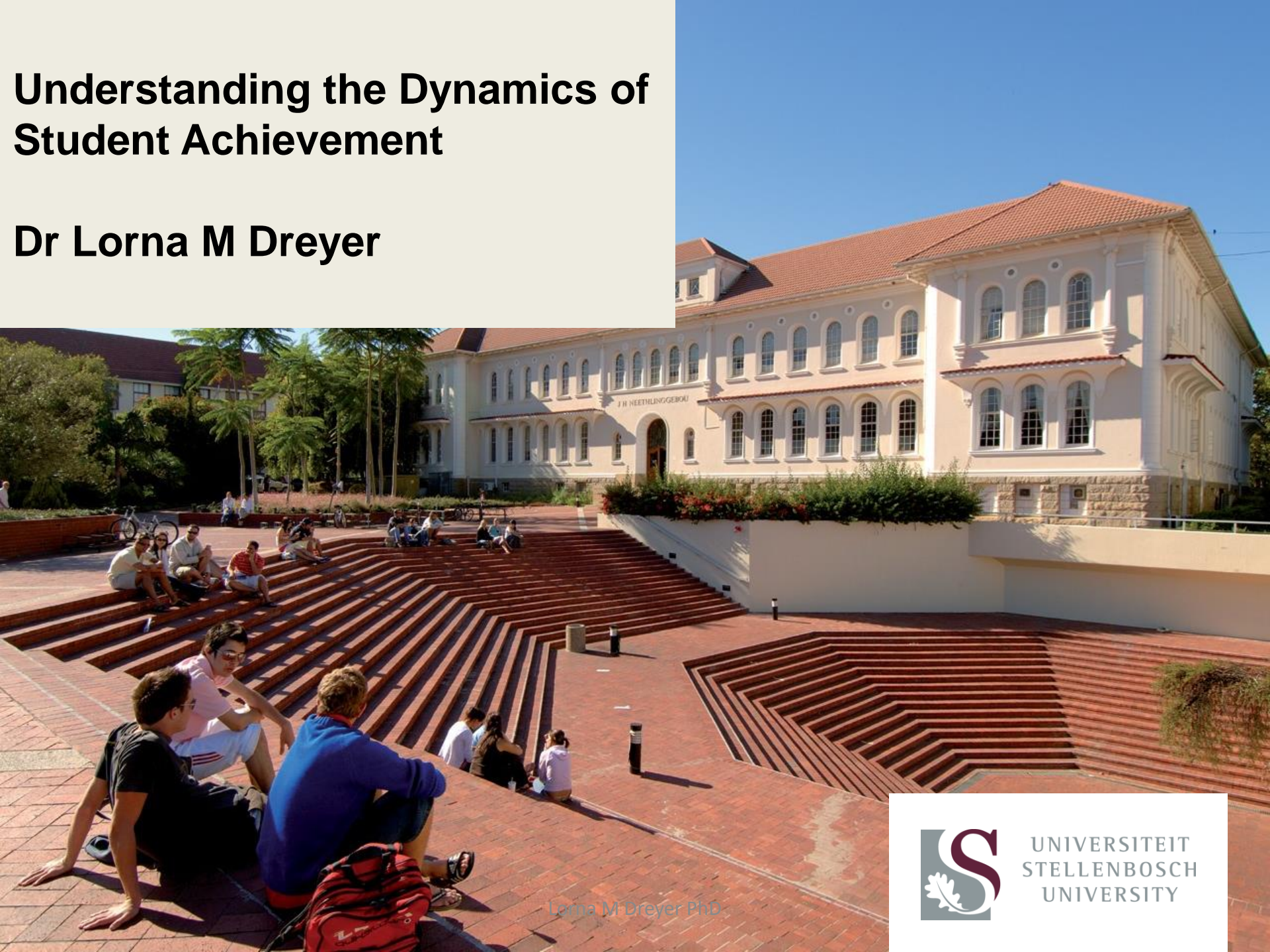


# Understanding the Dynamics of Student Achievement

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# **Closing the Gap? Persistent Underperformance of Minority and Marginalised groups**

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# Contributors to success

Discovering not only what causes these disparities in academic performance among minority groups, but also **what factors contribute to their academic success**, has become increasingly important. These factors can serve to guide and inform future measures of **support** provided for learners, parents and teachers within the context of fostering academic success (Ogbu, 2003).

# Best practices

- Academic orientation → students / parents / school (support programmes and structure)
- Teacher orientation
- Teacher-student relationships

# Why Asian American students perform better than other minority groups

- → parental involvement,
- → time spent on task and
- → study habits

(Nickerson & Kritsonis, 2006).

## ...Academic orientation

- → visible academic role models,
- → effective parental strategies,
- → perseverance and working hard are factors in achieving good grades.

(Ogbu, 2003)

# Enhancement of the student's academic orientation through

Ogbu (2003)

- → supplementary educational programmes and the
- → creation of a cultural context which increases the value of academic success are important factors to consider when examining academic achievement amongst minority communities.

# The TEACHER

- The important role that teachers play with regard to creating an environment which fosters academic success cannot be ignored (Vandeyar, 2010).
- → Teachers have to be aware of their own prejudices and
- → engage in reflective practices where they critically assess the effect of their views and practices in the classroom.



## ...The TEACHER

- → They must find ways to provide an inclusive, nurturing environment where learners from different backgrounds feel safe to express themselves freely (Ferrer, 2011; Sleeter & Grant, 1994).

## ...The TEACHER

- → Teachers should use the learners' cultural and linguistic assets as a basis for providing positive and socially meaningful classroom experiences.
- → Learning from and with their learners can help teachers to be more effective (Vandeyar, 2010; Michael, Andrade & Bartlett, 2007).

# SA Research...

- Research (Vandeyar & Killen, 2006; Makhalemele, 2005; Goduka, 1999) clearly shows the important influence that teachers' attitudes and support can have on the academic success of learners.
- Sayed & Motala (2012)- persistence of racism, sexism, bullying and corporal punishment → schools very uninviting places

# Case study - purpose

- Understand the life experiences of Xhosa learners as a minority in a former whites-only school.
- Factors contributing to their continued poor academic performance.
- Highlight the need for effective support strategies

# Theoretical Base

- SA constitution (1996) and SA Schools Act (1996)
- The broader inclusive education discourse

**Inclusion:** The creation of an accepting and welcoming environment, with an ethos of respect for diversity, is essential for learners to feel that they can be themselves and make a valuable contribution.

- Bronfenbrenner

**Bio-systemic perspective:** Schooling does not happen in isolation – influenced by what happens in the other systems and sub-systems.



# Major reasons identified...

- Discriminative attitudes of teachers and peers  
and
- Feelings of inadequacy by the respondents  
and their parents.

# School's reaction

“All that has happened thus far has been geared towards improving relations amongst the learner/staff community.” (Singh)

## ...School's Reaction

- Instituted annual camp (teachers and learners)
- Staff development workshop on diversity.  
“I used this opportunity to talk about what the research showed in terms of the **ethos of the school and its influence on the students learning**. It was received with mixed reactions, with some wanting to know more and others not.” (Singh)



## ...School's Reaction

- Planning another workshop with the staff and some of the learners who went on the camp.
- give learners the opportunity to talk about the school ethos from their perspective.

## ...School's Reaction

“The principal, at every staff meeting, gives one teacher an opportunity to present a 5-10min presentation on inclusive practices in the classroom.”

“We still have a long way to go.”

# Conclusion

If the trend of continued poor academic performance of minority and marginalised groups in previously whites-only SA schools are to be reversed, progressively narrowed and eventually closing the achievement gap, schools have to take cognisance of the covert racism that still exist in schools and take appropriate systemic action.

# Internationally

Attitudes and reactions toward difference

→ (Dis-) Ability

→ Socio-economic status

→ Gender

→ Sexual orientation

→ Religion

→ Race and ethnicity .....

- Perceptions and prejudices towards difference

**DANKIE  
THANK YOU  
ENKOSI KAHKULU**



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