to give meaning, form and continuity (Bandura, 2001). It is through symbols that people expand their knowledge about what they learnt from personal experiences and the lived experiences of others, and it is through these very same symbols that people find solutions to problems. Symbols are also used as a means of communication (Bandura, 2001).

#### **3.1.4. Self-reflective capability**

The focus on social cognitive theory also explores the idea of an individual's capability to reflect upon the self (Bandura, 2001). This reflection of self is directed at one's thoughts and actions. Bandura (2001) focuses on an individual's ability to do so adequately. An individual's ability to self-reflect means that one is able to formulate ideas, act on those ideas or hypotheses and predict what will happen from those ideas (Bandura, 2001). In applying this concept to this study and understanding the emotions that are evoked by the singing of struggle songs. This study looks at the students' ability to reflect on the emotions they experience as they sing and how they express those emotions in songs. This expression of their experiences allows them to reflect on their situation and formulate ideas on how they can change and improve their situation. This self-reflective process allows for people to judge the adequacy of their thoughts and change those thoughts accordingly (Bandura, 2001). Through self-reflection, student activists can judge their own thoughts concerning how they feel about their environment as they sing these songs. This idea of judging one's thoughts happens in a process that consists of four different manners of verifications (Bandura, 2001). The first is enactive verification, which relies on the adequacy of fit between a person's thoughts and the results of his/her actions (Bandura, 2001). The second is vicarious verification, which consists of an individual observing people's interactions with their environment, and the resultant outcome provides a check on the correctness of their own thinking (Bandura, 2001). The third is experiential verification, which is often used interchangeably with social verification and occurs when people evaluate the soundness of their views by checking them against what others believe (Bandura, 2001). Lastly, there is logical verification, which occurs when people check for distorted beliefs in their own

thinking by deducing from knowledge that is known and what necessarily follows from it (Bandura, 2001).

### **3.1.5. Vicarious capability**

Vicarious capability refers to a person's ability to learn through the experience of others (Bandura, 2001). The singing of struggle songs during protest action is a practice that is not new to the South African context; they have been sung throughout the years (Gray, 1999). This could be another reason why struggle songs are sung during protest action. Through the process of vicarious capability people are able to increase their knowledge and understanding on various topics through their observations. Bandura talks about the concept of social learning, in which behaviour is learned through modelling (Bandura, 2001). When people learn from others through modelling, this form of learning can be intentionally or unintentionally acquired from a person's model in their environment (Bandura, 2001). A symbolic act like the singing of struggle songs during campus protests is a behaviour that was modelled from previous generations to the next. This concept also increases our understanding on how the singing of struggle songs has been learned by student activists from the previous generation, and what they are hoping others learn from them as they express their emotions over matters through struggle songs.

### **3.2. Structural Ritualization Theory**

The Structural Ritualization Theory by Knottnerus (1997) aims to understand ritualization in human behaviour (Knottnerus, 1997). According to the structural ritualization theory, rituals are essential and play a vital role in the formation, reproduction and alteration of social structures (Guan & Knottnerus, 2006). McLaren (1984) describes rituals as natural social activities found in groups of people which consist of everyday human activities. This theory advances the idea that rituals are a significant part of people's everyday social life (Knottnerus, 1997). It is through rituals that there is some form of structure in group gatherings such as protest marches, regardless of cultural group membership (Guan & Knottnerus, 2006). In relation to this study, the singing of struggle songs is understood as being a ritual that takes place during a protest action. This idea of struggle songs being a ritual explores the objective of how struggle songs are defined. Rituals help give symbolic meaning to behaviour - they provide focus and direction to people's actions -and they also develop a sense of stability for people in social interaction (Guan & Knottnerus, 2006). In this case the singing of struggle songs can be seen as a ritual that gives meaning to the protest action. The emotions that these songs evoke are also what give these songs meaning.

The structural ritualization theory highlights the manner in which ritualized behaviours are made up of cognitive schemas that enable people to understand reality and organise their behaviour (Guan & Knottnerus, 2006). The focus is on ritualized symbolic practices, which involve regularly engaged actions that possess meaning and expressing of those symbolic meanings (Knottnerus, 1997). In understanding this study, the ritualized symbolic practice is the singing of struggle songs during protest action. Ritualized structural practices consist of people's everyday activities and they rest on cognitive schemas behaviours (Guan & Knottnerus, 2006). Ritualized structural practices are based upon cognitive structures or symbolic frameworks which express various thematic meanings and behaviours (Guan & Knottnerus, 2006).

There are four factors that are essential to the ritualization process (Guan & Knottnerus, 2006). These factors determine the effectiveness of the ritualized symbolic practice (Minton, 2003). For the purpose of this study, these factors help us understand the effectiveness of struggle songs and the messages they convey, which are provided as student activists express the emotions evoked by the singing of the songs. These factors determine the importance of a ritualized structural process in a social setting such as a protest action (Knottnerus, 1997). These factors are: salience, repetitiveness, homologous and ritualized structural practices resources (Knottnerus, 1997). Salience refers to the extent to which a ritualized structural process is perceived to be at the centre of an event or an action sequence (Knottnerus, 1997). In this study this refers to the singing of struggle songs during protest action. The singing of the struggle song is a ritualized structural process and the protest is an event. The singing of the struggle songs is understood to be at the centre of the protest action as it is through the medium of these songs that student activists express their emotions about events taking place in their environment. Repetitiveness looks at the degree to which the ritualization structural process occurs, or how often the ritualized process occurs in a certain context (Guan & Knottnerus, 2006). This factor entails that the more often a ritualized process takes place, the more likely it is to achieve its purpose. Struggle songs are sung at every protest as struggle songs complement protest actions. They are sung whenever student protest action is taking place. Homologous focuses on the degree of perceived similarities amongst different ritualized structural processes in the same or different settings of interactions (Knottnerus, 1997). This factor helps to understand if the struggle songs are similarly defined by student activists as they have been defined by others who have been singing the songs in similar contexts. The last factor is the structural ritualization practice and this refers to human and

non-human materials that are essential for student activists to engage in ritualization structural practices (Guan & Knottnerus, 2006). These include resources such as human skills, ideas, finances and technological equipment that students utilise during a protest action.

This theory suggests that the greater the extent of salience of the ritualized structural practices, repetitiveness, the presence of homologous ritualized activity and the availability of resources, the ritual becomes more symbolic in different social settings (Guan & Knottnerus, 2006). A structural ritualized practice has high importance if it is practised regularly. These practices that are perceived to be more important by the participants have a greater effect on people's cognitions and behaviours (Guan & Knottnerus, 2006). Ritualized structural processes that are considered important may also have an influence on those who are exposed to the activities that take place during a ritual (Guan & Knottnerus, 2006). This enhances understanding of how a ritualized structural practice, such as the singing of struggle songs, influences the people observing the protest action and how these songs can influence their cognitive structures, for example, what they think about certain matters.

### **3.3. Black Consciousness Theory**

The academic exclusion of Black African students from institutions of higher learning is mostly due to outstanding fees. The Black consciousness theory is used as a lens to understand the lived experiences of Black students, and to get insight on the emotions evoked by the singing of struggle songs during protest actions.

Biko (1978) defined Black consciousness as the realisation of Black people to come together around the cause of their oppression. The emphasis was on the unity of Black people to mentally liberate themselves from a system that marginalised them and failed to recognise their humanity (Biko, 1978). In relation to this study, this theory looks at how the students addressed being marginalised by the university community. Students took social action and took part in protest actions where they sang struggle songs to address the issues they experienced. Black consciousness encourages group pride and inspires Black people to rise and attain the envisaged self (Biko, 1978). Mngxitama, Alexander and Gibson (2008) added that Black consciousness made resistance possible. Through the Fees Must Fall protest actions Black students resisted the exclusion from institutions of higher learning because of their socio-economic status. They also expressed this resistance through the singing of struggle songs during protests.

Tafira (2013) is of the view that Black consciousness looks at Black people and their situations. It recognises the importance of Black people to empower themselves and be at the forefront of their struggle (Tafira, 2013). Similarly, the students who participated in the Fees Must Fall protest looked at their situations and realised the need to rise up and challenge a system that continues to exclude them from higher education. Additionally, Cooper and Ratele (2018) explain that Black consciousness allows Black people to live meaningful lives which are not created under the restrictions of those that oppressed them. Biko (1978) emphasised that Black people are oppressed because they are Black, and that concept should be used for Black people to unite themselves and respond cohesively as a group to challenge oppression. Black students in the 2015-2017 protest actions united to challenge decisions that were made which would lead to the exclusion of Black students from attaining an education. Furthermore, Hull (2017) mentions that Black consciousness was a think tank, where Black people united to conceptualise the injustices of apartheid. The understanding of these injustices informed what Black people needed to do in their defiance and resistance against apartheid (Hull, 2017).

The Black consciousness theory is made up of several ideas, however, for the purpose of this study the aspects of group pride and African cultural concepts will be considered and discussed.

### **3.3.1. Black consciousness and group pride**

A culture of community and collectivism is one that is considered to be of crucial importance in Black consciousness (Biko, 1978). When students take part in protest actions and sing struggle songs they do so as a group. There is a community that is formed by a group of people who identify with one another and are in the same struggle.

The theory was developed to inspire pride in Black people, so that they own who they are and everything that makes them Black, i.e. their efforts, value systems, culture, religion and outlook on life (Biko, 1978). Additionally, Cooper and Ratele (2018) state that group identity and community are essential in Black consciousness. Biko (1978) states that community and group pride are at the heart of Black people's culture. Students may think individually about how decisions made by their universities affect them, but they also recognise themselves as part of a collective of people who have the same struggle. This thought was also supported by Cooper and Ratele (2018), when stating that, as much as Black consciousness emphasises an inward focus of self, group identity is essential.

When a group of Black people get together they somehow manage to get in sync with each other and form a community where each member finds belonging (Biko, 1978). Hull (2017) furthermore states that in Black consciousness, a person's identity is not based on their biological reality but on the social reality that they belong to a racialized group. Additionally, Tafira (2013) states that Black consciousness makes Black people aware of the power they have as a group, therefore, group cohesion and solidarity are important features of Black consciousness.

### **3.3.2. Black consciousness, African cultural concepts and practice**

Biko (1978) was of the view that one's culture can provide them and their society with solutions to different life problems. What people know and are accustomed to can be a think tank to form solutions that they need to resolve their issues. Similarly, the collective meeting by students to challenge institutions on fee hikes while singing struggle songs is a common practice in the African culture. It is common practice that when African Black people congregate, they sing. Black consciousness therefore challenges Black people to re-think their African cultural concepts and practices (Mngxitama et al., 2008).

Biko (1978) states that Black people communicate their emotive experiences through their love of music and song. Similarly, Black students communicated their grievances through the struggle songs sung during protest actions. Biko (1978) further added that the culture of defiance can find its expression through music. In relation to this study, the student activists' culture of defiance was expressed through the struggle songs and the emotions the students experience. Biko furthermore stated that any suffering was made more real through song (Biko, 1978). It was therefore crucial to explore the emotions evoked by the struggle songs that the student activists sing in order for us to understand the sufferings of Black students in South African higher education.

On revolutionary songs, Biko (1978) was of the view that the songs provided an urgent need for the awakening of those who were unaware of some of the issues. The songs therefore brought awareness to by-passers who still needed to be informed on the ideals of Black consciousness. Furthermore, Biko (1978) states that the songs that Black people sing are not individual songs, they are group songs and they awaken others to the urgency of bettering their lives. Songs are therefore a useful tool for transmitting information on ideals. Biko (1978) further stated that the group songs that Black people sing express their common experiences. Similarly, the students who sang struggle songs during protest actions shared a

common experience of possibly being excluded from their institution of higher learning because of a lack of finances.

Biko (1978) also stated that Black people have many problems and the way they deal with those problems adds to the richness of the cultural heritage of Africans. This was mentioned in relation to songs and making music; he believed the songs created by those who came before him had their relevance in his time (Biko, 1978). The songs have enabled people to keep going and be persistent when faced with opposition, and when they experienced hardships, the songs increased their energy (Biko, 1978). Similarly, the struggle songs that were sung by Black people in apartheid South Africa found their relevance to the 2015-2017 students in South Africa.

“A culture of defiance, self-assertion, group pride and solidarity is a culture that originates from a situation of common experience of oppression” (Biko, 1978, p. 47). The theory of Black consciousness is one that will continue to find meaning in every generation of Black people (Tafira, 2013). Black consciousness promotes African cultural identity and autonomy in laying out a plan to fight oppression (Tafira, 2013). It is therefore applicable in this generation of Black students who found they were fighting another form of exclusion in their lifetime.

### **3.4. Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the theoretical frameworks that were used to understand this study. The Social Cognitive Theory, as an agentic framework, was employed to understand the belief that student activists have to change their environment as they express themselves through struggle songs. The Structural Ritualization Theory was utilised to understand how student activists define struggle songs as these songs are rituals that have a symbolic meaning. Black consciousness theory has been used to understand the lived experiences of Black students as they express their emotions through struggle songs. These theories have been used to provide understanding about the topic of investigating emotions evoked by the singing of struggle songs.



## **Chapter 4: Methodology**

This chapter will observe the methodology that was used for this study. The qualitative research methodology and research design are described and discussed. The research paradigm used for this study is discussed, as well as the sampling method, data collection process, data analysis and ethical considerations.

### **4.1. Research Methodology and Research Design**

This study made use of a qualitative research methodology. A qualitative research approach aims to understand and describe actions or events (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). The use of a qualitative research approach enabled the researcher to get in-depth information about the emotions aroused by singing struggle songs during university protests. This is because qualitative studies are exploratory and they try to understand people's actions in terms of their history and context (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). The subjective nature of qualitative research was necessary, as the study aims to understand the meaning and emotions evoked by the singing of struggle songs during protest action (Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim, 2006).

The main strength of conducting a qualitative study is its process-orientated character, which allowed the researcher to get meaning and understanding of the emotions experienced by student activists when they sing struggle songs during protest actions (Atieno, 2009). Another strength of the qualitative method is the opportunity it provided the researcher to interact physically with the participants. This physical interaction allowed for a natural process that permitted the participants to share their experiences in relation to the singing of struggle songs, the meaning they ascribe to their experiences and their own interpretation (Atieno, 2009). Lastly, the strength of a qualitative study lies in its open-ended inquiry, in which participants were able to raise issues that matter the most to them regarding this topic (Choy, 2014). This method facilitated the exploration of the different views on, and perspectives of, struggle songs and the emotions they evoke within student activists. This exploration made it possible for students' experiences to be examined in detail and in depth (Anderson, 2010).

This study made use of an exploratory research design. This design was particularly appropriate for this study because there is a paucity of literature that has addressed the singing of struggle songs during protest actions on university campuses and the concomitant

emotions these songs evoke in those singing them. According to Van Wyk (n.d.) an exploratory research design is suitable for studies that address topics characterised by misunderstanding or uncertainty.

An exploratory research design identifies the limits of an environment that the researcher wants to explore, and the important factors that may be of use to the study (Van Wyk, n.d.). The aim of using an exploratory research design for this study was to identify the important emotions evoked in student activists when they sing struggle songs during protest action, thereby adding to the body of knowledge on this topic.

The main strength of using an exploratory research design for this study is that it provided the researcher with an opportunity to derive new insight that was previously unknown on the singing of struggle songs during protest action (Brink, 1998). This awareness and insight can result in individual experiences becoming a shared reality, through the manner in which the essence of student activists' experiences were captured, resulting in others who have lived similar experiences being able to recognise themselves (Brink, 1998). The advantage was that the data was recorded and presented as it is and not as the researcher would like it to be. The sample of this study have personal experience and knowledge on this topic (Brink, 1998).

#### **4.2. Research Paradigm**

The research paradigm that was used for this study is the interpretative paradigm. This paradigm takes the subjective individual experiences of people as the essence of what is real for them (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The interpretative paradigm was relevant as this study explored the emotions evoked within student activists by the singing of struggle songs. The student activists were provided with a space to share their emotive experiences when they sing these songs during protests. This enabled the researcher to investigate this topic of struggle songs and the emotions they evoke, by understanding this from the student activists' individual perspective (Scotland, 2012). Student activists' voices and experiences regarding the singing of struggle songs were taken as communicated by them. This was done as reality differs from person to person, and this paradigm provides people with a space to share their voices (Creswell, 1998).

This study aimed to explore how student activists define struggle songs and the reasons why student activists sing these songs during protest action. In doing so, it was important that students' experiences were taken as they were shared by them. This study allowed student

activists to voice their thoughts and feelings over matters that they protest and sing about when they sing struggle songs. Interpretive research must give voice to participants so their voice is not silenced, disengaged or marginalised (Creswell, 1998).

The interpretative research paradigm is characterised by understanding the world from the perspective of the participants (Ponelis, 2015). The understanding of the emotions evoked by the singing of struggle songs was attained from the information that the student activists shared as well as their outlook on this topic. What matters in an interpretative study is the degree to which the understanding of events can be interpreted from the participants' frame of reference (Ponelis, 2015). The value of the study is therefore determined by the degree to which understanding is formulated from the participants' interpretation of events (Ponelis, 2015). The use of the interpretative research paradigm in this study gave insight on the student activists' emotive experiences and reasons they sing struggle songs during protest actions. This was crucial as the interest in an interpretative research paradigm is on the relevance of a study rather than its rigorousness (Ponelis, 2015).

#### **4.3. Sampling**

A sample refers to a representation of the population that is used to gain information about the entire population regarding a particular phenomenon (Henry, 1998). The sampling method used for the individual interviews was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a sampling method that chooses a certain group of people because they suit the aims and purpose of the study (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003). Purposive sampling aims to ensure that all the qualities relevant to a specific topic or subject matter are covered (Ritchie et al., 2003). For this study, these qualities include active involvement in the 2015–2017 Fees Must Fall protest action at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus. These activists are also individuals who are at the forefront of student issues and have sound knowledge of struggle songs. The sample for this study consisted of student activists from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus. The sample size of this study is five student activists. The five student activists were individually interviewed. According to Ritchie et al. (2003) it is more manageable to conduct and analyse data from a small sample size in a qualitative study. The student activists are students who are part of different political parties and other organisations on campus. This sample includes both male and female student activists. The reason for this was to allow for variation in the data obtained, which aimed to lessen biasness (Tongco, 2007).

For this study, student activists were selected as participants because they have been involved in protest action on campus. They sang and still sing struggle songs during protests and even sing them during their gatherings. These were some of the features of student activists that made it possible to explore the use and meaning of struggle songs in rich detail.

#### **4.3.1. Sampling procedure**

The researcher followed the purposive sampling procedure highlighted by Tongco (2007) for the individual interviews. This procedure entails the following:

1. Decide on the research problem

Firstly, the researcher needs to decide on the research problem. This means that the researcher has to decide what has to be known when conducting a study (Tongco, 2007). The researcher identified an area of research, i.e. student protests and the singing of struggle songs during protest action and the emotions evoked by the singing of struggle songs.

2. Determine the type of information needed

According to Tongco (2007), the purposive sampling technique involves obtaining information held by certain members of the community. This step entails the researcher setting out to find people who are willing to, and who can, provide information on the topic of study (Tongco, 2007). This is by virtue of the participants' experiences and knowledge on the specific topic (Tongco, 2007). For this study the researcher obtained information on student protests, struggle songs, the use of these songs, and the emotions struggle songs evoke. The researcher identified that the type of information required for the study needed to be obtained from student activists from different organisations on campus who have been actively involved in protest action.

3. Define the qualities the informants should or should not have

According to Tongco (2007), with the purposive sampling method, the choice of the participants is deliberately made, based on the qualities those participants possess. These qualities consist of the participants' knowledge and experience on the topic of study, (Tongco, 2007). The researcher realised that the type of information that was needed for this study was to be obtained from student activists. These activists were from different political parties and other organisations on the university campus. These activists have been actively involved with the latest protest action on campus and have sung protest songs. The student

activists were selected because of their knowledge of struggle songs and their experiences when they sing them during protest action.

#### 4. Find your informants based on defined qualities

According to Tongco (2007), this step entails doing some investigation into the area of research. This involves seeking assistance from people in that community before going on site to conduct the research. The researcher had some familiarity with the targeted research community, however some assistance was sought on information regarding how to approach student activists. This was done by interacting with other students who were familiar with different organisations on campus. The students were also aware of different gatherings organised by student activists and this provided an opportunity for the researcher to attend one of those meetings.

##### 4(a). Recruitment strategy

The researcher attended a meeting organised by one of the student organisations on campus which was open to all students. This gave the researcher an opportunity to become familiar with different members of the organisations. In so doing, the researcher was able to identify students who may possess the defined characteristics making them suitable participants of this study. These characteristics entailed knowledge of struggle songs and active involvement in student protests. These identified student activists were contacted and recruited to take part in the study.

#### 5. Keep in mind the importance of reliability and competency in assessing potential informants

Tongco (2007) states that a danger in purposive sampling is that the researcher has to exercise judgement on the participants' reliability and competency. This means that the researcher has to be certain of the participant's knowledge in providing meaningful data (Godambe, 1982, as cited in Tongco, 2007). The researcher also has to be alert and aware of any biases from the participants (Tongco, 2007). In exercising judgement, the researcher ensured that the participants were chosen solely on their ability to provide meaningful information for the study. The selection of participants was based on the defined characteristics and qualities.

## 6. Use appropriate data gathering techniques

The researcher used semi-structured interviews to gather data. The use of this technique is suitable because of its in-depth conversational manner, which facilitates rich, detailed information (Tongco, 2007).

## 7. In analysing data and interpreting results, record the bias, do not apply the interpretations beyond the sample population

Purposive sampling is not free from bias. It is important to state the bias clearly, when analysing and interpreting the results (Bernard, 2002, as cited in Tongco, 2007). This report contains a record of any biases that were a limitation to the study.

### **4.4. Data Collection**

Semi-structured interviews were used as data collection method in this study.

#### **Semi-structured interviews**

In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer tries to obtain information from the participant by asking open-ended questions (Longhurst, 2003). These open-ended questions were prepared by the researcher before the interview (see Appendix A). Semi-structured interviews unfold in a conversational manner (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Longhurst, 2003). This unfolding that took place during the interviews made it possible for student activists to express themselves freely when they shared their experiences about singing struggle songs during protest action.

The use of open-ended questions enabled student activists to give thick, rich, in-depth information about the singing of struggle songs during protests and the emotions the songs evoke. The open-ended questions also enabled the researcher to probe the student activists' responses where necessary. The predetermined order of the semi-structured interview allowed for some structure in the type of questions being asked and when to ask them. However, the order also allowed for flexibility in the way the topic was addressed by each participant (Longhurst, 2003).

#### **Data collection instrument and data collection procedure**

In terms of the data collection instrument, an interview schedule (see Appendix A) was developed by the researcher. The questions were developed by considering the research topic, research objectives and literature reviewed.

The data collection procedure was as follows: The researcher gained permission from the Humanities and Social Science Research, Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC), (see Appendix B).

Once permission was granted the students that were identified through purposive sampling were contacted and invited for interviews. Three of the interviews were conducted at the psychology department and the other two were at venues chosen by the participants. The data collection process took place in the space of a week. Prior to the interview, the researcher went through the information sheet pertaining to details of their participation in the study, (see Appendix C). This allowed the participants to make an informed decision about giving consent and commencing with the interview. After this information was provided the participants were given the consent form to sign (see Appendix D). The interviews were conducted in English; they took 20-60 minutes and were recorded with the consent of the participants (see Appendix E). The interviews were recorded for transcribing and analysis. To ensure confidentiality, at no point during the interview process were the participants required to reveal their identities or any other information that may reveal who they are. Pseudonyms will be used to refer to participants in all communications and reports regarding this study.

#### **4.5. Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis as discussed and described by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used in this study. This method, according to Braun and Clarke (2006) identifies, analyses and reports themes within a data set. The data set from the semi-structured individual interviews was analysed using thematic analysis.

There are six phases explained by Braun and Clarke (2006) that lead to a successful thematic analysis, of which this study made use. The phases include the following:

***Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with your data.*** The researcher immersed herself in the data. The collection of data through semi-structured individual interviews in this study gave the researcher prior knowledge to the data, as well as some initial analytical thoughts. The data was transcribed by the researcher and this allowed for the absorption of the data collected. Verbatim transcription enabled the researcher to get more sense of the students'

feelings and tone. The transcribed data from the semi-structured interviews was read and re-read in order to extract meaning and patterns.

***Phase 2: Generating initial codes.*** This is the phase where the researcher generated initial codes. The generating of the initial codes was done by organising the data into meaningful groups. Coding was done manually by the researcher, by writing notes on the texts that were analysed. Each data item was therefore given careful attention. Codes identified features of the data that appeared interesting to the researcher and referred to the most basic elements of the raw data that was assessed in a meaningful way (Boyatzis, 1998, as cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006). These features of the data that appeared interesting and meaningful were collated.

***Phase 3: Searching for themes.*** The researcher at this phase sorted the codes generated in phase 2 into potential themes. Whilst analysing the codes, the researcher started thinking about how the different codes may combine to form an overarching theme. This was done by considering meaningful patterns of data which were relevant to the research questions. The researcher thought about the relationship between the codes, the themes and the different level of themes. The themes that did not belong were identified.

***Phase 4: Reviewing themes.*** This phase involved the refinement of the themes generated in the previous phase. It became clear that some of the potential themes identified in phase 3 were not meant to be themes. For this study, all the collated extracts for each theme were read and then it was decided whether they formed a coherent pattern. The validity of the individual themes in relation to the data was considered. The entire data set was re-read to make sure that the themes worked in relation to the data set. Any additional data that was missed in the previous stages was coded. The researcher then had an idea of the different themes, how they fit together and the information elicited from the data.

***Phase 5: Defining and naming the themes.*** In this phase the crux of each theme was identified as well as the aspect captured by each theme. For every theme a detailed analysis was conducted and written. For every piece of information or detail found in a theme, the researcher explained how it was related to the research objectives. Every theme was considered in relation to the other themes. By refining the themes in this manner, the researcher was able to see if a theme had sub themes.



***Phase 6: Producing the report.*** In this phase the final analysis was done. This included; considering the order in which to present the themes and selecting the data that will be suitable to illustrate each theme. The write-up of the report was done using empirical evidence that addressed the research questions.

#### **4.6. Credibility, Dependability, Conformability and Transferability**

##### **4.6.1. Credibility**

In a qualitative study, the credibility of a study refers to how true a study claims to be (Silverman, 2000). “Credibility refers to the truth of the data or the participant views and the interpretation and representation of them by the researcher” (Polit & Beck, 2012, as cited in Cope, 2014 p.89). Credibility considers whether the researcher has presented the information the participants have provided. Credibility of a study also looks at how relevant the study is to its context (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). The credibility of this study was enhanced through referential adequacy where a substantial amount of notes from the semi-structured interviews were written; the interviews were also recorded and transcribed (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). This was to keep track of the researcher’s experience throughout the process, so that what the participant shared is congruent with what is presented in the findings of the study (Cope, 2014). These notes included details about the context of the research and the observations made by the researcher during the course of the interviews. No information from the data was omitted or fabricated, and every piece of information that the participants presented was documented as it was presented. The original form of every material used in this study is available (Silverman, 2000).

##### **4.6.2. Dependability**

A study is dependable when the researcher provides the information from the data collection in the exact same words used by the participants, providing the experiences as related by the participants (Silverman, 2000). When the researcher collected data, dependability was maintained by asking open-ended questions (Silverman, 2000). The data collected was recorded and transcribed, and the transcribing of the data ensured the dependability of the data processing exercise. The careful and thorough transcription of the interviews ensured that the findings of this study are dependable. The interaction with participants and the information the researcher elicited from the participants maintained the dependability of the study.

#### **4.6.3. Conformability**

The conformability of a study refers to a researcher's ability to represent the data of study as it is without presenting their own points of view (Cope, 2014). This was essential as the researcher has a particular interest in the topic and there was a high possibility of bias. With that in mind, the researcher derived the findings of this study directly from the data collected; the quotes from the participants are presented under each theme and discussed in relation to what the participants shared with the researcher in the interviews (Cope, 2014).

#### **4.6.4. Transferability**

In a qualitative research the transferability of a study refers to the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to a similar context with different participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). The researcher collected sufficient, detailed descriptions of data, which were reported precisely and in detail, allowing for judgement to be made by the reader regarding transferability (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). The transferability of a study also depends on the congruence between the 'sending context', where the research is conducted and the 'receiving context', where it is applied (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). This was enhanced by providing 'thick' descriptions from the data collected (Creswell, 1998; Cuba & Lincoln, 1984, as cited in Babbie & Mouton, 2005).

#### **4.7. Ethical Considerations**

According to Wassenaar and Mamotte (2012) there are eight principles that need to be considered carefully to enhance the ethical standing and scientific value of social science and psychological research. These principles are: (a) collaborative partnership;(b) social value;(c) scientific validity;(d) fair selection of participants;(e) favourable risk/benefit ratio;(f)independent ethics review;(g) informed consent; and (h) ongoing respect for participants and study communities.

These ethical principles were adhered to in this study.

##### ***a) Collaborative partnership.***

For collaborative partnership the researcher is encouraged to develop studies that are conducted in collaboration with the target population and that exploitation of research participants and their communities is reduced (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012). In terms of collaborative partnership, this study ensured that the participants in this study and their communities were not exploited in any way. The research results will be made available to

the participants and the University of KwaZulu-Natal community. The data has been collected and analysed, the final report was compiled, and all the participants in the study who communicated that they would like to receive the results of the study will be contacted via email and a date will be set with them for the researcher to present the results of the study.

***b) Social value.***

The principle of social value refers to the responsibility of the researcher to address questions that will add value to the community and that forms part of the researcher's study (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012). This study is of social value as the findings of this study provide a better understanding of the emotions and challenges faced by young people in South Africa.

***c) Scientific validity.***

The principle of scientific validity refers to the thoroughness, feasibility and justification of the study's research design, sample, and analysis in answering the research questions (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012).

The research design, sample, and data collection chosen by the researcher answered the research questions of this study. The methods used are also recognised scientific methods. This shows that the methods used in this study gave a truthful account of the emotions evoked in the lives of student activists when singing struggle songs during protest action. The study is feasible and a clear outline of the methods, sample, data collection techniques and analysis of the study is provided in the methodology section of this report and is explained in detail.

***d) Fair selection of participants.***

Fair selection of participants refers to ensuring that the population selected for the study are those to whom the research question applies (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012). Purposive sampling is a method that is inherently biased, however, it provides robust and reliable data (Tongco, 2007). The participants were therefore selected solely on the basis of their suitability for this study and their knowledge of the topic.

***e) Favourable risk/benefit ratio.***

The principle of favourable risk/benefit ratio refers to the consideration by the researcher of harm occurring during the course of the study and the severity of the harm occurring. It includes safeguards and contingencies that should be put in place to deal with any foreseeable harm (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012).

A factor that was taken into consideration by the researcher was the risk of the different emotions that student activists might experience as they reflect on their experiences in protest actions when singing struggle songs. During some of the protest actions some traumatic events eventuated; i.e. police brutality, teargas explosions and some students being arrested. The researcher therefore made an arrangement with the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Child and Family Centre to provide trauma therapy should those student activists display any signs of trauma (see Appendix F).

***f) Independent ethics review.***

The principle of independent ethics review ensures that before commencement of data collection the study's research proposal is subjected to a process of independent ethics review, which maximises the protection of participants and enhances the quality of the research (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012). The scientific elements of the study are also reviewed to determine whether the methods are appropriate.

The research proposal was submitted for ethics review. The data for this study was not collected until there was formal approval from the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC), University of KwaZulu-Natal, (see Appendix B).

***g) Informed consent.***

Informed consent refers to the researcher providing the participants with clear, detailed information about the study, the methods, risk and benefits as well as their voluntary rights (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012).

An information sheet providing all the relevant information for this study was given to participants to read and sign before taking part in the study (see Appendix C and Appendix D). The researcher read the information sheet with each participant before commencing the data collection. This was to ascertain that the participant understood and was clear about their participation in the study. The data collected was not recorded without the consent of the

participants, and consent for audio recording was requested from participants (see Appendix E).

***h) Ongoing respect for participants and study communities.***

The principle refers to the continuous treatment of participants with respect and dignity during and after the study (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012).

The participants of this study were treated with respect and dignity during and after the study. It was clearly communicated to the participants that the study was voluntary, that they did not have to answer the questions that they did not want to and that they could withdraw from the study whenever they wished to do so. The participants' identities were protected. Should there be any new information regarding the study it would be made known to the participants.

**4.8. Conclusion**

This chapter provided the methodology that was used for this study. Qualitative exploratory research design was used to explore the emotions evoked within student activists when they sing struggle songs during protest action. Purposive sampling method was used for the selection of participants. Data collection was through semi-structured individual interviews. Ethical procedures were adhered to throughout the data collection process. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. The following chapter will present the results from the study.

## Chapter 5: Findings

In this chapter the findings from the study are presented. From each research question, several themes regarding that question emerged. Table 1 presents a summary of the themes that emerged from the different research questions in the study. This is followed by an empirical presentation of the themes where each theme is briefly discussed with evidence from the data collected.

**Table 1**

*Summary of themes*

Research question	Theme(s)
What emotions are evoked within student activists when they sing struggle songs during campus protests?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Negative emotions: Anger and Pain</li><li>• Positive Emotions: Pride and Hope</li></ul>
How do student activists at the University of KwaZulu-Natal define struggle songs that they sing during campus protests?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Spiritual</li></ul>
Why do student activists at the University of KwaZulu-Natal sing struggle songs during campus protests?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cultural Identity</li><li>• Communication</li><li>• Unity</li></ul>

### 5.1. Theme Description

#### Negative emotions -anger

The theme of anger was a common emotion mentioned by the student activists. This was mentioned as the student activists shared about the emotions they experienced when they spoke about some of their favourite struggle songs or the first songs that they learned. The student activists expressed the thoughts and emotions they have regarding their situation or issues they have. The songs also triggered memories of other protest actions where things went wrong.

## Participant Interview Extracts

Participant 2: “Think about certain things, feel sad for yourself at the same time you want to fight and anger is triggered .... Sad and the sadness triggers anger, you want to fight something.”

Participant 3: “Mmmh, nna I get very angry... I get very angry because our parents never signed up for that... and they have got no clue what they have given us... whenever I sing the song we were sold out by our parents, we were sold out by the government.”

Participant 4: “These songs allow us to be angry but not lose our humanity that wants to dance that wants us to sing .... We don’t protest because it’s fun, there are certain, there are certain things that happen to you.”

### **Negative emotions - pain**

The theme of pain speaks to the pain that comes with singing the struggle songs. The student activists shared how the songs allow them to reflect on the pain that they feel. The struggle songs are also a reminder of how dire their situation is. The student activists are therefore able to express the pain they feel through singing these songs during protest actions. The singing of the songs also provides some relief and comfort to the pain they feel.

## Participant Interview Extracts

Participant 1: “These songs are like a dose of medicine through my pain. We sing songs beyond conversation. Alleviates my social pain, alleviates my consciousness, alleviates my love. We are in pain.”

Participant 4: “Some songs are reflective, some songs will make you realise how broken you are.”

Participant 4: “There is pain in someone ignoring you when you have something genuine to say.”... “There is pain in watching other people suffer.” ... There is pain in someone shutting down something that is important to you ... Want to cry, weep and feel the pain, want to feel that we are more than the pain and that’s what the songs do to us.”

### **Positive emotions- pride**

The theme of pride speaks to the positive emotions that the struggle songs evoke to the student activists. The pride they experience allows them to take pride in the group and the

cause they are fighting for. They are also reminded of their previous victories and the victories of those who came before them. They are therefore able to celebrate themselves.

#### Participant Interview Extracts

Participant 4: “Some songs you sing because they celebrate you.”...“Some songs would trigger you because they celebrate you.”

Participant 5: “Uuhm sometimes I become a bit proud of where, of South African history and of where we have been and what we have achieved and uuhm, although sometimes I do feel like there wasn’t justice after 1994.”

#### **Positive emotions - hope**

The theme of hope speaks of the positive emotions that the student activists experience as they sing the struggle songs during protest actions. This allows them to persevere through their hardships. There is a belief that their cause is worthy and that they will overcome their adversities. The theme speaks to how they keep going and their belief that they will overcome.

#### Participant Interview Extracts

Participant 1: “Keep seeing more of the vision .... Believing that we will do this.... Trigger greatness to actually go. Be brave, confused.”

Participant 4: “Hope there was a song that gave people hope that an army is coming for you.... Hope (there was a song that gave people hope that an army is coming for you)....There is so much to despair there is literally an army coming for you.”

Participant 5: “I think singing the songs uuh motivates us. Keep us going ... But it also motivates them to keep walking.”

#### **Spiritual**

The spiritual theme refers to the meaning that the struggle songs have for the student activists. It speaks to the impact the songs have on their souls. This impact and spiritual aspect of the songs allows the student activists to experience different emotions. The spiritual element of the songs allows them to reflect and connect with their emotions.



## Participant Interview Extracts

Participant 1: “Some songs allow you to meditate and reflect....Some songs allow you to meditate and reflect. They connect me to where everything started to where our disposition, our, the fact that you know land is dignity for me, we all speak that land is identity.”

Participant 3: “Yeah so, that is the purpose of singing, it speaks to our inner souls.... When you are singing you are directing your energy and your emotion it’s more meaningful to sing, cause that is where there is spirituality.”

Participant 4: “Songs are Spirit given, understanding how even our culture of singing in SA started in the church. There is a Spiritual connection.... Spiritual being that dynamic that leads to a place to cry, to feel.”

### **Cultural identity**

The theme of cultural identity emerged when the student activists were asked about the reason they sing struggle songs. Singing is a huge cultural practice in the African context. This practice is part of their heritage and defines who they are as a people.

## Participant Interview Extracts

Participant 2: “In Africa singing is the best thing ever, it brings communion, unity and the zeal, the strength to just do certain things, so if we, you go there actually it will be like guys we not doing anything.”

Participant 3: “As Africans we sing and that’s what we do best”....it goes back to the pre-colonial setting of Africa this is what Africa is known of throughout the world.”

Participant 3: “We can’t detach ourselves from who we are.... the minute we do that we are going to lose track of all that we are, we are going to suffer from identity crises...These songs they come, we can’t stop them. They are part of us...”

Participant 4: “Because it connected me to where everything started, to where our disposition, our, the fact that, you know land is dignity for me, we all speak that land is identity.”

Participant 5: “Well I think for us in South Africa it has been a culture.... So when we move and we sing about these things and everything it actually has an emotional impact on the people who are singing, the people who are actually watching, it’s good for them to actually understand. So it’s more like cultural thing.”

### **Communication**

The theme of communication refers to the reason the student activists sing the struggle songs during protest actions. It refers to the messages they are trying to convey through the songs. The emotions that they feel about what is going on in their environment are also communicated in these songs. The student activists also expressed which groups of people they are trying to communicate to through the songs. These people include by-passers and those in positions of authority making decisions that affect the lives of the students.

#### **Participant Interview Extracts**

Participant 2: “I mean, I don’t know it’s a sign of showing our, like showing that we want something. Uuhm that we want to voice out something... You just want the person who suppressed our leaders to feel sorry for you. To have sympathy for you, but then having hope that maybe they will hear you”

Participant 4: “Is more of, it helps to spread the ideology behind the protest....You want to convey this message.”

Participant 5: “Normally is more like I just want to be heard, that’s all I want, I just want to be heard. I just want someone to know, whoever is in charge of whatever we are striking for, like maybe NSFAS [National Student Financial Aid Scheme], UKZN [University of KwaZulu-Natal], the government whoever, they need to listen that we as people are not happy with certain things that you are doing or you have done, or we are not happy with this thing that has been placed.”

### **Unity**

The theme of unity provides another reason that the student activists sing the struggle songs. The songs remind them of the importance of coming together as a collective. The unity brings them strength to keep going in the quest to achieve their desired results of the protest actions.

## Participant Interview Extracts

Participant 2: “Unity and bring strength amongst us.... Having one voice boosts your energy. When that songs starts I mean you can just feel it in me, like yhoo, I’m ready, whatever yeah.”

Participant 4: “Components of my favourite remind me that you can’t do this alone... I have a responsibility and purpose even from within the collective.”

### **5.2. Conclusion**

This chapter presented the findings of the study. A brief description of each theme was provided with evidence from the data. The next chapter will provide a detailed discussion of the findings.

## **Chapter 6: Discussion**

In this chapter the findings from the study are discussed. The themes that emerged from each research question are discussed under each respective research question.

### **6.1. What Emotions Are Evoked Within the Student Activists When They Sing Struggle Songs During Campus Protests?**

This question is answered in two themes that divide negative and positive emotions. The negative emotions that were experienced by student activists were those of anger and pain. The positive emotions that were common were those of hope and pride. These four emotions are discussed below.

#### **6.1.1. Negative emotions – anger**

The first emotion that was found to be shared by student activists was that of anger. Gardner and Moore (2008) describe anger as a primary emotion. Primary emotions have been defined as intrinsic emotions that develop to support fast and reactive response behaviour in cases of immediate danger (Becker-Asano & Wachsmuth, 2008). A primary emotion usually leads to a specific response. In this study the primary emotion of anger that student activists experienced caused them to take certain actions, such as fighting back when provoked. As Thomas (2003) describes it, an emotion such as anger is expressed in different ways by people. These expressions usually lead to different actions which are the outcome of an event (Thomas, 2003).

The singing of the struggle songs allowed the student activists the opportunity to further think through their situation as Black students, what was happening in their environment and the implications thereof. This is supported by Tafira's (2013) description of Black consciousness. According to Tafira (2013) Black consciousness enables Black people to critically examine their lives and experiences. The emotion of anger was triggered when the students examined their situation and this anger found its expression through struggle songs. Anger has been described as an emotion that occurs as a result of events being assessed as incongruent with a goal, and the cause of that event is attributed to people other than self (Smith, Haynes, Lazarus & Pope, 1993, as cited in Blincoe & Harris, 2011). The events of an increased fee hike and possible exclusion from university were therefore found to be incongruent with the students' goals of attaining an education. This assessed

incongruence allowed the students to reflect on their anger. Reflecting on the anger they felt consequently led to a recognition and re-thinking of their situation. The re-thinking of their situation happens when the students are reminded that they are the ones who can help themselves, and bring change. The re-thinking of their situation takes place as they sing struggle songs, which compels them to protest. This experience is supported further by Mngxitama et al. (2008) who stated that Black consciousness made defiance possible. As it is with Black consciousness, Black people empower themselves and are therefore at the forefront of their own struggle (Tafira, 2013). The emotional experience and awareness that the students' ability to lead brings about the change they want, is what triggers their motivation to fight for themselves

Through the social action of protest and the singing of struggle songs, student activists were able to find meaning in the affective event (Thiel, et al., 2011). As mentioned by Biko (1978), Black people express their emotive experiences through music and song. Student activists were able to reflect on their anger as they were singing the struggle songs during protests. The students were expressing their frustrations over the decisions taken by the government regarding the fee increment. Similarly, Nwoye (2018) described how struggle songs have been used by people to express their frustrations to governing authorities over matters that were of concern to them.

#### **6.1.2. Negative emotions – pain**

The second emotion that the student activists mentioned as one that is evoked within them when singing struggle songs is that of pain. The concept of pain is one that is complex to define. For the purpose of this study emotional pain, mental pain, suffering and grief were considered when understanding the pain that the student activists reflected upon. Emotional pain has been defined as “the activation of pain affect by any stimulus other than physical injury” (MacDonald, 2009, p.3). Tossani (2013) described this emotional pain as a state where one feels broken as a result of being wounded or experiencing some form of loss. The mental pain consists of an individual's various subjective experiences which are characterised by a perception of negative change in the self, which is accompanied by negative feelings (Tossani, 2013). In terms of suffering, Tossani (2013) described it as distress that can be linked to events that threaten the intactness of a person. In the case of this study, an event such as the announcement of a fee increment is one that led to the distress that threatened the students' academic goals. Lastly, the concept of grief was considered in understanding the

student activists' pain and this was described as the characteristic response to the loss of an individual, or loss of a dream (Tossani, 2013).

For the student activists, the struggle songs are sung to express their pain. The songs are an expression of the pain they feel regarding what is taking place in their environment. Nwoye (2018) similarly, found that struggle songs were used to express the grief that people experience. Through the singing of struggle songs, student activists are able to express their pain about matters occurring in their environment. This form of expression through singing also provides some relief to their pain. Furthermore, Nwoye (2018) has described how struggle songs have provided consolation for the distress that people experience in their situations. Struggle songs have therefore been found to provide a cathartic experience as they provide a space for those singing them to verbalise their concerns over matters in their environment (Nwoye, 2018).

This pain is experienced when the students feel ignored or unheard as they try to raise their concerns. The pain was also found to be triggered by the manner in which student activists feel dismissed when they share and express what they consider to be unfair in their environment. Furthermore, this pain is a result of a system that fails to recognise their humanity (Biko, 1978) and how they are marginalised as a group of students from low income families. Similarly, Ndlovu (2000) speaks of how struggle songs have been used to articulate people's anguish and experiences regarding a system that was insensitive to their needs. This then brings to awareness the restrictions and hindrances that the students experience in attaining their education. The restrictions were found to not only bring pain, but are also viewed by the students as matters to be subdued. In managing their pain, the students are also reminded that they are more than the pain they feel. This concept of being more than the pain can be further understood from the Black consciousness perspective as described by Cooper and Ratele (2018). Black consciousness allows Black people to live meaningful lives which are not created under the restrictions of those who oppress them (Cooper & Ratele, 2018). Students therefore, protest to live their lives, not under the restrictions of those causing their pain and oppressing them.

It was also found that the pain that is triggered within the student activists brings an awareness and insight into the degree of the pain. This is brought about by their ability to reflect on the pain they feel as they sing the songs. It also indicates the manner in which the struggle songs allow for those who are singing them to look within themselves and become

aware of other areas of pain and hurt that they experience. The struggle songs therefore allow the student activists to deal with their affect and to acknowledge the pain they feel.

### **6.1.3. Positive emotions - pride**

The singing of struggle songs has been found to evoke emotions of pride in the student activists. For this study, the definition and description of pride by Williams and DeSteno (2008) was found to be relevant in understanding the pride that is evoked within student activists when they sing struggle songs. Pride has been defined as “an emotion generated by appraisals that one is responsible for a socially valued outcome or for being a socially valued person” (Mascolo & Fischer, 1995, as cited in Williams & DeSteno, 2008, p. 1007). Additionally, pride has been described as a positive, self-conscious emotion that can be credited to a person’s abilities and efforts.

For this study, pride can therefore be understood as a feeling that student activists experience about what they have achieved. In their collective setting, this takes into consideration their own efforts towards achieving their goals. This also looks at the pride student activists feel in the overall group efforts or in similar groups which have come before them and who have achieved their goals. This sense of pride results from what has been achieved by the people who came before them who have reached their goals in standing up against the injustices of the past. le Roux-Kemp(2014) found that struggle songs were used as a reminder to people of how far they have come, especially in post-democratic South Africa. Similarly, Groenewald (2005) also found that in post-democratic South Africa, struggle songs are used to celebrate leaders and are also sung at different events to commemorate those who were involved in the struggle for liberation. There is a sense of pride that the students have in them as a people. This pride also makes them aware of what they can still achieve despite the challenges they may be facing.

The singing of the struggle songs evokes a sense of pride as the students reflect on what they have achieved, and think about what they can still achieve. The pride that is experienced can either be pride in self or in the group. Similarly Gray (1999) found that struggle songs, through the solidarity they bring, also lead to group pride. This pride heightens belief in the student activists, that they can change their situation. The pride also speaks to their agency. Similarly, Allen (2004) spoke about how music functions as a site of group agency. The manner in which they articulate their origins and how they celebrate themselves through the singing of songs, leads to them being strengthened. The student

activists therefore form their beliefs on how they can change and improve their situations. The songs also act as a great reminder of what they can achieve. They are somehow reminded of their abilities and inner strengths, of what they are able to do, and this brings about a sense of pride. Additionally this is the pride that is mentioned by Black consciousness theorists where Black people own who they are and everything that makes them Black (Biko, 1978).

#### **6.1.4. Positive emotions – hope**

The second positive emotion that will be discussed, which was found to be evoked within student activists by the singing of struggle songs, is hope. There is hope that the students experience when they come together as a collective group that stands and speak up against the injustices that they experience in their environment. The songs provide them with hope as they try to manage and cope with their stressful conditions. Nwoye (2018) described struggle songs as songs of hope and consolation, because they provide people with hope in the midst of their stressful conditions. This hope that is evoked in student activists as they sing these songs, encourages them to keep on going until they reach their desired outcome. Makky (2007) found that the songs allowed for those singing them not to lose hope and served as fuel to keep fighting back. Additionally Biko (1978) was also of the view that songs have enabled people to keep going and be persistent when faced with opposition. The singing of struggle songs therefore, allows the students to keep being hopeful when they experience hardships, which also increases their energies and fuels them to keep fighting (Biko, 1978; Makky, 2007).

Nwoye (2018) speaks of how the songs reinforce messages that persuade the protestors to persevere in their protest action, thereby encouraging them to foresee a brighter future. This gives the students hope that their efforts will not be in vain and they will succeed in reaching their goal. Similarly le Roux-Kemp (2014) found that the singing of struggle songs remind those who are singing them that their desired outcome is attainable. Through the singing of the struggle songs the student activists were therefore reminded that they can reach their goals. It was also found by Gray (1999) that the struggle songs not only restored the Africans' faith in themselves, but they also offered hope in the direction taken. In a manner of speaking, the struggle songs validate the students' efforts in their protests and expressing this through songs brings a level of hope, which reinforces the motivation to keep on going and persevere. As Makky (2007) describes it, the songs continued to ignite resistance. This was also discussed by le Roux-Kemp (2014), who found that the songs offer



hope and promote a positivity that can replace the oppression that the singers are experiencing at the time.

The opposition that the students are confronted with may lead to hopelessness; it was however found that struggle songs elicit hope to the students. Le Roux-Kemp (2014), found that some of the struggle songs were aimed at nourishing hopes and aspirations. Furthermore, Nwoye (2018) described how these songs acted as a source of consolation to those facing limiting circumstances. The singing of some struggle songs has therefore been considered over the years as a beacon of hope, which has enabled student activists to overcome the challenges they faced while protesting. This is similar to the findings of Nwoye (2018), who found that these songs have forged hope and vision that has enabled Africans to transcend the atrocities of the apartheid system in South Africa

## **6.2. How Do Student Activists at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Define Struggle Songs That They Sing During Campus Protests?**

### **6.2.1. Spiritual**

The only theme extracted from the data collected, which answers this question of the study, is the theme of spirituality. The songs were defined by student activists as being spiritual. By defining these songs as having a spiritual connection, the researcher understood that these songs permit student activists to connect with their spirituality and the spiritual world. Similarly, Barz (2011) described music as ‘food for the soul’, as something that can save one’s soul. The term ‘food for the soul’ describes the spiritual purpose and feelings music evokes in human beings. Furthermore, it was found that it is the spiritual element of struggle songs that allows student activists to feel and express their emotions when they sing these songs, making the songs more meaningful for them.

The connection to the spiritual world provides the student activists with a space to meditate and reflect. This ability of student activists to reflect while singing the songs, is understood further through the self-reflective capability as explained by the social cognitive theory. When singing struggle songs, student activists are provided with a space to reflect within themselves and on their situation. This reflective process allows them to formulate ideas, act on those ideas and predict what may happen (Bandura, 2001). This process can take place in a self-reflective manner that Bandura (2001) called the logical verification process, in which student activists are provided with a space where they can check within themselves for distorted beliefs in their thinking, of things they have always known. This meditation and

reflection process places them in a position which allows them to think about where everything started. This process allows for a cognitive re-assessment of their issues and brings about a new understanding of their issues.

This theme indicates that the spiritual nature of struggle songs provides a space for student activists to reflect and connect to the spiritual world. The reflective process that connects them to the spiritual world allows them to ponder their emotions, express them, and make sense of them as they move forward. This reflection allows them to acknowledge their emotions. The struggle songs are therefore defined as being spiritual by student activists because of their nature to speak to the soul, which allows them to reflect and meditate on their feelings. It is through this reflective process that they ponder and re-structure their cognitions on certain matters.

### **6.3. Why Do Student Activists at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Sing Struggle Songs During Protests?**

#### **6.3.1. Cultural identity**

The theme of cultural identity is the first theme that answers the last question of this study. Student activists sing struggle songs because these songs form part of their cultural identity. It was mentioned by the student activists that the songs are a big part of their lives. Student activists sing these songs because they remind them of their identity and where they come from as a people. These reasons, which form part of the cultural identity of student activists, indicate that these songs are symbolic to them. Student activists sing these songs because they are symbolic. This cultural identity is discussed in two ways: the first is identity and belonging; and the second is the cultural value that struggle songs hold.

The findings of this study indicate that the songs create a space for student activists to think back on what has happened and how past events have contributed to the formation of their identity. Struggle songs facilitate the process of personal revelation; by singing them the students can reclaim their identities, instead of forming their identities on distortions imposed upon them. The songs therefore become symbolic to those singing them (Byerly, 1998). Furthermore, Byerly (1998) speaks about how the symbolic nature of the songs serves as a vehicle to reconstruct and take back what has been taken by force, and to re-evaluate what has been unlawfully created. This process can be understood further through symbolising capability as described by Bandura (2001). These songs have been symbolised by the student activist, and from them student activists have the ability to understand, create and control the

environment that speaks to every aspect of their lives, including their identities (Bandura, 2001). As explained in the social cognitive theory, cognitive factors partly determine which environmental events people will observe, what meaning they will give to those events and the effects the events will have on them (Bandura, 2001).

Additionally, the songs do not only remind student activists of their identities, but by singing these songs they can preserve and maintain who they are. This is done as the songs allow them to continually reconstruct their identities. This idea also found favour with Byerly (1998), who said that struggle songs can be used to retrieve, express and preserve identity. Student activists therefore sing these songs firstly, because they form part of their identity, and secondly, they sing them to preserve their identity.

In terms of belonging, student activists described how the singing of struggle songs reminds them of their belonging. The belonging can be understood in terms of individuals identifying themselves with a certain group. In this case, struggle songs remind student activists that they belong to a collective that has shared experiences with them. le Roux-Kemp (2014) elaborates this idea further by describing how struggle songs allow individuals in a group to talk about shared experiences common to them. By expressing themselves through the medium of these songs, they grow in self-assertion and group pride. These collective experiences could be shared by people from the same political party, or members of the same movement, such as the Fees Must Fall movement.

Through the singing of struggle songs the student activists are reminded of their identity and their belonging and this validates them as individuals. This was further supported by the finding of Byerly (1998) on struggle songs validating people. By belonging to a group of people with common experiences and sharing the same goals, people feel part of a community or a collective which forms part of who they are. le Roux-Kemp (2014) also elaborated this idea further by stating that struggle songs are sung by a group of people, which indicates that each individual in that group forms part of a collective or a community. There is therefore a shared identity that is shared with others, which in turn reminds them of where they come from. This also reminds them of where they are going, and asserts their autonomy, which validates them as individuals (le Roux-Kemp, 2014). This validation that student activists experience through the singing of the songs facilitates the process of personal revelation (Byerly, 1998). Hence, student activists sing these songs because they are reminded of their belonging.

The other reason for singing these songs during protest action, as shared by student activists, is that the songs form part of their culture. The term culture has various definitions in different disciplines. For the purpose of the study the definition by Rathje (2009) will be used, which defines culture as a set of practices that are uniform within a social system. A social system encompasses a group of people with shared commonalities (Rathje, 2009). As it is understood in Black consciousness, the way Black people deal with problems adds to the richness of their cultural heritage (Biko, 1978). This is evident as the student activists continue with the cultural practice of singing struggle songs during protest actions. As Unwin et al. (2002) describe it; songs have always had their role when a group of people meet in states of heightened emotions. Social movements have relied on music to express protest (Unwin et al., 2002). The singing of struggle songs is therefore a norm during protest actions. From this finding it can be deduced that struggle songs are natural in the social group where people meet to take part in a protest action. It can then be deduced that these struggle songs are sung as a form of ritual. McLaren (1984) describes rituals as natural social activities found in groups of people. Rituals that are common to specific groups of people are symbolic for interpreting events that happen in their everyday lives (McLaren, 1984).

Furthermore, the structural ritualization theory emphasises that rituals are a significant part of people's daily social lives (Knottnerus, 1997). Rituals have a symbolic meaning to people's behaviour in a specific event, they focus and direct people's actions, and they also develop some structure for a group of people in gatherings (Guan & Knottnerus, 2006). The struggle songs therefore organises the protestors and channels the direction of the protest. This idea was also further understood through the ritualization process. This was observed through the factors that are essential to the ritualization process as described by Knottnerus (1997). The first factor is that of salience, which looks at the extent to which the ritualized structural process is perceived to be at the centre of an event (Knottnerus, 1997). In this case, the singing of struggle songs is considered to be at the centre of student protests. The struggle songs can be viewed as a factor that signifies and fuels protest actions. The second factor, which is repetitiveness, observes the extent to which the ritualization structural process takes place in certain social contexts over the other (Guan & Knottnerus, 2006). In terms of repetitiveness, studies (Allen, 2004; Bratton & van de Walle, 1992; Gray, 1999; Groenewald, 2005; Mutonya, 2004; Nkoala, 2013; Perullo, 2011; Unwin et al., 2002), indicate that a ritualization structural process, such as the singing of struggle songs, takes place in most

contexts in Africa and across the globe. So the cultural aspect indicates that struggle songs are sung because they are a ritual practice during protest action.

### **6.3.2. Communication**

The theme of communication also answers the third question; student activists sing struggle songs because they are communicating a message. The songs are used as a communication tool. There is therefore a message that is being conveyed to various people. These messages could be conveyed to student activists, to others in their environment or even to those in the spiritual world. This finding reiterates what Janzen (2000) mentioned about music originating from a group of people whose words form a conversation. Similarly, Barz (2011) mentions that in the African culture, it is believed that messages are portrayed better through music.

This message is directed at different parties. Firstly, the message is sent out to leaders or people in positions of authority. This finding matches what Gray (1999) said about struggle songs being used to approach the government with the intention of airing grievances and removing obstacles of prejudice, poverty and legislation. Similarly, Groenewald (2005) states that struggle songs have been sung to try to engage with those who occupy seats of power exploiting the needy or oppressed. Through the singing of these songs student activists communicate that a certain outcome is desired; a change in their situation is what the activists want. This change will be achieved if the students' concerns are heard by those who hold leadership positions. This finding is understood further through the construct of outcome expectancy of Bandura's social cognitive theory. Through the singing of struggle songs during protest actions, there is a certain outcome that student activists expect as they communicate their grievances to those in positions of authority. Furthermore, Groenewald (2005) supports this idea by mentioning that struggle songs are sung as a means of communication to achieve desired results. Additionally, Nwoye (2018) described how these struggle songs are used to evoke emotions of guilt in order for them to re-think their ways and not oppress others. The struggle songs are therefore sung to communicate the emotions of the protestors as well as to evoke emotions of empathy to those in positions of power. Perullo (2011) also states that the singing of struggle songs creates a response that requires action from those who listen; they also usually put pressure on politicians to do something about the conditions of ordinary people. Nkoala (2013) expressed the same idea that these songs are sung as a means of communication to achieve desired results.

Apart from targeting figures of authority, the messages in struggle songs are also directed at other people who may not be taking part in the protest action, but who are observers of the protests. This is supported by Biko (1978) when he mentioned that struggle songs were essential in awakening those who were unaware of some of the issues. Similarly, Perullo (2011) found that the songs give the composers a voice to express themselves in the hope that others receive the message that they are trying to convey through these songs. Furthermore, when exploring the different objectives of the singing of struggle songs in South Africa, Byerly (1998) found that the practical objective of these songs is to communicate with people from within the group and with those from outside the group. The message described refers to the message behind the protest action. This communication through songs facilitates the process of social recognition, which allows for cognitive re-assessment (Byerly, 1998). This creates a space for those within or outside the group to review where they stand on the issues that are at the forefront of the protest action (Byerly, 1998). Similarly, Mutonya (2004) in his study found that the communication that was portrayed to others was used as a weapon to politicise and educate them. The songs heightened the workers' consciousness against foreign occupiers (Mutonya, 2004). This cognitive re-assessment happens through the education and information that is communicated to others in these songs.

### **6.3.3. Unity**

The next theme that answers the third question of this study is unity. Student activists sing struggle songs during protest actions because these songs unify them. As it is emphasised by Black consciousness theorists, unity is essential for Black people to effectively challenge systems that marginalise them (Biko, 1978). It was found that the songs unifies the student activists and strengthens them; there is therefore, strength that they gain from the unity of the group. This finding is similar to the findings of Unwin et al. (2002) on social movements and the music sung during protest action. According to Unwin et al. (2002), social movements have relied heavily on the music they sing during protest action to build solidarity. It is therefore in the unified strength of the collective that each individual gains the strength to continue working toward the collective goal (Kemper, 2000, as cited in Bensimon, 2012). Struggle songs are therefore sung by the students to solidify the group and provide strength to the individual members. Similarly Biko (1978) mentioned that the songs increase the energies of people in the group as they sing them. The unity of the group when they come together in protest and song encourages each individual to keep going.

Furthermore, Gray (1999) has described struggle songs as a collective cry that may be seen as a powerful building block. It was further found by le Roux-Kemp (2014) that struggle songs have been sung to unify people and reassure them of their hopes for the future. The unity of the students' collective cry expressed in songs reassures them of their hopes for the future. Makky (2007) also found that the singing of struggle songs brought about a unity that allowed people to share their experiences and strategise on how to reach their goals. As a collective the students are therefore able to explore different ideas on how they can achieve their desired outcomes.

Additionally, the ability of these songs to unite the people singing them, reminds them that they need each other. As mentioned by Tafira (2013) Black people need to be aware of the power they have as a group. Thus, by singing the songs the students are reminded that they need the collective. This was also found by Gray (1999), that the singing of struggle songs assists in the process of social integration and cultural unity. It is in this sense that student activists see the need to unite with others in order for them to achieve their expected outcome. Furthermore, Groenewald (2005) described how these songs cut across barriers, encourage exclusivity and bring people together. Additionally, Gray (1999) said the singing of struggle songs represents a meeting of different groupings of individuals, all experiencing a sense of solidarity and unity owing to the oppression they experience in their society.

#### **6.4. Conclusion**

The findings of this study reveal that there are negative and positive emotions evoked within the student activists when they sing these songs during protest actions. The negative emotions are anger and pain. The positive emotions are pride and hope. Student activists define the struggle songs that they sing during protest action as spiritual. The songs are sung because they form part of their cultural identity and they are sung to communicate their grievances and spread the idea behind, and the reasons for, the protest. Struggle songs are also sung to bring unity within the group, which mobilises them and brings them strength.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations**

This chapter provides an overall conclusion of this study where the summary of the main findings of the study are provided. The strengths of the study are discussed. The limitations of the study are also discussed and recommendations for further research are provided.

### **7.1. Summary of Main Findings of the Study**

The findings of this study indicate that there are negative and positive emotions evoked within student activists when singing struggle songs. The negative emotion that was common to them, was that of anger, which was triggered by the ability of the songs to enable student activists to deal with and think about their situations. The second emotion triggered was that of pain, which was triggered by the dismissive responses the students receive from those to whom they address their concerns. The pain that was triggered also reminded them of their social pain. Although the songs triggered emotions of pain and reminded them of their pain, it was also found that the songs provide a remedy to their pain by providing some form of healing and relief to their pain. The first positive emotion experienced was that of pride, triggered by the student activists' ability to think back and reflect on their achievements. Lastly, these songs evoke the feeling of hope, triggered by the collective singing of the group. This hope instils in them the belief that they can continue in their quest to reach their desired goals.

The findings of this study indicate that struggle songs sung by student activists during protest actions are spiritual to them. The spiritual aspect of the songs speaks to their souls, where they can communicate to their higher being on matters that are of concern to them in their university environment. The songs connect them to the spiritual world, which allows them to express the emotions they feel and this is what makes the songs meaningful to them.

Student activists sing these songs during protest actions because they form part of their cultural identity. These songs form part of who they are and also remind them of their belonging. The songs are also sung by student activists because they are a ritualised practice at protest actions and they are symbolic. Struggle songs are also sung to communicate grievances to governing authorities and spread the ideology of the protest. Furthermore, it was found that the songs are sung to unite student activists during protest actions. Lastly, the



songs are sung because they bring about unity amongst the protestors. This unity provides them with strength to continue in protest in order for them to reach their desired goals.

### **7.2. Strengths of the Study**

The qualitative methodology that was used for this study was beneficial in that the exploration of a key historical tool, like struggle songs, provided insight into the emotions of contemporary student activists. This has not been done before in South Africa and this study has succeeded in doing so. This was of importance as it creates an understanding of some of the reasons behind the actions of students during protests. It also provides insight into the nature of the issues that contemporary students in South Africa are currently facing.

Qualitative interviews provided the researcher with an informed understanding of the experiences of student activists when singing struggle songs and the emotions evoked by the songs. The methods of analysis used in this study enabled the researcher to get an in-depth understanding of the student activists' perspectives on struggle songs.

### **7.3. Limitations of the Study**

The following were the limitations which may have obstructed the study, and which should be taken into account when considering related research in the future:

The qualitative nature of the study in terms of the sample size does not allow for generalisation of the research findings to the entire student population. This is unfortunate as student protests take place in educational institutions across the land. Understanding the emotions of contemporary student activists countrywide will provide a general overview of measures that could be taken to reduce the extent of damage that occurs during protest actions in universities across South Africa.

### **7.4. Conclusion**

The study set out to investigate the emotions evoked within student activists while singing struggle songs during protest actions. This was explored in three research objectives and three research questions.

In response to the first question regarding the emotions evoked, the negative emotions are triggered by the dismissive responses that student activists receive from those to whom they address their matters of concern. The positivity in the emotions they experience, is the manner in which the songs provide a cathartic experience to their pain, bringing them hope to

pursue their goal to reach the desired results. The songs also provide a space for them to celebrate themselves, which improves their belief and hope in their ability to change and improve their situation. These songs give them hope to keep believing, helping them not to despair and to stay motivated in the belief that their desired goal is attainable.

In response to the second question, by defining the songs as spiritual, student activists indicated how meaningful these songs are to them. Through the spiritual connection forged by these songs, students are able to connect with their emotions. This connection allows them to meditate upon and make sense of their situations during protests. The connection to their spirituality enables them to draw upon the spiritual energy that allows them to feel and contain their emotions.

In response to the last question and the objective of the study, these songs are symbolic to student activists. The space that these songs create for the students to reflect on themselves and their situations, provides room for personal revelations as they sing them. It is through this process that student activists get to re-think who they are. There is therefore a cognitive re-assessment of their identity that takes place. This re-assessment allows for the re-assertion of distorted identities, where student activists are able to form new identities of themselves, which are not based on distortions. The songs are also a reminder of their belonging, that they are part of a collective and this validates them as individuals. This is crucial as the matters they were protesting about encompassed the possibility of being excluded due to financial constraints. This exclusion meant that they were made to feel as if they did not belong in the institution because of their socio-economic status. This posed a threat and signified the possible loss of their dream to obtain an education. Through singing songs a feeling of belonging is experienced, as they form part of a united collective. This sense of belonging strengthens them and re-assures them of their hopes for the future.

## **7.5. Implications of Study and Recommendation for Further Research**

### **Implications of study**

The findings from this study have significant implications that can assist in understanding and improving the experiences of Black students in institutions of higher learning. As it was mentioned by the student activists in this study, they do not protest and sing struggle songs because it is fun, rather they are making appeals.

The student activists in this study mentioned the emotion of pain that they experienced when singing struggle songs during protest actions. The pain is felt when the students feel dismissed or unheard while raising their concerns. These experiences of feeling pain, being dismissed and not being heard, indicates a lack of belonging that Black students experience in institutions of higher learning. If the concerns raised by one generation of students are not heard or acknowledged, there will be another generation that will raise the same concerns. This may therefore, lead to a never ending cycle of protests actions until the oppressed and marginalised feel heard. Additionally, there were police brutalities and damages to university resources during student protest actions. The continuation of miscommunication between students and various stakeholders in institutions of higher learning will likely lead to more defiance from the students until they are heard. Appropriate dialogues between students and the different stakeholders in institutions of higher learning should therefore be considered. These dialogues steered with action may be a way to usher the process of improving the experiences of Black students in higher education. Furthermore, the action taken from these conversations may contribute to creating different experience for the next generation of Black students entering higher education. The students may feel like they are valuable stakeholders in their institutions and that they belong regardless of their background.

### **Recommendation for Further Research**

It is recommended that future research looks into the perception of struggle songs to those that the protestors are expressing their emotions to. This includes those in positions of power, like university management, governing authorities and other students who do not take part in the protests. There seems to be a gap and disconnect between the students who are singing the songs and those who are meant to hear the students' voices and the message they are conveying in protest actions. Understanding the perception of struggle songs by the people the songs are aimed at, could assist in improved responses to the protestors' grievances from those parties. There has been an increase in police violence throughout protest actions, and a better understanding of how the messages of the protestors' expressions are received by others (i.e. governing authorities, police officers and others), could provide some form of understanding for both parties, that is, the protesting students and the recipients of these messages expressed in song. This form of understanding between the two parties could lead to better responses during protest action, resulting in less damage to property and harm to individuals.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A**

#### Individual interview question guide

1. Tell me about your involvement in student activism.
2. When were you first exposed to protest actions?
3. When were you first exposed to struggle songs?
4. Who taught you the first struggle song you learned?
5. Which struggle song is the first song that you learned?
6. What does that song mean to you?
7. What are some of your favourite struggle songs?
8. What do these songs mean to you?
9. Why do you think struggle songs should be sung during protest actions?
10. What type of emotions are evoked in you when you sing some of your favourite struggle songs or any other struggle song during protest actions on campus?

## Appendix B



1 November 2017

Ms Mapula Mantsha Adams 216022033  
School of Applied Human Sciences  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Ms Adams

Protocol reference number: HSS/1246/017M

Project title: Investigating the emotions that are evoked within student activists when singing struggle songs: A study of student protests at the University of KwaZulu-Natal

### Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 26 July 2017, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

  
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)  
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

cc Supervisor: Mr Thabo Sekhesa  
cc Academic Leader Research: Carol Mitchell  
cc School Administrator: Ms Nondumiso Khanyile

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### Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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## **Appendix C**

### Participant information sheet (Individual interview)

Dear Participant

My name is Mapula Adams and I am conducting research for obtaining a Master degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg campus). There have been intense protest actions around university campuses across South Africa. Not a lot of research has been conducted on struggle songs that are sung by student activists during these protest actions. This study aims to explore the emotions evoked within student activists when singing struggle songs during campus protests.

I would like to invite you to take part in this study. The interview will take approximately an hour of your time and will be audio recorded. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can choose to withdraw your participation at any point during the study, should you feel that you do not want participate in the study anymore, there will be no penalty or negative consequences for your decision to withdraw.

The information obtained from this study will be treated with confidentiality and kept private. The information obtained, from the interviews that will be recorded will be kept in a safe place in my Supervisors office. Your identity will not be disclosed in this study, pseudo names will be used. A written report on the findings of this study will be made available to you and A presentation of the final results of the study will be arranged (via email) with you should you want to know the final results of the study.

If you have any concerns about this study you can contact Ms PhumeXimba of the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee at 0312603587 or e-mail ximbapa@ukzn.ac.za.

Should you need further information or have any other queries regarding the study you may contact me at mapula.adams@yahoo.com or my supervisor at sekhesa@ukzn.ac.za.

Your participation will be greatly appreciated

Kind regards

Mapula Adams

## **Appendix D**

### Consent form (Individual interview)

I (full names and student number) \_\_\_\_\_

have read and understand the information of the study as explained in the information sheet. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I am not obliged to answer questions that I do not feel comfortable answering. I understand that I have the right to remain anonymous, pseudo names may be used if needed. I understand that no identifying details such as my name and student number will be used in the research report and transcripts and these will make my responses remain confidential. I understand that there are no direct benefits and rewards for participating in this study and that there are no unforeseeable risks.

Should you want a presentation of the final results please provide your email address below so that arrangements for this can be made with you.

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix E

### Consent form (Audio recording)

I (full names and student number) \_\_\_\_\_

have read and understand the information of the study as explained in the information letter. I understand that my identity will be protected. I understand that the information obtained from the interviews that are on tape will be kept in a safe place in my supervisor's office. I understand that I am not obliged to give consent for the interview to be recorded.

Please mark with an X

Permission granted?

Yes ☐

Permission not granted?

No ☐

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F

### Referral letter



19 July 2017

#### To whom it may concern

This letter serves to provide the assurance that should any participant interviewed by Ms Mapula Adams (Psychology Masters student) require psychological assistance as a result of any distress arising from the research project titled *"Investigating the emotions that are evoked within student activists when singing struggle songs: A study of student protests at the University of KwaZulu-Natal."*, the service will be provided by Masters one Psychology students and intern psychologists at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus Child and Family Centre – phone 033-2605166.






Yours sincerely,

Y. Chilimanzi  
Director: Child and Family Centre  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

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Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville