

**NARRATIVES OF EDUCATIONAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL
SUPPORT AMONGST BLACK AFRICAN MALE STUDENTS
AT A HISTORICALLY WHITE UNIVERSITY**

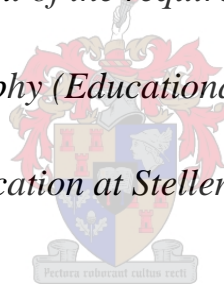
by

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

The democratic elections in 1994 marked the formal end of apartheid in SA. As part of the action to address the inequalities of the apartheid era, the government compiled a National Plan of Higher Education (NPHE). One of the goals of this plan is: “The promotion of equity of access”. The result of this is that a growing number of students entering universities come from previously disadvantaged backgrounds and sometimes with numerous challenges. Within the South African context, this is especially the reality of Black students entering HWIs. Literature suggest that it is especially black male students that are more likely than any other group to drop out, to underperform or disengage academically. Furthermore, Black male students at HWIs often feel unwelcome and often experience a lack of support and understanding. Therefore, the primary aim of the study was to do an in-depth exploration of Black African male students’ everyday experiences at an HWI and furthermore explore what they and the university may do to enhance their educational and psychosocial experiences on campus.

As the theoretical base of this study, critical race theory (CRT) as an overarching theory at a macro level as well as defining properties of micro-aggression theory (MAT) and co-cultural theory (CCT) on micro level, were utilized. Within a social constructivist paradigm, a qualitative research approach was adopted and a case study, as a research design, was most suitable for this study. Through focus group sessions as well as individual interviews, 20 Black African male students were able to share their educational and psychosocial experiences as well as their support needs. The findings of the study demonstrate how race and gender-based treatments like micro-aggressions that include negative stereotyping, criminalization, racial profiling and the questioning of their intellectual abilities impede participant’s ability to thrive at the institution.

However, participants also shared positive comments about their experiences and perspectives about the institution. Positive aspects that participants mentioned about the institution include, funding opportunities, well-aligned administration

processes, quality of education, supportive lecturers and they refer to the institution as a top-class university.

The implication of the study is that transformation within the HE sector necessitates that aspects that are hidden in institutional culture and environment that function as barriers to transformation, needs to be explored and illuminated within a social justice framework, as proposed by CRT. A social justice stance is guided by the belief that all students are equal and entitled to appropriate, equitable, and culturally and racially responsive education and support.

OPSOMMING

Die demokratiese verkiesing in 1994 was die formele beëindiging van apartheid in SA. As deel van die aksie om die ongelykhede in die apartheidsera aan te spreek, het die regering 'n NPHE (Nasionale Plan vir Hoër Onderwys) saamgestel. Een van die doelstellings van hierdie plan is: 'Die bevordering van billikheid van toegang'. Die resultaat hiervan is dat 'n groeiende aantal studente wat universiteite betree, uit voorheen benadeelde agtergronde kom en soms met talle uitdagings.

Binne die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks is dit veral die werklikheid van Swart studente wat histories wit universiteite betree. Literatuur suggereer verder, dat dit veral Swart manlike studente is wat waarskynliker is as enige ander groep om akademies te onderpresteer of te ontkoppel. Verder voel Swart manlike studente aan histories wit universiteite dikwels onwelkom en ervaar hulle dikwels 'n gebrek aan ondersteuning en begrip. Daarom was die primêre doel van die studie om 'n diepgaande verkenning van Swart manlike studente se alledaagse ervarings op 'n spesifieke histories wit universiteit te doen en verder ondersoek in te stel wat hulle en die universiteit kan doen om hul opvoedkundige en psigososiale ervarings op die kampus te verbeter.

As teoretiese basis van hierdie studie is kritiese rasteorie as 'n oorkoepelende teorie op makrovlak sowel as mikro-aggressie-teorie en ko-kulturele teorie op mikro-vlak toegepas. Binne 'n sosiaal-konstruktivistiese paradigma is 'n kwalitatiewe navorsingsbenadering toegepas en 'n gevallestudie, as navorsingsontwerp, die geskikste vir hierdie studie. Deur middel van fokusgroepsessies sowel as individuele onderhoude kon 20 Swart manlike studente hul opvoedkundige en psigososiale ervarings en hul ondersteuningsbehoeftes deel.

Uit die studie is bevind dat ras- en geslagsgebaseerde handelings soos mikro-aggressies, wat negatiewe stereotipering, kriminalisering, rasprofielering en die bevraagtekening van hul intellektuele vermoëns insluit, die deelnemer se vermoë om by die instelling te floreer, belemmer. Deelnemers het egter ook positiewe opmerkings oor hul ervarings en perspektiewe oor die universiteit gedeel. Positiewe aspekte wat deelnemers oor die universiteit genoem het, sluit in

finansieringsgeleenthede, goedbelynde administrasieprosesse en gehalte van onderrig. Deelnemers het ook in 'n positiewe lug verwys na sekere dosente wat ondersteunend is hulle het na die universiteit verwys as 'n topklas universiteit.

Die implikasie van die studie is dat transformasie binne die HO-sektor noodsaak dat aspekte wat dalk mag weggesteek is in die institusionele kultuur en omgewing wat funksioneer as hindernisse tot transformasie, ondersoek moet word binne 'n raamwerk van maatskaplike en sosiale geregtigheid. Sosiale geregtigheid word gelei deur die oortuiging dat alle studente gelyk is en geregtig is op toepaslike, billike en kultureel en ras-responsiewe onderrig en ondersteuning.

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ACRONYMS

CRT	Critical Race Theory
CCT	Co-cultural Theory
CHE	Council on Higher Education
DEC	Department of Education and Culture
DET	Department of Education and Training
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoE	Department of Education
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HWI	Historically White Institution
HWU	Historically White University
MAT	Micro-aggression Theory
NCHE	National Commission of Higher Education
NPHE	National Plan for Higher Education
SA	South Africa

CHAPTER 1

Cages. Consider a birdcage. If you look closely at just one wire in the cage you cannot see the other wires. If your conception of what is before you are determined by this myopic focus, you could look at that one wire, up and down the length of it, and be unable to see why a bird would just not fly around the wire anytime it wanted to go somewhere! It is only when you step back, stop looking at the wires one by one, microscopically, and take a macroscopic view of that whole cage, that you can see why the bird does not go anywhere; and then you will see it in a moment’. (“Oppression in Jehangir, 2010, p.1)

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND POSITIONING OF THE STUDY

Two decades ago, South Africa (SA) entered a new era of democracy. However, the new democratic SA inherited a divided nation, with high poverty levels, inequalities, discriminatory practices and inequitable distribution of income. We, therefore, need to recognize that although apartheid legislation formally ended in 1994, apartheid legacies still remain entrenched in all sectors of the country especially in the education sector (McGrath & Akajee, 2007; Singh, 2009).

In spite of these historical legacies, there is much that the education sector can claim to have achieved. Some of these achievements include the transformation from its fragmented past to an integrated education system; a single dedicated national department; greater access and a drastic change in the demography of its students; a growth of 80% in the number of Black students and the allocation of financial aid to many more students than twenty years ago (Strydom, Basson, & Mentz, 2010). It should be noted however that despite the fact that SA has made great strides in transforming education since 1994, there are still major challenges within the sector. Low throughput and low student success rates, as well as high attrition rates, are some of challenges the higher education (HE) sector faces in the new democratic SA. Beck (2011) mentioned that one of the groups that are especially

¹ It is important to note that for this study, within the SA context, the term Black students refer to all students of colour and not White students. Furthermore, the term Black African students does not include Coloured and Indian students as stipulated in the Apartheid classification system. The terms Black, White, Coloured and Indian are used to denote the historically disadvantaged and advantaged groups in SA and do not imply an acceptance of these concepts.

vulnerable in the student cohort is students from previously marginalised groups and backgrounds. As a result of inequalities, a large group of students entering higher education, present with risk factors that are directly associated with university underperformance or factors that ultimately may lead to drop-out (Kuh, Kinze, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek;2007).

According to a study conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council in 2006 and 2007, 60% of students drop out of university and 70 % of those students are from poor families. Letseka and Maile (2008) note that SA's graduation rate of 15% is one of the lowest in the world. At university, only one in three Black students graduate within the prescribed degree completion time and less than 5% of this cohort obtains a degree at all, according to Strydom, Kuh (2010). The statistics published by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) demonstrate the success rates of previously marginalized students to be much lower in comparison to other students (DHE, 2013). As part of the action to address the inequalities of the apartheid era, the government compiled a National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE). One of the goals of this plan that is most relevant to this study is: *‘The promotion of equity of access and a fair chance of success to all who are seeking to realize their potential through higher education while eradicating all forms of unfair discrimination and advancing redress for past inequalities’*. Another goal included in the plan is to *‘build new institutional and organizational forms and new institutional identities and cultures in higher education’* (DoE, 2001 p.19).

HE institutions (HEIs) therefore need to be constantly aware of the diverse student population they attract to their campuses and the diverse needs and challenges some of these students might bring along. However, it is important to note that most students also do have strengths that they bring along into HE spaces, so it is not always their deficits that are important for interventions. HEIs are therefore challenged to assist and support all students to successfully finish their studies especially Black students who are because of apartheid, now socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged as a result of the country's history.

At this point, it is important to note that during the anti-apartheid struggle the term Black was considered as referring to people classified as Coloured, Indian as well as African. This was based on the Black consciousness notion on Black and not the Apartheid constructed “divide and rule” categorisation to divide black people into separate groups competing for resources and dignity. It is therefore important to note that in this research, I focussed on Black African male students and Coloured and Indian male students were therefore excluded from this study. However, this stance definitely does not minimize or dismiss the struggles and challenges that Coloured and Indian students might experience today at HWIs. Furthermore, the term Black African is not intended to be degrading or discriminatory in any way. All participants in this study identified as Black African male.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

Maxwell (2005) suggests that there are two reasons that motivate people to conduct research in a specific field. It is either a gap in the literature or personal experiences or both. Identifying gaps in the literature is an important exercise because it contributes to research significance.

Working in support services of a university for more than ten years left me with valuable experiences and insight in terms of student experiences and their support needs. By reflecting upon these past years I also became aware of the changing student profile at the university where this study was conducted. Making HE accessible for all, is, however, not unique to this university or SA. Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley (2009 p.11) refer to this phenomenon as “a worldwide academic revolution that has taken place in the past half-century marked by transformations unprecedented in scope and diversity”.

Within the South African context, because of this widening of participation, a growing number of students entering universities come from marginalized backgrounds and sometimes with numerous challenges. Some of these students experience a variety of personal, economic and emotional barriers. However, what became very alarming to me is the fact that although the student profile changed drastically at the university where this study was conducted not much has changed

in terms of how student needs have been addressed or approached. A one-size-fit-all westernized support approach is, unfortunately, the reality that most students experience on a daily basis on this campus, especially those students who do not fit the traditional student profile of the institution.

Burke (2006) and Wilson-Strydom (2015) who both did extensive research in the field of widening participation mentioned that widening of participation is much more than access and academic ability. As student populations become more diverse HEIs need to be aware of students' changing experiences and support needs. They add that central to this global debate about widening participation, are social justice issues of inclusion, appropriate support and success in HE. It is thus clear that despite the increasing awareness of student diversity, westernised student support approaches remain dominant in South African HEIs (Stead & Watson, 2006). Metz and Guichard (2009) refer to this situation as a lack of consensus amongst support staff on how to redress social issues. He also mentioned that there are many barriers that perpetuate the status quo and create a sense of generalized helplessness. The reason for this, according to Watts (2009) is that support services were structured historically to serve the needs of a small and specific group, in the case of this university, predominantly White students.

Although all HEIs in SA offers a range of support services and initiatives to their students, Maree and Van der Westhuizen (2011) and Dunn (2013) noted, what seems absent but essential, is to create more relevant and inclusive practices based on the diverse South African population. In these contexts' research efforts need to position support services within a context and framework that is more suited to the needs of all South Africans and interventions and support should be based on students' specific needs. Similarly Ancis, Sedlacek and Mohr (2000) emphasize that support services need to respond to the concerns of an increasingly diverse student population. They further noted that all staff members who work with students in support services have an ethical responsibility to embrace and understand the specific life experiences of a 'culturally diverse clientele'. What's needed to address some of the challenges that widening of participation brought along is to address the social justice issues that are at the core of this dilemma.

Any HEI seeking to attract a diverse student population and individuals from previously marginalised groups should commit themselves to explore the experiences of these students and research the specific needs and barriers that they might experience. Similarly, Macmaster (2014), Moja, Luescher-Mamashela and Schreiber (2013) and Schuh (2014) noted that student support services can offer targeted support for students who may be marginalised in the institutions' context. They furthermore emphasise the importance of student support services focusing on a holistic experience that incorporates positive in and out of class experiences for all students.

Within the context of this research, it is especially Black students at historically white institutions (HWIs) adjustment to the HE environment that is critical for their success and retention at the institution. Not only are these students' educational or academic adjustment important but so is their psychosocial adjustment to the institution. This educational and psychosocial adjustment might include academic performance, emotional well-being, motivation, as well as the students' perception of how well he or she fits in or is made to feel welcome at the institution (Robbins et al., 2004). It is important to note that all the tenets within the educational and psychosocial domains are interrelated and operate in co-existence. However, it was beyond the scope of this study to fully capture the many aspects and correlation of a students' educational and psychosocial dynamics. Rather, the aim of this research was to explore key or defining themes of Black African male students' academic, social and emotional experiences and support needs while conducting their studies at a HWI.

1.3 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

As mentioned, although all Black students at HWIs might experience educational as well as psychosocial challenges, this study only focussed on the experiences of Black African male students at a specific HWI. However, it is important to note that this research does not imply that the needs or challenges of other groups of students are less valued than the group this study focussed on. Instead, this research explored how race and gender might intersect to create specific and unique

conditions of experiences for Black African male students. This cohort of students carry the burden of two negative social identities, one as a Black African student and the other, as a Black African male student that might make them vulnerable for potential gendered stereotypes, prejudices or racism, especially within historically white spaces (Ancis, et al., 2000).

Jackson and Moore (2006) contended that throughout the educational journey, from primary to higher education, many Black males lag behind their Black female as well as their White male counterparts. They are often more likely than any other group to be suspended from school, to underperform academically or to disengage academically. Furthermore, Black male students do experience the most challenges in HE settings, especially at HWIs.

In the same vein, Solórzano, Allen, and Carroll (2002) mentioned that Black male students at HWIs express high levels of repressed frustration, academic underperformance and greater dropout rates, because of the continuous environmental challenges they experience in public, academic, and social spaces on and off campus. In addition, Black males are more likely to minimize acts of racial discrimination and are less likely than Black female students to respond directly or indirectly to prejudices and discriminatory acts or incidents. The reason for this is their fear that they might suffer greater consequences for assertively confronting their perpetrators (Smith, Allen & Danley, 2007).

Furthermore, Black males are commonly described as being 'out of place' and this often results in them being stereotyped and scrutinized by the general community, students and staff on and off campus. In addition, they are sometimes perceived to be lazy, unmotivated, intellectually incompetent and disengaged (Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1993; Howard, 2008; Smith, et al., 2007). In this regard Wilson-Strydom (2015) noted that although HEIs open their doors to a diverse student population, students do not necessarily experience a similar campus environment. Black male students, especially those at HWIs often feel unwelcome and often experience a lack of support and understanding.

It seems that even if some HWIs encourage inclusion, some students may still subtly or unconsciously be excluded and that contributes to them feeling excluded or unwelcome. It is in these contexts that students tend to underperform or drop-out, not only because they lack academic skills but because they often do experience barriers within the institutional culture and environment. Institutions can easily underestimate or overlook the subtle barriers settled within all spaces of the campus (Smith, et al., 2007). It is therefore important to scrutinize campus environments in terms of how they might be unsupportive and experienced as hostile and unwelcoming by historically marginalised students and in the case of this research, Black African male students.

Furthermore, one of the core challenges that Black African male students might experience at the institution where I conducted the study, is the fact that the institutional culture is completely immersed in white, Christian, middle class and often patriarchal cultural norms. This institutional ethos contrasts significantly with the histories from which these students come as well as their home experiences (McGhie, 2012). This creates a disjuncture and often conflict within students about who they should be in the university space and how they reconcile this person with who they are when not at the institution.

If the HWI at which I conducted the study values Black African male students' presence on campus and values their academic success as well as their emotional well-being, it is important that the institution allows them to voice any type of discomfort, alienation or feelings of 'not-feeling-at-home' that they might experience. HWIs cannot just focus on attracting and retaining students from diverse backgrounds but they should also be able to take responsibility for these students' academic, social and emotional needs that they bring to campus (Donnell, Edwards, & Green; 2002). The late rector of Stellenbosch University, Russel Botman, underpins this view in his vision encapsulated in the University's Institutional Intent and Strategy Document (2013 – 2018 p.11): *'With the new vision, we aim to further demonstrate relevance as an institution. We also want to foster an environment of inclusivity...and embrace diversity. Appropriate redesign*

of core processes, structures and the institutional culture is at the core of our planning and positioning as a leading 21st-century university in Africa’.

Given this statement captured in the university’s Intent and Strategy document (2013-2018), the university management and the broader society were shocked by the release of the “LUISTER” video on 20 August 2015. The short documentary was uploaded by Contraband Cape Town and distributed via social media. The documentary captures interviews with Black students who talk about their personal accounts of race-based discrimination and how they are allegedly still exposed to the dehumanising experiences of racism and other forms of discrimination at a HWI and a nearby agricultural college. In this series of interviews, students recount instances of racial prejudice that they continue to experience in the university town, and the enormous racial and cultural challenges that they face at the institution. Some of the most hard-hitting statements some students made in the video are:

- *“I feel like it's wrong to be black. I sometimes ask myself when I'm alone, 'Why did God make me black?’”*
- *"The colour of my skin in (name of town) is like a social burden... Just walking into spaces, there is that 'stop, pause and stare', where people cannot believe that you would dare enter into this space"*
- *“They said: What are you doing here? Are you not supposed to be in the zoo?”*
- *“I can't deal with the constant feeling of feeling unwelcome, in my own country”*
- *“There's a culture of trying to silence black voices”* (Contraband [LUISTER VIDEO], 2015, August 20; <https://youtu.be/sF3rTBQTQk4>)

Max Price, the vice-chancellor of the University of Cape Town in SA, underpinned these sentiments at the inaugural conference on restitution in Cape Town during November 2016, by stating that although HEIs had done much to right the wrongs of the past, institutions had failed to fully address concerns around institutional culture. He stated that Black students, especially those in historically white spaces, are often made to feel inferior and not authentically ‘at home’. He further noted that restitution was not just about access to resources, but it’s ultimately about restoring a sense of belonging for these students.

(<http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/university-culture-still-alienates-black-students-price-20161110>)

Similarly, Vice (2015) stated that because of SA's very specific apartheid history, HWIs should prioritize and strive to develop the creation of spaces that feels like 'home' for all students, especially for students that were previously excluded from these spaces. In order to interrogate these assumptions, we do have the responsibility to ask Black African males about these challenging issues to get access to their experiences, perspectives as well as their support needs. It is important to hear from them what keeps them enrolled at the institution from year-to-year; what strategies they employ to keep them going on a daily basis; and how they manage to transcend institutional, social, cultural, academic and emotional challenges that typically undermine their achievement and over-all experience, at the institution.

Against this background this has resulted in an increasing personal interest and urgency within me, to actively explore this specific issue within the institution. Nevertheless, any HEI that values diverse enrolments, as well as students' success, needs to be reflective and consciously evaluate all contexts of the institutional environment. Furthermore, the perception that student support is only situated in specific divisions or units at the university, neglects the importance of institutional culture and operational philosophies of the wider campus environment and the impact of that on students that were previously excluded from these spaces.

1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY

The primary aim of the study, therefore, was to do an in-depth exploration of Black African male students' everyday experiences at a historically White Afrikaans university and how they navigate and negotiate the institution on a daily basis. The objective of the study was twofold: firstly, to explore the dynamics of Black African male students' everyday experiences on campus, and secondly, to explore what they and the university may do to enhance their educational and psychosocial experiences on campus.

Their perspectives in terms of the extent to which they experience the campus as socially, culturally, academically and emotionally inclusive and supportive were overdue. It was important to bring Black African male students' voices and the diverse challenges that they might experience within the institutions to the fore. By 'listening' to their personal and reflective narratives, we are making them the experts of their own lives and acknowledging them as important as other students at the university (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to explore and understand the perspectives and experiences of Black African male students on a historically white campus, I utilized critical race theory (CRT) as the theoretical base of this study. However, I have also drawn from some of the defining properties of micro-aggression theory (MAT) and co-cultural theory (CCT). CRT therefore served as an overarching theory at macro level that comments on the structural dynamics while MAT and CCT focussed on the impact of structural arrangements like racialisation, at a micro and individual level. These theories provided a coherent analytic framework for this study. I will briefly discuss these theoretical approaches below but will do a more in-depth discussion of these theories in Chapter 3.

1.5.1 Critical race theory (CRT)

In order to fully understand Black African male students' experiences and support needs at a HWI, understanding the racial realities of their navigational journeys through the institution is both necessary and important. Modiri (2012) noted that because of the legacy of apartheid that continues to persist in post-apartheid SA, education, wealth and power are still divided along racial lines. HE campuses, especially historically white campuses are therefore often settings and environments where prejudices and racial issues exist in both direct and indirect forms. Consequently, racism and race-based discrimination has been and continues to be embedded within the structures and discourses that guide the operational philosophies of institutions (McCoy & Rodrick, 2015; Modiri, 2012). According to them CRT as a theoretical framework is best suited to explore and illuminate this unequal and unjust distribution of power and structures within these HWIs.

Theoretically, the foundational tenets of CRT, are (1) the permanence of race and racism; (2) counter-storytelling (experiential knowledge); (3) challenge dominant ideology (critique of liberalism); (4) interest convergence; (5) commitment to social justice and (6) whiteness as property. The first tenet, *'the permanence of racism'*, suggests that racism is permanent and central and it controls all political, social, and economic spheres of society. Furthermore, racism is seen as an inherent part of all societies around the world whilst privileging White people over Black people in most areas of life, including education (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). The second tenet, *'counter-storytelling'*, acknowledges the racial and subordinate experiences of marginalized groups through counter-storytelling. Counter-stories, therefore, serve as a tool that exposes and challenges the dominant White, Christian and heterosexual ideology which perpetuates racial stereotypes (Parker & Villalpando, 2007).

The third tenet, *'challenge the dominant ideology'* or *'the critique of liberalism'*, stems from the ideas of colour-blindness and equal opportunity for all. Colour-blindness is a mechanism that allows individuals to ignore and overlook racist acts, policies and structures that perpetuate social inequity. Additionally, the notion of colour-blindness fails to take into consideration the persistence and permanence of racism in society (DeCuir, & Dixson, 2004). The fourth tenet, *'interest convergence'* which notes the benefits to White people at the heart of all spheres in society. CRT, therefore, acknowledges that white supremacy and white privilege are the bases on which racial and societal dynamics operate. Interest convergence could, therefore, be a valuable tool to assist in the explanation and understanding of institutional and systemic racism by shining light on the salience of race and racism in HE policies and practices (Milner, 2008).

The fifth tenet, *'commitment to social justice'*, works to eliminate racial injustice as well as other forms of insubordination that pervade in society. The last tenet, *'whiteness as property'* refers to the fact that whiteness itself constitutes something of value that Black people do not have and will never have. In this sense having a white skin is an inherited right or passport to many privileges. Some of these

privileges include, always being cast positively in dominant discourse (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

Although CRT serves as a valuable tool to illuminate the overarching structural arrangements of race and power dynamics within specific settings, it lacks the facet of highlighting the impact of these dynamics on individuals. I therefore drew on properties of MAT, additionally.

1.5.2 Micro-aggression theory

Research suggests that Black men at HWIs are exposed to unrelenting racial discrimination and stereotyping as part of their everyday experiences at HWIs (Bimper, 2015; Bonner & Bailey, 2006; Smith, Altbach, & Lomotey, 2002; Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000). Yet, as Solorzano, et al. (2000) note, it is not necessary the direct, overt or essentialist forms of racially charged acts but rather the subtle and mini assaults like micro-aggressions, which is the substance of today's racism. McGee and Martin (2011 p.1352) refer to micro-aggressions as 'subtle, often automatic, and nonverbal exchanges which are *'putdowns'* of Black people by offenders'. Additionally, Smith, Hung and Franklins' (2011) mentioned that these micro-aggressions also extends to gender micro-aggressions in terms of the experiences of Black men in historically white spaces.

I, therefore, concur with Solorzano, et al. (2000) that, anchored in the CRTs' tenet, *centrality of race* one can frame micro-aggressions as a distal framework to explore and understand the educational and psycho-social experiences of Black male students at HWIs. More importantly MAT can serve as a valuable theoretical framework to illuminate the impact of micro-aggressions on the educational, social and emotional wellbeing of Black male students on a historically white campus.

Although CRT serves as a valuable overarching theoretical lens through which the narratives of Black African male students could be illuminated, it lacks a facet of communicative, operating and coping strategies when individuals interact or operate within a specific setting. This shortcoming of CRT furthermore necessitates me to draw on co-cultural theory (CCT) in addition.

1.5.3 Co-cultural Theory (CCT)

As initially described by Orbe (1998), CCT assists in exploring and understanding the ways in which individuals who are historically marginalized in dominant societal structures navigate their everyday lives. This theory also illuminates the process by which minority groups navigate their '*cultural differentness*' within a specific setting (Glen & Johnson, 2012). It therefore, focuses on the exploration of lived experiences that acknowledge the impact and interaction of dominant and non-dominant groups, specifically from the perspective of the non-dominant group.

Urban and Orbe (2007) further noted that CCT is based on the following three principles namely: that any social hierarchy benefits those with dominant group status in the society; that groups with dominant status usually use their power to create and maintain systems that reinforce and promote their experiences; that the structures created by the dominant group members have a negative impact on the progress of those who are not part of the dominant group. However, Bell, Hopson, Weathers, and Ross (2015) noted that an additional co-cultural strategy, rationalization, must be added to the broader framework of CCT. They defined rationalization as a strategy that provides an alternative explanation or justification for various forms of verbal or nonverbal communicative injustices, usually executed by dominant group members. Rationalisation downplays or diminishes the serious nature of these unjust treatments and therefore allows an alternative explanation for the dominant groups' actions from the point of view of non-dominant groups.

Within the CCT framework, Black African male students at a HWI construct a non-dominant identity operating within a dominant group setting and as such, CCT can therefore be applicable for this study. Furthermore, CCT, can be used to provide insight into the general strategies and approaches that participants in this study take in negotiating their societal positioning in intergroup relations or as in the case of this research, at HWI. Of particular interest to this research is communication orientation that refers to a specific stance that co-cultural group members take during their daily interactions with others.

In order for me to explore Black African male students' everyday experiences at a HWI, in addition to CRT and MAT, CCT served as a lens through which this exploration could unfold. Furthermore, CCT can be used as a theoretical framework to qualitatively explore participants' everyday experiences on campus, as they navigate their status as a non-dominant group or as cultural outsiders, at a HWI.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was framed within a social constructivist paradigm which is based on the understanding that reality is subjective and that it can have multiple meanings (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). A social constructivist paradigm implies that reality is socially and personally constructed and that the subject is actively involved in the process of meaning making. This paradigm adopts a view of social reality that is context-dependent and multiple. It is therefore important to take cognizance of the multiple and subjective perspectives and experiences of individuals' 'realities'.

In order for us to understand how Black African male students navigate a specific historically white campus on a daily basis and how they experience support at the institution, we have to rely on their perspectives and views of their context (Creswell 2007). This research, therefore, involved listening to the ways in which Black African male students described their realities, and in this way, assist myself as the researcher and all other role players at the institution to better understand their experiences and support needs (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Within this social constructivist paradigm, a qualitative research approach was adopted. According to Merriam (2009 p.5) "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experience". Qualitative research, therefore, allows us to understand and explore these processes of meaning-making and interpretation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009).

Creswell (2007) further stated that we do qualitative research when we need a complex, detailed understanding of a specific issue or a problem. Through that, we want to empower individuals to share their experiences, hear their voices and allow them to verbalize their experiences and interpretations of an issue or problem. This process allows individuals to share their experiences unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we read in the literature.

In this regard Vincent (2015) stated that it is through narratives that we can make sense of our surroundings and truly understand institutional cultures. By allowing students to tell their stories about an institution, we can determine whether they feel 'at home' at an institution or not. The focus of the study therefore, was to develop understanding of Black African male students' experiences at a historically white Afrikaans institution from these students' own personal and social perspectives and experiences. The goal was to provide a rich description of their perspectives and experiences in a particular context, which in this study is a HWI. This goal was therefore in line with a qualitative research approach and as Creswell (2007) stated, qualitative research emphasizes that context cannot be separated from the people in the context.

Given the aims of this study from a social constructivist viewpoint, a case study, as a research design, was most suitable for this study. Case study is a research strategy that focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings, therefore Yin (2009) defines a case study as a study of a single case or a bounded system of some sort within a specific context. Understanding of a single case is usually framed from an interest in what is particular and common about the case, as well as the dissimilarities in the case. A case study research design is therefore best suited for this study because it focused on a specific cohort of students within a specific context that allows for in-depth exploration, understanding and meaning (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009). Therefore, using a case study research design enabled me to do an in-depth exploration of the educational and psycho-social experiences and perspectives of Black African male students at a specific HWI.

1.7 PARTICIPANTS

For this study, I made use of purposeful sampling, which means I carefully selected participants from which I think the most can be learned (Merriam, 2009). In order to recruit Black African male students at the institution, four inclusion criteria applied. Participants were expected to identify as male and Black African; be located on the main campus of the institution and participate voluntarily in the research. Furthermore, the group of participants included undergraduate as well as post-graduate students from different faculties and departments. This allowed me to collect rich data from a first-year students' perspective as well as students who are at this institution for a longer period and from diverse faculties.

I made use of the Transformation Office at the university where the research took place, to assist me to identify potential participants. An invitation for voluntary participation were send to 30 Black African male students, via e-mail. The invitation gave a brief description or motivation of the study. Students could indicate whether they were prepared or not to take part in the study and they were given the opportunity to identify possible participants that might be interested in taking part in the study. Twenty students that fitted the criteria, accepted the invitation and were willing to participate voluntarily in the research.

These 20 Black African male students were able to share their experiences in a context where they felt comfortable and where I could learn more about aspects of their experiences as well as their support needs which crucially affect their chances of success as well as their sense of belonging at the university where they conduct their studies (Elliot, 2006).

1.8 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection took place in two phases. The first phase consisted of focus group interviews. The 20 participants were randomly divided into 5 groups of 4. Therefore 5 focus groups were conducted. After phase one, data were preliminary analysed in order to identify areas or aspects that need further exploration. Follow-up individual interviews took place with some of the participants. Ten individuals were identified and invited back to take part in the individual interviews. These interviews gave the

participants the opportunity to expand on issues addressed in the focus group interviews or issues that could not be discussed in-depth during the focus groups. It allowed them to expand on their experiences and support needs as well as their recommendations.

All the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. In order to establish good rapport and positive experiences for all participants as well as the researcher, participants were given the option to indicate the setting for the interview to optimize a safe environment and to ultimately enhance spontaneous as well as authentic conversations or self-expression.

Furthermore, interviews were seen as ‘conversations with a purpose’ as stated by Marshall and Rossman (2011 p.101). To guide these conversations, a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions based on themes guided the conversation. During these interviews I focused on listening, questioning, framing, and gentle probing as described by Denzin and Lincoln (2011). One of the strengths of interviewing as a data collection method is that it allows for the researcher’s understanding to unfold during the interview, as one can probe responses for clarity as Marshall and Rossman (2011) suggests. Ultimately, the questions for all the interviews with participants were guided by the data needed to answer the research question. As such, it focussed on the participants’ educational and psychosocial experiences and their perceptions about support at the institution.

1.9 RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUB-QUESTIONS

The question that guided this research was therefore:

What are the narratives about educational and psycho-social support amongst Black African male students at a historically white university?

The sub-questions that will support the study in answering this research question are:

1. What are the narratives about educational and psychosocial challenges of participants?

2. What are the narratives about educational and psychosocial opportunities of participants?
3. What are the narratives about coping strategies and support of participants?
4. What are the narratives of interventions and recommendations that would support black African male students at an HWI, optimally?

In order to answer these questions, a huge amount of rich and in-depth data were collected through the five focus groups and ten individual interviews with 20 students that identified as Black African male at a HWI. All these interviews were transcribed verbatim.

1.10 DATA ANALYSIS

The data were analysed by means of thematic analysis as structured by Braun and Clarke (2006). According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis is a process for identifying, analysing and reporting of patterns (themes) within the data. Thematic analysis provides a systematic procedure for generating codes and themes from the qualitative data. Clarke and Braun (2017) refer to codes as the smallest units of analysis that capture interesting features of the data that are relevant to the research question. They further noted that codes are the building blocks for themes, underpinned by a central idea. Themes refer to larger patterns of meaning and it provides a framework for organizing and reporting the researcher's analytic observations in order to describe your data set in rich detail. According to Saldana (2013 p.3), any researcher that wants to become proficient and effective at doing qualitative analysis must learn how to code well. In this study I based the coding process on Saldana's criteria for effective coding.

Furthermore, the aim of thematic analysis, as well as this research, was not simply to summarize the data content, but to identify, and interpret the key features of the data, guided by the research question. Merriman (2009) concluded that the overall interpretation of the research data will ultimately be the researchers understanding of the participants' understanding of the phenomenon of interest.

1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Permission was sought from the Ethics committee at the university where this study was conducted (ethical clearance number: REC-2017-0300). The research was based on the ethical principles and values like informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, voluntarily participation and avoidance of harm.

The purpose of the research was to explore and understand the perspectives and experiences of Black African male students at a specific HWI and I constantly had to be aware of potential harm participants could be subjected to. Therefore, as a researcher, my actions were informed by specific ethical considerations based on Crow, Wiles, Heath and Charles (2006) and Gray (2013) aspects of ethical principles.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants in the study. Details of the research were provided to all participants verbally as well as in writing and consent forms were provided to each participant. Before participation, all consent forms were signed, and consent was treated as an on-going process and not merely a once-off agreement as noted by Daniels (2008). Furthermore, all participants were also informed about the nature of the research. This included explaining the purpose of the research, allowing an opportunity for them to ask questions, making it clear that their participation is voluntary. Participants were also assured of their rights to withdraw from the research any time during the research process. In addition, they were assured of confidentiality in terms of all personal data and their individual identities and that all information and data gathered during the research will be treated confidentially.

To address bias issues, I ensured quality by constantly engaging with my supervisor and research peers regarding issues of possible bias. In addition, I made use of a research journal in which I can reflect on my own feelings and perceptions throughout the research process. According to Rule and John (2011 p.113) “*being transparent about one’s positionality and its possible effects*” contributes to the credibility of the study”. Furthermore, the research process was free of deception as deliberate misrepresentation is unethical and this is in line with Denzin and

Lincoln (2013) recommendation that accurate data representation is a core principle in social science research and any omissions and fabrications are unethical. My relationship and my interaction with participants were constructed in such a way as to preserve their dignity and respect for their rights as human beings.

1.1.12 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to this research study. It provides an overview of the research problem, the research question, the theoretical framework, and the methodology of the study.

Chapter 2 focuses on the historical context of the study. It provides an overview of South Africa's apartheid history as well as post-apartheid South Africa. I furthermore discuss the transformation of the Higher Education sector in South Africa against the background of the history of the country. I also pay attention to the research setting and background in this chapter.

Chapter 3 explores international as well as national literature about the experiences of Black men in HE. I pay attention to critical issues such as institutional culture, sense of belonging and meaningful inclusion in this chapter. Prejudices, stereotyping and gendered-racism and the psychological impact of that on the experiences of Black men at HWI are central to this chapter.

Chapter 4 introduces and engages with the theoretical foundations of the study. I discuss critical race theory (CRT) as the overarching theory of the study. I furthermore focus on micro-aggression theory (MAT) as well as co-cultural theory (CCT) as additional theories to frame this study within. The chapter makes the argument that all three of these frameworks provide a critical analytic lens through which participants' experiences and perspectives may be explored and understood.

Chapter 5 formally introduces the methodological framework adopted in the study. The study employs a qualitative research approach and a case study research design that aims to explore the narratives of Black African male students at an HWI

through focus groups and individual interviews. The processes of data collection, analysis, ethical considerations and reflexivity as a researcher are also discussed.

Chapter 6 presents and discusses the identified emerging themes within the data, and it highlights the core themes related to the research questions. The aim was also to present or include as much as possible of the direct extracts as narrated by the participants in this chapter, in order to establish the context of this study.

Chapter 7 focuses on the key findings of the study. I also pay attention to the contributions of the study as well as the recommendations of the study.

1.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter serves as an introduction to this research and it provides an overview of the research process. In the next chapter, I will focus on the historical context of the study.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

'If memory is used to rekindle old hatreds, it will lead us back to continuing hatred and conflict. But if memory is used to rebuild, or to begin new relationships that is where hope lies' (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2014, p.12).

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Any research on students' lived experiences in HE in SA will be incomplete without any reference to the history of SA. In order for us to develop an authentic sense of black African male students' 'voices' and their perspectives about their experiences and support needs at a specific HWI, we have to acknowledge SAs very specific history and the impact thereof on all SA's, but Black South Africans in particular. Therefore, as part of the process to contextualize Black African male students' experiences I will give a brief overview of the historical background of SA.

The first section in this chapter begins with a brief overview of SA and its apartheid history. Furthermore, the impact of this specific history on the education sector and more specifically on the HE sector in SA will then be discussed. The second section in this chapter will give a brief overview of HE in a post-apartheid SA and more specifically at the HWI as the research site. The chapter will end off with a brief overview of the student protests on South African campuses, 22 years after Apartheid.

2.2 HISTORICAL VIEW ON SOUTH AFRICA AND ITS EDUCATION SECTOR

2.2.1 Overview on South Africa under Apartheid

How can we ever forget 'Apartheid', a political system based on unequal and separate development between artificially constructed race groups, which became a reality in SA in 1948? Policies and laws of this system separated different groups in SA, according to socially constructed race groups and constructed a legal system

of discriminatory practices based on race. This was orchestrated by the ruling party at the time, namely the Afrikaner National Party and consisted entirely of members of the white minority group. The core intentions and ultimate strategy of this party was to ensure control of the overall economic and social activities of all Black people in the country. Ultimately the party wanted to ensure racial separation in all sectors of the country, based on separation by race and separation by location (Mdepa & Tshiluba, 2012).

Although most SA's are aware of the country's apartheid history, the focus on creating new national narratives also became an unfortunate strategy for some to rather 'forget' the history to claim that 'apartheid is over' and in our past. Therefore, a brief review of SA's apartheid history justifies a rightful place in this research. I will do dishonour to students' voices if I attempt to explore their narratives, without acknowledging the lingering legacies of apartheid that are until today still intertwined in especially Black students' realities and experiences on historically white campuses.

Of all the discriminatory policies and acts that were put in place during apartheid, the three acts that are most relevant for this study and that will be briefly discussed below, are The Population Registration Act, Separate Development Act and The Bantu Education Act.

2.2.2 The Population Registration Act (1950)

Racial classification was the foundation of all operations and structures within all sectors of SA during apartheid. The racial classification act classified all South African citizens into three very specific groups: White, Coloured and Native. A fourth category – Indian - was later added, for people of South Asian descent. The term 'Native' was later omitted and replaced by the term "Bantu" and was later again changed to the term 'Black'. From 1970 the 'Black' category was further subdivided into ethnic groups such as Zulu and Xhosa (Seekings, 2008).

Three years later The Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, an outflow of the Population Registration Act, was added to further extend the racial segregation of

all public activities, services and areas. From then, specific public areas were reserved for a particular race, creating, among other things, separate beaches, public transport, health care facilities, as well as educational institutions. The deep crippling part of this act was the fact that Black people were provided with services, structures and areas greatly inferior to those of Whites, and, to a lesser degree, to those of Indian and Coloured people.

Most importantly as Eades (1999), as well as Seekings (2008), noted, the legal racial classifications system represented a social hierarchy in SA with White people at the top of the hierarchy and black people at the bottom and other racial groups somewhere in between. It is thus clear that Apartheid imposed a legally enforced racial ranking and hierarchy that positioned 'race' or rather the colour of your skin, as the foundation of an individual's identity and value in society. This racially based ideology created such a strong historical legacy whereby black Africans' in SA were labelled as the lowest status groups in society against white people as superior and at the highest status group.

What is even more detrimental to this reality, is that White people were the minority group in terms of the population whilst Black people were the majority. The most devastating impact of Apartheid is, that *"today, more than 60 years later, this ideology still forms the base of the stereotyping of black people and their assumed inferior moral, intellectual and behavioural features, while whites are still perceived as being the dominant and the superior race"*(Puttick, 2012:24). In the same vein Mafumo and Divala (2014, p.95) noted that apartheid created notions of *"whiteness as representing political and social superiority and non-whiteness as representing political and social inferiority"*.

Furthermore, Carolissen and Bozalek (2016) expanded on how the effects of apartheid in terms of conceptions about different HEIs continue into the current era. For example, historically Black universities are seen as inferior to historically White universities (HWUs). Consequently, Black students who can both afford to study at HWUs and who meet the more stringent academic standards tend to choose to study at these institutions. While working-class students who are mostly Black

students, do not always meet the academic requirements, study at historically Black institutions. This has resulted in many institutions “remaining predominantly mono-cultural in terms of race and class categories”. This reality of the current higher education context shows how South African HEIs are still marked by “dualistic thinking and structures along racialized and class fault lines” (Carolissen & Bozalek, 2016 p.346).

2.2.3 Group Areas Act (1950)

The Group Areas Act of 1950, on the other hand, assigned different racial groups to different living spaces as well as different areas in terms of business operations. The strategy behind this law was to ensure that White people have legal occupational rights to the most developed and best-located spaces. The law further ensured the prevention of all black people from occupying and owning the best land and spaces.

In this regard, Dubow (2014) highlights that the reality of this law was that hundreds of thousands of people were forcefully removed from their established living spaces and that led to the breaking up of families, friends and communities. Once an area was legally allocated to a specific group, government officials had the power to demolish all the houses, remove and displace everyone who was not of the designated group. The reality is that those affected were deeply traumatised by being uprooted. Individuals were often removed at short notice just to be dumped in underdeveloped areas. These areas usually just had very basic facilities like tents, huts and pit toilets. Clean water and firewood were scarce while schools and medical facilities were a rarity (Seekings, 2008; <http://www.sahistory.org.za>).

The Group Areas Act added more restrictions to the lives of black African people although it was also one of the most drastic rights infringements for Coloureds and Indians. The ruling party’s strategy behind this law was not only to ensure separate development of the white minority from other racial groups, but it also ensured the separation of all other socially constructed racial groups from each other. This ultimate strategy of the government was to reduce the over-all political power of Coloureds, Indian and Black African South Africans (Eades, 1999).

Dividing Black African SA's further into smaller tribal groups whilst forcing these groups into areas referred to as 'Homelands' or Bantustans ensured and established separate 'nations'. Black SA's were forcefully removed from rural areas to the homelands and the ruling party re-occupied and re-classified these areas for whites-only as 'rural white areas. More than 3.5-million people were deliberately and forcibly removed during the timeframe of 1960 to 1994 into the Bantustans, where they were plunged into poverty. It was thus clear that this 'divide-and-rule' principle was successful to enable the government to claim that there was no black majority in the country. This political strategy would, therefore, reduce the chances that blacks would unify into a single organization that might try to oppose or challenge the government of the day (<http://www.sahistory.org.za>; Dubow, 2014).

Eades (1999) refers to this strategy as one of the most '*disturbing aspects of apartheid*'. Dubow (2014) shared this sentiment by noting that through this policy intense human suffering and poverty were created and established. The impact of this policy was so huge that until today the chances of rectifying the damage almost appears impossible. Another deep-rooted effect of this act is that today, most Black people live on the periphery of towns, cities and rural areas that are usually far away from well-developed infrastructures, businesses and well-established educational institutions.

Furthermore, Thobejane (2013) notes that the challenges of constructing a new education system in post-apartheid SA cannot be fully grasped without a proper understanding of the pervasive impact of Bantu education on Black SAs.

2.2.4 Bantu Education Act (1953)

Up till the early 1990s, SA's education system was clearly based on race. Different educational institutions for different racial groups were established as well as different educational operating systems or departments for different races were also put in place. An Education Department for whites, an education department for coloureds and Indians (Department of Education and Culture (DEC), and an

education department for black Africans (Department of Education and Training (DET) were established (National Education Co-ordinating Committee, 1993).

The implementation of the Bantu Education Act of 1953 officially legalised this racial separation of education in SA. Schools for White learners were well equipped and well-resourced with globally competitive programs as opposed to schools for Black South African learners that were underfunded with very limited infrastructure and resources. This reality led to Whites experiencing considerably superior education and networks, while the rest of the country's schools were mainly characterized by overcrowded classes, lack of basic resources as well as poorly trained teachers. (Boughey, 2004; Sennett, Finchilescu, Gibson & Strauss, 2003; Wilson-Strydom, 2015). Letseka and Maile (2008) and McGhie (2012) mentioned in the same regard that resources, infrastructures and funding were divided accordingly for these different educational institutions. Whites received the most and best of everything, and Coloureds and Indians received far less than the whites but a little more than Black Africans, who received the least of everything

The ruling party made it clear that education for Black people was not one of their priorities. For them Black people did not need any form of education beyond basic reading and writing skills. This ideology was enforced through the Bantu Education Act, by stating that education for black learners should not go beyond the idea to *“teach Africans to work”*. A statement made by the then Minister of Native Affairs (1958-1966) demonstrates this sentiment, by saying: *“What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? That is quite absurd. Education must be in accordance with their opportunities in life”*. Another Member of Parliament who supported this sentiment made the statement: *We should not give the native an academic education as some people are prone to do. If we do this, we shall later be burdened with a number of academically trained” non-Europeans” and who [then] is going to do the manual labour in the country?*(Mekoa, 2015, p.14)

To further strengthen their social-economic wealth as well as their educational superiority the Afrikaans-dominated ruling party appointed the Eiselen

Commission (1948-1951) to promote Afrikaans as a language from its inferior position in relation to English. During November 1951, this commission committed itself to challenging the monopoly of the English language and to promoting the use of Afrikaans to ensure its dominant status legally. In 1974, the Department of Bantu Education sent a circular to African schools to inform them that, from 1975, fifty percent of subjects would be taught in Afrikaans (Reddy, 2004, p.26). It became clear that the Apartheid regime wanted to use “Education” as a tool for division, discrimination and repression. This mission was reflected through the school curriculum that aimed to prepare Black citizens to accept inequality and the superiority of the ‘white’ race (Weldon, 2010, p.354).

In this regard, Dubow (2014) mentioned that Bantu education set a clear limit on black African aspiration. Not only were learners subjected to an inferior curriculum but it also induced inferiority and lowered expectation levels among black learners for years to come. Bantu education therefore, was furthermore successful in securing white supremacy that is unarguably, still prevalent today. Again, the core strategy on the part of the ruling party was to ensure that future generations of Black learners to understand that they were unequal and inferior.

2.2.5 Extension of University Education Act (1959)

In 1959 the principles of Bantu Education were extended to the higher education sector with the so-called Extension of University Education Act. This Act legally created the way for the establishment of racially based universities. Because of the fact that the education sector was integral to the apartheid ideology, universities were perceived as ‘creatures of the state’ according to Bunting in Wilson-Strydom (2015). Mekoa (2015) shares this sentiment by noting that white universities were established to cater to the interest and further education of White people and were supported with multiple resources as opposed to the then black universities that were created to cater to the interest of Black people with little support.

These black universities or ‘bush’ or ‘tribal’ colleges as they were referred to, were further managed and controlled by graduates of usually white institutions. By so doing, the ruling party could influence and control the learning experiences of

African, Coloured and Indian students. Therefore, these universities, ‘bush’, or ‘tribal’ colleges became educational and learning spaces of the apartheid ideology and an apartheid curriculum. The irony, according to Dubow (2014:10), “*is that in the early 1970s, it was from within these apartheid institutions that fundamental new challenges and opposition to white supremacy would emerge*”.

Since apartheid laws and policies like the Population Registration Act, Separate Development Act and The Bantu Education Act were implemented, the South African economic, social, political and educational landscape was never to be the same again. SA became polarized between rich and poor and White and Black whereby White people were entitled the first-class citizenship, Coloureds and Indians the second-class citizens while black Africans were regarded as the third class citizens in the land of their birth. It is this clear that apartheid perpetuated hierarchical views of the SA society and fostered an ideological consciousness of White superiority and Black inferiority on a social, economic, cultural as well as an educational level among all groups in SA (Thobejane, 2013).

2.3 POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

2.3.1 Transformation from Apartheid South Africa to a Democratic South Africa

On February 11, 1990, the political landscape of SA changed forever as Nelson Mandela walked out of prison after 27 years of imprisonment. In April 1994 the National Party “crumbled’ under national as well as international political pressure and was forced to hand their power over. This historical event led to the first democratic election in SAs history. On this day “the ‘old flag’ of SA was lowered and replaced by a new rainbow flag that represented a ‘rainbow nation’ and a democratic SA” (Daniel & Greytak, 2012, p.347). The image of the ‘Rainbow Nation’, as excitedly used for the first time by Archbishop Desmond Tutu in 1994, is the most significant symbol that represents the ideology of a free and democratic SA.

2.3.2 Aftermath of the Apartheid ideology

Today, approximately 70 years after apartheid became a reality in SA a huge majority of SA's Black population remain marginalized, not only socio-economically but also in terms of education. Although Black SA's are currently dominating the political sphere and despite White people no longer being politically dominant, whiteness and White people still represent the socio-cultural norm and socio-economic dominance (Puttick, 2012).

One of the very daunting realities is that Black SA's (80% of the total SA population) are still the population group who bear the largest burden of deep-rooted discriminatory acts of the Apartheid era. Today, low levels of education, unemployment and poverty are clear proof of this reality. Swartz (2016) illustrates the point by noting that the South African unemployment figure for White SA's is a mere 8% while the figure for Black SA's stands at 34%. She further noted that around half of privately-owned land is still in the hands of the white population in spite of White people being a statistical minority in SA. In terms of education just over one-third of learners who start school, exit with a matric certificate, while twice the proportion of White SA youth has a matric certificate, compared to Black SA.

In terms of the HE sector, White SA's between 18 and 29 are seven times more likely to be enrolled at university than Black SA youth. Interesting enough, statistics for Coloured and Indian SA's reflect almost exactly the relative privileges and benefits afforded and allocated to each population group under apartheid. These statistics therefore confirmed, that not only is SA the most unequal country in the world, but these inequalities remain clearly differentiated by race years after the abolishment of Apartheid (Swartz, 2016).

What supports these harsh realities and legacies of apartheid, even more, is a report, *Poverty trends in South Africa: An examination of absolute poverty between 2006 and 2015* (Statistics South Africa, 2017). This document states that the most vulnerable to poverty in our society are children (aged 17 or younger), black Africans, people living in rural areas and persons with little or no education.

It is therefore clear, that despite the end of Apartheid and the birth of a new democratic SA in 1994, certain legacies of Apartheid are unfortunately still prevalent in this ‘rainbow nation’, 25 years later. The harsh reality is, not only did the Apartheid government transfer their power to the new and democratic SA in 1994 but they also transferred a very poverty-ridden and unequal society. Therefore, the most daunting aftermath of apartheid is that although the new democratic SA was born in 1994, it remains the most unequal country in the world. Swartz (2016) and Eades (1999) notions are in line with my perspective when they argue that these discriminatory apartheid laws and the impact thereof are still, until today, deeply entrenched in South African society. Swartz (2016) further noted that all initiatives and strategies that were put in place after 1994 to try to create unity in the new ‘South Africa’ have to continuously face the ‘ghosts’ of deeply-rooted mistrusts, prejudices and stereotyping based on these apartheid laws.

2.3.3 The Higher Education landscape in post-apartheid South Africa

The HE sector that the new government inherited in 1994 was characterised by difficulties and challenges because of Apartheid and its discriminatory laws. On how the new democratic government was to proceed and deal with these challenges was a very daunting task. A comprehensive plan on how to address all historical imbalances and democratize SA's Africa's education systems had to be put together urgently. Educational initiatives and a diverse range of transformation-oriented projects also had to be developed (CHE, 2004).

One of the first strategic changes within the education sector was to merge the three separate education departments into one uniform Department of Education (DoE). The three departments that were merged into one were the National Department of Education (NDE) for Whites, the education department for Coloureds and Indians (Department of Education and Culture (DEC), and the education department for black Africans (Department of Education and Training (DET) (DoE: Department of Education, 1995; National Education Co-ordinating Committee, 1993).

Furthermore, new policies regarding education were formulated and conceptualised through policy-framing documents such as the National Commission on Higher Education Report: A Framework for Transformation; Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (DET, 2001; DoE, 1995; 1997a; National Plan for Higher Education, 1995).

In 1994 a National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) was appointed to make proposals as to how the sector could be transformed and how to approach the challenges of the past. The NCHE (1996) submitted its report in 1996, 'A Framework for Transformation'. This report was followed by a White Paper (1997) and a Higher Education Act (1997) in which the principles of equity and democratization were stressed. These policies were followed in 1999 with a Council on Higher Education (CHE) report commissioned by the Minister of Education on the size and shape of the sector. This report provided the framework for the restructuring of the education sector and higher education institutions.

SA National Education Policy Act of 1996: (Values and Principles) stated clearly that no educational institution can refuse access to anyone who qualified for a specific program. HWIs therefore, had to become inclusive, both with regard to staff as well as students. This Act further implies that all educational institutions have to respect all people from diverse religious, cultural and language backgrounds. Ultimately all educational institutions had to adapt and change their mission/vision statements, their policies and regulations as well as their curricula (DoE, 2001; Parker 2002).

The reality is that although most HEIs put initiatives and strategies based on these policies and recommendations in place, transformation remains a huge challenge specifically in HWIs. What became clear was that the education sector was challenged by institutions that remained stuck in their apartheid history. Although apartheid has ended, the legacies of apartheid are still firmly in place in some of these institutions. The reality was that formulating new policies, and simply opening the doors of HWIs to students that were previously excluded, were just not enough (Cloete & Bunting, 2000; Soudien, 2008).

In this regard, Badat (2010) proposed the creation of a new institutional landscape in SA. He further noted that within the South African education sector, the creation or establishment of new institutional identities are of utmost importance. It is through the development of new institutional missions and the redress of organisational structures and practices that institutional identities can be reshaped. He cautions though, that the restructuring of institutional landscapes does not end simply with new identities for institutions. What is needed, is the constant interrogation and confrontation of institutionalised inequities of SA's HE, which was caused by apartheid.

What became clear is that the long and arduous process of restructuring SAs HE sector is and will be a long ongoing process. However, this is understandable, if we take into account that all SAs were indoctrinated into living with differentness, separateness and unequal development for many-many years. One has to keep in mind that only twenty-five years have passed since apartheid came to an end and although the pace is slow and painful for many, the goal of a democratic society has been reached. The ultimate vision of equality, successful integration and social cohesion for all South African citizens is still to be realised.

In the next section I will give a brief overview of the research setting and background in the next section.

2.4 RESEARCH SETTING AND BACKGROUND:

2.4.1 Research site

The research site is a historically white university situated in a town that is well-known for its wine industry and university, and like the rest of SA, is plagued by deep inequality. The institution may be described as the oldest Afrikaans-language university in SA which was designated for Afrikaans speaking white SA's only. The university had strong ties with the apartheid regime. Between 1919 and 1978, each South African prime minister had been an alumnus of the university either as student, professor or chancellor. Some of the names on this list include Jan Smuts, JBM Herzog, DF Malan, JG Strijdom, HF Verwoerd and BJ Vorster. The institution

therefore served as a base for ministers of the Apartheid regime (1948) to collaborate and discuss strategies that were implemented during Apartheid. It is therefore understandable that this university was not only perceived as the birthplace of Apartheid, but it also served as an incubator for discrimination, stereotyping and racism (Odendaal, 2012).

Based on National policy at the time, the university announced on 11 June 1977 that they would open their door to other races. However, this was on the university's very specific terms. For instance, the university would only accept Black undergraduates for courses not offered at their own universities. Furthermore, it was also based on a quota system where a certain number of Black students could study at white universities and they had to apply for permits to do so. In spite of the move being referred to as a progressive one, the move was meant only for those who could speak Afrikaans as the university used mainly Afrikaans as the medium of instruction. With this language policy firmly in place, students (mostly black students) that were unfamiliar with the Afrikaans language were indirectly excluded from the institution (<http://www.sahistory.org.za>).

2.4.2 The “language debate” at the institution On the 29 May, 1997 South African Minister of Education Dr Sibusiso Bengu stated that this HWI could no longer be an exclusively Afrikaans medium university. This was particularly not in line with the new educational policies and Acts on inclusivity in HE. Since 2017 a new Language Policy under the guidance of the Language Revision Work Group has been implemented as approved by the Senate of the university. This was to ensure that no student is excluded from the teaching and learning process. Council with the concurrence of Senate approved a new Language Policy on 22 June 2016 for implementation from 1 January 2017. The aims of this policy, as stated in the official Policy document, are as follow:

1. To give effect to section 29(2) (language in education) and 29(1) (b) (access to higher education) read with section 9 (equality and the prohibition against direct and indirect unfair discrimination) of the Constitution.
2. To contribute to achieve institutions Vision 2030, as contained in the University's Institutional Intent and Strategy (2013–2018), so as to enable

inclusivity and equitable access to the institution for all prospective and current students and staff in pursuit of excellence.

3. To facilitate effective learning and teaching, research, and service delivery at the institution.
4. To promote multilingualism as an important differentiating characteristic of the institution. (<http://www.sun.ac.za/english/about-us/language>)

Although policies are firmly in place, the use of Afrikaans at the university remains a huge challenge, especially for Black African students. For some of these students, English is not their first or second language. Therefore, language as a medium of exclusion can become a daily struggle within certain academic and social spaces on and around campus, for these students. This scenario resulted in many Black African student's unwillingness to take part in group activities in class and social gatherings on campus. Furthermore, the impact of the reality of these exclusionary acts might impact on certain students' academic underperformance or contributing to them ultimately dropping out of the institution (Bunting & Cloete, 2004).

According to Badat (2016), it was exactly all the aforementioned issues that not only necessarily raised social and political dilemmas but also created the responses characterised through the #FeesMustfall, #OpenStellenbosch and the #AfrikaansMustFall campaigns on SA campuses during 2015.

2.4.3 Student unrest on South African campuses (2015)

During 2015, something shifted drastically and dramatically at South African universities. Students formed national solidarity groups in order to mobilize the biggest student protests on SA campuses since apartheid ended in 1994. These protests led to the beginning of a student discourse about correcting the historical legacies of apartheid and specifically in HE. One of the core issues that sparked the protests on campuses was the unaffordable tuition fees. Many Black students said they come from poor families, and fee increases will rob them of the opportunity to continue studying. Some students mentioned that increased tuition fees amount to discrimination in a country where the average income of black families is far less than that of white families. While the original request or demand from students the

demand for a 0% increase in fees, it shifted to the calling for university fees to be scrapped altogether. Other demands by students include language policies that exclude Black students who were most disadvantaged. Students demand that Afrikaans be dropped as a language of instruction. At certain tertiary institutions, Afrikaans was referred to as the “primary instrument for the marginalisation of black students” (Jansen, 2017 p. ix; <https://theconversation.com/why-south-africas-universities-are-in-the-grip-of-a-class-struggle-50915>).

During the protests, students also voiced their frustration over the presence of certain historical symbols and statues that represents the apartheid history of SA. This sparked the #RhodesMustFall campaign and was directed against symbols and statues which some students saw as representations of their alienation and exclusion on historically white campuses. The campaign for the statue's removal received global attention and led to a wider movement to ‘decolonise’ education on all South Africa campuses. (Jansen, 2017). Hall (2016) mentioned in this regard that although the #RhodesMustFall campaign was primarily perceived by some as the mere removal of statues, it actually intricately symbolized the deeper need for the decolonization of higher education and the persisting ‘white ideology’ that still dominates all spheres in certain HEI.

In line with the students' protest, Pather (2016, p.3), a journalist for the Mail & Guardian Newspaper noted, that we are now in a time of history after apartheid and student protest are inevitable and we should be mindful *to protect South Africans' right to protest, not only because of its importance to human rights and our flawed democracy but also for its ability to inspire memory rather than forgetfulness in a country where many still choose the latter*. She further noted, that although apartheid ends in 1994 and many laws and policies changed, *“racial capitalism was maintained, leaving too many young black youths to inherit a life of destitution”*.

Confirming her sentiments is the release of a short documentary in August 2015. The documentary, referred to as the ‘LUISTER VIDEO’ (A film was posted on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/sF3rTBQTQk4>) captured the narratives of a group of

Black students sharing their perspectives on the lack of transformation at a specific HWI. In the interviews, students share some of their personal experiences, stereotyping and challenges that they face daily due to social and racial prejudices as well as the use of Afrikaans as a language of teaching at the institution. One of the students refer to his experience on this historically white campus as: *"The colour of my skin in (name of the town) is like a social burden... Just walking into spaces, there is that 'stop, pause and stare', where people cannot believe that you would dare enter into this space."*

Petersen (2015, p.2), a journalist of NEWS24 reported, that during an interview she has done with one of the students at the institution, the student referred to the institution as a “mini-apartheid island” that is in urgent need of change. He was speaking outside one of the university's administration buildings after a group of students marched through the streets, in protest against the apparent lack of transformation at the university as well as its language policy. This student further stated, *"There is an urgent need for radical transformation at (name of the university). The institution does not reflect the demographics of the country and excludes non-Afrikaans speakers"*.

Although the ‘LUISTER’ video creates the impression that the management of the institution does not listen (‘luister’) to students, management reacted and challenged this notion by stating that the rector of the university, has committed himself to listening and has in writing encouraged staff of the university as well as students to enter into conversation with him to enable open and courageous conversations on campus (Black students rally against 'remnants of apartheid'; <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-34125297>).

2.5 CONCLUSION:

Because SA is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world, the peaceful transition to democracy in 1994, surprised communities nationally as well as internationally. Since this transition, SA has addressed many social inequalities of the past.

Badat (2010) mentioned in this regard, that SAs education sector during 1948 – 1994 was clearly a reflection of apartheid and other legal discriminatory practices. Separate development and the impact of these discriminatory practices on the broader society and the education sector specifically was so detrimental that educational institutions still struggle to rectify these injustices. This author further noted that of the 60% of black African students who survive the first year at South African universities, only 15% graduate ultimately. This does not come as a surprise because most of these students come from under-resourced and ineffective public-school systems. Most of these learners never make it to HE and those who do, usually come poorly prepared to HEIs because of the pervasive nature of apartheid.

It is thus clear that SA's transition from an apartheid system to a democratic system is one of the most dramatic and hopefully inspiring stories of our time. However, although apartheid ended with a negotiated transition to a non-racial democracy, unfortunately, that did not happen without detrimental personal cost to thousands of people. Tjabane and Pillay (2011) suggest that although SAs HEs social justice agenda focusses on equity and redress, on how HWIs reflect this agenda 25 years after apartheid, remains a huge challenge.

In the next chapter, I will give an overview of the literature that focusses on the experiences of Black male students in HE as well as the experiences of Black men on historically white campuses.

CHAPTER 3

BLACK MEN AND THEIR HIGHER EDUCATION ASPIRATIONS

There is a great deal of evidence to demonstrate that not all children are valued equally, that some children are clearly valued more than other children. African (American) male children are valued least of all. It is not likely that educational institutions, as they are currently structured, will ever look on the majority of children they serve as having unlimited potential (Governor's Commission on Black Males – Maryland State: Department of Education, 2007: Online Quotes)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in Chapter 1, this study was guided by the philosophical worldview of social constructivism that holds the assumption that individuals seek understanding and meaning of the world in which they live and operate.

This chapter, therefore, builds on social constructivism to offer an overview of the experiences of Black men in HWIs and the intersectionality of constructs like race and gender, within an international as well as post-apartheid South African context. As discussed in Chapter 2, *race* is a socially constructed entity that was employed during the apartheid era as a means of social categorisation and separation. Yet, it is shown how, despite the formal end to apartheid in 1994, *race* still exerts a pervasive and powerful force over the lives and experiences of especially Black students in HE and more specifically black African male students at HWIs.

This chapter therefore, will give a literature overview of issues that impact the overall experiences of Black students on historically white campuses framed within the context of the widening participation agenda. This chapter also provides a very brief and by no means an exhaustive overview of past research which has explored the experiences of Black men in HE. Research which is drawn from is largely international studies however, a few are situated within the SA context.

I will then also pay attention to literature that zooms in on the experiences of Black male students on historically white campuses. Lastly, the impact of gendered racism on the academic, social and emotional well-being of Black male students on historically white campuses, will be discussed.

3.2 EXPERIENCES OF BLACK STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

3.2.1 Widening participation

As part of the global widening participation mission in HE, HEIs that were historically reserved for certain racial groups, are opening their doors to all students that were previously excluded. Burke (2006) however noted, that policy and practice are sometimes too narrowly focused on simplistic notions of excess for all and consequently recruitment strategies are sometimes solely aimed at increasing the numbers of Black students at the institution. According to Brown (2004) this might create a situation where Black students at HEIs might be caught in the middle of the ‘widening participation’ tendency and the harsh realities of their day-to-day navigational experiences and challenges on these campuses.

It is therefore a worldwide phenomenon that students face a vast amount of challenges and adjustment issues on entering HE. Being enrolled at a HEI might create a future vision for a better life and better employment opportunities. However, being a student at a HEI simultaneously has the potential to precipitate long-lasting educational as well as psychosocial problems. All students thus need to adjust to the HE environment, not only academically, but socially as well as emotionally.

However, Malefo (2000), Smith, et al. (2007) and McCoy (2014) mentioned that although all students do experience challenges in HEIs, it is especially Black students at historically white institutions (HWIs) that face additional academic, social and emotional challenges. McCoy (2014) refers to this situation as a complex situation where Black students at HWIs are on a daily basis potentially exposed to direct or subtle discriminatory interactions marked by a “*Sea of Whiteness*”. This situation does not only have an impact on Black students’ general wellbeing, but it

also creates a reality where Black students are challenged daily with issues such as how to navigate and negotiate their own needs versus the needs of others in these learning spaces. Therefore, one cannot overlook or underestimate the fact that many Black students might still feel excluded and alienated on these historically white campuses.

Ironically, words like ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusion’ are easily used on the websites of HWIs as well as in their policy documents as a way to attract Black students. However, the group of Black students they do attract to the institution do not always receive the support they need once they are enrolled at the institution. Consequently, many of these students underperform and ultimately drop out of the institution. It is argued that HWIs seldom take responsibility for Black students’ underperformance and high drop-outs rates and refuse to admit they have actually failed these students by not giving them the support they needed to succeed (Orelus, 2012). According to Schreiber (2007), it is the responsibility of HWIs to demonstrate their commitment to Black students in order to facilitate their academic, social and emotional development and their adjustment to the new HE environment.

3.2.2 Diversity and meaningful inclusion

Within the South African context, as discussed in Chapter 2, the Apartheid regime has left the education sector with a legacy of exclusion, division and suspicion that are still hard to overcome, 25 years later. Although with widening participation and open access policies firmly in place HEIs became increasingly diverse with regard to the student population and some students might feel excluded and pushed to the peripheries on these campuses. This means that the environment in the institution may be unconsciously loaded with discriminatory and exclusionary acts because the institution’s *‘implicit unconscious structures are created and established for the use and comfort of white people’* (Mekoa, 2011, p.115). Therefore, all role players in the HE sector must be cautiously aware of this situation and act upon it.

Furthermore, the lack of critical role players in HE, construct and sustain learning spaces that are loaded with exclusionary and discriminative acts and nuances

(Wilkins, 2007). It is thus clear that new and different approaches are necessary on how to create more conscious and meaningful inclusive learning spaces where all students feel welcome. Unfortunately, this became a very challenging mission in HE and as Gobodo-Madikizela (2014, p.12) stated '*racial discriminatory acts presents itself very different now in the 21st century as in the previous century. Direct prejudices as well as blatant racism dominated our previous century whilst it presents nowadays in very subtle forms and ways*'. This reality not only makes it difficult to address these race-based treatments, but it creates a situation where the experiences of Black students at the receiving end of racial discriminatory acts are usually dismissed as *over sensitive* behaviour on the part of Black students.

Wilkins (2007, p.207) expresses similar sentiments in '*The Aesthetics of Equity*' by emphasising that an activist role needs to be taken up by all role-players within every division within the campus environment. These role players include the academic, emotional, physical as well as social context. It is therefore important that all role-players must own and embrace their roles as "architects" of a diverse and inclusive learning environment. This stance is important and needed specifically for the support of Black students that were historically excluded from these learning spaces. This author further noted that this 'activist architecture' will assist in society's ultimate mission for the mitigation of any form of discrimination and racism that still is prevalent today in especially HWIs. Therefore, Wilson (2007) furthermore suggested that in order for us to create learning spaces that are more inclusive, the activist approach that he proposed needs to be an intentional and conscious position that all role-players in the HE environment must adopt. These efforts will then ultimately have a huge impact on whether an institution's culture and campus climate are welcoming to all students or not.

3.2.3 Institutional culture and campus climate

According to Higgens (2007) the concept of 'institutional culture' has become a buzzword within the HE sector in SA. Yet, Jansen (2004) note, that although there is a level of confidence with which the concept 'institutional culture' is used, it still remains a challenge to define the phenomenon or concept. Within the South African HE context, Steyn and Van Zyl (2001, p.x) refer to institutional culture as "the

prevailing ethos and the deep-seated set of norms, assumptions and values that predominate and pervade most of the environment”. These authors further note that, *“institutional culture has the capacity to refer to any and every aspect of experience at university, from parking to policing, from the sites and names of buildings to any and every joke told on campus”* Steyn and Van Zyl (2001, pp.27 & 28).

One can then reason that most HEIs develop and establish institutional cultures over time. The outcome of these institutional cultures is therefore the establishment of operating strategies and philosophies that are rooted in the ‘hidden’ historical layers of the institution. These hidden threads are deeply anchored into the institutions’ operating conscience and historical memory. Therefore, these operating philosophies then usually serve as a compass, that guides the institution as it makes decisions about resources, curriculum, educational initiatives and support. Furthermore, these institutional operating conscience and historical memory are usually made up of tacit understandings about what is important to the institution and its unspoken values and beliefs about students and their education journeys (Kuh, Kinze, Schuh & Whit, 2005).

However, Brown (2004) contended that the roots of most of HWIs are anchored in a long history and culture of exclusion based on race. This author further noted that history never goes away and it impacts the present continuously. It is therefore not surprising that some Black students feel that management at these HWIs is not authentically and genuinely interest in them and their educational journey on these campuses. Rather, their presence at these HWIs is purely for the purpose of having a representative number of students from other racial groups. According to Badat (2016) and Biscombe, Conradie, Costandius and Alexander (2017) this reality creates a context where White students at HWIs tend to experience the campus culture as natural and experience the space as ‘feeling at home’, whereas Black students tend to find the campus culture and environment alienating, disempowering and exclusionary.

In this regard, Vincent (2015) mentioned that the best way to truly understand the institutional culture, in general, is through narratives. She furthermore comments,

that it is through narratives we can make sense of our situation and our surroundings. It is through these stories that we can interrogate social reproduction by 'making the normal strange'. By telling the stories about our institutions, is only then that we have an effect or impact on institutional change and transformation. It is then important that HEIs provide opportunities for these stories to be told and heard. The author further noted that through narratives we can determine whether individuals feel 'at home' at an institution or not.

It is thus clear that examining institutional culture and campus climate can provide an important view of the institutional factors that impact the experiences of Black students at HWIs. Importantly, aspects like peer-to-peer relations, in-class and out-of-class experiences, as well as students' educational and emotional experiences need to be explored. Therefore, investigating Black students' engagement realities on historically white campuses through their narratives can provide an important window for better understanding how they experience the institution and their educational journey (Bonner & Bailey, 2006; Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015).

Kuh, et al. (2005) concludes by noting that efforts to enhance student success often falter because too little attention is given to understanding the properties of the institutions' culture and environment that reinforces the status quo and perpetuate everyday actions and the way they do things. Furthermore, these operating philosophies and institutional cultures might have a direct impact on some students' sense of belonging as well as their academic, social and emotional wellbeing if issues like diversity and meaningful inclusion are not a priority for certain institutions.

However, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, that although all Black students at HWIs might experience educational as well as psychosocial challenges, this study will only focus on the experiences of black African male students at a specific HWI.

3.3 LITERATURE REVIEW TO CONTEXUALIZE THE EXPERIENCES OF BLACK MEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

3.3.1 Research context

Within the international research context, more has been published about Black men over the past 20 years than any other racialized gender group in educational settings as well as higher education settings. Authors such as Harper, (2009), Harper et. al, (2011), James, (2012), Patton, (2014), Wood, (2014) and Brooms and Perry (2016) covered this field extensively. Research on black men in HE continues to revolve around issues of preparation, access, retention, and persistence (Kim & Hargrove, 2013; Palmer & Wood, 2012; Wood, 2013). Important to these experiences, and efforts to enhance their success, are how Black males experience the campus climate and their engagement on campus (Brooms, 2018; Brooms & Perry, 2016; Brown, 2006; Brown, Dancy, & Davis, 2012).

Within the South African context, not much literature exists about the experiences of Black African male students in HE or more specifically at HWIs. However, some research in terms of the experiences of Black students, focusing on all Black students (including Coloured and Indian students) as well as females at HWIs has been done. Authors such as Cooper (2005), Daniels and Richards, (2006), Graaff, (2006), Jansen, (2004), Leibowitz et al. (2005), Makobela, (2001), Pattman and Carolissen (2018), Puttick, (2011), and Siyengo, (2015) and for example have researched experiences of first-generation students or Black students in the South African HE sector. Most of these studies focussed on exclusionary and discriminatory practices in the broader sense. Research that focuses on the experiences of Black African male students at a HWI is absent from the literature.

In this regard Brooms (2018) notes that Black males face a number of challenges in HE, whereby many of them are pushed to the periphery of the campus where they feel like outsiders. The primary reason for this is because of the continued discrimination that they face. Although issues around Black male students' success and retention rates are well researched the discourse around the direct or indirect impact of discrimination and racism on these student experiences in HE is still limited (Patton, McEwen, Rendon & Howard-Hamilton, 2007).

3.3.2 Black men on historically white campuses

It is a worldwide phenomenon that many Black men find themselves on the margins of society because of their low-ranked racial status. Research and empirical data show that Black men are constantly confronted by a system that oppresses them because they are members of a racialized Black group and because they are Black men, consequently, they are constantly exposed to gendered racism (Smith, et al., 2007). Based on the literature it is thus clear that Black men carry the burden of two negative social identities, Blackness and Black maleness. This burden they have to carry as they navigate themselves, not only through HWIs but through society at large. As a result, Black men are constantly developing unique navigational techniques for applying adaptive and coping strategies that leaves them emotionally and physically drained (Smith, et al., 2007; Smith, et al., 2011).

According to James (2012), this situation creates a discourse where Black men find themselves in a disadvantaged position in society in general as well as in HE and more specifically at HWIs. What is interesting though, is that nationally as well as internationally it appears that even though Black men are aware of this situation, they are choosing these HWIs over other higher education institutions (Imenda, Kongolo & Grewal in Soudien (2008). However this tendency does not come as a surprise because for many Black male students HWI's represent wealth and freedom, as well as the perception of superior quality of education (Carolissen & Bozalek, 2017). To be enrolled at one of these HWIs thus becomes an important strategy for the potential ability to make positive contributions to one's own community, as well as to gain access to a better life.

However, Anderson (2011) noted that this situation creates daunting and challenging everyday realities for Black male students in some of these HWI's. This often means that young Black men begin many social interactions from a deficit. As a result, he contended '*the young black male is approached with a deficit model: he must prove himself to be law abiding and trustworthy, which he is seldom able to do to the satisfaction of his white counterparts*' (Anderson, 2011, p.99).

3.4 BLACK MEN AND RACIALLY CHARGED CHALLENGES

Racism has been one of the most prominent worldwide phenomena that have shaped society's perceptions about race and ultimately in determining how people, especially White people perceive and act towards Black people and more specifically towards black African men.

As a black male, Barack Obama summarized his personal experiences in terms of gendered racism in his speech on 19 July 2013:

There are very few African (American) men in this country who haven't had the experience of being followed when they were shopping in a department store. That includes me. There are very few African (American) men who haven't had the experience of walking across the street and hearing the locks click on the doors of cars. That happens to me—at least before I was a senator. There are very few African (American) men who haven't had the experience of getting on an elevator and a woman clutching her purse nervously and holding her breath until she had a chance to get off. That happens often.

3.4.1 Black masculinity and Black misandry

Upon entering HWIs Black students soon realize that they stepped into an essentially white space that is dominated by a largely white campus culture (Smith, et al., 2007). Furthermore, according to Meko (2011) Black students perceive HWIs as institutions that embrace white male culture. In this regard James (2012) noted that Black men are continuously measured against the white hegemonic structure of masculinities. Furthermore, the combined impact of their race and gender identity manifests itself in gendered racism as they are stereotyped, profiled and denigrated constantly at these HWIs (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013; Smith, et al., 2007; Wood & Palmer in Broome, 2018). Not only does this marginalize Black male students at HWIs but it also impacts on their academic as well as their social and emotional well-being.

Within the South African context, Ratele (2014), noted that research that focuses on Black masculinities appears to suggest that Black males are underachieving in

SA. This author further noted that researchers regard men chiefly as a ‘problem’ and one of the reasons for that is an underlying narrow agenda that views African notions of masculinity as inherently dangerous. This has had a great impact on the types of research and interventions designed for men (Ratele, 2014). Ratele, whose work is informed by critical masculinity studies argues that versions of masculinity are imbued with power and negotiated and performed in particular kinds of contexts. However, certain versions of masculinity associated with physical strength and public confidence become ‘hegemonic’ in patriarchal societies and asserted through the marginalisation and ‘othering’ of Black men, especially Black men in post-colonial and white settler societies.

This helps us to theorise the particular kinds of prejudices and stereotyping Black African male students experience in their everyday lives at HEIs, and the support and coping mechanisms they draw upon to deal with these. They are constructed and treated in problematic ways like macho males, as potential criminals, racially profiled on a daily basis. Furthermore, Black African men are expected culturally to be ‘strong’ and not to ‘cry about things’ The effect of this is to position them as ‘outsiders’ at the HWIs and exhaust them emotionally.

In this regard, Wood (2014) found that the reasons for the challenges Black male students’ experience on historically white campuses are multifaceted. This author established that issues like disengagement and academic underperformance that Black male students at HWIs experience are due to issues like faculty dissonance, lowered educational expectations, and abrasiveness of their White counterparts in and out of class and on and around campus. Similarly, in a study about the experience of Black male students in HE by Smith et al. (2007) in Broome (2018), they found that students experienced persistent anti-Black male stereotyping and marginality which caused extreme hyper-surveillance and control both on and off campus.

Furthermore, most HWIs and their surrounding communities are often located in historically white spaces where racial discrimination exists in both subtle and direct forms. Therefore, for a Black male student to walk off campus into surrounding

areas has proven to be a challenging task. For other students it may be simple to walk or jog in the area but for Black male students, it can become a dangerous challenge. According to Smith, et al. (2007) the ideology of Whiteness that equates White people with good motives and Black people with bad motives created systemic and deep-rooted subconscious fears towards Black men, and therefore Black male students. Furthermore, Smith (2010) refers to this very unique and critical positioning of Black men in society as Black misandry that refers to pathological aversion toward Black men. Similarly, Smith, Yosso and Solórzano (2007) contend that this situation is created and is reinforced on a daily basis in individual, societal and institutional practices and behaviours.

3.4.2 Prejudice and stereotypes

According to James (2012), most of the problems that Black male students experience at HWIs are based on the stereotyping of these Black students as lazy, dumb, intellectually inferior and dangerous. These stereotypes are part of deficit thinking about Black male students, which acts as daily challenges at HWIs as they try to productively engage with their academic process.

Furthermore, Steele and Aronson (1995) described “stereotype threat” as a social-psychological predicament that usually stems from negative stereotypes about a certain group. The impact of this is that anything one does or any of one’s features, like skin colour, that conform to the stereotype, make the stereotypes more “real” and “true” in the eyes of others. Furthermore, Anderson (2011, pp.3 & 99) asserted that within public spaces people often use skin colour as well as gender as a social perimeter and that often influences their social observations and interactions with others. Therefore, stereotypical tropes often associate White skin colour with ‘civility’ and ‘trust’ while Black skin colour and more specifically for Black males is associated with ‘danger’ and ‘distrust’.

Wilson (2010, p.15) identified the two key features at the core of racism in society: (a) *the beliefs that one’s race is either biologically or culturally inferior to another* and (b) *the use of such beliefs to rationalize or prescribe the way that the “inferior” race should be treated in this society.* Therefore, within the HE sector, stereotyping

remains a major issue that continues to limit the educational opportunities, possibilities, and successes of Black male students, especially on historically white campuses (James, 2012).

3.4.3 Racial Invisibility and colour blindness

According to Ladson-Billings (2013), racism is so naturally ingrained in our society and that is the reason why it is often invisible to most. Therefore, racial invisibility refers to the action when individuals believe racism no longer exists or that it is only a direct outflow of a very specific “isolated” incident. The author further noted that racism is a normal component of the everyday experiences of black people that pass others as invisible or non-existent.

Colour blindness, on the other hand, is the belief that race does not matter (Worthington, Navarro, Loewy, & Hart, 2008), fails to consider the permanence of racism. According to Manning (2009) it is the misguided belief in the equality of people because they are human. DeCuir and Dixson (2004, p.29) suggested embracing colour blindness ignores “that inequity, inopportunity, and oppression are historical legacies that will not easily be remedied by ignoring race in contemporary society”. It is thus clear that colour-blindness serves to minimize or ignore the effect of gendered racism on Black men by (a) denying the existence of White privilege, (b) ignoring the extent of institutional racism within our society and (c) denying the present existence of blatant or “old-fashioned” racism (Coleman, Chapman & Wang, 2012).

The only thing Black male students are trying to do is to transition into these HWIs and be successful, despite never knowing if or when they might be the targets of racial discrimination and stereotyping (Smith et al., 2007). This situation cannot be dismissed or underestimated and the impact thereof on their academic, social, physical and emotional well-being as well as their sense of belonging at these HWIs.

3.5 PSYCHOLOGICAL COST OF GENDERED RACISM

3.5.1 Emotional impact of racism on Black men at historically white institutions

It is thus clear that Black male students experience special added stressors especially in HWIs because of perceived, and actual gendered racial discrimination. This situation is additionally complicated for these students by at least three stressful and enduring psychosocial outcomes in these historically white spaces: (a) *'they have to spend mental energy considering whether they are genuinely accepted or just being tolerated'*; (b) *'they use mental and emotional energy discerning the difference between supportive Whites and destructive actions by Whites as a collective'*, and (c) *'they confront additional and unique race-based stress identifying when, where, and how to resist oppression, versus when, where, and how to accommodate to it'* (Smith, et al., 2011, p.65).

Furthermore, Stanley (2007) and Sue et al. (2008) noted that the impact of regular racial discrimination treatments can create psychosocial stressors that might include feelings of anger, resentment and frustration. On the other hand, what impacts even more on these emotional stressors of Black male students at HWIs is usually how the perpetrator (individual or institution) typically rationalizes their actions. When Black male students question or re-act on these racially loaded treatments the perpetrator usually dismisses the incidence by offering a logical explanation for their actions. These relentless acts of power and privilege executed by the perpetrator usually not only causes Black male students to question whether the racial discriminatory act or treatment really happened, but it also drains them emotionally and physically (Smith, et al., 2011).

It is thus critical and crucial that all role-players at HWIs must realize that there is an emotional, physiological, and psychological cost of gendered racism. Smith, et al. (2011) furthermore noted that far too many Black male students on historically white campuses must navigate themselves daily in a climate that is loaded with gendered racism, blocked opportunities as well as intense environmental stress. In the same vein, Feagin (2010, p.10) stated that this context is a direct outflow of a

"White racial frame" or lens through which others, especially Whites view Black men.

As Carter, Skiba, Arredondo, and Pollock (2017) concluded, historic legacies have left us with ideas about "race" that still prompt exclusionary and segregated experiences that make it difficult to confront these historically based racial issues that continue to play out in HWIs. Although there is a considerable effort in our society to dismiss racism and to rather steer away from the topic it is imperative that the psychological and emotional impact of racism on Black male students at HWIs not be overlooked (Carter, 2007). Smith, et al. (2011) share the sentiment by saying that not only must HWIs realize, but society-at-large as well, that there is an emotional, physiological and psychological cost of gendered racism.

3.5.2 Sense of belonging

A vast amount of research has been done about influential factors in terms of the retention and drop-out rates of black students in HE but one factor that stood out as a consistent factor is the lack of a sense of belonging at the institution (Strayhorn, 2012). It is thus clear that the institutional culture and environment of a HEI has a direct impact on each individual students' sense of belonging at the institution. Sense of belonging refers to '*students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to a group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus*' (Brooms, 2018, p.62). To put it simply, belonging within the HE context describes whether a student feels that he or she belongs or feels welcome at the institution.

Unsurprisingly, a growing body of evidence suggests that a low sense of belonging and social exclusion are experienced as painful and related to psychological problems, like anxiety and depression (MacDonald & Leary, 2005). Research done by Smith et al. (2007) does not only emphasize the importance of Black male students' at HWIs voices as they share their everyday experiences of prejudices, stereotyping and racial discrimination, but it also necessitates critical coping mechanisms in the struggle to survive in these learning spaces.

It is therefore clear that students that are regularly exposed to exclusionary acts or racial discriminatory find themselves on the periphery of an HEI are likely to have a lower sense of belonging than those students that share and relate to the institution's culture. Students' sense of belonging at HWI's is clearly central to both their psychosocial well-being and ultimately their academic success (Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007). Furthermore, Cerezo, Lyda, Enriquez, Beristianos and Connor (2015) noted in this regard that Black male students in HWI's reported at least one discriminatory event per week. Furthermore, these authors noted that the impact of these discriminatory experiences of Black male students were associated with a reduced sense of belonging at the institution where they conducted their studies (Mallet, et al., 2011; Smith, et al., 2011).

Furthermore, Walton and Cohen (2007) extended the concept of sense of belonging and introduced the concept of '*belongingness uncertainty*'. According to these authors '*belongingness uncertainty*' refers to the phenomenon when members of socially stigmatized groups feel excluded and are uncertain about the quality of their social bonds in these historically white spaces. It is thus clear that the institutional cultures of HWIs negatively affect Black male students' academic performance, motivation as well as their emotional well-being because they are continuously gauging whether they fit, or belong, on these campuses.

3.7 CONCLUSION

While this chapter focuses on issues that may be difficult for some role-players in HEIs to acknowledge and discuss, it is undeniable that our history created shallow and false ideas about 'race' and that shaped our perceptions of '*who is valued and who is not, who is capable and who is not, and who is "safe" and who is "dangerous"*' (Carter, et al., 2017, p.209). Racial discrimination and stereotyping are deep-rooted in our history and these skewed and false perceptions of 'others' continue to be reinforced through the ongoing acts of implicit bias, stereotyping and colour-blindness.

I, therefore, contest, that as much as most Black male students want to move on and away from these racial issues created by our history, daily incidences at HWIs remind them over and over again of our society's racial divides. These incidences and the impact thereof extend beyond the lecture rooms into open and social spaces around campus (Carter et al., 2017). Furthermore the experiences of Black male students at HWIs need to be explored by 'listening' to these students' educational as well as their psychosocial needs and experiences in order to ensure that they do feel welcome and 'at home' in these learning spaces. Smith, et al. (2006) agree and emphasize the importance of the exploration of the experiences of Black male students in these historically white spaces.

However, it is important to note at this point, that literature that focusses on the experiences of Black men in HE might reveal a very negative and daunting reality. Yet, I acknowledge and embrace the existence of positive experiences of Black men in HE, and that these experiences might be underrepresented in the literature. I, therefore, share the sentiment with Swartz (2016, p.92) when she notes that, *'although the experiences of Black men in HE are never only experiences of pain, damage and outrage these experiences must be told. However, we acknowledge that there are also stories and experiences of grace, patience, resilience and the commitment to rebuild from the ashes'*.

The experiences of Black African male students at a specific HWI were explored, in this study. These students' experiences and perspectives were illuminated through the lens of CRT, MAT and CCT. In the next chapter, I will discuss these theories in-depth, while contextualizing the experiences of Black students on historically white campuses.

CHAPTER 4

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

We dare not forget the enduring effects of racism. We dare not focus on poverty without focussing on racism as its root cause. We dare not attempt to build a 'normal society' without addressing the outrage and pain of entrenched racial inequality (Swartz, 2016, p.68).

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Race-related challenges are some of the biggest challenges of societies around the world. Within the South African context, it is no different. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the impact of most of the Apartheid policies is still 'real' for most Black SA's who still experience and feel the depth and extent to which these apartheid laws still affect their lives. Apartheid has intergenerational consequences, where dispossession of land, for example, has left material and psychological consequences. Furthermore, because of SA's Apartheid history, the HE sector, like all other sectors, is still plagued by its apartheid legacy as discussed in the previous chapters. However, since the transition to democracy, SA has addressed many social inequalities of the past. Yet, even though an intense process of restructuring at institutional as well as national levels were put in place since 1994, what is alarming though, is that race and racism are still one of biggest challenges, especially in the HE sector.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the literature suggests that Black students in HE are exposed to relentless incidences of racial discrimination, as part of their everyday experiences, especially at HWIs. The findings in various HE studies suggest that Black students, especially Black male students, struggle to survive academically while battling against racism. Additionally, Black male students at HWIs are constantly confronted with negative stereotypes about their intellect and must excel academically despite racially biased and racially insensitive treatments by certain lecturers, staff members, students as well as members of the broader community. Furthermore, Black males are criminalized and placed under increased surveillance by community, local police officers and campus security, on and off campus. Based

on these experiences and treatments, Black students at HWIs present with psychological stress responses like frustration, anger, resentment, anxiety, helplessness, and hopelessness. There is unanimous agreement in the literature that the HE environment, especially the historically white campus environment, is more hostile toward Black males than other groups (Harper, 2014; Harper & Griffin, 2011; James, 2012; Smith, et al., 2002; Smith et al., 2007; Solórzano, 2001; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Wood, 2013; Wood & Palmer, 2013).

I, therefore, concur, that Black male students at HWIs might find themselves between two extreme realities, on the one hand the psychological stressors they have to endure, as opposed to their hopes and aspirations of academic success and a brighter future for themselves and their families. Against this backdrop, I will now discuss the theoretical foundations of this study based on the overview of the literature as well as the context of SAs contemporary and historical past.

4.2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THIS STUDY

Different theoretical frameworks are used to explore the experiences of Black students in HE. Research in the field of education and psychology that focusses on access, success, retention and social integration tend to draw from properties of certain theories. The theoretical frameworks that are usually drawn on are John Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory, Bourdieu's theory of social and cultural capital of the dominant classes and Yosso's cultural wealth theory which includes aspirational and familial capital that marginalised students draw from to succeed in HE. Additional theoretical frameworks are Tinto's integration theory and Ungar's resilience theory (Kiguwa, 2014; Siyengo, 2015).

However, for the last two decades, CRT has become an increasingly valuable toolkit for researchers seeking to critically explore educational opportunities, institutional climates and the experiences of marginalized groups in HE. Dixon and Rousseau (2005) commended this shift and note that race was 'under-theorized as a topic of research inquiry' in education. In the same vein Ledesma and Calderon (2015) underscores Dixon and Rousseau's observation and mention that CRT

researchers in education have long understood the urgency behind the need to theorize race and racial discrimination.

Against this backdrop, I decided to employ a critical paradigm that uses a historical-contextual approach to explain and understand the experiences of black African male students at a specific HWI, for this study. To separate these students' voices from our country's political-historical past will be inauthentic and irresponsible. Hence my decision to use CRT as the overarching theoretical framework for this study. CRT serves therefore as framework on macro level and focusses on the structural arrangements of power and racialisation dynamics within a specific context.

Yet, individuals engage differently with issues of race and racial discrimination and there are usually distinct patterns in individual experiences and their coping strategies. Hence my decision to additionally draw from some of the defining properties of micro-aggression theory (MAT) and co-cultural theory (CCT) that focus on the impact of racially charged treatments on individuals, on a micro-level. This study, therefore, draws on the defining properties of CRT, MAT and CCT as captured in Figure 4.1 below.

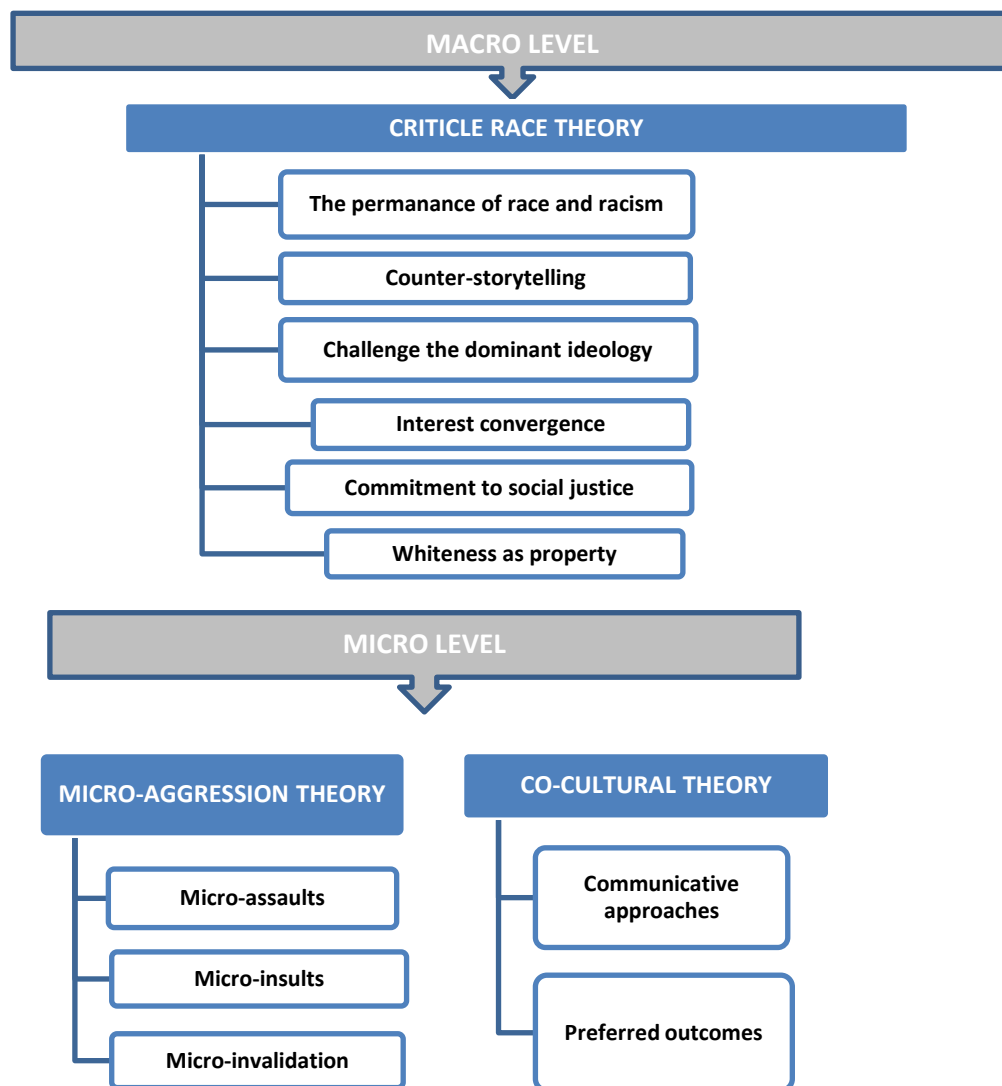


Figure 4.1. Structural out-lay of theoretical foundation

4.2.1 Critical race theory (CRT)

CRT came to the fore in the mid-1970s when Black scholars in the United States of America realised that the civil rights movement of the 1960s had stagnated and the need for alternative and critical interrogation and explanations for the continuing presence of racism in society, became a reality. By attempting to understand the racialized nature of society, its general mission seeks to analyse, deconstruct, and transform for the better the relationship between race and power. CRT, therefore, aims to generate societal, institutional and individual transformation while it draws from diverse disciplines such as education, sociology,

history, feminist and postcolonial studies, economics, political science and cultural studies. As such, this study will attempt to provide an understanding of the impact of ‘race’ and racial discrimination on the educational journey of black African male students at a HWI in contemporary SA (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Solorzano, et al., 2000).

Although issues around student access and retention in HE are well researched and published, research on the impact of discriminatory acts, stereotyping and racism on the student experience in HE remain scarce. In this regard, CRT became a valuable research theory among researchers to assist them to unpack any form of racialisation discrimination on the educational and psycho-social experiences of black students at HWIs (Patton, et al., 2007; Smith, et al., 2007).

CRT, therefore, is a valuable tool for researchers to expose ways in which institutional cultures and environments might support and sustain discrimination and racism especially at HWIs. Furthermore, this theoretical approach also aligns with the aim of this study by exploring how educational contexts may negatively contribute to certain students’ academic motivation and emotional well-being while conducting their studies. According to Modiri (2012) CRT furthermore understands that human beings are defined by much more than ‘race’ and that we are simultaneously raced, gendered and classed. Therefore, CRT will serve as an ideal overarching lens to illuminate the experiences of black African male students at a HWI and the impact that gendered racism might have on their educational and psychosocial wellbeing while conducting their studies (Harper, et al., 2011).

I will now briefly discuss the tenets of CRT.

4.2.1.1 The permanence of race and racism

Referring to the concept in my research topic ‘*Black African*’ as well as ‘*historically White*’ I cannot dismiss the issue that “*race*” is central to my approach in this exploration. CRT assumes that race is a construction that is central to society and the ways in which relations and interactions are negotiated and structured. Critical race theorists are therefore clear that ‘race’ and racism are central to any theorizing

or intervention. Hylton (2010) noted that the existence of racism and the prevalence of racial ideologies are not in doubt in wider society even though it might be deemed by many as non-existent or rare. CRT does not view racism as rare or absent in society and the core mission of CRT is therefore to foreground racially charged discriminatory processes and structures that are still embedded within certain education institutions.

Similarly, Walker (2005) noted that we as researchers and specifically those working in student affairs, need to acknowledge that all students' lives are marked by racialized subjectivities. This is especially true for all of South Africa's students because of our historical past of racial separateness. In line with this notion, Ladson-Billings (2013) warns that we need to be cognisant of the fact that racism is never just a once-off act, but it is rather so deeply engraved in society that it often takes place in very subtle ways. In this regard, Lopez (2003) stated that when individuals make themselves guilty of these subtle racist acts, they usually convince themselves that racism is something of the past or that it is not really what happened in a specific incident. Discriminatory acts are then usually dismissed with comments like 'that's not really what happened', 'they are over-sensitive' or 'they are playing the race card again'. Taylor, Gillborn and Ladson-Billings (2009) highlights the danger of such thinking and mentioned that when discriminatory acts no longer seem like discrimination to the perpetrator, racial incidents might turn into horrific encounters or psychological trauma for those on the receiving end.

4.2.1.2 Counter-storytelling

Another important tenet of CRT that is relevant for this study is the focus on narratives and storytelling. This theoretical approach recognizes and embraces the experiential knowledge of individuals that have been historically excluded from certain learning spaces. Critical race researchers are therefore usually drawn to this theory because it is through CRT that researchers give voice and agency to individuals or groups that usually operate on the periphery of structures. The power of experiential knowledge has been "instrumental in providing a voice for students who are otherwise not heard, thus allowing students to provide their own

perspectives on their educational experiences (Teranishi, in Dixon & Rosseau, 2005:11; Ledesma & Calderon, 2015).

In this regard, Walker (2005) mentioned that in order for us to fully understand how race and racism affect the lived experiences of black students at HWIs, these students' narratives must be viewed as necessary forms of data. In the same vein Rawlins (2003) appeals to student affairs practitioners to hear the stories of Black students and their experiences at historically white campuses. These stories are not just stories but a way for Black students to share their personal perspectives and lived experiences in HE. CRT further argues that the value of stories lies in the descriptive and transformative power of these stories. It is exactly through the lens of CRT that we can illuminate stories and ultimately expose what is 'cruel, self-serving or ridiculous' about the way we view the world or others. Therefore, I agree with Walker (2005 p.132) that experiential knowledge, through a CRT lens, can assist us in generating rich data and insight in not only the lived experiences of individuals but also about *'the broader context in which that life is lived'*.

4.3.1.3 Challenge the dominant ideology

Another important and relevant tenet of CRT, especially in education, is to challenge the experiences of whiteness, white supremacy or white dominance as the norm. Museus and Iftikar (2013) noted that CRT assists researchers to unpack how white supremacy had been established and perpetuated. It also challenges and interrogates the ways in which white supremacy, directly and indirectly, shapes institutional cultures and campus climates. In line with this notion Kiguwa (2014) suggests that CRT has been especially advocated by researchers whose mission it is to foreground racialization processes and structures that are deeply embedded within education institutions and reflected in the lived experiences of students.

Interesting though, from a critical point of view, CRT also challenges researchers on a very personal level and the theoretical approach can easily be 'falsely' applied or 'misused' by researchers. The proof of this is in the ironic discovery that Harper (2012) made in a systematic analysis he did on the work of researchers that claimed to have explored race and racism through the lens of CRT. What the author found

was that White supremacy even prevails within most of these studies. His findings suggest that although these researchers claim that their focus was to address racism and race-related issues most of them ultimately retreated to the dominant ideology and in the process dismissed the experiences of historically marginalised individuals. Harper (2012) also discovered that although some researchers claim that they applied a CRT lens to analyse their data, they were hesitant to directly name racism as complicit in creating and/or maintaining inequitable educational opportunities and experiences for historically marginalised individuals. He mentioned that these authors rather choose the safe option and defer to ‘assorted explanations’ or ‘anything but racism’ to explain the racial phenomena in HE (Harper, 2012).

These findings highlight how the dominant ideology can prevail without the individual who is feeding directly into it, explicitly being conscious of how they contribute to the dominant ideologies of racism. Harper (2012) concluded by stating that social cohesion, educational equity, and racial justices are compromised when researchers do not name and interrogate racism directly. If researchers refrain from this direct and open approach, they in-directly sustain white supremacy and whiteness as the dominant ideology. This ‘head-in-the-sand’ attitude is exactly an opposite stance of CRT that clearly stands for challenging researchers to challenge the dominant ideology.

4.2.1.4 Interest convergence

Issues of race and racism are not only deeply rooted in society, but it is also deeply embedded in the practices and policies of operational systems of institutions. CRT therefore is concerned with disrupting, exposing and challenging racist institutional policies and practices that subordinate certain groups in the attempt to maintain the status quo. Therefore, the tenet interest convergence can assist in analysing and conceptualize discriminatory policies and practices in institutions, especially at HWIs. Furthermore, interest convergence stresses that racial equality and equity for all people will only be pursued and advanced when they converge with the interests, expectations and ideologies of White people (Milner, 2008).

4.2.1.5 Commitment to social justice

CRT is committed to social justice and offers a transformative response to racial, gender and class oppression. Such a social justice research agenda works toward the elimination of racism, sexism and poverty, as well as the empowerment of Black people and other subordinated groups (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001). CRT reflects a clear commitment to the pursuit of social justice for those experiencing oppression and discrimination. Based on this commitment to changing social institutions, CRT seeks to uncover the mechanisms and structures that actually disadvantage people, even those ostensibly designed by social institutions to serve the needy. Those who profess CRT principles view with suspicion approaches to intervention that merely assist marginalized persons, families, groups, or communities to acquiesce to a racist structure. Rather, CRT-oriented practice endeavours to change structures that are the source of the original problem (Ortiz & Jani, 2010).

4.2.1.6 Whiteness as property

Harris's (1993) analysis of whiteness as property described four rights of whiteness as property: (a) *the right to disposition*, which includes being able to pass along rights and privileges to heirs; (b) *the right to use and enjoyment*, holds White people can use their whiteness as they see fit. For example, they can use their whiteness to focus on their needs and perspectives, ignoring racially marginalized people's needs and perspectives because they are not expected to know those; (c) *the right to status and property*, this right protects the good reputation and elevated status of White people. Whites are assumed to be good-intentioned while creating an understanding that being White has more status and power; (d) *the right to exclude*, referring to the exclusion of racially marginalized people through laws, policies and actions. For example allowing only White men access to certain benefits or positions and certain policies that limit opportunities and access by race (Bondi, 2012; Patton et al., 2007).

According to Donnor (2013), one of the greatest assets of whiteness as property is the ability to exclude others from the benefits of whiteness and therefore maintaining inequitable distribution of resources. Whites simply do not have to

consider equitable distribution of property and the privileges associated with that property. Therefore, whiteness as property has historically and continues to function as a tool to confer social benefits, from the intangible to the material, on those who possess it and to punish those who do not (Annamma, 2014).

Ladson-Billings (2009) similarly refers to ‘whiteness as property’ as conceptual whiteness, where, for example, excellence is always attached to whiteness. Therefore, whiteness itself represents something of value that black people will never have. Having a white skin is therefore associated with the inherited right to many privileges. The base of these privileges is, for instance, to always being cast positively in dominant discourse (Carolissen, Van Wyk, & Pick-Cornelius; 2012).

As discussed above, CRT offers valuable conceptual tools for interrogating how race and racial discrimination have been institutionalized and are maintained in society. However, Ladson-Billings (2005) caution that CRT is not without its own limitations and shortcomings. Among the researchers that take a critical stance against certain properties of CRT are Darder and Torres (2004, p.97) who contest that what they perceive to be ‘CRTs hyper-emphasis on race’. In the same regard (Taylor, 1998) states that CRT may be criticized as too cynical or hopeless. Indeed, CRTs assumption of the permanence of racism and its stance based on the premise that race and racism are central, endemic and permanent in society, might sound excessively negative.

However, despite race and racism being at the center of CRT it is also important to acknowledge its commitment to intersectionality. This commitment recognizes that ‘racism, oppression and discrimination are not unidirectional, but rather that racism, oppression and discrimination can be experienced within and across divergent intersections, such as gender, class and sexual orientations’ (Ledesma & Calderon, 2014). In this regard I would suggest that it might be important for Black people to understand the centrality of blackness in their lives. This may furthermore help them to understand the social context in which they operate so that they not internalize negative reactions to them as personal failure but rather understands that racism is part of social structures.

There is now, more than ever, a subtle theoretical shift from dominant proximal frameworks to distal frameworks, or a combination of both, to explore and explain societal inequalities like the experiences of Black men in historically white spaces. Growing number of research indicates that far too many Black men at HWIs are exposed to gendered racism and more specifically racial micro-aggressions. Additionally, constant exposure to micro-aggressions can add physical, social and psychological strain upon these groups of students. Furthermore, these excessive strains required additional energy that redirected these students from more positive life fulfilling desires for coping with and fighting against gendered racism and racial micro-aggressions. Racial micro-aggressions are therefore best suited as additional theoretical frame for this study (Smith, et al., 2011).

4.2.2 Micro-aggression theory

As I mentioned earlier, CRT serves as an overarching theoretical frame for this study. Positioned under the core tenet of CRTs, *centrality of race*, and the approach that racism is part of everyday reality, MAT serves as an additional and distal theoretical framework for this study.

Racial micro-aggressions are defined as “subtle insults” that are directed towards specific groups or people. These insults or acts can be verbal, non-verbal, and/or visual and they are often automatically or unconsciously enacted. These acts usually manifest in subtle ways, such as a dismissive look, body language and tones (Constantine & Sue, 2007; DeAngelis, 2009; Solorzano, et al., 2000). These sometimes constant and subtle non-verbal exchanges are usually executed in such a manner that it conveys a message of irrelevance and insignificance to the recipient (Solorzano, 1998).

According to DeAngelis (2009) micro-aggressions can present itself in three different forms, namely:

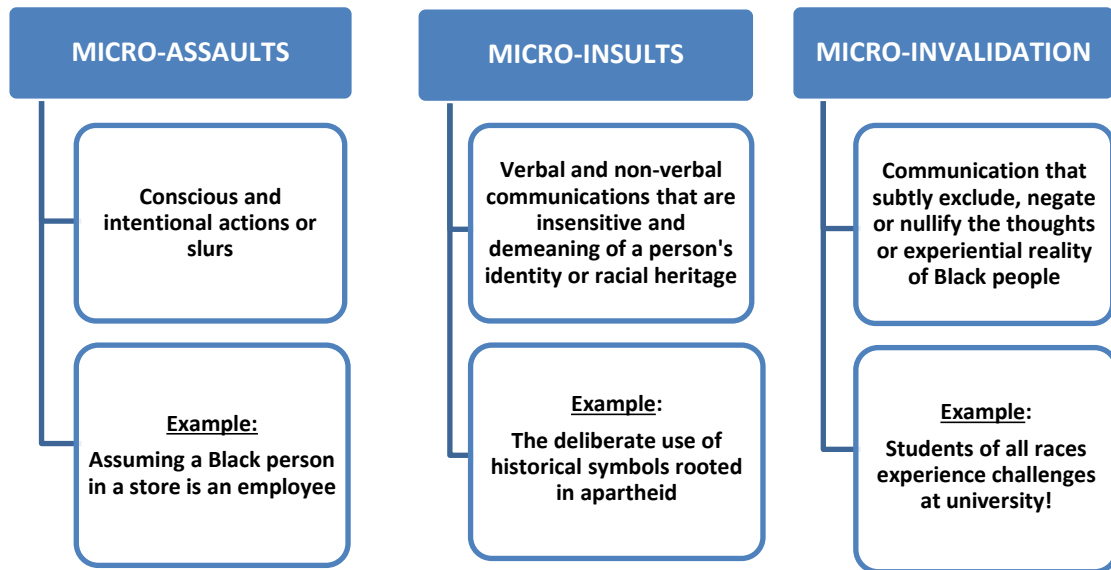


Figure 4.2. Forms of micro-aggressions (DeAngelis, 2009)

In fact, Bonilla-Silva (2015) refers to these enactments of micro-aggressions as the “New Racism” whereby racism is also viewed as the soft ‘othering’ of others. ‘Othering’ is a process through which certain categories of people are constructed as deviant or ‘other’ in relation to ideas about what constitutes the norm. Therefore ‘othering’ is placed in inverted commas because it is socially constructed with the racial or gendered “other” as a kind of symbolic structure on to which difference is projected.

However, individuals who commit micro-aggressions are often unaware that they engage in micro aggressive behaviour. What is important though, according to Sue, Capodilupo, Nadal and Torino (2008) is to keep in mind that no one is immune from engaging in micro aggressive behaviour but the most negative impact occurs when these behaviour occurs between those who occupy power and those subordinated by it, for example between White individuals and Black individuals (Sue, et al., 2008).

Micro-aggressions therefore underscore the ideology of white superiority in society. Generally, there is an ambivalence with respect to how both the perpetrator and the recipient view the impact of these racial micro-aggressions. It is therefore important and critical to name and explain, the micro-aggression behaviour when

it happens rather than label and dismiss it at the point of incident (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). In this regard Sue (2010, p.xvi) notes that ‘the power of micro-aggressions lies in their invisibility to the perpetrator, who is unaware that he or she has engaged in a behaviour that threatens and demeans the recipient of such a communication’. She further states that while most hate crimes and racial, gender, and sexual-orientation harassments continue to be committed through direct and overt acts, micro-aggressions do not come from these openly and conscious perpetrators. It rather comes from well-intentioned people that refer to themselves as fair-minded and decent people who would never consciously discriminate against others.

Consequently, subtle racism or micro-aggressions remain relatively invisible and potentially harmful to the self-esteem as well as the social and emotional well-being of many marginalized groups in society. Sue (2010) conclude by noting that the invisible nature of micro-aggressions prevents perpetrators from realizing and confronting their own complicity in creating educational, social and psychological dilemmas and disparities for marginalized groups not only in education settings but in society at large.

Black African male students have ‘raced’ and ‘gendered’ experiences at all stages of the educational pipeline and these experiences are often detrimental to their educational aspirations and achievement (Smith, et al., 2007). Against this backdrop, a propose MAT as a fitting and additional theoretical frame to assist me in this study to explore and understand how a historically white campus, as well as its surrounding spaces, might affect the educational and psycho-social experiences of black African male students at the institution.

As mentioned earlier, although CRT serves as a valuable overarching theoretical lens through which the narratives of Black African male students could be illuminated, it lacks a facet of communicative, operating and coping strategies when individuals interact or operate within a specific setting. This shortcoming of CRT furthermore necessitates me to draw on the defining properties of co-cultural theory (CCT) in addition.

4.2.3 Co-cultural theory (CCT)

Orbe (2004), who developed this theory, uses the term co-culture to refer to cultural groups who coexist within social spaces and therefore have to navigate their cultural identities within the structural power dynamics. The main function of co-cultural theory is therefore to highlight the everyday perspectives and experiences of a 'non-dominant' group who coexist with a 'dominant group' in order to get insight into how the 'non-dominant group negotiate their cultural differentness with others.

Researchers can, therefore, use CCT as a valuable tool to illuminate the unequal power dynamics between dominant- and non-dominant group interactions. Co-cultural theory is, therefore, one of only a few theories that is grounded in the lived experiences of the persons it seeks to describe. In this regard, it approaches the topic from the perspective of those traditionally marginalized or oppressed by other groups in societal structures (Glen & Johnson, 2012).

Therefore, researchers interested in the experiences of a group that is not part of a dominant normative group in a specific social context can make use of the strengths of co-cultural theory to assist them. CCT provides a framework within which the strategies or systems that members of co-cultural groups use with members of dominant cultures can be illuminated and explored. Ting-Toomey (2010) noted in this regard that CCTs' critical-interpretive foundation proved valuable in understanding contemporary forms of intercultural communication. It is through co-cultural theory that researchers can get insight into the lived experiences that acknowledge the impact of majority/minority status from the viewpoint of the minority group. (Martin & Nakayama, 2013; Wood, 2005).

The assumptions informing co-cultural theory are as follows: (1) co-cultural group members share a similar positioning that renders them marginalized within society, and (2) co-cultural group members adopt communication orientations in their everyday interactions with in-group and dominant group members in order to negotiate within the dominant culture and achieve any measure of success.

It should be noted, however, that individual group members within the dominant, as well as the non-dominant group, do not necessarily share the exact same social, cultural and economic values. In this research Black African students for example, also identify with different sub-cultural groups e.g., Zulu and Xhosa ethnicities (Krogstad & Cohn, 2014). Therefore, a one-size fit- approach to black African students cannot adequately account for all of the variations within the group. However, despite the variation within and among Black African male students, they share the common experience of navigating systemic racism and stereotyping especially on historically white campuses. In terms of a co-cultural theoretical perspective navigating stereotyping, discrimination and racial slurs are the binding factors for this group.

According to Lapinski and Orbe (2007), the core variables of CCT are based on two three-dimensional variables, namely **communicative approaches** and **preferred outcomes**. According to these authors the 3 communicative approaches, which refer to the manner in which non-dominant group members communicate with dominant group members, are:



Figure 4.3. Three-dimensional communicative approaches of CCT

Preferred outcomes, on the other hand, refer to the goals members of the non-dominant group have in mind based on their communicative approach, which includes:

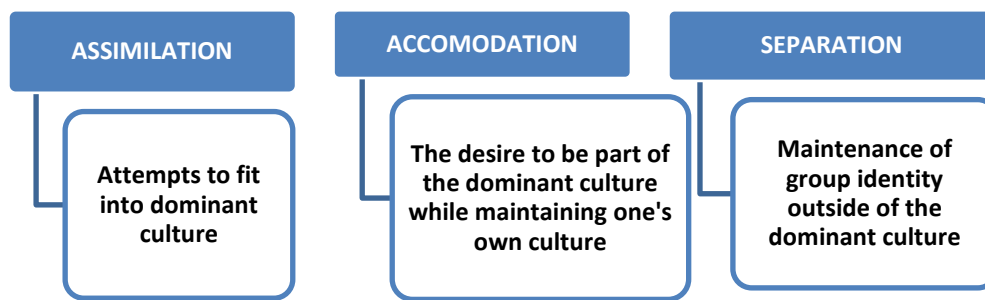


Figure 4.4. Three-dimensional preferred outcomes of CCT

Lapinski and Orbe (2007) caution us though, that these concepts are embedded in a continuum of behaviours and actions but for the sake of conceptual clarity, they treated them as distinct variables. Furthermore, co-cultural theory represents a communication approach theory that draws on the tenets of established conceptual frameworks like Muted Group's Theory. These theories share the notion of the dynamic play between culture, power and communication (Bell, et al., 2015).

Bell, et al. (2015) extend co-cultural theory to include an additional communication strategy: rationalization. They defined rationalization as instances where individuals provide alternative explanations for communication rather than labelling them as racially insensitive, prejudice or discriminatory. Rationalization specifically helps to comprehend the different ways in which communicators may respond to everyday intercultural and interracial tensions.

Furthermore, *muted group theory* (Kramarae, 1981) expands on co-cultural theory by adding that all societies consist of social hierarchies where certain groups are more privileged than others. Within this societal dynamic the groups that function at the top of this hierarchy (dominant group) usually establish the acceptable communication system. Over time, these communication structures are (re)produced by the dominant group members (DGM's) as well as the non-dominant group members (NDGM's) although the dominant communication systems always remain in place (Orbe & Roberts, 2012).

What remains clear is that the DGMs always establish the rules of the accepted discourse, while the NDGMs are ‘muted’ without equal representation. These NDGMs are thus marginalized because of the difference between their communication systems and the communication system that the dominant group has established as the prototype. This scenario led to NDM’s been forced to the periphery of societies and in the process, they are ‘muted’ (Hogg & Reid, 2006).

The inability to have a voice and being ‘muted’ ultimately leaves NDGMs disadvantaged and they are forced to function within systems and structures that fail to reflect their values. As Orbe (1998, p.4) explains, *“this process of social reproduction renders marginalized groups as largely muted because their lived experiences are not represented in these dominant structures”*.

This study therefore used CCT to explore how Black African male students choose to enact certain communication strategies within the dominant cultural spaces of an HWI. Furthermore, CCT assisted in understanding how these groups of students select communication strategies as they decided how to present their social identities with members of the dominant cultural group within the research setting.

4.3 CONCLUSION

CRT is a flexible framework whose point of departure is not the question ‘do we live in a racist society’, but rather the realization that ‘we live in a racist society’. Although there is no longer a questioning of this fundamental positioning, the biggest challenge of the ‘everydayness’ of racism is not the direct and obvious racially loaded acts and behaviours, but rather the subtle, overtly and more complex nuances of racism referred to as micro-aggressions (Hylton, 2010 p.350). This reality can be challenging for most individuals that operate within systems where cultural groups have to coexist. In this regard, although CRT served as an overarching theoretical framework for this study, I have additionally drawn from the defining properties of MAT as well as CCT. These theoretical frameworks assisted me to illuminate the dynamics when different racial groups who coexist within social spaces have to negotiate their racial and cultural identities within the structural power dynamics.

Consistent with CRT as well as CCT and the aim of ‘giving voice’, this study sought to centralize black African male students’ insights by directly asking them to share their experiences and perspectives about their navigational journey at a specific HWI. These theoretical frameworks, as discussed above, provided a framework for exploring the narratives about Black African men in HE and to claim ownership of their personal and authentic ‘voices’. In the same vein, Pelzer (2016) stated that researchers must create counter-spaces for Black male students to re-author and re-tell what it actually means to be a Black male student in higher education.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodological processes of the study.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

“In the broadest possible sense, the aim of the social sciences is to understand the world as it is made by human beings, the structures and institutions they produce, and the actions they take within those structures” (Hancké, 2009, p.12).

5.1 INTRODUCTION

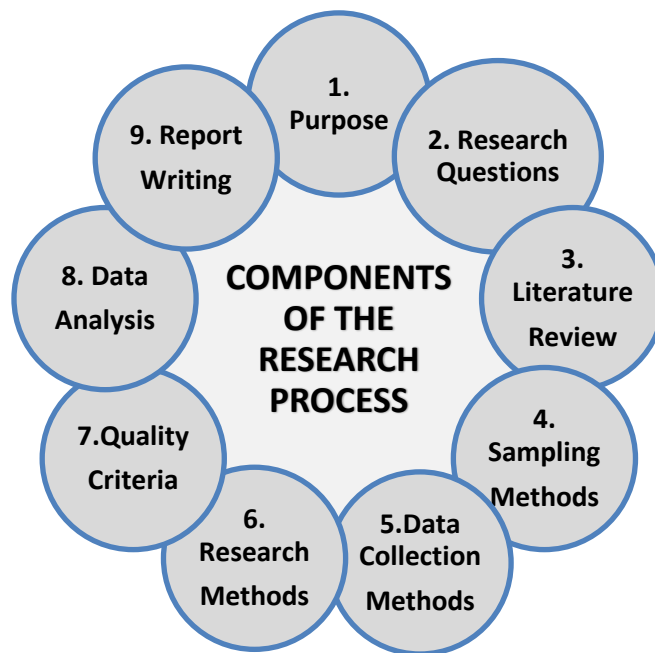


Figure 5.1. The research process

This chapter on the research methodology serves to make my reasoning behind the choices I made transparent and to discuss how I have positioned myself within the research. I will outline the reasoning behind the methodological decisions I made for this study and I will provide a systematic explanation of the entire research process, in this chapter.

Firstly, I will explain the research paradigm, and ultimately why I decided that a qualitative research approach was best suited for this study and the most appropriate method to answer the research question presented. Furthermore, I will discuss why a case study, as a research design, was the most suitable research design option for

this study. Secondly, I will focus on the context of the research by focussing on the participants, and I will offer a rationale why I decided on the purposive selection of participants. Thirdly, I will give detailed explanations of the data collection process, which included focus group sessions as well as individual interviews, where after I will discuss thematic analysis as the data analysis method. Lastly, I will address all ethical considerations for this research as well as aspects of research positionality and reflexivity.

5.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Cohen, Mannarino and Murray's (2011) suggestion that the people with whom we engage are fully capable of understanding their own issues and challenges, is core to this study. This put them in the position where they are fully capable to engage in "reflective and critical analysis" of the factors that contribute to those challenges and opportunities and use these insights to initiate change.

My research methodology therefore had to be a portal through which the participants and I could explore the complex and subtle dynamics of their personal experiences and perspectives that were central to the research and how these dynamics informed their educational and psychosocial experiences and support needs at the university where they conduct their studies.

5.3 OBJECTIVE AND AIM OF THE STUDY

As described in Chapter 1 the objective of this study was two-fold: firstly, to explore Black African male students' educational and psychosocial experiences at a HWI, and secondly, to hear from the students themselves what their educational and psychosocial support needs are. The ultimate objective was to derive from the data a socially situated, supportive approach that could be used to enhance these students' holistic learning experiences at the institution.

I, therefore, hope that this study can contribute to the body of knowledge in HE specifically with regard to finding ways in which we can support Black African male students in historically white learning spaces. I am therefore hopeful that the findings of this study and the recommendations made will provide further insights

for developing socially situated support approaches that will not only enhance student retention and success but also enhance Black African male students' sense of belonging, specifically on historically white campuses. With these objectives in mind, the aim of this study was thus to answer the main research question: **What are the narratives about educational and psychosocial support of black African male students at a historically white university?**

The sub-questions that will support the study in answering this research question are:

1. What are the narratives about educational and psychosocial challenges of participants?
2. What are the narratives about educational and psychosocial opportunities of participants?
3. What are the narratives about coping strategies and support of participants?
4. What is the nature of interventions and recommendations that would support black African male students at an HWI, optimally?

Based on my research question as well as the aims and objectives of this study I classified this research as an empirical study because it seeks to explore, describe and understand a very specific real-life issue or problem. Furthermore, in order for me to answer my research question I had to position my research within established literature as well as a theoretical framework. The literature that I reviewed assisted me in constructing a conceptual framework that aims to guide the research process followed.

Henning (2004) states that a conceptual framework anchors your research in the literature. It also facilitates the dialogue between the literature and your study, and it helps you position your research in the bigger research enterprise. She furthermore adds that a conceptual framework includes a literature review that signals the importance of the researcher's contribution to the production and interpretation of knowledge in a specific domain (Henning, 2004). Based on this interpretation of what a conceptual framework is, I constructed the conceptual framework presented below.

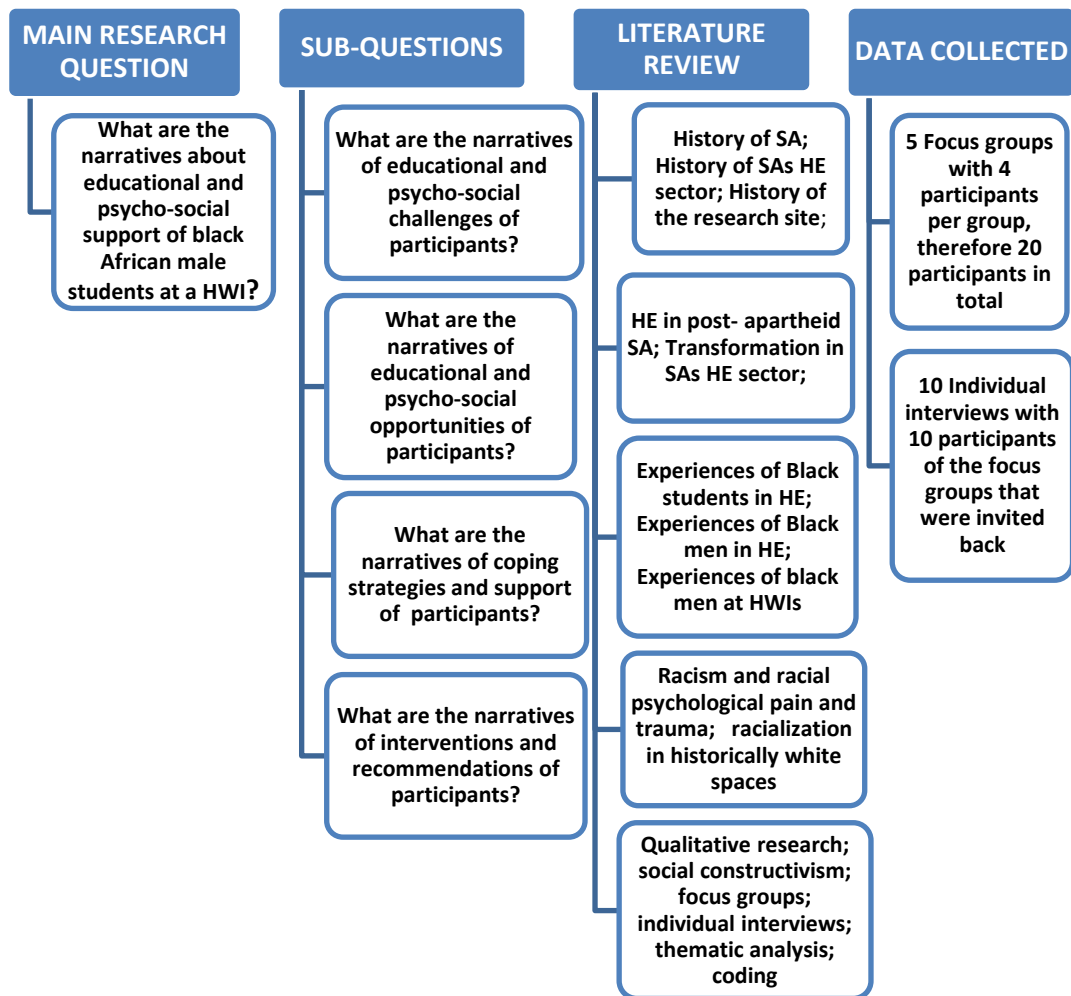


Figure 5.2. Conceptual framework

Based on my conceptual framework my research questions guided me in the literature review and directed my thinking in selecting and discussing the literature in the manner that I did in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. This was not an easy task because of the vast amount of overlapping literature as well as the nature of the intersectionality of my topic. Furthermore, my conceptual framework also assists and directed me in proposing a student-centred analytical framework and in choosing my data collection methods (Berg 2001; Henning 2004). The main research question contextualized the study in that the research site and context are a HWI and it further conceptualised the study in that it was a specific cohort of students namely, Black African male students, experiences that were explored. As furthermore indicated in my conceptual framework above, I used qualitative research data collection methods that I described later in this chapter, in order to find answers to the research question. Lastly, the conceptual framework also guided

me in choosing a research paradigm or philosophical worldview as described by Creswell (2009), which is presented next.

5.3.1. Philosophical worldview

Creswell (2009) prefers the term ‘worldview’ as meaning a basic set of beliefs that guides the research process. He furthermore refers to ‘worldviews’ as a general orientation about the world. Some prefer the term paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) or epistemologies and ontologies (Neuman, 2000). In this regard, Manning and Stage (2015) mentioned that before the researcher can make any methodological choices he or she must first understand or tap into his or her ‘worldview’. The researcher’s philosophical worldview will therefore ultimately guide the researcher as he or she considers methodological choices. According to Savin-Baden and Major (2013), qualitative researchers usually are guided by one or more of the following philosophical worldviews: pragmatism; phenomenology; post-modernism/ structuralism; social constructivism or critical social theory.

For this study, the best-suited philosophical worldview that not only resonates well with me but that I also found most suited for this research was social constructivism. A social constructivist worldview is based on the notion that ordinary people are experts in their own lives. Social constructivists, therefore, rely on the knowledge and experience of the participants and their understanding and interpretation of their lived reality. It, therefore, departs from the premise that reality is socially constructed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). For this research Black African male students are the experts because if we are interested in any form of intervention of support for them the best and most suited information lies within them.

In addition, Creswell (2009) noted that social constructivists hold the assumption that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and operate. Individuals therefore develop subjective meanings of their experiences and these meanings are usually varied and multiple. Therefore, the goal of the social constructivist researcher is to rely as much as possible on the participant’s views and perspectives of the issue or situation being studied.

Furthermore, these “subjective meanings are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others (hence social constructivism) and through historical, social and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives” (Creswell, 2009, p.8). Thus, social constructivist researchers often not only address the process of interaction among participants but they also focus on a specific context in which participants live or operate in order to understand the historical, social and cultural dynamics of participants. Therefore, the researcher’s intent is to make sense of or interpret the meanings others have about the world because it is during our daily interaction with others that our versions of knowledge are shaped and constructed. In this regard Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) noted, that social constructivism is a long- and well-established philosophical worldview through which research can be conducted, and that has meaning and understanding as its end goals.

5.3.2 Research approach

Considering the historical, cultural and social context of the research problem, a qualitative research approach was utilised within the study. At its core, qualitative research is concerned with the exploration and understanding of human life as it is lived and experienced within a social world. This concern is especially reflected in the broader qualitative agenda of illuminating research participants’ own subjective interpretations and understanding of their lives. Therefore, the most basic definition of qualitative research is that it uses ‘words’ as data. (Creswell, 2007). Furthermore, the focus of qualitative research is meaning making rather than to prove a theory or determine a relationship between factors as in quantitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The main purpose of this qualitative research was, therefore, to explore and understand the everyday experiences of black African male students at a HWI.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p.3) and Lincoln and Guba, (2000) explain qualitative research as follows: “*qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, in the attempt to make sense of a specific issue or to explore the interpretation and the meanings people bring to them*”. Qualitative research involves the close study

and exploration of everyday experiences in diverse social contexts and therefore describes and analyses the processes through which social realities are constructed. However, Creswell (2007) noted, that we not only conduct qualitative research because a phenomenon or issue needs to be explored but we also want to empower individuals to share their stories and allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature.

Similarly, Marshall and Rossman (2011) mentioned that any research conducted with students that have as an intended developmental or intervention-based outcome needs to honour the voices, needs and experiences of participants from their perspectives. This notion synergises with the social justice aims of critical race theory that this research is framed in. However, they caution researchers against dealing with participants of a group as if they were homogeneous; instead, it is necessary to acknowledge the existence of multiple realities even if a group presents as homogenous. Research with groups, therefore, seeks not only to highlight the voice of the collective, but also to strengthen the voice of the individual within that collective (Babbie, 2010; Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009).

However, having reviewed the literature on research methodology, I soon came to the realisation that there is no 'blueprint' on how to design a qualitative study. In this regard Creswell (2007, p.41) states, "there is no agreed-upon structure for how to design a qualitative study". Braun and Clarke (2013) however, proposed 10 fundamentals of qualitative research (see Figure 5.3) and it was those ten entities of a sound qualitative research process that resonated with me and which underpins this study.



Figure 5.3. Ten fundamentals of qualitative research (Braun & Clarke; 2013)

After familiarizing myself with these basic fundamentals of qualitative research I tried to stay true to these principles through the entire research process. I sometimes had to go back to this diagram in order to keep me on track. As Braun and Clarke (2013, p.19) propose: “*rather than blundering uninitiated into the wilderness of qualitative research, and potentially getting lost or making some fundamental errors, you can walk confidently, with solid ground beneath your feet*” with these ten fundamentals as a road map.

Braun and Clarke (2013) notes that qualitative research is a rich, diverse and complex field. They conclude by emphasizing that qualitative research can aim to do one or more different things, including, ‘give voice’ to a group or individuals or an issue and it can provide rich and in-depth descriptions of events or experiences. It can also assist and allow the researcher to interrogate the meaning in the data and engage in social critique.

In this qualitative research study, I was interested in understanding the meaning that Black African male students construct, that is, how they made sense of their educational and psychosocial experiences as well as their support needs at the HWI where they conduct their studies. Through this qualitative approach, I could get excess to their rich and detailed descriptions of their experiences and therefore ‘giving voice’ to them within a group context as well on an individual base.

5.3.3 Case study as the research design

Research design is understood as a plan to guide one through the research process, from the beginning to the end (Yin, 2009). Consequently, a research design represents the entire research plan that gives direction and guidance, in order for the researcher to arrive at the intended outcomes. Babbie and Mouton (2001) refer to it as a carefully thought-through plan that a researcher has to put together with the assistance of relevant literature, critical reflection, supervisor ‘s input, and any other forms of assistance that are needed. This means that when one embarks on the research journey, the research design should be the priority. Given the aims of this study, case study, as a research design, was the most suitable option for this study.

Yin (2009) defines a case study as an in-depth empirical inquiry that explores and investigates a real-life phenomenon, within its real-life context, with the purpose of meaning-making and understanding. Case studies are commonly used as a research method in the social science disciplines and have been used successfully in that they allow for rich, thick descriptions of the phenomenon studied (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2009).

There are five essential features of a case study that support the characteristics of case studies according to Savin-Baden and Major (2013). These characteristics are captured in Figure 5.4 below.

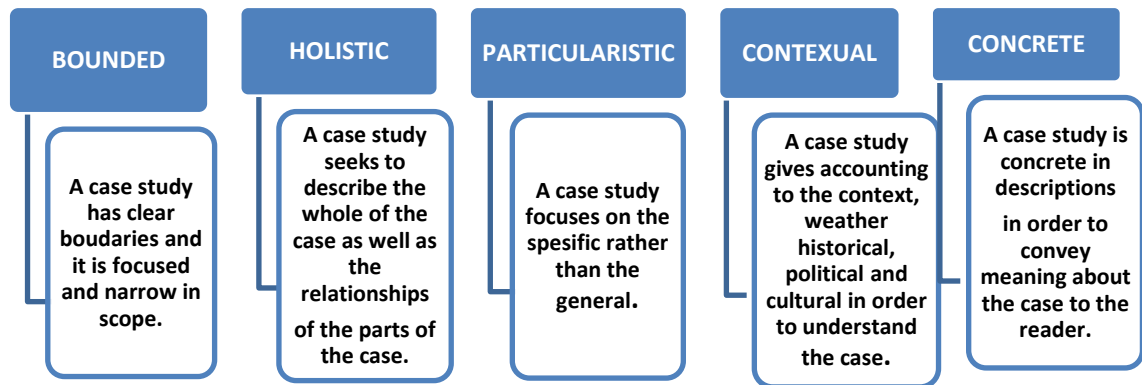


Figure 5.4. Characteristics of case studies (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013)

Firstly, a case study tends to be *bounded*. It means that the case has clear boundaries and it is focused and narrow in scope. Secondly, a case study is *holistic*, meaning it seeks to describe the whole of the case as well as the relationships of the parts to the case. Thirdly, a case study is *particularistic*, in that it focuses on the specific rather than the general. Fourthly, it is *contextual*, in that it is necessary to give an accounting to the context, whether historical, political, and cultural, in order to understand the case. Lastly, a case study is *concrete* in descriptions in order to convey meaning about the case to the reader (Merriam, 1988; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Yin, 2009;).

From the outset of this research journey, I had the desire to gain an in-depth understanding of Black African male students' navigational journey on a specific historically white campus. I wanted to understand what the educational and psychosocial challenges and opportunities are that they might experience while they are conducting their studies at this institution. More importantly, I wanted to know what their support needs are as well as the factors that might enable them to cope and overcome the challenges, in order for them to thrive in at the institution.

Therefore, Black African male students, represented the 'case' in this study, based on the fact that they are a very specific, identifiable group that shared certain

characteristics that made them a coherent grouping or bounded group. However, the exploration and understanding of the experiences of this bounded cohort of students at a HWI cannot be situated only in the participants. Their historical contexts, as well as the institutions' historical context, may also influence their experiences and perspectives. The central theme, therefore, is that of an in-depth investigation of a case within its natural (real-life) context. It would therefore be irresponsible and ruthless of me as a researcher if I divorce these participants' experiences and perspectives from the institution as well as the countries' historical past. As discussed extensively in Chapter 2, South Africa's historical background, as well as the background of the research site, must be the backdrop against which participants of this study experiences and perspectives are analysed and discussed.

Furthermore, Babbie and Mouton (2001, p.282) stress the importance of detailing the context of the unit when they state that "to understand and interpret case studies, researchers describe the context in detail. The surrounding environment, with its notions of multiple, interacting contextualized systems, helps conceptualize the contexts in which the unit of analysis is embedded". Contextualising this study was therefore an important step because it will guide the reader through the process that I have followed, the type of literature that I concentrated on, the conceptual framework, the data collection methods, and how and why I have analysed and interpret the data in the manner that I did (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Yin 2009). In line with the characteristics of case studies, Savin-Baden and Major (2013) furthermore propose 5 advantages of case studies as a research design. In Figure 5.5 these advantages are summarized.

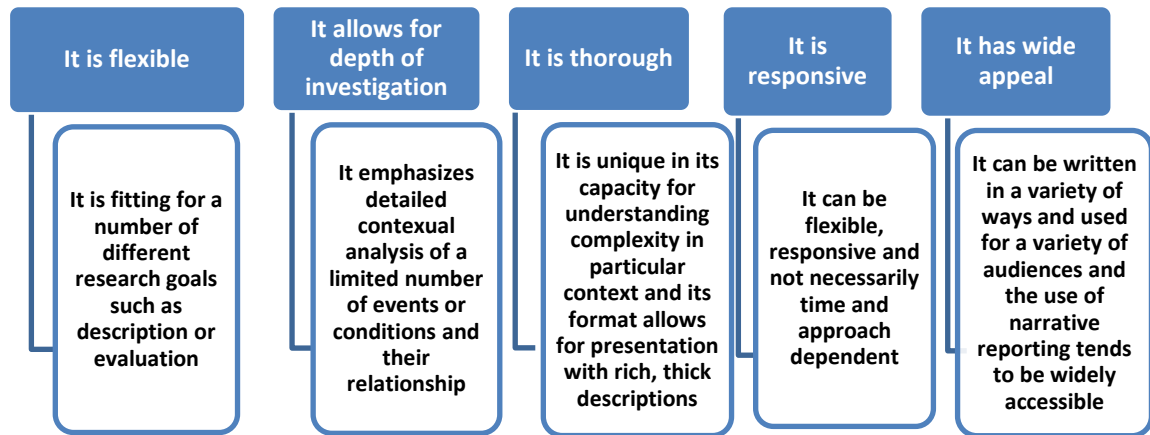


Figure 5.5. Advantages of case studies (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013)

Case study as the design is flexible and therefore allows researchers to have a number of different research goals. These goals can, for example, either be descriptive or evaluative. Researchers employing a case study may furthermore also approach the study from diverse philosophical viewpoints, such as interpretivism or constructivism. Moreover, case studies tend to draw from different research approaches, such as grounded theory or ethnography. Another advantage of a case study is that it allows for depth of investigation. As a research design it may be used to document multiple perspectives that also acknowledging and presenting diverse points of view. Merriam (1988) suggests that this positioning makes case studies holistic.

Other strengths' or advantages of the case study is that not only is it flexible, but it is responsive and not necessarily time and approach dependent. Merriam (2009) further suggests that a case study is heuristic, meaning that it illuminates the readers' understanding of the participants of study. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) therefore contended that because of all these strengths' or advantages, case studies do appeal to a diverse population of researchers and a variety of audiences. However, they furthermore noted that there have also been many criticism and prejudices against case study as a research design.

5.3.4 Challenges of case study as a research design

Yin (2009) refers to case studies as distinctive forms of empirical inquiry. However, this form of research design is also viewed as a less desirable form of inquiry than, for example, surveys and experiments. In the Figure below I will summarize the 4 most distinctive challenges of case studies as proposed by Creswell, (2007), Savin-Baden & Major, (2013) and Yin, (2009).

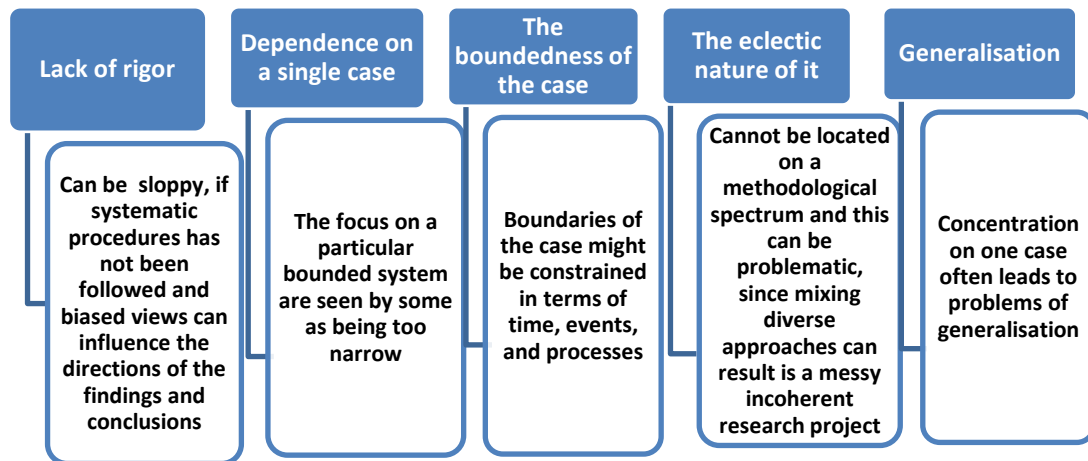


Figure 5.6. Challenges of case study as a research design

Although Creswell (2007), Savin-Baden and Major (2013) and Yin (2009) emphasize the vast amount of strengths and value of case study as a research design, they also acknowledge the potential challenges to a case study design. The five main challenges to a case study design are captured in Figure 4.3.

The most common concern against case studies has been over the lack of rigor. Yin (2009) positioned this concern in front of sloppy researchers. He states that too many researchers do not follow ethical procedures or have equivocal evidence to impact research procedures, findings and conclusions. Other challenges of a case study lie in the focus on a single bounded system which might create challenges in terms of the boundaries of the case and how it might be constrained in terms of time, events, and processes (Creswell, 2007). Furthermore, what might also present as problematic when doing a case study, is the fact that it can be located on a methodological spectrum and the use of diverse approaches might result in a messy and incoherent research study. In this study it was important that as a researcher, I familiarised myself with these specific challenges. I furthermore decided to frame

this study within a single methodological approach, consequently I did not experience any of these challenges.

Another challenge is that of generalisation, when only one case is studied. Yin (2009) provides a counterargument for the issue of generalisation when he states that the short answer is that case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a sample and in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization). Thus, in qualitative research the issue is not to generalise to other populations, but to focus on specific issues pertaining to a specific population's situation and context (Yin, 2009). This is then also true in the case of this study. The main aim was not to generalize this specific cohort of students' experience but rather to focus on the specific issues relevant within this specific situation and context.

Lastly, Yin (2009) also notes that another critique against a case study is that they might take too long and result in massive, unreadable documents. With these challenges in mind, I focused on a specific timeframe, in terms of the data collection and data analysis phases. Although the data of this study were collected in the specific period as planned, the huge amount of data generated did present a challenge, during my first engagement with it. As time progressed, I moved back and forth multiple times between the data and the preliminary analysis before I experienced the data as more manageable.

Against this backdrop, Henning (2004, p.42) cautions that case studies are not the easy way out 'for researchers who have not developed their methodological expertise. She emphasises that you need to ask the design questions: What is this study a case of? Does this topic warrant being referred to as a 'case'? Usually, if the answer to this question is yes 'and if there is a bounded system with a clear unit of analysis, the study will warrant a case as a research design. Although it is clear from the above challenges that deciding on a case study design is a matter that

researchers should consider carefully and critically, I decided that a case study as a research design is best suited for this study.

5.3.5 Sampling Process

The purposive sampling approach was best suited for this study because potential participants could be handpicked or nominated for their wealth of information and their "relevance to the research topic and their 'representativeness' of the population (Neuman, 2000, p.196). This view is in-line with Polkinghorne's (2005) who recommends that participants be purposively selected because they provide "significant accounts of the experience under consideration".

Furthermore, I decided on purposive sampling because the underlying assumptions inherent in purposive sampling are that a few cases studied in depth yield many insights about a specific topic (McMillan & Schumacker, 2001; Patton, 2002). This type of sampling relied on selecting information-rich interviewees or focus group participants who could highlight the area being researched (De Vos, Delpont, Fouche & Strydom; 2011). Individuals, sites and activities are thus purposefully selected to inform an understanding of the research question; hence the term, purposeful sampling (Babbie, 2010; Merriam, 2009).

Furthermore, as the aim was to explore the experiences and support needs of black African male students at a specific HWI, therefore pre-acquaintance may have been possible. In this regard, the literature suggests that participants who view themselves as being fundamentally similar spend more time discussing the issues at hand and less time explaining themselves (Babbie, 2010; Polkinghorne, 2005). This was important in the study so that participants could focus on the issues under discussion and I could ultimately generate rich and in-depth data.

Given this context, a purposively sampled group of 20 Black African male students was identified and invited to take part in the study. The invitation letter is included as Addendum 1. The demographical information of all the participants in this research is included as Addendum 7.

5.4. DATA GENERATION PROCESS

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) remind us that because the researcher is the main data-collection instrument in qualitative research, the researcher has to plan clearly how and when he/she will be involved in data-generation activities, how he/she will ensure non-intrusive data capturing and facilitate the administrative side and practicalities of the research process. They, however, caution that if involvement in concurrent actions is not well coordinated, the result could be the loss of valuable data. To this end, I decided to get absolute clarity and a well-designed timeline on how I would conduct the data-collection process from the beginning until the end. Data were generated by means of qualitative interviews and I describe the detail of the data generation process below.

5.4.1 Qualitative Data

According to De Vos et al. (2011) a qualitative interview refers to a process that is considered to be an in-depth data-generation tool in qualitative research. For this study, I conducted five focus groups as well as 10 individual interviews. The focus groups consisted of four participants per group in order for me to establish a general overview of the topic at hand. A preliminary data analysis of the data or information gathered from these focus groups allowed me to identify 10 potential participants that I invited back for individual interviews. These 10 participants were invited back for individual interviews because of the issues they mentioned in the focus group that needed further exploration or issues that I needed to clarify. All the individual interviews took place one month after the focus groups were conducted.

5.4.2 Conducting the sessions

At the start of each session, I introduced myself and explained the background to the research. This was also the time where I made use of the opportunity to reassure the participants about confidentiality and anonymity and I provided them with the letter of ethics approval for the research project. I also explained their involvement in the process and the fact that they could withdraw at any stage. At this stage, I also obtained their biographical information and kept this information in a locked cabinet in my office, as promised. All participants agreed to participate and signed the consent form. A copy of the consent form is included as Addendum 2.

In order to protect the students' identities, I omit their names and applied this rule to all the data sets. All interview sessions were scheduled for allocated Fridays from 13H00 – 14H00 during lunch-time and all the interviews took place in my office since we agreed on the venue as mutually suitable.

5.4.3 Focus groups

Gray (2013, p.468) refers to a focus group as “*an organized discussion among a selected group of individuals with the aim eliciting information about their views on a specific topic or area*”. Focus groups are interviews conducted with a small group of people, to explore ideas on a particular topic (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002).

Furthermore, focus groups generate a wealth of understanding about participants' experiences and beliefs through guided discussions. During these discussions, the group dynamic provides insights into the world of the participants, highlights new perspectives and enables diverse views to surface. Just as I listened to the participants, they listened to one another (Yosso, Smith, Ceja & Solorzano, 2009). The open-ended response also provided students with a platform to recall, reflect, and share their thoughts and experiences.

I considered this data-generation method particularly relevant for this study as it could illuminate multiple viewpoints or responses as well as providing points of contestation and agreement. Furthermore, I considered a focus group approach to be a gateway to gaining a better understanding of how participants experienced their academic, social as well as their emotional learning environment and their specific needs within this specific context. If researchers want to listen to the voices of individuals, then we need to create spaces that do not leave them feeling vulnerable or exposed. Therefore, I considered the focus group sessions to be such a communal space that I created for students to feel safe enough to share their views. By creating a safe and welcoming space, it was possible for me to facilitate interaction and discussion so that rich and in-depth data could be generated. The focus group sessions were therefore arranged to engage participants in extended

conversation, a process that is considered to be an in-depth data-generation tool in qualitative research (De Vos et al., 2011; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013).

Gray (2013) however, noted that focus groups should not be mistaken for group interviews because focus groups focus on the interaction between participants and the researcher taking a less active role in directing the discussion. It is through these group discussions that meaning is created. Barbour and Kitzinger (2001) share the same sentiment by suggesting that in focus groups, participants are encouraged to talk to one another; ask questions, exchange anecdotes, and comment on each other's experiences and points of view. Focus groups are thus ideal for exploring individuals' experiences, opinions and concerns. For this study, focus groups, therefore, served as a useful method that allowed Black African male students to share their experiences, opinions and concerns unencumbered.

However, a potential weakness of focus group discussions might be that they can amplify particular issues and may silence diverging perspectives and therefore encourage 'bandwagoning'. During the focus group sessions I was mindful about this potential challenge. In order to address this issue, and to enhance the trustworthiness of the data, I invited ten participants back for individual interviews.

A copy of the focus group interview schedule is included as Addendum 3. As mentioned above, in addition to the focus group interviews, semi-structured individual interviews were used in the study.

5.4.4 Semi-structured individual interviews

The second data generation phase of the research process was semi-structured individual interviews with ten participants that took part in the focus groups. At this stage it is important to note that my original plan was that these sessions will give these 10 participants the opportunity to reflect on the focus group session and allow each participant an opportunity to elaborate on certain issues mentioned in the focus group discussions. However, this process did not evolve precisely as I endeavoured.

During the focus groups there were some of the participants that were less vocal or talkative, while others needed and took up more time to share their experiences and perspectives. The individual interviews, therefore, served as an opportunity for participants that did not have the chance to share their experiences and perspectives during the focus groups, either due to time constraints or just because some of them potentially felt more at ease in an individual setting as to a group setting. Consequently, I had to adapt and change the original interview schedule that was compiled at the beginning of the research process, accordingly. Furthermore, as I mentioned earlier, the individual interviews furthermore served as an opportunity to enhance the trustworthiness of the data.

The length of the individual interviews range from 20 minutes to 40 minutes of voice recording sessions. I chose semi-structured interviews to allow the participants to share as much as they wished and not to be restricted by the structure of the interview. Although, some of the questions asked during focus groups were asked again during the individual interview sessions just because some of the participants did not have the opportunity to respond to certain questions during the focus groups due to potential reasons as discussed above.

The distinguishing characteristic of interviewing in qualitative research is the use of open questions, which allows participants to focus on the issues of greatest importance to them, rather than the agenda being determined entirely by the researcher's interests (Creswell, 2002). These individual interviews, therefore, allowed me to be attentive to the responses of the participants in order to clarify certain areas and to identify new emerging information or data pertaining my research question.

Before each session, I informed participants that all interviews would be audio recorded and all the participants consented to this arrangement. All focus groups and individual interviews were, therefore, audio-recorded and stored electronically on a flash disc to be kept safe in a lockable cupboard that was used to store all relevant research information and data.

5.4.5 Organising the data in preparation for analysis

The data-collection process resulted in the generation of vast amounts of data in the form of written transcripts. When I started the data analysis process, it was important to put strategies in place on how to sort and organize this vast amount of data. These strategies would assist and guide me in the organizing and classifying of the raw data collected. I also wrote reflective notes during all the processes of data collection (Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 2009; Polkinghorne, 2005). It was also very important for me to be constantly aware of my research questions as these guided the data analysis process. For this research thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

5.5 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Before I started thematic data analysis, I repeatedly listened to the voice recorded data and began to identify specific ways in which the participants talk about, understand and think about an issue. The voice-recorded data were then transcribed into written text. The next phase was to read and re-read the data in order for me to get a better understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives about the topic being explored.

Thematic analysis can broadly be defined as a method for identifying, analysing and reporting themes within data. These themes are an invaluable research tool as they emphasised and described patterns which occurred frequently across the data set (Brandt, Dawes, Africa & Swartz, 2004). According to Saldana (2013), any researcher that wants to become proficient and effective at doing qualitative analysis must learn how to code well. He further noted that coding refers to the transitional process between data collection and data analysis and a code refers to a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient and essence-capturing, for a portion of data.

The data can consist of interview transcripts, participant observation, field notes, journals, documents, literature, etc. (Saldana, 2013). Charmaz (2001) describes coding as the "critical link" between data collection and their explanation. Although there is no perfect or right way to do coding the act of coding requires that you wear

your researchers' analytic lens. In the same way, Sipe and Ghiso (2004 p.482) stated that "all coding is a judgment call since we bring our subjectivities, our personalities, our predispositions and our quirks" to the process.

Furthermore, through coding researchers can organize and group similarly coded data into categories or 'families' because they share some characteristics that are usually the beginning of a pattern. During this data analysis or coding process, researchers should use their classification reasoning as well as their intuitive senses to determine which data 'look alike' and 'feel alike' when grouping them together. Because qualitative analysis is about meaning making it is important to synthesize the collective not necessarily to obtain a reduced answer but to establish consolidated meaning. That meaning may take the symbolic form of a category, theme, and concept or furthermore categories to subcategories or themes to sub-themes. Categories are not cast in stone and can sometimes overlap whilst codes can be placed in more than one category (Saldana, 2016).

During the data analysis process of this research, I applied the analysis process as proposed by Saldana (2013). Data were therefore analysed by identifying codes followed by the search for possible themes in response to research questions.

Quality of data of the case study

The quality of the data collected, the analysis of the data and the interpretation thereof in a case study design are very important factors that need attention throughout the entire study (Patton, 2008; Yin, 2009). Henning (2004) refers to sound data and good analysis as 'precision' and she further notes that precision refers to how well the entire research process was managed and how the quality and trustworthiness of the research was assured.

Checking should be done throughout the process in order to identify issues such as biases, neglect and a lack of precision, and to rectify any of these if needed. All procedures and decisions should be questioned critically, and the researcher should be aware of his/her own biases through the entire research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Henning 2004).

During the entire research process and especially during the data analysis phase I had to be consciously aware of the impact of my own potential biases and involvement in the process. I wanted the results of this study to be regarded as trustworthy and authentic. For this reason, I checked all my decisions, actions and interpretations as the process unfolded.

Therefore, during all the interview sessions I was mindful to regularly ‘mirror’ participants responses in order to check whether or not I ‘got it right’ and understood correctly what they are trying to say or tell me. This process not only assist me to establish trustworthiness of the data but it also allowed me to gain greater insight into participants' perspectives and experience. It furthermore assisted me to ensure that the selected data and my analysis of the data remained as close as possible to reflecting the authentic voices of the participants. I also had to ensure that the findings would reflect a realistic and reasonable account of all the participants' narratives (Creswell, 2009).

After I had analysed the first set of data, I shared the findings with my supervisor, as well as a peer-reader. Their comments and feedback helped me to look anew at the analysis and the way in which I categorised data. In this regard Marshall and Rossman (2011) recommend on-going peer scrutiny of the research project as they are of the view that engaging with knowledgeable critical peer-readers brings a fresh perspective on our processes and actions, and that this may challenge our own conscious and unconscious assumptions.

Working through the categories and themes again allowed me to make adjustments and to pick up on issues that I did not previously observe.

In the final analysis, I presented the findings as authentically and holistically as possible in Chapters 6. In Chapter 7, I focused on the meanings and experiences of the participants. Throughout this final phase, I reflected critically on what I do, how I do it, and being acutely aware of my own positionings that might impact on how

I interpret, discuss and understand the data (Creswell 2007; Denzin & Lincoln 2008). A copy of the preliminary data analysis process is included as Addendum 4.

5.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The current study was granted ethical clearance by the Stellenbosch University Ethics Committee during October 2017 (REC-2017-0300. Homan in Gray (2013) refers to research ethics as the “science of morality”, meaning that research needs to be conducted in such a way that it goes beyond the boundaries of just the application of the most appropriate research methodology but rather to conduct research in a moral and responsible way. Research ethics, therefore, underpins the moral principles guiding the research.

Furthermore, Mouton (2001, p.239) noted that “the researcher has the right to search for truth and meaning but not at the expense of other individuals in society”. Hence, I needed to obtain ethical clearance from the institution where I planned to conduct the research, and because the participants of the research are students at the institution, I had to secure institutional permission for this research (Addendum 4).

Although the research was conducted with the purpose of exploring and understanding the perspectives and experiences of a specific cohort of students, I constantly had to be aware of potential harm participants could be subjected to. Therefore, as a researcher, my actions were informed by specific ethical considerations based on aspects of ethical principles (Crow, et al., 2006; Gray, 2013). All participants were informed beforehand of the purpose and background of the study. I provided the participants with enough information about the research to enable them to make reasonable, informed decisions about their participation. Furthermore, to ensure informed consent, I provided participants with sufficient information about the research so that they can make an informed decision as to whether to become involved or not. All participants, therefore, had to complete an informed consent form.

I also took special care not to coerce anybody to participate, therefore all participants were informed that participation in the research was voluntary. Participants were informed that should anyone decided not to take part or to discontinue participating in the study at any time, there would not be any negative consequences for them. Rather, that they have the right to withdraw from the process whenever they choose to.

All the information generated from the interviews was managed confidentially. Participants were assured and informed that whatever they share with me will be treated with confidentiality. All names were omitted to protect the identity of the participants. Raw data, as well as analysed data, were securely locked in a cupboard in my office.

As a researcher, my focus was to cause no harm and to contribute to research that would be used in the best interest of the participants. The research will be considered harmful if it causes a participant to be embarrassed, ridiculed, belittled or subjected to any form of mental distress. Furthermore, research could also be referred to as harmful if it produces anxiety or stress to participants or if it produces any negative emotional reaction. I, therefore, had to put support in place in case participants needed a debriefing or counselling session during or after the interview sessions. Participants were informed that services at the Centre for student counselling and development were available if needed.

Furthermore, as a registered member of the Health Professionals Council of South Africa, I am legally bound to adhere to the council's ethical code. In this regard, Barbour (2008, p.146) notes that "*the entire framework of a research project needs to be under ethical scrutiny, not just dilemmas that arise in the field ... the choice of the research topic already is an ethical decision*". It is thus clear, that numerous factors contribute to a research study being sound from an ethical perspective. To conclude, as a researcher, my focus was always not to cause any harm and to make a positive contribution to a very specific research area in HE. The participants' well-being was always my priority and was not undermined by the envisioned research outcomes.

5.7 REFLEXIVITY AS A QUALITATIVE RESEARCHER

Reflexivity, in part, is an expression of the viewpoint that the researcher plays a unique and valuable role in the entire research process. It acknowledges that the researcher both shapes, and is shaped by the research (Silverman, 2010). Etherington (2004, p.19) describes reflexivity as the “ability to notice our responses and to use that knowledge to inform our actions, communications and understandings”. Self-awareness and awareness of the ethical and power issues related to the research along with transparency are essential in order to be reflexive, according to Etherington (2004). Therefore, reflexivity helps the researcher to step back and critically examine the transformation of the research because of ones’ own impact (King & Horrocks, 2010).

Furthermore, Braun and Clarke (2013) refer to reflexivity as a conscious and critical reflective process on the part of the researcher. This means that throughout the entire research process, the researcher must constantly be aware of his/her own role in the research. These authors further noted that researchers must be aware of their various ‘insider’ as well as their ‘outsider’ statuses during the process. They refer to the ‘insider’ position when the researcher shares some aspects of group identity with participants. For example, if a female researcher researches females she could be viewed as an insider researcher. The inverse is true where an ‘outsider’ positioning refers to a researcher not sharing some group identity with participants (for example, a heterosexual male researching bisexual women). However, Braun and Clarke (2013) mentioned that researchers are likely to have multiple ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ positions.

In terms of my own ‘outsider’ and ‘insider’ status in this research process, I concur with Braun and Clarke’s (2013) stance that as a researcher one can have multiple ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ positions. Firstly, I could embrace an ‘insider’ positioning because I share a very specific historical context with the participants in this research. We all can relate to the fact that the legacies of apartheid left us with deep-rooted scars and emotional injuries, and we are often perceived to be second-class members in society, even today.

However, I have to note, not only do I identify as a coloured woman, but I am also much older than the participants. I therefore, have to acknowledge that the participants in this study, namely Black African male students' racialised and gendered realities and experiences might be different from mine. Researching Black African male experiences might, therefore, position me as an 'outsider' in the research process. Furthermore, I was acutely aware of the power relations that may have existed between the participants and me because of the fact that I am not just an older coloured woman, but I am also a staff member at the institution.

Yet, because of my strong interpersonal skills as well as my interest in the experiences of others, I was able to establish trust and rapport with all the participants. I could, therefore, create a safe and non-threatening space where all the participants could share their personal opinions and perspectives.

Braun and Clarke's (2013) 'qualitative sensibility' that refers to an orientation in terms of the research question, data collection and data analyses during the research process resonates with me. These authors brought my attention to certain skills or orientations that constitute a 'qualitative sensibility' and they include:

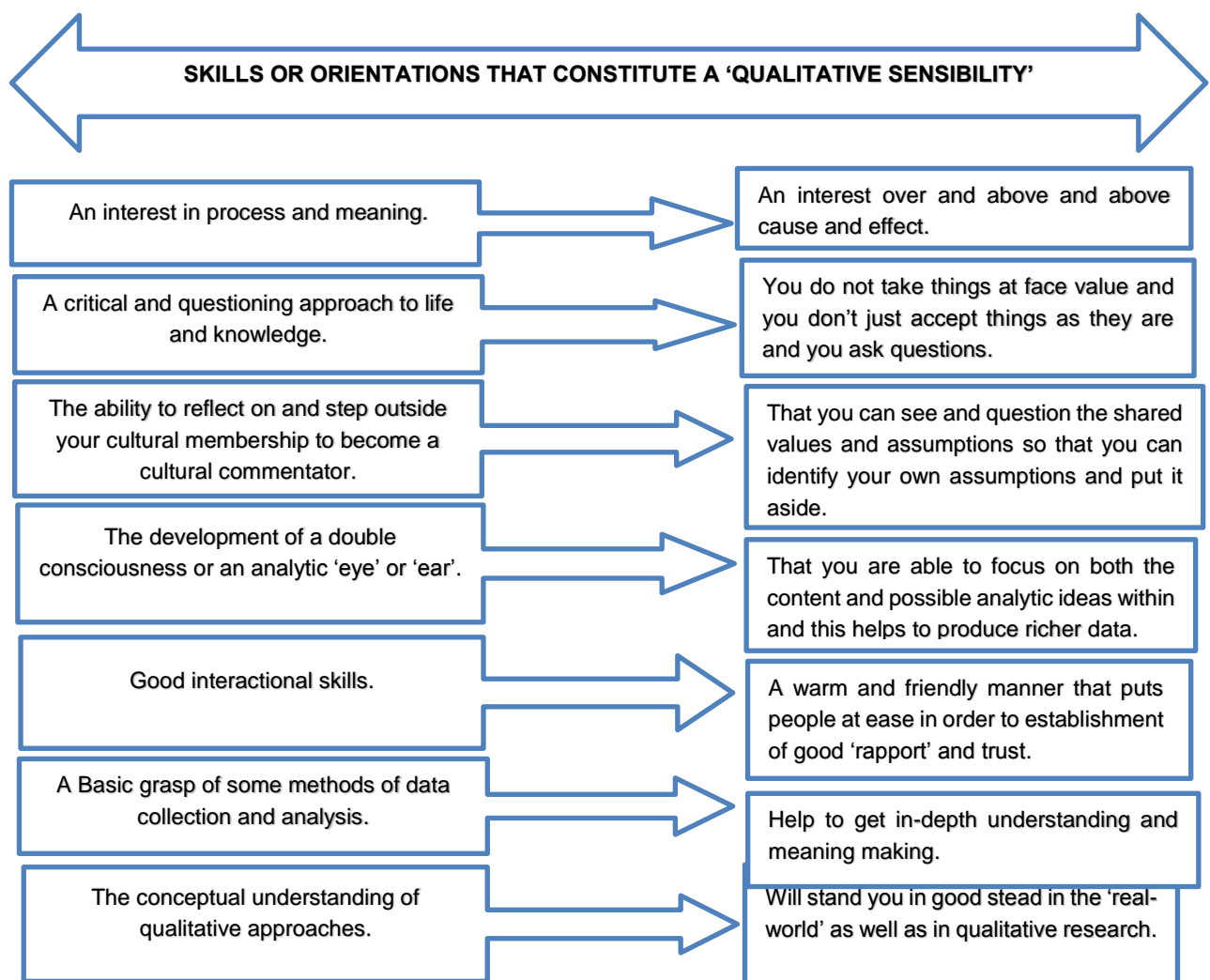


Figure 5.7. Skills for qualitative sensibility

During this research process, I applied these orientations that constitute a 'qualitative sensibility' as described by Braun and Clarke (2013). Firstly, I developed a conceptual understanding of qualitative research and meaning making, at the beginning of the research process. In terms of the data collection process, Braun and Clarke (2013) furthermore emphasises that qualitative researchers must be able to see and question the shared values and assumptions when engaging with the data they collected, in order for them to identify their own assumptions and objectivity. I include as much as possible of the participants authentic "voices" as narrated and expressed in their own words, in this chapter. This furthermore coincides with the idea that qualitative researchers highlight meaning that

participants ascribe to their experiences and through the research process, I could give ‘voice’ to this specific cohort of students.

After each interview session, I felt deeply honoured that I could create a space for participants where they could share their uncensored experiences and perspectives. That alone already made this a successful research journey.

King and Horrocks (2010) suggests that researchers’ emotions, political and philosophical orientation all play a pivotal part in the approach to the research. Therefore, as a researcher I had to acknowledge and be conscious of the influence of my own ‘worldview’ as well as the research setting on the participants and ultimately on data analysis process.

5.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a comprehensive discussion of the research process followed in this study. The goal of this chapter was therefore to establish an appropriate fit between the research questions and the methods selected and employed in this study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Additionally, I explained in detail the steps taken in the data collection procedures, which included focus group sessions as well as individual interviews. This was followed by a thematic analysis as the method of data analysis. The last section in the chapter dealt with all ethical aspects and researcher positionality.

This chapter, therefore, focused on the research methodology that informed the research and described how the research was conducted in order to ultimately answer the research question. In the next chapter, the data analysis and findings from the research will be discussed.

CHAPTER 6

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Social spaces are not blank and open for anybody to occupy. Over time, through the process of historical sedimentation, certain types of bodies are designated as being the “natural” occupants of specific spaces. Some bodies have the right to belong in certain locations, while others are marked out as trespassers who are in accordance with how both spaces and bodies are imagined, politically, historically and conceptually circumscribed as being “out of place. Therefore who is felt to belong and not to belong contributes in an important way to the shaping of the social space. (Sibley, 1997, p.13)

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study endeavoured to explore Black African male students’ everyday experiences as they navigate the different social, public and academic spaces at a specific HWI. Twenty Black African male students shared their personal experiences on their navigational journey on and around this campus. Through their narratives, they could share their educational and psychosocial challenges, opportunities and support needs as well as recommendations on how the institution can enhance their academic and emotional well-being while conducting their studies at the institution.

In this chapter, I will, therefore, present and discuss the findings of this study. At this point, it is important to note, that the data collection process was a strenuous though humbling experience. Some readers might find these narratives overwhelming or even intimidating. However, I am also hopeful that readers will embrace these narratives and they will feel just as emancipated as I in our collective journey to restore humanity in all. Therefore, my plea to all readers of this dissertation is to engage with the narratives of the 20 participants in this study, with an open-minded and non-judgemental manner. Furthermore, I hope that these heartfelt narratives will guide us all to face and alter our own individual demons that keep our prejudices towards others active.

6.2 RESEARCH CONTEXT

The data for the present study were generated from 5 focus group sessions and 10 individual interviews. In the study, participants consisted of a group of 20 black African male students at a HWI. The focus group sessions, as well as the individual interview sessions, were audio-taped with the permission of the participants and the data were transcribed. Data were coded by reading and rereading transcripts, followed by creating more specific categorical meaning units or themes. The data was continuously revisited to create the opportunity for a deeper understanding of emerging themes.

The overarching research question that guided this study was: What are the narratives about educational and psycho-social support among Black African male students at a historically white university? The four sub-questions were:

1. What are the narratives about educational and psychosocial challenges of participants?
2. What are the narratives about educational and psychosocial opportunities of participants?
3. What are the narratives of coping strategies and support of participants?
4. What are the narratives of interventions and recommendations that would support black African male students at an HWI, optimally?

6.3 FINDINGS

The data analysis phase was a very strenuous and long process because of the interrelatedness and interdependency of all the different themes as narrated by the participants. After a critical and in-depth engagement with the data, the content revealed thematic patterns within the data that illuminated the social construction as well as the realities of race and the influence thereof on the participants' daily experiences at a HWI.

The first stage of the data analysis process involved a general reading of the data which allowed me to orientate myself and to get a general sense of what the

participants were saying. I then read and engaged with the data multiple times and on multiple levels in order for me to identify units of meaning. Copies of my preliminary findings are attached as Addendum 5(a) and 5(b).

The four broad themes based on the main research question were, firstly, participants' perspectives on challenges that they experience in public, social and academic spaces. Secondly, participants' perspectives of their coping strategies and support to overcome these challenges, were documented. Thirdly, participants' recommendations on how the institution can create a campus climate where they can thrive, was included as a theme. Lastly, participants' perspectives on opportunities at the institution were documented. It is important to note that the themes identified through thematic analysis are interrelated therefore participants' narratives of challenges in public, social and academic domains, as well as their narratives of educational and psychosocial support, are interconnected with each other.

During this analysis phase I moved back and forth in the data, trying to identify and group the information until I was reasonably certain that they authentically reflects the 'voices' of the participants. It was not an easy process because of the interrelatedness and interdependency of all the issues narrated by the participants. It is important to note that the themes that emerged from the data analysis process reflect a variety of issues that could be regarded as important but in this chapter, I will only focus on the themes that addressed the main research question. Therefore, after multiple engagement sessions with the data, I felt comfortable and convinced with the organizing and structural outlay of the data as captured in Figure 6.1 below.

At this point it also important to note that although participants' narratives significantly reflected challenging experiences at the institution, they also shared some positive experiences and perspectives. For the purpose of the flow of the discussion of the data, I will first address participants' narratives about educational and psychosocial challenges as well as their narratives about coping strategies and support. I will then discuss participants' narratives about their positive experiences at the institution followed by their narratives about interventions and

recommendations. Additionally, I also made a conscious decision not to engage too critically with the data but rather to present and interpret it through a theoretical lens and within the context of the literature reviewed. I will base my discussion on the structural layout below.

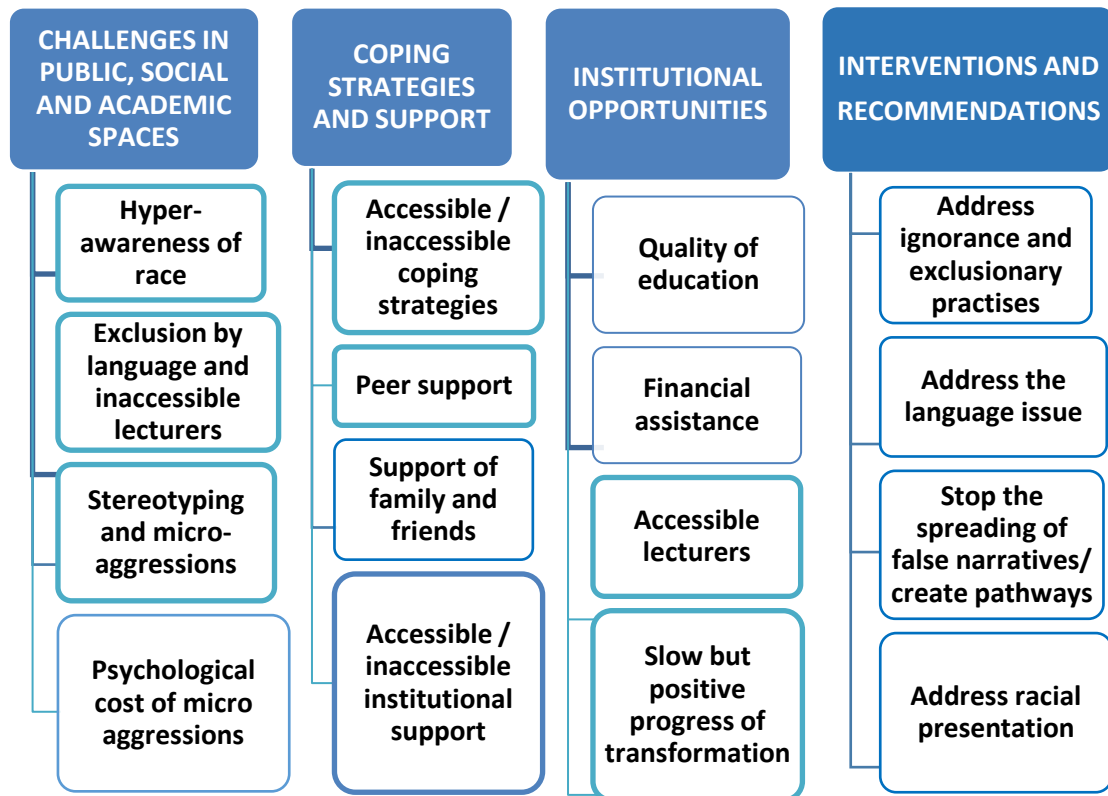


Figure 6.1. Structural presentation of the findings

6.4 DISCUSSION OF THE DATA

6.4.1 Narratives of educational and psychosocial challenges in public, social and academic spaces

Participants were asked to share their experiences and perspectives from their first impressions on the first day of arrival on campus as well as their experiences in social, public and academic spaces overtime at the institution. I allowed them to share their experiences in as much detail as possible and I captured and reflected their narratives in their authentic and direct format, as expressed by them during the interview sessions.

Hyper-awareness of race

Transitioning into HE means having to engage with diverse cultures, practices, and racial groups and that includes how one is not only socially but also racially perceived and positioned by others. Most of the participants' experiences aligned with this realization by narrating their hyper-awareness of race from the first day of arrival on the campus. It became evident in how participants became aware not only of the presence of so many white people in one space but also a sudden awareness of their "blackness":

Participant 4: I'm from a place where you don't see a lot of white people. So that's the first thing I recognized when I got here. I was like, "What? There's a lot of white people everywhere.

Participant 3: You become very aware of your blackness.

Participant 5: Yes, you suddenly become aware of your blackness. You're like "I am black" when I get here. Because it's something I've never experience. Although I've moved around a lot as a child to different areas, but I've never ever been conscious of the fact that, yes, you're black.

Within the South African context, this can be a challenging reality, especially for Black African male students entering HWIs with their racialized and gendered identity. Interesting though is that participants furthermore became aware of the different kinds of treatments and responses their presence evoked and they perceived that to be specific to their racial and gendered selves

Participant 1: Let's say you walk into ... Even not just the university, the surrounding shops and stuff like that, people start acting funny when you are in their space.

Participant 6: Throughout your everyday experience you're not even conscious of the fact that you are black as a person until you are in those spaces that certain things happen around you and then you're like, oh okay, yes, it's because I'm a Black man. I think that's the extent to which it burdens me. There is no other way to explain it but that, that you would walk around feeling normally until someone does those sorts of things that you see, oh, okay, they only do these things because I'm a Black man.

Participants' extracts indicate their exposure to treatment and behaviours that send out clear messages of them invading the space of white people when moving around in social and public spaces. What's interesting though, is that participants indicate that they not only become aware of a white majority, but they simultaneously became aware of being reminded of their 'blackness'. They contended that within these social spaces at this HWI, white people will immediately notice their presence and that realization is usually accompanied by dismissive glares and the questioning of the reason for their presence.

These accounts of participants seem to suggest that racial difference is still being foregrounded as central to identity and that the racialized ideologies of apartheid are still impacting on and shaping racialized identities in present-day SA. The implication of this is, that individuals' first notice 'race' and then decide accordingly on how to direct and apply their thoughts, behaviours and treatments accordingly. Participants' experiences center on them experiencing feelings of not belonging in these spaces, but rather as a burden and an inconvenience to others. These realities are based on the premise of race as prevalent, permanent, and deep-seated within society as confirmed by CRT. Participants in this study furthermore noted that they either felt invisible or hyper-visible on this campus.

Participant 5: So you're very aware of your blackness and you tend to in a way just feel invisible in certain way ... Although you stand out, you feel invisible in the same space, especially in social settings where there's events and stuff like that. You don't say a lot because you just observe and then you feel like if I left here, no-one would actually ask why. And that's something I picked up from the get-go.

Participant 7: You can't just walk in. Like right now if I was at home and I walked into Spar it would be chill. But here someone will definitely give off the energy that I have noticed that you're here and it does make me sort of uneasy and it is irritating but I'll act like it's nothing. Then they'll just smile it off, which is very irritating.

Participants' extracts clearly indicate their acceptance and internalization of the social construction of space-allocation whereby certain spaces 'belong' or are

‘owned’ by certain racial groups. For Black students to experience feelings of being denied access to these white spaces, confirms Harris’s (1993) analysis of the tenet of CRT *whiteness as property* as white people’s right to ‘use and enjoyment’ and the ‘right to exclude’. Furthermore, participants’ ability to read social scripts is evident in how they construct and deploy racialized subjectivity. Such insight entails being able to read the normative constructs of racial subjectivity and being able to enact those aspects of subjectivity necessary to the context. Negotiating this context of contact also means engaging complexities beyond ‘do I fit in or don’t I’ but it also plays directly into the normative racialized social order of what is perceived as the norm and established as superior. It is therefore not surprising that participants felt silenced and inferior, within these dominantly and historically white spaces:

Participant 6: You feel black. You get here and you feel it, you feel black. You as a being and you as a person, you’re even afraid to talk now because you’re scared of what people are gonna say about your accent and everything. It silences you. It silences you and I think from the first day I felt like I was silenced, my first experience here.

To arrive on campus on his first day was clearly a huge accomplishment for another participant and he described how his feelings of excitement were clouded by feeling intimidated by the presence of so many white people. This also led to him feeling lonely at that point:

Participant 9: I was really very excited to be here, but it was kind of intimidating for me cause I went to a black school and I came here and it was just too many white people and stuff. To me mingling around with them was just very intimidating. So, I felt a bit lonely.

Most participants come from dominantly black communities and schools. It is therefore not surprising that the centrality of race and racism only became real for them when they got at the intuition:

Participant 1: I wasn’t, honestly speaking, I wasn’t aware of these things. I never knew racism existed when I came here. I had no clue what ... All these terms, white supremacy and all that, I never knew what those things were. So I’ve started learning when they were

happening to me. Why are these people treating me like this? I started questioning myself. Okay, what's going on? They make you feel like ... You know you're black, but you don't feel that you're black. So when you come into this space, they make you feel that you're black, that you are less than others.

Participant 1's comment about his unawareness of the racism until he got on this campus is very interesting. His interpretation is clearly based on the whiteness of the campus and surrounding areas and the treatments that he experienced while moving around in these spaces. The participants' internalization of being black and therefore less than other confirms historically established ideologies of the superior and inferior positioning of different race groups.

To feel like intruders or invaders in certain spaces indicates how the use of space can be a key mechanism for establishing racial boundaries between different race groups. In order to secure racial homogenization and to simultaneously create and sustain the marginal status of marginalized groups (Alexander, 2007). Sibley (in Alexander, 2007) who focussed intensively on the socio-spatial construction of the 'outsider', highlight the ways in which 'insiders' or 'owners' of certain spaces, keeping 'their' spaces free from any non-conforming elements. These spaces as 'pure' spaces and that are within these 'pure' spaces, that the social construction of 'others' or 'outsiders' that notions of difference are rendered highly visible. As such, Black African men, operating in historically white spaces are perceived as 'impure' elements and are therefore perceived as a threat to the collective integrity of the homogenized White space (Sibley, in Alexander, 2007).

The hyper-awareness of Black men in these historically white spaces creates conflicts of hyper-visibility of their presence that are further compounded by the superficial opposite, *the dilemma of not being seen at all or invisible*. Racial visibility further relies on significant experiences that emphasize the social constructions and meanings of race to participants. Being seen as Black and as male might highlight their difference not just in relation to other racial groups but also from other male counterparts and therefore feed into subjective stereotyping and prejudices. Participants furthermore mentioned on how their presence in social spaces are greeted with distrust and discomfort:

Participant 7: There aren't that many black places in (*name of town*). There's no one black place where black people go and hang out. It's mainly white places, restaurants, all of this. So when you go to a restaurant, every time we'd go there together, it would always be one of those, they first stare at you, like who are you? Are you supposed to be here? One of those kinds of things. And then only then after that do people continue with their life.

Participant 9: And also, what happens at the clubs. I know a few of my friends who wanted to go to a club. They just said, no, it's full, where there were two white students right in front of them, they would let them in and then when it was their turn, they're like, no, it's full.

Participant 2: You get the whispers. If you walk into a restaurant, you get people looking at you and they come in to each other and they look at you again. And then it makes me feel so self-conscious. What are you seeing? What is your perception of me?

It seems, that within the post-apartheid SA, in spite of the huge amount of economic, social and political changes within the country, racial segregation continues to occur, often taking the form of seemingly 'voluntary' practices and entitlements within different social spaces, organizations, and institutions (Schrieff, Tredoux, Dixon & Finchilescu, 2005). Alexander (2007) shares the same sentiment and notes that these practices and entitlements are based on South Africa's historic apartheid laws of informal segregation and it provides a striking demonstration of the ways in which groups use space in order to maintain distance and group divisions. This social arrangement furthermore confirms CRT's stance of whiteness as a dominant ideology and the experience of racism as an everyday lived experience especially for Black men in historically white spaces. These feelings and experiences that participants shared denote their sense that Black people are deemed aliens within these historically white public and social spaces. However, their narratives furthermore indicate that it is not only in these social and public contexts that such interpellation occurs, but it rather creeps into academic spaces like lecture halls, as well.

Exclusion by language and inaccessible lecturers

Participants in the study felt that the use of Afrikaans, which is either their third or fourth language, was another challenge that impacted their academic performance and ultimately their emotional well-being. There were numerous experiences that participants shared about the use of Afrikaans in social, public and especially in academic spaces like lecture halls, and how that made them feel excluded.

Participant 8: So they use Afrikaans as a kind of an exclusionary tool if you don't speak the language. They said you have to know Afrikaans.

In recent years, the university where this study was conducted has been obligated to address many issues regarding language at the institution. This led to numerous challenging debates because some parents and specifically alumni are adamant on maintaining the key role of Afrikaans as language at the institution. What's interesting though is that although participants shared accounts on how the use of Afrikaans is used as an exclusionary tool, they also expressed their understanding and acceptance of this reality within the institutions' historical racial and cultural context.

Participant 14: On the WhatsApp group, on the reses group. They were speaking, communicating everything in Afrikaans. Even important stuff, they'll communicate in Afrikaans. So we were at a point where we're like, because I didn't mind it at first that they were speaking Afrikaans on the group, because sometimes when you get to res you see that the culture is already Afrikaans, so the events that will be had at res are Afrikaans, so you don't seem like you fit in those type of situations and setups.

It became evident through participants' narratives on how parents' opinions about culture and language filtered down to younger generations of students as the extract of participant 14, above indicates. The language of communication on certain social media groups of residences confirms this. One would assume that the younger generation and current students would be acutely aware of the racial and culturally diverse nature of student populations, but this cannot be taken for granted. It is therefore important to note that Afrikaans might play a major part in upholding elements of symbolic racism and it might continue to signify white privilege and

power, as it has in the past. This might suggest that the institution maintains its position of white supremacy through Afrikaans.

Furthermore, since all the study participants identified as Black African, it is no surprise that most of them experience the use of Afrikaans as an exclusionary tool. The message that this sends out is that Afrikaans is assumed to be the culturally superior language in which all must speak for them to be accepted at the institution. This informs the framing of non-members' status who is unable to assimilate to the dominant language and cultural traditions. The use of Afrikaans might furthermore be experienced by participants as a subtle insistence to accept and conform to the hierarchy as well as to the racial and cultural frame of the institution. Therefore, although unconscious, the impact of the exclusionary intention of the use of Afrikaans cannot be underestimated because it contributes to the internalization of racial and social constructs associated with self-doubt, exclusion and academic capacity as expressed by participant 11:

Participant 11: So there's that kind of hierarchy that if you speak Afrikaans, then you can be with us. If you don't, then you are kind of like against us in a way.

Participant 1 and 6, furthermore phrased the privileged and advanced positioning of Afrikaans students at the institution.

Participant 1: I mean, the lecturer explains, they have the advantage of being taught in their own language. The Afrikaans kid asks a question in his language, it gets translated to him back in his language. He gets called to the office and then they explain more stuff, detailed. This guy literally gets the exam before writing the exam. When I go there as a black person they just, there's no leeway.

Participant 6: I think when it comes to class and lecturers, there is this problem. When you are in a class, your problem is not your sole problem, it's possible that it's half of the class' problems. And I've seen that Afrikaans people, they ask their problems in Afrikaans even if it's an English lecture. So they're probably asking something that troubles me but I'm not aware of it, and they are asking it in Afrikaans, I don't hear what's going on, the response would also be in Afrikaans. So from the conversation in my space within the period in which I'm supposed to be learning, I actually learn nothing.

These participants reveal their awareness and consciousness about subtle and sometimes direct practices that exist within lecture halls which may manifest in Afrikaans students being advanced in supposedly neutral academic practices. Participants note that it is through these practices they, who are not familiar with Afrikaans, miss out on learning opportunities and how that may have a negative impact on their academic performance.

Participant 8: It's no longer like racism that is like, oh, you're black. It's like systematic exclusion. Even in classes as well. As he was saying, the white lecturers who favour white students, and that's a fact. But there are a select few that are not like that. And two days ago I went to this lecturer. I registered late, I was trying to find a way to postpone ... Because I was not ready to write the test that I was supposed to write because I was not able to attend classes. The lecturer was just like, so, there's nothing I can do. I'm just going to give you a zero.

Participant 8's comment indicates how the effects of language and disposition influence not only the nature of participant's interaction with lecturers but also the perception and feeling of inadequacy to productively function in the academic space. These extracts of participants furthermore confirm how race-related prejudices and discrimination within lecture rooms of HWIs remains a big challenge for them. They shared how their race often influenced lecturers' manner of interaction with them as well as their academic expectations of them (Smith, Yosso, Solorzano, 2006). These accounts suggest that they must work much harder than white students to show their academic worth and how certain uncaring lecturers make racially loaded statements, unaware of the emotional impact of their statements on them. Participant 9 shared one Afrikaans lecturer's response to the fact that he must teach in English:

Participant 9: Oh, since we are the same now, I have to speak in English, but that wasn't the case before 1994. Man, what's this world coming to?

This lecturer's reference to 1994, that marks the date when SA transitioned from an Apartheid political system to a democratic system, might suggest resistance

towards the new disposition. Participant 9's account on the lecturer's statement conveys a sense of ignorance and of the student feeling judged. It seems apparent that he interpreted the lecturers' seemingly innocuous behaviour as racial discrimination. In line with his reaction, a CRT framework does not only acknowledge the continuation of existing power relations, but it also accepts that historical contexts continue to contribute to current manifestations of racism (Carolissen, et al., 2012). Furthermore, this awareness of the participant as well as the lecturers' comment can be framed in their perception and interpretation of race and culture within the context of academic practice and it furthermore highlights a racialized lens with white privilege and dominant ideologies at the core.

It, therefore, does not come as a surprise that participants' experience certain lecture halls, in the same way, that of being an alienating space and where students of different races and languages are not embraced and welcomed. They always have to somehow verbally or nonverbally, communicate convincing reasons for being where they are if they are perceived or found to be not in "place". Participants' accounts, therefore, reveal that being subjected to discriminatory acts and practices in lecture halls influence how they engage with other students and lecturers and they lose confidence in their own capabilities.

Participant 10: And we get this thing a lot, even from our lecturers. Cause I can't speak Afrikaans. I don't even understand a single word of Afrikaans. So I was struggling. I couldn't understand what was going on in class. So I went up to one of my lecturers and then I'm like, can you please explain this and this to me? So I was always going to him after class. Then this other time he said to me that why didn't you go to UCT then, cause you came here knowing that this university is Afrikaans. I'm like, this is not what I was told when I applied.

The historical and cultural context of the institution is white, Afrikaans and Christian based. This might function as an incubator of prejudices and stereotyping, which accommodates culturally inappropriate and insensitive practices and treatments towards those that do not fit this profile. Within the post-apartheid South African context, the idea that HEIs must operate on the principles of multiculturalism, democracy, and equality of opportunity is clearly not reflected in

the experiences of participants in this study. Their experiences at the institution are rather affected by constructions of Black masculinities that are linked to danger, deviance, and low expectations. In this regard, Boske (2010) noted that people who practice deficit thinking often fail to pay attention to those aspects of certain student's experiences. In the concept of deficit thinking, Black male students fail because *they lack so much*, not because institutions fail to consider the significance of constructs like race, gender and the impact of racism, as participant 7 and 17 narrate.

Participant 7: You fail at (*name of institution*) not because you are not academically capable, but it's a whole different world. There's a lot of background things that go into the academic sphere of things. The racism, the lack of support for black people, black males, it's like the whole place makes you feel like a reject even though you're not a reject. You come here as a top performing student from wherever you come from. You know you are academically gifted. But this whole new environment changes all that. And it's not just the books anymore, it's the whole culture of the place.

Participant 17: There was also another incident where I went to consult a lecturer to give me a scope of the work and some hints. There are ten chapters and the exam can only cover so much. What areas can I focus on and what not? And the lecturer was really cold and blunt with me, and just said the exam includes everything. Okay, fine, and then I went and studied everything. But we have a class WhatsApp group where everyone posts hints, past papers, what not to study. Then an Afrikaans kid goes to the same lecturer, asks the same question, and then he comes back to the group with a detailed scope.

The raced and gendered navigation of historically and dominantly white spaces are seemingly loaded with conflicting and ambivalent emotions of participants' outsider status. However, participants' feelings of not feeling welcome and accepted in these spaces is not unique to the current study. Many authors have highlighted the ongoing ways in which Black male students face discrimination (Boske, 2010; Brooms & Perry, 2016; Smith, et al., 2002). Racially and culturally discriminatory treatments in public, social and academic spaces at HWIs, do have a negative impact on Black students and that might present as underperformance and/or disengagement. Boske (2010) furthermore noted that if all role-players at HWIs are unwilling to examine the root causes of underachievement and

disengagement of Black students, especially Black male students, this reality will persist.

Stereotyping and micro-aggressions

Dr. Pierce, an African-American psychiatrist, developed the concept of subtle, stunning and repetitive forms of racism having both physiological and psychological effects on recipients of these acts, like micro-aggressions. Micro-aggression, therefore, can be defined as “subtle, often automatic and non-verbal exchanges which are ‘put-downs’ of Black people by offenders’ (Doharty, 2019; McGee & Martin, 2011). Although micro-aggressions can present in many forms, participants in this study mostly experience it in the form of, the questioning of their intellectual abilities, undue scrutiny of police and security guards, exclusion during formal activities and being perceived as scary in public spaces. Participants shared their accounts of experiences on how their intelligence is questioned and how they constantly must prove themselves:

Participant 7: Somehow you feel belittled. And your intelligence to an extent is somehow questioned until you prove yourself, until they hear, “No man, *jy maak sin*. (*You make sense*) Do you know what I’m saying? And so the whole notion of why do I have to say something that makes sense... for me to matter? Why do I have to drop a massive statement and everyone’s like, hmm, for me, for my opinion to even be regarded as, or my voice to even be heard?

Participant 3: My first year was so hurtful. I feel like....Do you mean that I’m less intelligent because of my skin colour? Do you actually believe that intellectual ability is something to do with skin colour? How can you? That’s absurd. I was born the same way like you. And it’s so alarming, so shocking to me. It made me feel less of a person really. It made me realise that I have to work almost twice or thrice or four times as hard as the average white person here in Stellenbosch to actually just grasp something.

Furthermore, the unique character of the university where this study was conducted is that the institution itself blends into the central town. Students, therefore, can move freely and easily between the institution and the town. This creates a context whereby casual strolls by black African male students in these surroundings are often greeted with white fear and feelings of unease because of their presence. In

response to the question to share some of their experiences where they felt discriminated against on and around campus, regular exposure to micro-aggressions as an offensive concern was shared by most participants, as participant 8 narrates.

Participant 8: So each time we'd walk on the street, whether as a group or as individuals, there is a reaction or an awareness. Like this, I remember there was a white girl, she was walking, she was approaching us and we were in this direction, and when she looked up and noticed us, she crossed over to the other side of the road to continue walking, to approach us. So that in itself, it stings you as a black person. There's a stereotype that you think exists between us and our white counterparts, but there is no way that they want to know the real us. There's that gap in between and each time you go into a white space, they try to or they feel obligated to adapt to you and it makes them uncomfortable as they try to bridge that gap.

Another participant shared his experience where his presence as a black African male in this historically white space created feelings of racial profiling and how that experience stuck with him until this day.

Participant 1: I've had a few experiences as well. I remember it was last year. It was just a stupid comment, but then it does stick. I'm walking behind these two Afrikaans guys, right behind them. So I was speed walking because I was kind of from one residence going across to another residence. So they got such a big fright cause I was speed walking and then they turned, and then they laughed about it and I was like, "Yoh, relax guys", and they were like, "Oh, yes man, sure. We didn't see you and also it's because you're black. So statements such as this, what does that have to do with anything, that I'm speed walking? So if it was anyone else, wouldn't you have jumped maybe?"

It's a worldwide phenomenon that Black men are confronted with discrimination, prejudices, and micro-aggressions as part of their everyday experiences at HWIs (Smith, et al., 2002; Swartz, et al., 2018). These micro-aggressive behaviours Black African male students are exposed to clearly create a feeling of self-doubt that ultimately impacts their self-esteem negatively. Not only do these experiences make them feel like a 'burden' in these spaces but it also leaves them feeling

uncomfortable about themselves. Participant 10 articulates his experience as follows.

Participant 10: “And also sometimes... Like in a queue, let’s say you’re in a queue and this lady, they’re just standing there, when you get there and all of a sudden now there’s this discomfort that, oh, let me protect my bag. So it’s also those unspoken things, but through their actions you see, it’s like why are you being uncomfortable? Is it now because I am a Black man and you expect a certain misconception of who I am? Cause we don’t even know each other. So sometimes it kind of, it comes across as a burden that, oh, I’m a Black man in a white space, and you’re made to feel a bit uncomfortable about yourself even”.

Participant 2 shared his experience which indicates that these kinds of treatments are not just executed by strangers and students but by academic staff as well, especially in spaces beyond academic spaces.

Participant 2: There was this incident where ...the marks took long to come out ...and then I saw one of my lecturers at the mall. So, I approached him, I just wanted to ask him when the marks are coming out. Before I could even say anything, he was like, “No, I don’t have.... (*Thought he was a beggar*)” So, I was like... I had to explain to him who I am, then he’s like, no, I’m sorry man, then he ... But I never took it personal. I was just laughing about it. But later on, ... It’s just, I don’t know”. Was it because I am Black or was his reaction just a coincidence?

Being criminalized is among the most often reported micro-aggressions and offensive concerns shared by Black male students on historically white campuses. According to Otuvelu, Graham, and Kennedy (2016) to reduce the fear of Black men in these historically white spaces, White people sought to eliminate the perceived threat of danger by establishing system control via activation of increased Black misandry surveillance and restrictions. Consequently, local police and security guards on campus are deployed to control and watch Black men in these spaces.

Participants shared their experiences on how they are presumed to be criminals, dangerous and not worthy of trust because of the intersection of their race and gender. Nadal, et al. (2015) describe these criminalized experiences of the

participants as situations in which the aggressor ascribes qualities of criminality to Black men and when individuals appear to be afraid of them, as evidenced by their body language or movement. Participants described how individuals, police officers as well as the security guard's on and around campus sometimes stereotyped them as to be deviant.

Participant 3: It's like when you walk around the street there, everyone just looks at you. And again, walking around at night here, it's very annoying cause cops would be driving around, and they will stop you and start searching you. In front of other white students.

Participant 1: We were just sitting there on the tar road in front of our residence and just talking. This security guard comes up in a car, he tells us not to sit outside because he won't be able to distinguish us from criminals. We were like, "How do you differentiate between a civilian and a criminal that you won't be able to distinguish between criminals and us?"

Participant 10 agrees by adding:

Participant 10: Yes, so that's where you feel like you have a target on your back. And it literally feels like you are being watched. So it feels like you have a target on your back.

The encounters that many young Black men have with law enforcement is therefore laden with racial micro-aggressions and perceived as even overt racism (Otuyelu, Graham, & Kennedy, et al., 2016). It became clear that the complexity and breadth of the racial micro-aggressions that participants in this study are exposed to on and around this campus are influenced by the fact that perceptions of them are based on a race as well as a gendered context. This creates a context where they are furthermore confronted by micro-aggression behaviours in the form of criminalization and racial profiling on a daily basis. Simply walking across the campus or in town can easily escalate into a confrontational situation activated by security guards or police officers.

These extracts of participants furthermore support the paradox that Black men at HWIs face when they navigate their educational journeys and experience racial climates that are replete with gendered racism and micro-aggressions. Therefore, CRTs' tenet, *centrality of race* and racism as well as *the everydayness of racism* for

those who are exposed to it was furthermore powerfully illustrated through the narratives of the participants.

Literature suggests that Black men's experiences of being feared and criminalized are not only shaped by their racial identities but also by the meanings that are assigned to their identities. Therefore, their experience and interpretation of being feared in public space intersect with their construction of gender and race identities, and the ways that they assign racial meanings to public places (Day, 2006). In the same regard, Ruddick (1996, p.136) noted that Black men's experiences of stereotyping, micro-aggressions and being feared, in social and public spaces can "deeply scar their psyche, inscribing into the very bodies of Black men's understanding of themselves and their place in a racialized hierarchy". According to Otuvetu et al. (2016), racial micro-aggressions erode relationships like undetected cancer and it is perpetuated and reinforced systematically in all spaces on and around historically white campuses. There are therefore clearly emotional consequences and psychological costs to participants' experiences of micro-aggressions and being feared in public and social spaces.

Psychological costs of micro-aggressions

It was important to explore how participants of the study cope with the challenges they are exposed to at this institution in order for them to complete their studies successfully. HWIs tend to create campus environments where Black males tend to not only be the primary target of subtle racially motivated treatments and micro-aggressions but where they also feel unwelcome and rejected (Salvatore & Shelton, 2007). The narratives of the participants in this study are in line with research that demonstrates and confirm the cumulative impact of everyday racism(s) and macro-aggressions on the social, academic and emotional wellbeing of Black male students at HWIs.

Participant 9: It is very difficult and emotionally tiring...to discern, when you are discriminated against....so I just don't react to it because ...So in a lot of situations where things like this happen, it's very difficult for me especially to tell whether this person is treating me because you are a Black men or is it because generally they don't know that what they're doing is wrong. So most of the time I just don't confront it, I just let it go.

Participant 5: On the side of Black men, I can guarantee you, few of them survive this place. This place, I don't know about it, it just rejects you.

Participant 2: And I know a lot of people say you shouldn't really care, but then when it happens, it stings you. It really stings you. So it does feel like, it starts to feel like an inconvenience. You know what I mean? You start to feel it's like you're inconveniencing other people now just by being there. And yes, it's frustrating.

These extracts, as well as for CRT, contend that because HWIs are part of the historical and institutionalized white ideology that usually influences policy practices, behaviours and culture, white students usually experience the environment as supportive, while Black students experience alienation. The reality of this is, that these historically white spaces produce huge amounts of stress for especially Black male students and that impacts negatively on their emotional well-being. Being constantly exposed to race-gendered racism and micro-aggressions are certainly distressful and consume valuable time and energy that could rather be used for reaching their academic and career goals. In itself, macroaggressions may seem harmless, but the cumulative burden of a lifetime of micro-aggressions can contribute to augmented morbidity and flattened confidence (Smith et al., 2011). Therefore, HWIs cannot underestimate the psychological cost of gendered racism and micro-aggressions. Participant 14 and participant 11 express their emotional encounters as follow.

Participant 14: For me sometimes when it's really bad, it's really worse, I'll cry just before I sleep. All by myself, cry, like [sniffles], when I wake up in the morning, everything gone, life continues.

Participant 11: Whenever now something happens in your life ... You become numb to the pain that sometimes, for someone else, it would actually be like, this is so, I'm going through a lot. But for you it's like, [silence]. For instance, when people say, like my uncle passed away and we're like, [silence], okay, you'll be strong. You don't really, really, it doesn't really register that this is painful to this person. Because you've dealt with this. It's okay. You come from that, oh, male perspective, be strong, we don't talk about, we don't cry about things, you just soldier on basically.

These extracts of participants clearly indicate the psychological cost of micro-aggressions. The amount of time and energy Black men spend navigating hostile environments and dealing with racial micro-aggressions is not only physically and emotionally draining but it is also a major cost to maintaining a hopeful disposition toward racial relations and social justice. Therefore, racism and racial micro-aggressions operate as psycho-pollutants in the public, social as well as academic spaces of HWIs and that add to the overall race-related stress of Black men in HE (Smith et al., 2011). Participants shared how these racially loaded experiences tire them mentally and physically and sometimes it is just the idea of graduating successfully that keeps them going.

Participant 2: I decided to just ignore it. I don't even ... I don't care anymore. You can call me whatever you want, just ...I don't care. I just want to get my degree and leave, that's all I want.

Participant 1: So it's not about me anymore, it's about them all the time ... So what I basically do is just I focus on my work, because that's basically what I'm here for. Get that degree so that I can earn that money.

Participants furthermore shared their experiences where they experienced incidences as racially charged but with that, they also experience self-doubt in terms of what really happened and if race was really the core issue at hand. This situation is then usually followed by response indecisiveness, "what can, or should I do?" and "what will the consequences be" (Constantine & Watt, 2002; Solórzano, et al., 2000). Consequently, they are constantly dedicating time and energy to determining if there was a stressor in the form of micro-aggression, whether that micro-aggression was motivated by a racist purpose, and how or if they should respond. Participants noted.

Participant 16: Usually it's very difficult because you don't know if someone's just ignorant and they don't know that they're doing something wrong or that they're deliberately discriminating against you. Because there are many cases where something

happens and you don't,... like did this person do or say or treat me like this because I'm black or it was just a general concern?

Participant 5: What happened to me is that I once got a mark that I thought I didn't deserve. So I went up to the lecturer, I'm like, "I don't think I deserve these marks and I want you to maybe do something about it. Just check over maybe ...". And the lecturer said, "Oh, but that's good for you." So, I didn't know whether it was because I am black? In what sense are you meaning.... *good for you?* Do you see? So, it could be that it was well-meaning, and not bad, but then why did you say... *for you?* What does that "*for you*" mean? So it's things like that. Sometimes you may think, maybe I'm just overthinking it, but it's just those brash trigger words that make you think in such a way. But it would have been a different statement if she rather just said '*that's a good mark*' rather than '*for you*' or '*that's not too bad*'.

Given this context, Ancis, et al. (2000) reported that Black men in HWIs experience more racial conflict, more pressure to conform to stereotypes, and less equitable treatment by staff and tutors than their White counterparts. Moreover, Black students tended to experience poorer health and energy and overall lower satisfaction with their universities than White students (Grier-Reed, 2010). Cerezo, et al. (2015) share the same sentiment and state that all role players in HWIs must "recognize the impact of historical, social, economic and cultural factors on Black students' personal development and psychological well-being while conducting their studies at these institutions. They further emphasize that all role-players at these HWIs need to understand both the challenges Black men face in their pursuit of HE and the importance of academic success not only for them but for society at large.

6.4.2 Narratives of coping strategies and support

Coping strategies

Literature suggests that because Black men at HWIs must spend many hours dealing with hostile campus environments because of their race-gendered identity, they must constantly develop and apply unique techniques and coping strategies while navigating through these historically white spaces (Smith, et al., 2007; Smith, 2010). Strategies that participants in this study employed include ignoring the

incidence, minimizing the experience either by making jokes to lighten the situational encounter, ignoring their racialization altogether or avoiding particular social and academic places:

Participant 17: I just ignore them, because at the end of the day it's just a waste of your energy and emotions

Participant 16: The only way we are surviving now is you choose to ignore all the bullshit – mind my language – and you also suck up with the Afrikaans kids. If you wanna survive in Stellenbosch as a black kid, you need to burry, you need to put that ego aside, you need to forget about the racism.

Participant 16's strategy to "just suck it up" reflects a personal negotiation with his racialised positioning as per for the course in his participation in white space. Participants furthermore shared their experiences where they experienced incidences as racially charged but choose not to address the issue because of fear for harsh punishment because of their race and gender identity.

Participant 6: Sometimes you just wanna confront the situation, but sometimes you just wanna,conserve my energy. Sometimes you're stressed out to be dealing with stresses like you being expelled out of res cause you fought with someone and stuff like that. I think there's nothing worse than stopping yourself from reacting, because you live under that fear that because of the colour of my skin I'm gonna get a harsh punishment.

Participant 1: For me it's always that thing of every time I have to do something, or I have to talk, if I'm in your situation I feel like I really wanna tell this guy what I think. But then you start fearing that if I get punished, I'm probably gonna get punished badly. Then you start thinking that you're gonna go through all these hearings, all these disciplinary hearings and you're gonna receive a harsh punishment. So, it's like in a way the system implicitly silences you. You know, you feel silenced and you can't be comfortable in your skin.

According to Camara and Orbe (2010), co-cultural members might adopt a communicative strategy that is confrontational or a strategy that attempts to avoid confrontation. Most participants choose not to be confrontational and would rather opt for ways to avoid confrontation. They also have to calculate the potential or

preferred outcome of their reaction before applying a communicative strategy. The reason for this positioning stems from the double burden Black men have to carry in society, that of being Black and being a Black male. Based on this they are constantly stereotyped as criminals and dangerous and therefore, because of their fear of harsh punishment, they choose to keep silent. Participant 1 clearly understands and internalizes the social construction of his identity as a black African male as likely to receive harsh punishment if he transgresses. This racial and gendered construct and his understanding of it clearly silenced him.

Participant 12: I just laugh about it and then I leave, but then it takes time to really sink in, when I'm like, oh, that was actually so disrespectful, that was so ignorant. If it had internalized at that time, I think probably I would have had a different reaction. But also in a way it kind of helps cause I mean, you don't wanna get yourself, now it's assault, you're in trouble with the university. I also think about all of those things, imagine charges of assault within the university property and now you're faced with charges, get arrested. I think of all that.

Participants' extracts indicate how they are socialized to employ many forms of coping strategies for combating these racial micro-aggressions. Co-cultural theory, as described by Orbe (1998), assists in understanding the ways in which individuals who are historically marginalized, in this case, Black African men, who operate in historically white spaces, communicate in their everyday lives with dominant group members, in this case, white people. According to existing research, many of the communication and coping strategies and strategic responses to discriminatory treatments usually involve non-confrontational coping strategies that reflect avoidance, blunting, denial or disengagement (Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002). In response on how they deal or cope with stereotyping and micro-aggressions participants' furthermore respond.

Participant 14: You don't feel anything. You just end up becoming numb and. You become numb to the pain"

Participant 4: I decided to just ignore it. I don't even ... I don't care anymore. You can call me whatever you want, just ...I don't care.

Constant self-questioning and efforts to avoid racial–gender stereotypes and micro-aggressions are part of Black males’ race–gendered experience, are very common according to Smith, et al. (2007). Although anger suppression may have worked best for most participants in this study, clearly the physiological and psychological impact can be costly over time. Furthermore, just as many participants choose a non-confrontational strategy, the rationalization that is framed within CCT and proposed by Bell, et al. (2015) was employed by many participants. Rationalization is a fitting strategy that provides an alternative explanation or justification for different forms of verbal or nonverbal communicative injustices. The effect is that it allows participants to downplay the serious nature of these unjust treatments and it also allows an alternative explanation for why they were treated like this in the first place, from their point of view. This coping strategy assists many participants to deal with the discriminatory treatments and interracial tensions they experience on and around campus. As one participant mentioned.

Participant 19: I’ve come and learn to not understand but also to appreciate everyone’s story and their background. To take into consideration that white people don’t just come on campus and say we hate every Black person. Some of them have been taught to, not necessarily their parents that says, hate black, hate black, but how they see their parents and their family relate to Black people, then they just inherently think it is fine, that is the right thing to do, and that’s all they know.

Most of the participants are clearly aware of the ignorance on the side of their White counterparts and usually the best way is to rather “pardon their counterparts behaviour” because that takes less physical and emotional energy.

Participant 18: But the overarching thing with a lot of situations, you look at people and you look at, I’m like, it’s not worth it. It’s not worth my energy. There’s no hope for this person. It sounds ... But just, how can you think like that? And you’re just, how can you ... You’re obviously intelligent because you’re in a university, I mean, so you have some form of brain cells in you. And you just, you look at their reasoning and you’re like, [sighs].

Participant 15: I don’t know how to deal with that because I didn’t do anything to maybe elicit that response. So I was like, maybe that’s how he was raised maybe. I don’t know. Maybe that’s how they treat black people where he comes from.

The strategy that participant 4 employed was to try to fit or blend in by taking up behaviours that will resonate well with white people. To assimilate is, therefore, a strategy he applied.

Participant 4: I don't know how to deal with all of this...I try to act normal. "Hi, how are you? Cool. I feel like, the thing that we'veonce we become palatable to white people, you speak English better and you speak Afrikaans to some certain white people, it makes it easier for them to trust you.

From a psychological point of view, to ignore or just walk away from incidences of racial micro-aggressions might not be an emotionally healthy strategy for participants in the long term. Although, at least for the purpose of meaning-making, it serves them best at the moment and free them to walk away from the situation. However, participants' coping mechanisms enacted through silence and avoidance and even rationalization might contribute to not only further alienation but also reinforces the dominant racial and cultural ideology that furthermore invalidates their academic citizenship.

For most Black African men to be a student at a HWI is often a dream that was fulfilled because it serves as a potential token to get them, as well as their families, out of poverty-stricken circumstances. Unfortunately, this idealistic vision suddenly starts to crumble as they became aware that the actual process of being a student at these HWIs. They not only need motivation but rather high levels of resilience. On the other hand, what also became clear through participants' narratives is that these exact experiences awakened a forceful drive within them to strive to be successful against all odds. To constantly remind themselves of the reason why you are in this space in the first place is also a coping strategy for some participants:

Participant 13: I decided to just ignore it. I don't even ... I don't care anymore. You can call me whatever you want, just ...I don't care. I just want to get my degree and leave, that's all I want.

Another participant agrees with him by saying.

Participant 7: I think it's also a matter of prioritising. We are ... I can speak for myself. I'm here for a bigger reason. I'm here for my people, for generations. I can't afford to let one sly comment throw my game off. You hear what I'm saying? So that's how I deal with it. I'm like, bro, you're dealing with far bigger issues than this. You're dealing with a legacy of things. You can't get bogged down by this thing. You have to keep forward, keep moving.

Self-reliance and the reliance on their inner strength in order for them to move forward and survive the system, is a pertinent coping strategy most of them apply.

Participant 2: How I deal with it, sometimes you just avoid, I just sometimes avoid doing things that gonna put me in a position where I'm gonna be noticed, you know. Like playing music loud in my room. There are some times when I do that, but sometimes I choose not to because I don't wanna be seen as, you know, ...it's cause you Black that you play load music. Because I'll be out here playing music because I love music it's not because I'm black that I love it, it's just that I love it and I love hip hop and everything. So I'll be playing it loud sometimes and sometimes you just don't wanna be in their faces. You just don't.

The lens of CCT was utilized to illuminate participants' coping strategies and on how they responded to instances of discrimination and micro-aggression. Participants extracts indicate that they choose non-assertive communicative strategies that are non-confrontational or a strategy that attempts to avoid confrontation. Non-assertive assimilation orientation was furthermore often utilized together with self-censoring and self-reflection in order to choose the best-suited response or preferred outcome on a given moment. This might suggest that these strategies are best suited for them with their race-gendered identities and therefore the fear of harsh punishment coupled with potentially being suspended from the institution. This does not come as a surprise because HE and being academically successful are at the core of Black men and their HE aspirations.

What is interesting though, is that although none of the participants never really succeeded in completely defying racialized stereotypes and micro-aggressions, none of them suggested that they wanted to 'divorce' or separate themselves from

being Black. Although all of them expressed feelings of alienation, isolation and a lack of sense of belonging at the institution they clearly experience value and comfort in being Black.

However, it is important for Black male students, especially those at HWIs, to understand the nature of racism, perpetuated through stereotypes and micro-aggressions. This will equip them with more psychologically sound affirming strategies for resilience in spite of these racial micro-aggressions they are exposed to. “Rather than internalize these treatments and their understanding of it, understanding the nature of racism may furthermore equip students to walk away from these race-gendered discriminatory treatments, less emotionally scarred” (McGee & Martin, 2011, p.1353).

Personal and institutional support

Whatever the circumstances, HE is a huge space for any student to cope without the support of other students. It is especially support by friends, that are crucial for Black students at HWIs as it becomes the pillar to hold onto when the HE environment becomes challenging. It is then among friends that realities can be openly discussed and resolved. These interactions furthermore provide these students with a greater sense of belonging and support which may have a positive impact on student retention and learning achievements. Support structures are therefore core entities of any educational institution.

As all participants shared their experience on and around campus it was also important to hear from them what their experiences are in terms of academic as well as emotional support at the institution. As in this study, participants indicated that friends, peers, and family played a significant role in supporting them academically as well as emotionally. They spent time together as friends because they understood the backgrounds where they came from, something they felt that not all the people around them understood.

Participant 13: I'd say most of my support comes from my peers. A lot of my support comes from my peers. I'd go for help to other students and as well, but I won't say it's race-related because it's....., which is when I need help I just go to them and then I just talk to them.

They always tend to help. I don't know if they feel pity or, but they help anyway. I need their help, so I take it.

It also became clear that when participants experience challenges in terms of certain course work or modules, they did not necessarily stick to their friends for support, but they also reached out to peers that presented as open and approachable. Some of them even mentioned that they will put the effort in to reach out to peers even if they are not friends. Participants shared their perspectives on peer support.

Participant 6: Yes, my thing is the same thing like you. You spot someone who's good at a certain module, you go them, you ask for help and they will always be willing to help you. I've never really had an incident when someone refused to help me. That's for academic support.

Participant 11: Psychological, I think psychological and emotional (support) comes from your friends. So besides family, because obviously I can call my mom and I'm like, okay, there's certain things we'll discuss and then certain things I'm like, okay, but I'm being childish and petty. But when I voice them with my friends, they're like, no, we were experiencing the same thing, we're going through the same thing.

Furthermore, research established that attending to the academic as well as the psychosocial needs of Black men in HE, is important to the success of these students (Ancis et al., 2000; Solorzano, et al., 2000). Therefore, the development of strong trusting relationships in which these students receive encouragement and support may assist in counter hostility and race and gender-related stress. Black African men can, therefore, use these safe spaces for sharing and coping with racial microaggressions. Research done by Powell and Arriola (2003) indicated that Black men who talked to others about being treated unfairly tend to perform better academically and emotionally than did those who did not talk with others. Therefore, social and emotional support for Black men in HE are significant predictors for success and coping with race-related stress (Grier-Reed, 2010). On the contrary, participants mentioned their concerns regarding support at the institution:

Participant 17: So even the support from the university itself and staff, I think it's designed in a way that we are like rejects as the black males, we are less of a ... We don't matter. You know what I'm saying? The mountain you have to climb as a black male student here in Stellenbosch, it's this steep.

Participants furthermore shared their concerns regarding the accessibility of psychological support at the institution:

Participant 20: You can't tell me that, hey, you need to go see a psychologist to help you with your mental issues from suffering from racism, you need to see a white psychologist. You know what I'm saying? This guy will tell me what he's taught from university, but he's never really experienced my black pain.

Whereby another student added his perspective.

Participant 10: But then apart from that, it's just you being in a space like this, you get the feeling not everyone is gonna be able to understand what you're going through. And there's nothing worse than actually talking about your issues to someone who doesn't understand, cause it makes you feel like you just crazy

Another student agrees on how difficult it is to share emotional challenges with someone that can't relate with you or won't be able to really understand the depth of your challenges.

Participant 1: Yes, it makes you think, you feel like a crazy person. You know what I mean? Deep down you know I'm not crazy for thinking like this, but because you spoke to someone who doesn't ...understand ... who cannot relate to you and, yes. I think that's in terms of emotions.

The absence or lack of individuals within the support services of the institution with whom participants in this study can relate to, was clearly a huge concern for them.

Participant 3: I don't know, because at this point in time I'm like, I'm beyond repair. Talking to someone who you can relate to, I think will help. It's important in terms of having someone you can relate to, who's had not the same but similar experiences or

understands things from your perspective or from your background even that you can talk to. Otherwise there is no sense talking to someone.

Another participant agrees by mentioning how he as a black African male can't connect with a white male for support:

Participant 9: Here is support at the university. But they must get black males or black females (counsellors) so people can relate. Cause that's all you want when you talk with someone, to connect. So if you don't connect, the session would be a waste. Because I once, I went twice. I'm speaking to him, it's a white guy. So the question that he was asking me, I don't know, I couldn't answer them openly because I couldn't relate to him.

Another student also refers to this situation as.

Participant 4: There are psychologist but when we go see a psychologist, they give me a white psychologist ...I'm not saying, let those that are white be treated by white psychologists. You tell me exactly my mental stress comes from my financial stresses. You have never been hungry. I'm hungry sometimes. So how would you know what hunger feels like, except you know about it from textbooks?

Furthermore, for the majority of Black men, education is the only option for better job opportunities and a stable income within an increasingly competitive workforce. However, the questions that are beginning to be raised are about the emotional, physiological, and psychological "costs" associated with their enrolments at HWIs (Smith, et al., 2011).

Unfortunately, these issues that participants raised are not new concerns. Black male students often express futility in discussing their lived experiences and they describe management at HWIs "not really hearing them" and, therefore, they feel rejected and erased from the discourse (Rapp, Silent & Silent; 2001). Boske (2010) concludes by noting that racial acts and covert racism impede the progress of Black male students at historically white campuses. Providing supportive structures and avenues that encourage these students to reach their fullest intellectual potential is central to overcoming institutionalized practices and cultures of exclusion. As one participant concludes.

Participant 11: I really struggle in my academics. My first, my second, my third year I struggled. But I am not academically not gifted. You know what I'm saying? This is my

sixth year of a four-year course, but had I been given enough support from the beginning, had I been given that push and had this racial issue, this whole segregation issue been sorted, if I had been given enough support from the first day, I would have graduated in record time.

For many Black students' the dream to achieve their goals of graduating lies between their aspirations and dealing with the challenges they must overcome in order for them to be academically successful. On a personal level, it is the reliance on the self of the participants that stood out for me. Masten (2001) defines resilience as a positive adaptation despite adversity. This means that the principle of adaptation in challenging circumstances implies that individuals must cope and adapt to changing conditions within a specific setting.

Black African male students at HWIs must clearly demonstrate competence and coping despite continuous or cumulative adversity in order to be successful. As Jahangir (2010) noted, all role-players at HWUs need to recognize that failures of black African male students are not their failures alone, but it is also tied to each and every one at these institutions. So are their successes not only theirs, but it also contributes to the social, economic and emotional health of our larger society, especially against the backdrop of South Africa's devastating historical past.

6.4.3 Narratives of educational and psychosocial opportunities

As mentioned earlier, most of the data revealed rather negative and challenging experiences and perspectives. However, some participants acknowledge that within these unfortunate and sometimes hostile environments, are also some positive experiences that encourage them to continue with their studies until they graduate. I choose to discuss these positive experiences only at this point because I propose for these positive narratives to serve as narratives of opportunities which could consequently form the basis for the creation of HE environments that are more welcoming and less alienating for Black students and more specifically Black male students.

Positive comments of participants include quality of education, financial assistance, accessible lecturers and slow but positive progress in terms of transformation.

Quality of education

In SA, there has been a noticeable increase in the proportion of Black students enrolling in HEIs that had previously been exclusively White. Participants in this study mentioned and acknowledged that they chose to enrol at this specific HEI because it represents quality education and it is perceived as a top-class HEI. They noted.

Participant 6: It was this Zimbabwean guy who told me that there is a university in Cape Town, it's called (*name of university*) and it's one of the best universities when it comes to engineering and stuff like that. So I'm like, okay, I will give it a shot.

Another participant shared his perspectives on the quality of education that the institution offers.

Participant 4: So I was very excited, I was very happy that I'm at university, especially a top class university like (*name of the institution*). I was really happy and I enjoyed my first year even though there were challenges along the way".

Financial assistance

Although access to HE comes with very specific requirements, one of the biggest challenges for especially Black students is the availability of financial assistance. Black students who consider HE typically come from families who have low income or no income to carry the financial burden of a student who wishes to pursue HE. Therefore, having financial support is usually the only option that many Black students have to overcome the financial barrier of attending university. In this study, one participant referred to the recruitment bursaries that the institution offers to Black students, as a means to get access to HE. He furthermore also referred to the institution as one of the best.

Participant 8: There is that recruitment bursary that you get when you come here and it's because of that I came to (*name of institution*). A lot of people say they are here because of the funds, not because they wanted to be here. But then in the end you tend to find out that it's one of the best universities. Now you want to be here because their things are good and

the social environment, in some cases, if you are a person who's not bothered too much about certain things, you'll enjoy it also.

Another funding option that is available to Black students is NSFAS bursaries. In 1999 the South African government established the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) to financially assist students from marginalized backgrounds who would like to pursue HE. Most Black students would not have been able to enter the HE domain without assistance from the NSFAS scheme. Although this participant does not directly refer to the NSFAS bursary, he applauded the institutions' extremely efficient bursary administrative processes:

Participant 5: I think the university does have that supporting system. I have never been in other universities, but to check in (*name of the university*) as he has said earlier on that you will go to another university, you will find a huge queue of NSFAS and stuff, but at (*name of university*) that's not the case. With (*name of institution*), yes, we do have queues, but not like the ones if you go to University of Limpopo, for example.

Accessible lecturers:

As mentioned, and discussed earlier, SAs HEIs have a historical legacy that continues to play a significant role in the culture of, especially HWIs. These legacies tend to exclude those students who are not born into the practices or culture that aligns with the institution. Therefore, students who bring a different culture to these HEIs might struggle to fit in because some of these practices are never translated to be understood by those who are not familiar with them. These are the realities for especially Black students at HWIs. Even something like approaching a lecturer can become a huge challenge for Black students within these historically white spaces. In this study, one participant specifically mentioned and acknowledged the importance of seeking academic support from their lecturers and he shared his positive accounts with certain lecturers as follows.

Participant 7: For me, my experience is different when it comes to the lecturers. I'm not gonna lie, in first year I was struggling academically, so I kept on going for consultations with my lecturers and they were really nice, they were really helpful. I was learning actually more during office hours than during classes. So they were really nice, they were very welcoming, they helped me a lot. They gave me skills that were outside what I came for.

They gave me skills to study, how to manage my time, all of that stuff. They were really helpful.

The same participant furthermore acknowledged his original fear to approach lecturers for support, but he realized that his fear might stand in the way of him being academically successful.

Participant 7: And I've also gotten rid of the fear of my lecturers and I've learnt to see my lecturers and other Afrikaans people as not threats, but approachable people who can really assist and try to meet me halfway with my problems.

Another participant shared the same sentiment that it does not necessarily come easy for Black students to approach white lecturers but if you do, you realize that some of them are helpful and supportive.

Participant 1: If it's really bad..... Because the other thing, that sometimes you work amongst yourselves. You're like, okay, we've got this. But then I think like, okay, we are really lost, and then I'll make an appointment and then go to the lecturer and then the lecturers were helpful. But of course, you need to take the step and approach them yourself. But once you approach the lecturer I haven't had a bad experience with that. They're helpful, they discuss it, they help with it.... That..., it becomes fine.

Although participant 9 referred to his experiences with administrative staff as challenging he also acknowledges that there are administrative staff members who are supportive:

Participant 9: And there's this, sometimes even when you go and look for help from the administrative staff, the way they are treating you is as if they want you to get out of their office quickly. They give you very vague answers so that you can get out of their face. And it's a case of you can do this or you can't do this, there's no compromise. You know what I'm saying? They don't give you any leeway. It's as if they're not willing to help you at all. You know what I'm saying? But some are really nice, some are ... Those that understand are really nice.

Slow but positive progress in terms of transformation

Research, as well as this study, confirms very subtle, yet pervasive reminders of the racial hierarchy at historically white campuses as a key factor on how Black male students perceive and experience these historically white spaces. However, participants in this study also shared positive and hopeful narratives of transformation at an individual as well as at institutional levels in terms of racial and cultural interactions:

Participant 10: I'd say the way things are progressing, it's just gonna,..... we're just gonna need time. Because back at res there are structures being implemented. Wouldn't say structures, but you see them try to learn Xhosa or Zulu (*Official/indigenous languages in SA*) songs, you see them try to learn more about our culture, you see them try to encourage us to put us in our leadership positions.

Another participant agreed and note.

Participant 7: Yes, we see them trying, because even my prim (*Leader of students in a residence*) back at res, he's trying. I see him trying to encourage us to go for leader positions so that we can have a better say in what goes on in the events and everything. We see them trying.

In terms of the pace of the transformation process, the following participant noted

Participant 20: So there is change...there's progress. There is hope, but we don't know how, if it's fast enough, that's the thing, and if those ones who can't be changed will ever be changed.

Although these narratives might not be seen as significant, it is within these positive narratives that the vision of hope and emancipation lies. As Jansen (2004, p.122) notes, the final bridge to cross in order to achieve social integration at HWIs in SA is to create an inclusive institutional culture, which he describes as, "the way we do things around here", in which students from diverse backgrounds "feel at home".

6.4.4 Narratives of interventions and recommendations

As stated in Chapter 1 as well as at the beginning of this chapter the objective of the study was twofold: firstly, to explore the everyday experiences of the participants on and around campus and secondly, to hear from them what their recommendations are on what the university can do to enhance their learning and psychosocial experiences at the institution. Participants, therefore, shared their perspectives about potential interventions and recommendations that might assist in them feeling more welcome and included in the public, social and academic spaces on and around this historically white campus.

Address ignorance and exclusionary practices

Participants recommended that ignorance on the side of their white counterparts needs to be addressed. They furthermore recommended that the institution addresses practices that exclude students that were historically excluded from the institution. They based this recommendation on the treatments and behaviours they are exposed to on this campus. The extracts below also suggest that the institution does not take their complaints seriously and they are ignorant of the fact that race and racism are not just permanent and central in society, but that it is also still prevalent at the institution:

Participant 16: I think the biggest problem that we have at (*name of institution*) is ignorance. Lots of people are ignorant, they are so ignorant about the fact that we feel excluded, we feel like we don't fit in. All these kind of experiences that we have, racism, all of that stuff, they are ignorant of the fact that it's existing. It's happening and it's affecting people. That's the number one thing that they have to address.

The following participant mentioned that it is only through exposure as well as conscious efforts that one can expand one's own and other's worldview and that process can assist individuals to understand others. He said

Participant 19: There's a lot of white people I wouldn't think I'd be friends with when I came here or at the beginning, when I started here, that I'm friends with now. You just see certain people actually reading up and actually educating themselves about black people and black experiences and them changing their perspective on certain things. So it's just like, if we can get more people like them, like the others... who'd also just expand their

worldview and understand other people, then that's the only way you could, because you cannot force it. As soon as you try to force it on someone, it's not gonna work out. It's not gonna work out.

Another participant noted

Participant 7: But I think in terms of progress in sensitizing people, opening up their minds and having conversations, critical engagement around it, it can actually work.

Participants furthermore expressed the need for systemic change by emphasizing the need for the institution to examine programs like the welcoming program at the beginning of each year. They mentioned that these programs on its own are based on keeping the status quo and not necessarily to include all students from different races and cultures. In terms of the welcoming program at the beginning of each year, participant 16 mentioned

Participant 16: They may do all these things during the welcoming, that does not help. In fact, even those traditions themselves are excluding black people. So it starts there from acknowledging the fact that this is a problem that we have, this is the issue and this is how it affects black people in (*name of town*) and therefore these are the kind of changes that we'll make during the welcoming, especially during the welcoming here, because that's where everything started.

Most participants mentioned that to include more Black students in certain leadership positions especially during the first few months on campus would assist Black students arriving here in their first year. Participants phrased their perspectives as follows:

Participant 11: So for one, in my first year, if there was a person of colour in our leadership structure that would have really made it easier for me because I could approach this person. Obviously I have to understand the fact that because I'm in (*name of town*) and predominantly black people in (*name of town*) speak Xhosa, the fact that there will be someone of colour who I can explain these things to me and relate with me...will be easier.

Participant 15 expanded on the same sentiment by saying

Participant 15: So, for one, if you have at least two to three people of colour in those welcoming leadership structures. Obviously, it's a democracy kind of thing, but someone who you guys will feel that is ready to mentor black students, who's ready to help someone,

but they should at least be there. Even if not everyone approves of that person, they should at least be there for the four, five, six people of colour who are gonna be coming into the university.

Participants' accounts deployed two contradictory discourses in the positioning of black students in relation to the institution. On the one hand, a discourse of ignorance is evident in how the institution is constructed and positioned as inherently unaware of the issues experienced by black students at the institution. On the other hand, the institutions' well planned and organized welcoming programs that focus, perhaps unwittingly, on the welcoming experiences for a very specific race-cultural group. Participants suggest that it is inevitable that practices of exclusion and discrimination will result if the institutions' unawareness of and ignorance of the racial and cultural differences of its students are not addressed.

Address the language issue

All participants shared their experiences of being excluded in social as well as academic spaces because of the use of Afrikaans as the language of teaching and communication in formal spaces. In order for the institution to support them to be academically successful, they recommend that the issue regarding the use of Afrikaans be addressed.

Participant 17: I think one of the ways you can undermine someone's existence is just by ignoring them and I feel with the varsity having Afrikaans as a major thing, that's a form of being shut out of the conversation, of being ignored.

In terms of the language of instruction, participants shared their concern on how they sometimes felt excluded in certain spaces because of language. One participant narrates his recommendation in terms of the issue of Black students' experiences of exclusion by language as follow.

Participant 20: We're not here to police people's behaviour. But when it comes to learning, cause we are here to learn, to get our degrees, to go support our families and do all of that nice stuff, and change the world, you have to make sure that everyone feels welcome in that institution by making a universal tongue that everyone at least can compromise.

The following participant also mentioned how the use of Afrikaans can easily leave them feeling excluded and he also recommended the language issue to be addressed:

Participant 15: Simple things like making sure that every meeting or house meeting or discussion is in English, for example. Because people tend to say, like when you discuss and someone will ask a question in Afrikaans, they'll respond in Afrikaans and then it continues in Afrikaans and then immediately someone is excluded. Because there's a lot of things where it's important information and then this is just not communicated, it's just lost in translation because someone, first of all, it looks like they don't care because, but you just couldn't understand.

Stop the spreading of false narratives but rather create helpful pathways

Participants refer to the "spreading of false narratives" whereby the institution presents itself as diverse on its website and certain pamphlets. The impact of this is that some students assume that that will be the reality when they get on campus, just to realize that that is not the case.

Participant 14: I think it would be very important for the university to not provide false narratives. And by this I mean when you send out, for instance you send out a University pamphlet, with many people of colour, because you're lying to me.

Based on their experiences on this campus, some of the participants' recommendations in terms of prospective students include recruitment processes, support processes as well as informing Black students prior to their arrival on campus, on what to expect.

Participant 13: So when it comes to prospective students. So for me it would also mean, great, you've attracted them, now they are here, how do you facilitate their success, their flourishing, if I may put it like that, as well?

Participants emphasized the importance of providing critical information early on to prospective students. They furthermore mentioned the importance of demystifying HE and recommended that the institution start building on relationships with prospective students and their families before they arrive on

campus. They furthermore mentioned the importance of providing prospective students not only information about the application process, admissions, and financial aid processes but also information that includes race representation, potential language challenges and the historical background of the institution.

One of the participants shared his concern that the university might sometimes recruit certain students and when they arrive at the institution they are left alone to deal with their challenges on their own:

Participant 12: Cause you know like those recruitment thing they do, they're so convincing. I was convinced that this university is the one. Because the way they did, they would call you after your results, they say your results, they're so good. So how would you feel about coming to this university? But when you get here it's more of a thing of, ah, you're here now, so deal with it.

To be open with prospective students in terms of their minority status at the institution is important information that needs to be communicated to students before their arrival on campus, is recommended by another participant.

Participant 6: I know there's people who literally just, they give you a bus ticket, it says (*Name of the university*), they don't know where it is and they probably learned to spell (*name of town*) when they were booking the bus tickets. That's the first ever interaction they have and then people are just left here and then you are left on your own.

This participant further recommended that for Black male students to get the same type of treatment and support in terms of welcoming them at the institution, as international students get.

Participant 9: And I feel like it happens mostly ... Because I know with international students, the various international societies generally tend to help them all, but especially local students, you're expected to know everything. You just come here and you are thrown in at the deep end. So I would just say, let them know that they're not alone and they should just ask as many questions as they are able to.

One participant mentioned that prospective Black students need to be informed about all potential challenges prior to their arrival on the campus. Their naïve

knowledge consists of assuming that the contexts and nature of interactions and practices at the institution will be the same as in their previous home and learning environment at school.

Participant 10: I think part of that communication, that mentor-mentee thing, is to blatantly say you're probably gonna be one of six black people in a class of so much and as you move on, your peers are gonna disappear. And just to let them know the realities that are here so that they can gear themselves up. They know, okay, obviously I'm not gonna be the one who drops out, I'm gonna go for the full thing. And just inform them as well. We can also share our stories to say this is what we struggle with as well.

It became clear that most of the participants' experiences at this institution are loaded with huge challenges as they navigate themselves on a daily basis between different spaces in and around campus. Participants conclude by sharing how this reality shaped their perspectives and perception of the institution.

Participant 18: So I'm just like, I don't want my black people, brothers, sisters, to go through this. Those kids are bright, they need good environments to fulfil their potential. You come to (*name of the town*) as a bright young kid and you get hammered, you waste six to seven years of your life which was only supposed to be four years of your life cause you're dealing with so much. You deal with so much emotional stress, you deal with so much financial stress, exclusion, you name it. We don't have to go through that. I wouldn't advise a black person to come to (*name of the town*) for whatever reason. I wouldn't. I'm sorry, but I wouldn't.

A conspiracy discourse in the form of spreading false narratives expressed by participants was evident in this study. Participants' accounts suggest conscious or/and sub-conscious construction of exclusionary practices by the institution. They mentioned that the institution deliberately works to exclude black students from all spaces on the campus because of their resistance to transform. Participants furthermore noted that the institution deliberately remains ignorant of the effects of its own racial profiling of black students on the campus.

Address racial representation

Participant 11: So we need more black people. We need more black people who come from, who have black experiences. Not these black people that went to study in the States. We need black academics from the townships, black academics from the rough parts, black academics from the apartheid eras.

Participants also voiced their concern about the lack of Black psychologists' and counsellors and more specifically Black male psychologists in the support division at the institution presented a problem for them. This reality might implicitly feed into the perception and feelings of alienation and exclusion that are echoed in the accounts of some of the participants.

Participant 5: And then when it also comes to dealing with these issues, most of the time we come to places like these and then you find there's not maybe a black male psychologist and you still have to report or talk about your feelings of oppression by a white person to another white person. So more Black psychologists, male psychologists, I would say.

Participants drew attention to the lack of Black academics as well as black male psychologists at the institution. This might represent concerns related to an ideological normative order against which blackness is measured, i.e. one that reinforces the social normative order that privileges whiteness as the norm. This might then contribute to them experiencing a lack of belonging on this campus. In line with this participants' stance, Vandeyar (2007) notes that the implications of a dominantly white academic staff and the lack of black male psychologists cannot be underestimated. This reality might send an unambiguous message to "Black students of not only the incompetence of Black academics but by implication, their own" as well as the dismissal of their psychological challenges they experience.

6.5 CONCLUSION

This study has provided a snapshot of how a specific group of marginalized Black African men traverses and negotiate different historically white spaces that inform their identities. They move from exclusively black spaces such as their community and school to integrate but still historically and predominantly white spaces of a specific HWI. When they move through this kaleidoscope of educational spaces,

they actively construct images about who they are and who others are, by internalizing and resisting identities placed onto them (Yuval-Davis, 2011).

The study suggests that marginalized Black African men in HWIs have raced and gendered experiences which are internalized and expressed as racialized experiences. These experiences involve these students both rejecting and reinscribing micro-aggressions which impact on their identities. Yet, at the same time, these students display agency in resisting dominant social discourses to let them lose track of their HE aspirations. These students, therefore, do not only learn how to negotiate the spaces that they physically inhabit but they also keep their dreams alive, within this hostile environment. These are fundamental student experiences, which all role-players in HE have to engage with when we work with students in similar contexts.

In the next and final chapter, I will focus on the summary of the key findings, the contributions of this study as well as recommendations based on the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When we look at humans, we have to face the fact that humans suffer from a kind of poverty of the spirit, which stands in glaring contrast with a scientific and technological abundance. We've learned to fly the air as birds, we've learned to swim the seas as fish, yet we haven't learned to walk the earth as brothers and sisters. (Martin Luther King Jr. *Online-quotes*)

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of CRTs tenet of the *centrality of experiential knowledge*, this qualitative study aimed to present and analyse the narratives of Black African male students at a specific HWI. The key findings therefore collectively represent a social constructivist worldview within a theoretical and analytical framework, which challenges the way in which race and racism influence social, cultural and educational dynamics and contexts.

The study was furthermore based on the specific tenet of CRT, the '*recognition of the experiential knowledge*' which is the basis of the theme of 'giving voice'. This, then, is the essence of 'voice', the acknowledgement of the importance of the personal experiences of students as sources of knowledge that furthermore contributes to a *social justice agenda*. CRT furthermore contends that we should 'shift the frame' or 'look to the bottom' and begin to value the knowledge of 'those who have experienced discrimination (to) speak with a special voice to which we should listen' (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005, p.10).

Based on this context, I will focus on the summary of the findings, implications of the study, transferability of the study as well as my final thoughts, in this chapter.

7.2 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Within the widening participation agenda many HWIs are making progress with regard to a numerical representation of Black students. However, what is lacking is "meaningful inclusion and interaction" between members of different racial groups (Oloyede 2009). This is especially challenging at the predominantly white

institution where this study was conducted because the demographic representation of the institution does not reflect that of South Africa. The creation and the establishment of a meaningful inclusive campus environment for all students remains therefore a huge challenge. In this regard, Costandius and Rosochacki (2012) mentioned that for many Black students operating or entering a place where their difference may set them apart from the rest of the largely racially and culturally homogenous student community, can be physically and emotionally challenging.

The institution can furthermore be described as a White, Afrikaans and Christian based institution and it played a critical role in the cultivation of South Africa's painful apartheid history. Consequently, the institution promoted a culture of "white supremacy" during apartheid and these legacies subtly continue to present in new forms on and around this campus (Odendaal, 2012). This study reveals post-apartheid SAs social, cultural and racial context and, more specifically, the related challenges that participants experience in the public, social and academic spaces of the institution.

Firstly, some of the key findings of this study furthermore confirm what several studies have shown; (Boske, 2010; Brooms, 2018; Burke, 2006; Day, 2006; Harper, 2009) that Black male students, especially those who attend HWIs face significant challenges and obstacles on and around campus. All participants in this study shared their experiences of how race and gender-based micro-aggressions that include negative stereotyping, criminalization, racial profiling and the questioning of their intellectual abilities impede their ability to thrive academically as well as emotionally.

In line with MAT, as well as CRT's tenet '*whiteness as property*' the findings capture the everydayness of micro-aggression experienced by participants in all the different spaces and that are based on the subconscious ownership and domination of whiteness of these spaces. Furthermore, this reality set participants up as 'others' against which the normalcy of whiteness is checked. Participants' presence in social

and public spaces are therefore met with unease and signals that they are intruding and invading spaces that are owned and reserved for white people.

Furthermore, at the core of participants' narratives is the conformation and acknowledgement of the reality that race, and racialisation processes as established by the tenet '*the centrality of race*' of CRT. This reality played a significant role in their integration in their HE experiences. In a broad sense, these narratives clearly indicated participants' feelings of not feeling welcome at the institution and their lack of sense of belonging in and around this campus. However, participants also shared positive comments about their experiences and perspectives about the institution.

The participants' quotes suggest that much of the factors that draw them to the institution were based on information they received about the institution prior to their arrival. However, they also indicated that once they arrived at the institution, they were disappointed but decided to make the best of a less than optimal experience. Positive aspects and opportunities that participants mentioned about the institution include funding opportunities, well-aligned administration processes, quality of education, and they refer to the institution as a top-class university.

However, although findings suggested that participants' experiences are not all negative and challenging, their experiences do reflect significant tensions. One important challenge they all faced was feeling that they were marked as different and isolated in all spaces on and around campus. I therefore contend that participants' accounts not only demonstrated that they possess or at least have to be resilient and persistent to succeed in their desire to be academically successful and reach their educational dreams. Their HE aspirations are the most important aspect of their life in terms of its potential to lay the foundation for a better future for them and their families. However, HWIs, cannot dismiss or overlook the fact, that there is a psychological cost for Black men to be successful at these institutions. Therefore, they might walk away from these institutions with their desired qualification but we cannot underestimate the impact of these ill-treatments on them as individuals and ultimately on society at large.

7.3 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

The study demonstrates how Black African male students experience, negotiate and mediate the HE environment at an HWI in post-apartheid SA. Within the context of a post-apartheid SA, transformation within the HE sector necessitates that aspects that are hidden in institutional culture and environment that function as barriers to transformation, need to be explored and illuminated within a social justice framework as proposed by CRT. A social justice stance is guided by the belief that all students are equal and entitled to appropriate, equitable, and culturally and racially responsive education. In this regard, Ford and Moore III (2013) mentioned that with a substantive understanding of the social justice agenda of CRT, all role players at HWIs should become more aware of their own views about themselves in relation to Black people and Black African men on these campuses.

This study, therefore, contributed to such a social justice agenda that attempted to explore and illuminate subtle, nuanced or invisible institutional practices that might be experienced as socially, culturally and racially exclusive by Black men at HWIs. This study, furthermore, contributed to the body of scholarly literature that addresses the challenges and opportunities that Black men might face, in their HE aspirations. The study's use of narratives is also a potential valuable contribution, since narratives offer a helpful medium through which to explore race, gender and other social constructs. Furthermore, narratives, like experiences and perspectives, offer a unique and valuable way of studying the socio-political and historical context.

In this study I employed CRT as an overarching theory at a macro level and I additionally drew from MAT and CCT as a theoretical base, at micro level. This allowed for a theoretical framework that allowed me to explore macro and micro dynamics of student experiences. This decision, therefore, assisted me to explore participants' experiences not only on the structural level but also allowed me to explore the impact of their experiences on their well-being and the coping strategies they employed at an individual level. I suggest that this serves as a unique and

valuable contribution to the knowledge base of this research field. In line with the tenet.

Furthermore, these theoretical and methodological choices I made in this study not only acknowledge and support the ever-growing body of literature on critical 'race' studies but also contribute to the knowledge base of the broader research field of critical and disruptive qualitative inquiry that is much needed for transformation in HE.

Furthermore, this study contributed to the better understanding of how legacies of our historically past might still impact on the experiences of especially black African male students on historically white campuses. This knowledge can assist all researchers, academics and HEI, especially HWIs on how they can optimally assist and support black African male students in their HE experiences and aspirations.

Another valuable contribution of the study is that participants shared their recommendations on how the institution can create a campus environment where they can feel welcome and 'at home' for them to thrive academically as well as emotionally. These recommendations, together with participants positive experiences of the institution, are of huge importance because it creates inroads into understanding what positive experiences can be built on. What was also interesting, although not new in the findings, are the strategies that participants employed to navigate the academic space of the campus. I therefore, contend that these strategies, recommendations and positive experiences that participants' narratives demonstrated have valuable implications for preventative interventions to draw on assets of institutions and individuals.

Lastly, at the core of the contributions of this study is that it highlights the importance of these kind of empirical research studies for all HEIs and its implications for transformation and decolonization debates in the HE sector.

I furthermore, contend and hope that this study contributes to the knowledge of all the role-players in SAs HE sector, the institution where this study was conducted as well as the division of student support services at the institution. Lastly, my hope is that this critical and disruptive inquiry as well as the theories I employed, will ‘speak’ to all prejudices and discriminatory practices and will ultimately help to facilitate social change in SAs HE sector, South Africa as a country, and indeed on a global level as well.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, additionally to the participants’ recommendations, I propose the following recommendations: access for success, building bridges, counter-spaces, professional development and training, training for coping strategies and racial discrimination management and cultivation of compassion through self-reflection, which I will discuss next.

7.4.1 Access for success:

Although a well-established HE funding system for historically marginalized students is in place, what is lacking are programs that support these students socially, academically and emotionally once they arrived at the HEI. Although these students qualify for funding because of their very specific historic and socio-economic circumstances, the moment they set foot on historically white campuses, they are expected to navigate and negotiate all spaces on and around campus, just as naturally and confidently as their white counterparts. From the point of arrival on campus, their historical and socio-economic circumstances are then minimised, and the playing fields are then assumed to be equal. If the institution really values these historically marginalized students’ successes, policies, regulations, and programs for their support and academic success need to be aligned. If not, institutions can be held accountable for setting these students up for failure.

HWIs should, therefore, be accountable and committed to addressing the imbalances of our historical past by ensuring that issues of access and success in HE, especially for historically marginalized students are given adequate, appropriate and authentic attention.

7.4.2 Building bridges

Before Black students arrive on HWIs campuses, they may need to be informed more about the expectations of HE, including the culture of different institutions. HEIs, especially HWIs therefore need to assist, especially Black students in the transition process from high school to the HE environment. For many Black students, the move into HE is a significant transition. Students may feel like strangers, and that they are not quite fitting in socially, culturally and racially in these spaces. HWIs can help to facilitate this process by offering well-designed initiatives that can assist Black students to successfully transition from school to HE, and consequently create a greater sense of belonging for these students on these campuses (Stebbleton, Soria & Huesman, 2014).

I would furthermore recommend all role-players at HWIs to not only direct prospective students to watch the documentary *Ready or Not* (Swartz, et al., 2018) but for staff members, and especially support staff members to watch it as well. The documentary explored the lived experiences of a group of students in HE in order to highlight their challenges and their strategies employed while navigating the HE domain.

7.4.3 Counter spaces:

Solorzano et al. (2000) emphasizes the importance of the establishment of counter spaces for Black students at HWIs. They defined counter spaces as sites where Black students can express themselves in a positive and safe context and with individuals they can relate with. These counter spaces have been identified as essential for the academic survival of especially Black men at HWIs for coping with racial and cultural racial micro-aggressions.

These counter spaces can, therefore, serve as a sanctuary for black African men to (1) make sense of their racially charged treatments and experiences on campus, (2) find support and validation for their experiential reality, and (3) equip themselves with alternative ways for responding and coping with racism and micro-aggressions (Grier-Reed, 2010). Furthermore, counter spaces on historically white spaces can

help to create a sense of belonging for black African male students on these campuses seeing that they experience a lack of sense of belonging in other spaces on and around campus. Participants extracts indicates their reliance on their peers and their need for racial representation in terms of academic and support staff. The creating of allocated spaces for them, where they can take pride in their own culture, language and activities, can therefore, potentially serve as spaces where they can feel grounded and anchored. Examples of such spaces are racial/ethnic centres, as well as a racially and ethnically themed hubs on campus.

However, some may perceive this as a dilemma of integration versus separation. What is critical is that Black students do not merely exist on the periphery of historically white campuses but that they are rather included and integrated into all spheres of the HE environment. This thinking is also in line with research that suggested that when diverse groups engage with one another, it creates opportunities for prejudice and stereotype reduction. While I agree wholeheartedly with this stance, I would also argue that Black students at HWIs also need spaces and places where they have a critical mass where they do not have to explain themselves or mask their experiences in order to blend in. These counter spaces will furthermore allow Black students to make sense of their social, cultural and racially based experiences and to engage meaningfully without the fear of being judged or misunderstood (Jehangir, 2010).

7.4.4 Professional development and training

As Black male students negotiating public, social and academic spaces at HWIs they are constantly on the receiving end of negative, sometimes hostile messages that challenge their belongingness on campus. Therefore, continuous training of practitioners on issues such as racial micro-aggressions and the impact thereof on individuals, is a necessity. Student support services should furthermore constantly examine the services they offer and equip staff members to be more racially-culturally aware and sensitive.

Unfortunately, these racial and culturally appropriate training initiatives with support staff will serve no value, if they experience it as ‘forced’ upon them. What

is necessary though, is that support staff must authentically see and embrace the value of such initiatives, if they value the academic and emotional well-being of all students equally. In order for Black students to access psychological services for support, they have to be assured that issues of racism and prejudice can successfully be addressed across racial lines.

7.4.5 Training of coping strategies and racial discrimination management

Coping strategies and the management of racial discrimination and racial micro-aggressions must be a core competence or skill that all Black students at HWIs need to have. If students understand the nature of racism, perpetuated through bias and stereotypes, this will assist them to adopt more psychologically affirming strategies for resilience in spite of stereotypes rather than internalizing their understandings to the degree that it lessened their performance. In short, it will assist students to exercise agency and could constitute a prevention intervention that could reduce the negative impacts of micro-aggressions.

This management is rooted in students' developing understandings of racism and their developing senses of, negotiations of, and assertions of what it means to be Black. As a result, students do not automatically experience a suppression of performance in situations where stereotypes exist. Moreover, because students define Blackness on their own terms, they are able to triumph over situational suggestions of Black inferiority.

7.4.6 Cultivation of compassion through self-reflection

A self-reflection process can ultimately empower all staff members in support services to analyse their own historical, social and cultural philosophies and positioning in terms of prejudices, stereotypes, and ideas about difference, superiority and inferiority. Furthermore, the process of self-reflection can assist individuals to analyse their own experiences and assumptions in order for them to develop constructive responses to social injustices rather than engaging in destructive and dismissive forms of opposition (Jehangir, 2010). Self-reflective activities that can assist individuals to question their unconscious and conscious

assumptions about others may be useful in removing the effects of stereotypes and prejudices.

I want to argue that transcending from the apartheid HE system into a post-apartheid HE system, we need to discover or rather rediscover our humanity and recognize the humanity of others, therefore, I suggest a deliberative form of social and racial engagement that goes beyond mere inclusion and equality, as proposed by Mafumo and Divala (2014). This includes a more vigilant form of addressing racism by taking constructs like compassion and empathy into account as the outward manifestations of such an engagement.

Furthermore, if we are to undo the racial inequities that continue to plague HWIs, we must find constructive ways to have conversations about our history, experiences of historically marginalized students as well as the realities of white privilege in HE. Thus, to address these racial inequalities, and to intervene constructively and consciously, the role of our historic past and race must be explicitly acknowledged and discussed. This historical, social and culturally responsive awareness preparation should include discussions about history, theories, prejudice, stereotypes, and white privilege, along with a healthy focus on discriminatory behaviours, policies, and practices (Ford & Moore, 2013). The objectives of these conversations must always be to 'unite' rather than to 'divide' and to 'include' rather than to 'exclude'.

All role-players in HE structures need to be cognisant of the fact that when Black African male students arrive at a historically white campus, they are usually unaware of the explicit and implicit expectations, the unwritten rules, and the historic, cultural and social memory required to navigate this public, social and academic spaces. Unlike their white counterparts, they do not have the 'codebook' and must discover the modus operandi in these historically white spaces that often undermines or ignores their lived experiences, on and around campus (Jehangir, 2010).

7.5 TRANSFERABILITY OF THIS STUDY

Transferability refers to whether the research findings and conclusions of a particular study can be applied to other contexts and with other participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). The principle of transferability in qualitative research is impractical as the study is conducted in the natural setting with the aim of describing the experiences of a particular group of participants. I therefore acknowledge that findings in this study do not necessarily have relevance for other contexts or for the same context in another time frame. In this regard, Shenton (2004, p.69) stresses, “since the findings of a qualitative project are specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals, it is impossible to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions are applicable to other situations and populations”.

While the results of this study might be particular to this institution with its unique contextual, socio-political and historical features, and because it focussed on a specific cohort of students, I contend that it might reflect Black African male students’ experiences at HWIs in general, in post-apartheid SA. Supporting this stance is findings in other South African studies that aligns with the findings in this study (Kiguwa, 2014; Swartz et al., 2018). Therefore, my hope is that this study would enable and encourage Student Affairs at all HEIs, especially HWIs to identify specific marginalized groups at the institution and centralize them as the experts of their own lives by being attentive to their specific support needs through counter storytelling. This will furthermore enable all staff members in support services to examine their roles in providing a service which is accessible and appropriate in facilitating the social, cultural, racial and emotional well-being of all students.

7.6 FINAL THOUGHTS

This research journey presented minimal obstacles for me as the researcher and was rather a smooth and well-aligned process. I could not have imagined how empowering the journey would be for myself as a researcher when I started the journey. Meeting and engaging with the participants was such a rewarding experience and I would forever be thankful to them, for their trust in me and that

they allowed me unconditionally into their most private thoughts, experiences, and emotions.

It is furthermore important to note that, while most of the participants shared their challenges on how they are clearly constantly being pushed to the periphery of the institution, one can also reframe the deficit lens to consider the huge number of strengths they bring to the table. Although all of them might present with a variety of support needs while conducting their studies, they also have built up knowledge and experiences of adapting, managing and coping to a new and sometimes hostile environment, language and culture.

Yet, the expectation of having to cope can easily constitute a broken promise for many Black African men in SAs HE sector, if all role-players in HWIs do not embrace their own personal and individual roles as agents of change before we all can commit ourselves to this collective social justice agenda. My hope is that the voices and insight of participants in this study will speak to the gaps that need our urgent attention if we are to repair and reimagine the HWIs to include and embrace all students.

7.7 CONCLUSION

I hope that this research will cast some light on the complex and vast number of challenges that Black African men face throughout their educational journey on historically white campuses. I furthermore hope that these findings can assist management, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to address some of these concerns in order to support these students socially, academically as well as emotionally.

What is concerning though is, despite existing policies and strategies, it remains taboo for people to discuss race and racism. According to Law, Philipps and Turney (2004), it is in this context of denial, that there is an aversion, firstly in seeing racism and secondly in confronting racist behaviour. This means that

it is understandable that most individuals are not prepared to interrogate and perhaps even break links with individuals with whom they formed working and professional relationships and even friendships. For most, the safest and easiest route is to rather look the other way and therefore rather dismiss any form of race-related incidences. (p.56)

However, anyone that values the success of all students has the responsibility to acknowledge and interrogate any issue that might hinder the success of especially marginalized students at HWIs. Students are experts on their own experiences on campus, their insights about campus climate, support, and academic experiences. We would, therefore, be wise to include them in dialogues, program designs, and racially and culturally responsive initiatives.

In conclusion, this study was framed within the theoretical foundation of CRT. However, CRT is not just a theoretical stance. Its commitment to social justice, change and to action, is inherent in its theoretical position as Calmore (1995) states:

“CRT finds its finest expression when it serves as ‘fuel for social transformation.’ In that sense, our efforts must, while directed by critical theory, extend beyond critique and theory to lend support to the struggle to relieve the extraordinary suffering and racist oppression that is commonplace in the life experiences of too many Black people” (p.317).

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1



UNIVERSITEIT•STELLENBOSCH•UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

INVITATION LETTER TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Dear (Name of potential participant)

My name is Claudia Saunderson and I am currently undertaking a PhD research study in the department of Educational Psychology here at Stellenbosch University. I would like to invite you to participate in the study because you meet the participant criteria and I believe your contribution to this study will be valuable.

In my research I will be exploring the daily experiences of black African male students at a historically white institution. The objective of the study is twofold: firstly, to explore how black African male students at the institution experience being at the institution and secondly, to explore what they and the institution may do to enhance their educational and psychosocial experiences on campus.

The study aims to explore these issues by conducting focus group interviews with identified participants. These focus groups will consist of 4 participants. The interviews will last approximately 45 minutes each and will be conducted by myself at a location that will ensure your privacy.

With your permission, interviews will be tape recorded. Should you agree to participate, your participation is voluntary. All of your responses will be kept confidential, and no information that could identify you would be included in the research report. Some of the responses that you provide in the interview might be quoted directly or indirectly in the final written report whereby an anonymous naming process will apply.

Appendix 2



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jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TITLE OF RESEARCH

Narratives of educational and psychosocial support amongst black African male students at a historically white university.

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Claudia Saunderson, PhD student, from the Educational Psychology department at Stellenbosch University. The results will thus contribute to her PhD thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because we know your contribution will be valuable.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study will explore the experiences and support needs of black African male students at a historically white university.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

- Read and sign the **Consent to participate form**.
- Be available to take part in a focus group interview and share your experiences. Groups will consist of 4 participants.
- Be available if you are invited for an individual interview more or less than 4 months after the focus group interviews.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The study should not pose any risk to you as a participant. You are however free not to answer questions you may feel not comfortable with. If necessary, emotional support and counselling services will be available at the Centre for Student Counselling and Development.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

You will receive no payment for your participation. Participation is strictly voluntarily.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained in a number of ways. Interviews will be anonymous. No personal names will be mentioned. Data will also be kept in a safe and secure space with no access to it except for the researcher and the supervisor.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to participate in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Claudia Saunderson (*Principal Investigator*) at 079 563 0599 or at claudias@sun.ac.za. You are also more than welcome to contact Prof Ronelle Carolissen (*Supervisor*) at rlc2@sun.ac.za or 021 8082738 / 0833035022.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to [*me/the subject/the participant*] by [*name of relevant person*] in [*Afrikaans/English/Xhosa/other*] and [*I am/the subject is/the participant is*] in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to [*me/him/her*]. [*I/the participant/the subject*] were given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to [*my/his/her*] satisfaction.

[*I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study/I hereby consent that the subject/participant may participate in this study.*] I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject/Participant

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the subject/participant*] and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative*]. [*He/she*] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*Afrikaans/*English/*Xhosa/*Other*] and [*no translator was used/this conversation was translated into _____ by _____*].

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix 3



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FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE:

1. Tell me about your experiences or first impressions on arrival at the university?
(Probe questions: challenging experiences / positive experiences)
2. What is your opinion about the statement that one of the individuals in the LUISTER VIDEO made: *"The colour of my skin in Stellenbosch is like a social burden... Just walking into spaces, there is that 'stop, pause and stare', where people cannot believe that you would dare enter into this space."*
3. Did you or any of your friends experience any form of discrimination, stereotyping or racism on campus? And can you share some of those experiences or incidences with me?
4. How do you handle these experiences or how do you cope with it?
5. What practices of support do you participate in on this campus? (Probe questions: individuals, institutional supports?)
6. Does the university do enough to make you feel "at home" at the institution? What can they do to make you feel "at home" at the institution? (Probe: What are they doing to make you feel included OR what more can they do to make you feel more included?)

Appendix 4



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NOTICE OF APPROVAL

REC Humanities New Application Form

24 October 2017

Project number: REC-2017-0300

Project Title: NARRATIVES OF EDUCATIONAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT AMONGST BLACK AFRICAN MALE STUDENTS AT A HISTORICALLY WHITE UNIVERSITY

Dear Mrs. Claudia Saunderson

Your REC Humanities New Application Form submitted on 16 October 2017 was reviewed and approved by the REC: Humanities.

Please note the following about your approved submission:

Ethics approval period: 24 October 2017 - 23 October 2018

Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after

complying fully with these guidelines.

If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: Humanities, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.

Please use your SU project number (**REC-2017-0300**) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further

modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

FOR CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD

Please note that a progress report should be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee: Humanities before the approval period has expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

Included Documents:

Research Protocol/Proposal Ethical Clearance.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL(June2017) 19/06/2017

Data collection tool Appendix 1.Focus

Group Interview schedule 07/07/2017

Data collection tool Appendix 4. Individual Interview Schedule 07/07/2017

Informed Consent Form Appendix 2.Consent to participate 16/10/2017

Proof of permission Institutional Permission_Standard Agreement_IRPSD 519 16/10/2017

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Default SECTION 9MODIFICATIONS REQUIRED 16/10/2017

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at cgraham@sun.ac.za.

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham

REC Coordinator: Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number: REC-050411-032.

The Research Ethics Committee: Humanities complies with the SA National Health Act No.61 2003 as it pertains to health research. In addition, this committee abides

Appendix 5



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INSTITUTIONAL PERMISSION:

AGREEMENT ON USE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION IN RESEARCH

Name of Researcher: Claudia Saunderson

Name of Research Project: Narratives of educational and psychosocial support amongst black African male students at a historically white university

Service Desk ID: IRPSD 519

Date of Issue: 14 September 2017

You have received institutional permission to proceed with this project as stipulated in the institutional permission application and within the conditions set out in this agreement.

Appendix 6



Pre-liminary analysis

Participant 1: You see, that's what I'm saying. Things that were initially not racist, as you grow and thinking about these things, they become more racist and people become more racist. But then from a legal point of view people are trying to do away with racism. So I think it will always be that catch-on type of thing. The more people learn, the more society is gonna see racists because now we are suddenly aware of dynamics you were not aware of.

Participant 3: But it's actually so weird how, for instance, I did my first year in the University of the Free State, there you never felt like, look, I'm black now, until you come here and here I think there's that constant reminder, hey look, you're black. You know what I mean? And for me, what I was thinking, I'm like, wasn't Free State that province that was really Afrikaans? Of course they've had instances there as well, but institutionally it has never been a thing where I was like, hey look, you're black. Whereas when you came here, I think you just feel it and even the people you interact with, there was more underpinned reminders that, hey look, we're not kind of the same way.

Participant 4: And we get this thing a lot, even from our lecturers. Cause I can't speak Afrikaans. I don't even understand a single word of Afrikaans. So in my second year when they started teaching in Afrikaans and then we had to use this translating devices, so I was struggling with that.

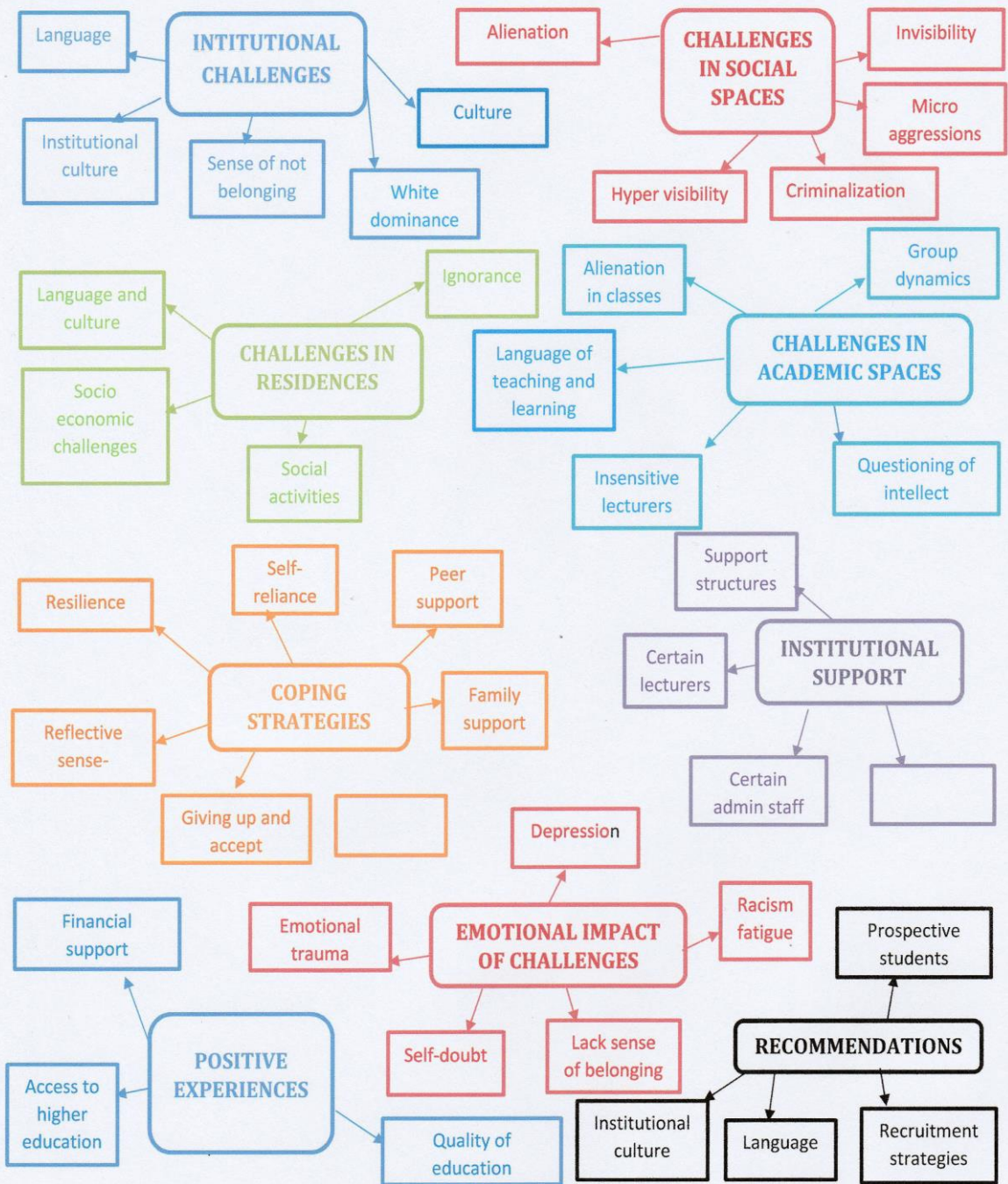
Participant 3: Yes, T option.

Participant 2: I couldn't understand what was going on in class. So I went up to one of my lecturers and then I'm like, can you please explain this and this to me. So I was always going to him after class. Then this other time he said to me that why didn't you go to UCT then, cause you came here knowing that this university is Afrikaans. I'm like, this is not what I was told when I applied.

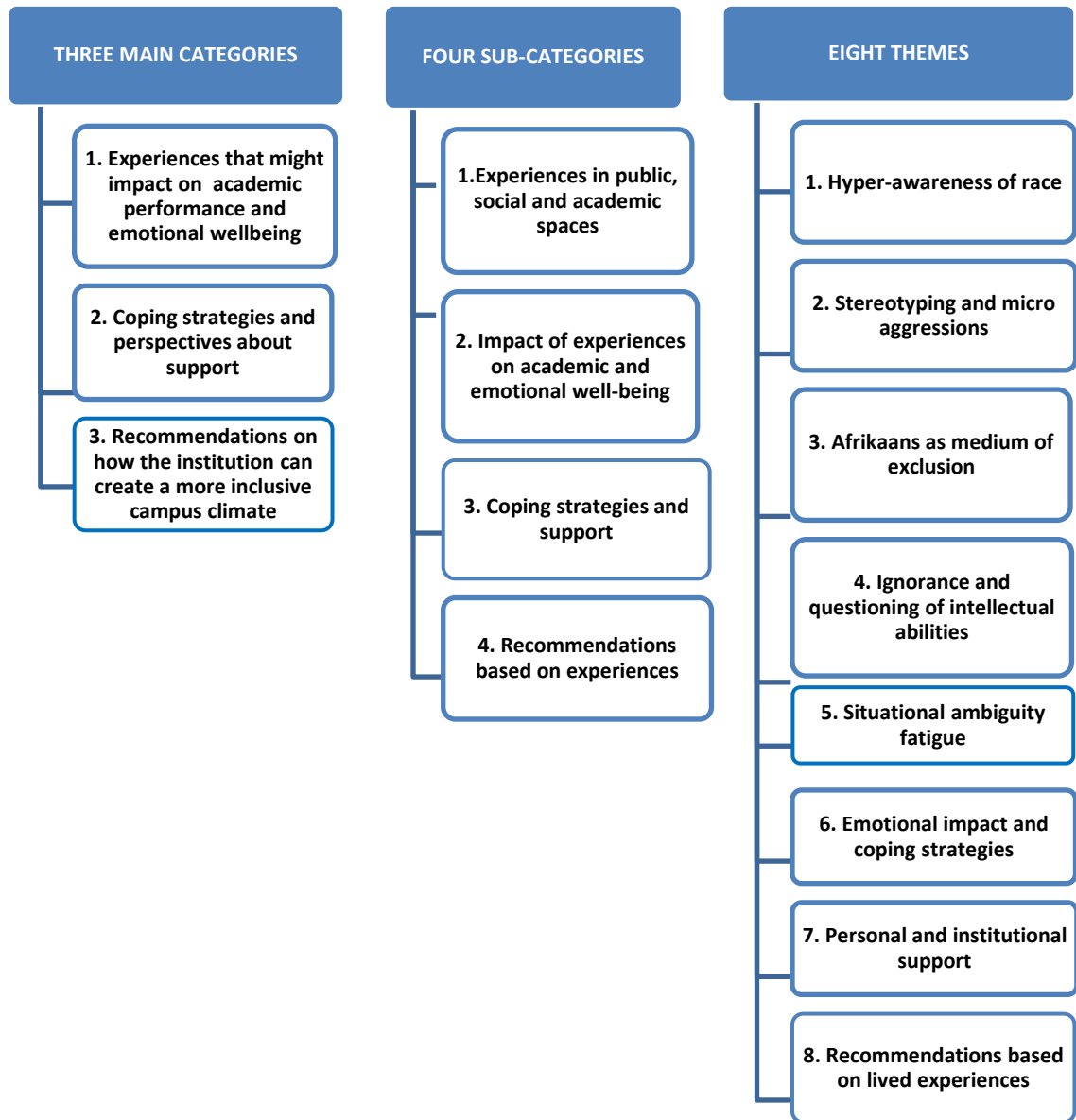
Participant 3: I get what you're saying.

Participant 2: They just make you feel like you don't belong here.

Initial categories and themes



Pre-liminary findings



Appendix 7

Demographical information of participants

PARTICIPANT	BACKGROUND	YEAR OF STUDY	
Participant 1	Kwazulu Natal (Township)	3 rd year	
Participant 2	Kwazulu Natal (Township)	4 th year	
Participant 3	Kwazulu Natal (Ulundi)	3 rd year	
Participant 4	Eastern Cape (Dutywa)	2 nd year	
Participant 5	Eastern Cape (East London)	4 th year	
Participant 6	Mpumalanga (Kwaggafontein)	1 st year	
Participant 7	Zimbabwe (Masvingo)	3 rd year	
Participant 8	Namibia (Ondangwa)	5 th year	
Participant 9	Kwazulu Natal (Township)	3 rd	
Participant 10	Limpopo (Polokwane)	5 th year	
Participant 11	Gauteng (Tembisa)	2 nd year	
Participant 12	Gauteng (Tembisa)	2 nd year	
Participant 13	Eastern Cape (Molteno)	2 nd year	
Participant 14	Lesotho (Maseru)	4 th year	
Participant 15	Eastern Cape (Utsolo)	3 rd year	
Participant 16	Limpopo (Polokwane)	4 th year	
Participant 17	Eastern Cape (Township)	4 th year	
Participant 18	Limpopo (Polokwane)	1 st year	
Participant 19	Kwazulu Natal (Township)	4 th year	
Participant 20	East London (Township)	3 rd year	