

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

Author Note

A thank you to my supervisor, Dr Wahbie Long, for his unwavering patience and support, and his dedication to academic integrity and achievement.

Thank you to my friends and family who motivated me when I did not think it possible to write another word. We serve a living God.

Without funding from the National Research Foundation, this research project would not have been possible.

To the participants in this project: I thank you for reflecting on your experiences even when the memories were difficult to process. Your stories are yours, and I thank you for sharing them with me. I hope you are now equipped with the language that you need to speak about your experiences in a way that allows you to identify and own them.

Abstract

In post-Apartheid South Africa, the ongoing salience of race has proved problematic, with many of these racial disputes being circulated widely on social media platforms. Much focus, energy, and emotional investment in these instances of overt racism, against which South Africa still struggles, exemplify the racialized society we live in today. While these instances of explicit racism are heavily focused on, more subtle forms of racism seem to go unnoticed in our day-to-day lives. These subtle forms of racism are called racial microaggressions. Operating within a social constructionist framework, this qualitative study utilized purposive sampling to investigate racial microaggressions experienced by Black¹ participants from previously Model-C schools. The focus groups conducted were analysed by means of a thematic analysis, which yielded eight main themes, namely, the second-class citizen; patronizing ascriptions of intelligence; #HandsOffMyCrown; the invisibilization of race and privilege; morphing bigotry or innocent preference?; under-representations of Black staff and learners; cultural assimilation; and knowledge in the blood. While some of these findings coincide with themes from American and European research (for example, patronizing ascriptions of intelligence, the invisibilization of race and privilege, and the second-class citizen), certain themes appear to be unique to the South African setting. Studies should ideally be carried out across historically white high schools around South Africa to obtain a more representative sample from which to collect data.

¹ Black refers to African, Coloured, Indian and Asian. The use of these categories remains problematic in post-Apartheid South Africa. They are used in this thesis only for reasons of familiarity rather than as an endorsement of Apartheid era racial categories.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction and Literature Review	6
1. Introduction	6
1.1. Race relations in South Africa	6
1.2. Race in post-Apartheid South Africa.....	7
1.3. Education in post-Apartheid South Africa.....	9
1.3.1. Tertiary education in post-Apartheid South Africa	9
1.3.2. High school education in post-Apartheid South Africa.....	11
1.4. Defining microaggressions	13
1.5. Taxonomy and forms of microaggressions.....	14
1.5.1. Microassaults	15
1.5.2. Microinsult themes	16
1.5.3. Microinvalidation themes	17
1.6. Racial microaggressions.....	19
1.7. Microaggression Process Model.....	21
1.7.1. Phase one – Incident.....	21
1.7.2. Phase two – Perception and Questioning of the Incident.....	21
1.7.3. Phase three – Reaction Processes.....	22
1.7.3.1. Healthy paranoia.....	22
1.7.3.2. Sanity check.....	22
1.7.3.3. Empowering and Validating Self.....	23
1.7.3.4. Rescuing Offenders.....	23
1.7.4. Phase four - Interpretation and Meaning.....	23
1.7.5. Phase five – Consequences and Impact.....	23
1.7.5.1. Powerlessness.....	23
1.7.5.2. Invisibility.....	24
1.7.5.3. Forced Compliance/Loss of Integrity.....	24
1.7.5.4. Pressure to Represent One’s Group.....	24
1.8. Other effects of racial microaggressions.....	24
1.8.1. Racial Battle Fatigue.....	25
1.8.2. Invisibility Syndrome.....	25
1.9. Aim and Research Question	26
Chapter Two: Methodology	28
2.1. Research Design	28
2.1.1. Qualitative research.....	28
2.1.1.1. The need for empirical research.....	28
2.1.1.2. The need to remain open.....	29
2.1.1.3. Grounding observed phenomena in the field.....	29
2.1.2. Social constructionism.....	30
2.2. Data collection	32
2.2.1. Focus groups.....	32
2.2.2. The use of vignettes.....	35
2.3. Sampling	37
2.4. Thematic analysis	38
2.5. Reflexivity.....	40
2.6. Ethical considerations.....	42
2.6.1. Informed consent.....	42
2.6.2. Voluntariness.....	42
2.6.3. Privacy and confidentiality.....	43
2.6.4. Debriefing of participants.....	43
2.6.5. Significance.....	43

Chapter Three: Analysis and Discussion	44
3.1. The second-class citizen: "Being Black means that I am inferior"	44
3.2. "You surprise me!" – Patronizing ascriptions of intelligence.....	49
3.3. #HandsOffMyCrown	52
3.4. The invisibilization of race and privilege.....	57
3.5. Morphing bigotry or innocent preference?.....	62
3.6. Under-representation of Black staff and learners	66
3.7. Cultural assimilation.....	70
3.8. Knowledge in the blood.....	72
Chapter Four: Conclusion	75
4.1. Summary of findings.....	75
4.2 Social implications of the research.....	78
4.3 Limitations and recommendations for future research	79
References	81
Appendix 1	91
Focus group questions	91
Appendix 2	92
Ethical clearance	92
Appendix 3	93
Informed consent	93

Chapter One: Introduction and Literature Review

1. Introduction

Recent reports in South African media have demonstrated the ongoing salience of race in the country. Many racial disputes have appeared in news headlines – as in 2015, for example, with the development of the Rhodes Must Fall student movement. This marked a significant shift towards a larger struggle against perceived institutional racism at, in particular, the University of Cape Town. Also in the news a few months later was the story of Penny Sparrow, a White estate agent in South Africa who made racist comments on the social media platform Facebook (Wicks, 2016). In another incident, a White woman was caught on camera spewing racial vitriol at police officers. In her outburst, the woman is of the opinion that "the calibre of Blacks in this town vary from the calibre of Blacks in Durban. They're opinionated, they're arrogant and they're just plain and simple useless" (Thathiah, 2016). People living in South Africa are acutely sensitive to matters of race, while the overt expression of racism remains deplorable in post-Apartheid South Africa. However, whereas these instances represent explicit racist talk in the nation, more subtle expressions of racism go largely unnoticed. These subtle forms of racism – known as microaggressions – form the focus of this study that seeks to investigate how microaggressions are experienced in high school settings in South Africa.

1.1. Race relations in South Africa

Laher (2012) notes that "the history of South Africa is a chequered one, marked by ethnic and racial interaction, integration and conflict" (p. 1). She describes how, in 1948, the National Party (the ruling political party in the country at the time), instituted a legal system of

racial segregation known as *Apartheid*. This official state policy operated to ensure the reservation and preservation of social, economic and political privilege for White South Africans, whereas, on the contrary, Black South Africans were denied access to basic material resources, opportunities and freedoms.

Since 1994, however, South Africa has experienced rapid transformation in several domains and, in the post-Apartheid era, it continues to be vitally important for past inequalities to be redressed. Race remains a salient feature of current national discourse that, while foregrounding unifying concepts such as the *rainbow nation*, also highlights fraught debates about difference (Carolissen, van Wyk, & Pick-Cornelius, 2012), including racism. For example, the recent jail sentence handed down to convicted racist, Vicki Momberg, is an instance not only of responsive legislation but also the ongoing legacy of open racism in South African society. Yet the Momberg case is arguably the exception in the 'new' South Africa and, as the overt expression of racism has become deplorable, other methods of expressing racist sentiments have come into being (Condor, Figgou, Abell, Gibson, & Stevenson, 2006). In other words, the relative absence of overt racism has not meant the absence of racism altogether; rather, it has meant that people have become strategic in the ways in which they perform and express racism (Condor et al., 2006). One of the ways in which racism is expressed in a seemingly socially acceptable way is through the performance of racial microaggressions, a concept to which I will devote considerable attention later in this chapter.

1.2. Race in post-Apartheid South Africa

Under the system of Apartheid, a White minority consolidated its rule over a native, Black majority. While this systematic oppression was not entirely unique to South Africa, and was indeed similar to colonial and settler situations in other parts of the world, the breadth and depth of such a social hierarchy structured primarily along the lines of racial

stratification was certainly unique to South Africa (Seekings, 2008). Indeed, it went far beyond the scope of race and racism and was exemplary of “social engineering around state-sanctioned racial ideology and legislation” (Seekings, 2008, p. 2). It would therefore be naive to imagine that the post-Apartheid would not be heavily shaped by these events.

Steyn and Foster (2008) note how, since the dismantling of the Apartheid regime, the strategy of many White people has been one of trying to navigate a path for the maintenance of White privilege in an economy in which Black people have attained political power. They explain that “the legal buttresses that held up the old South Africa collapsed with the advent of democracy in 1994, bringing about a time of profound social and psychological adjustment for all South Africans” (Steyn & Foster, 2008, p. 25). The new political climate has meant that White privilege is mediated through the political power gained by Black people, thereby problematizing the privilege conferred upon White South Africans under the legal system of Apartheid – a privilege built on a colonial and White supremacist past (Steyn & Foster, 2008).

Seekings (2008) contends that the hierarchical system created by the Apartheid regime remains deeply racialized, and manifests itself in economic and social disparities. This means that there is a disproportionate distribution of income, as well as an unequal social access to opportunities. But at a symbolic level, research also demonstrates the ongoing centrality of White subjectivities in post-Apartheid South Africa. Steyn and Foster (2008), for example, offer details of a study conducted in a Durban high school in which racial identities were the single most common form of social division. Another study conducted by Durrheim and Dixon (2005) confirmed such practices of informal segregation on beaches in Durban. To be sure, studies such as these affirm the ongoing salience of race

and racism in South Africa, and that despite the Apartheid regime having come undone, South Africans still see their identities in highly racialized terms (Seekings, 2008).

1.3. Education in post-Apartheid South Africa

1.3.1. Tertiary education in post-Apartheid South Africa.

Dating back to colonialism, “social inequalities were embedded and reflected in all spheres of social life, as a product of the systematic exclusion of blacks and women” (Badat, 2010, p. 2), and these were held in place by the system of Apartheid that followed. The higher education system, Badat (2010) notes, was no exception to this. Cornell (2015) highlights that although higher education in South Africa has encountered vast structural transformation since the abolition of Apartheid, these institutions remain highly racialised spaces. While the number of black students enrolling at historically White institutions is steadily increasing, black students are positioned discursively as not possessing the necessary competencies to deserve places in these institutions and are thus purported to lower the academic standing of universities (Kessi & Cornell, 2015).

Studies on the consequences of the racialisation of educational achievement in South Africa have demonstrated that these discourses reproduce feelings of not belonging, or alienation, as well as lower self-esteem in students who internalise these negative stereotypes assigned to them (Kessi & Cornell, 2015). These authors contend that “through the media, academic literature, institutional practices and policy documents” (p. 5) black students are positioned as being less academically inclined than their white counterparts, being wholly unprepared for the working world once they have graduated, and as unfairly using Apartheid as an excuse for under-achieving. Jansen (2004), too, adds that at formerly white institutions, alienation as a result of racial difference is deeply entrenched. Conversely, historically black

institutions that attract white students are seen as improving in status because of this (Kessi & Cornell, 2015).

As a result, the democratically elected government of 1994 committed itself to bringing about transformation in higher education, as well as in the related social and economic spheres that had inherited structures from the Apartheid government (Badat, 2010). With the weight of the law behind them, other initiatives were implemented to aid in this transformation (Badat, 2010; Cornell, 2015). The South African Constitution of 1996 and the Higher Education Act and White Paper of 1997 directed both the state as well as institutions of higher learning toward the goal of transformation in the higher education sector (Badat, 2010). The Constitution dictated that institutions needed to aspire to the values of “human dignity, the achievement of equality, and the advancements of... non-racialism and the human rights and freedoms that the *Bill of Rights* proclaims” (Badat, 2010, p. 3). The Higher Education Act called for the restructuring of the education system to ensure transformation in the content being taught as well as the redressing of past inequalities (Badat, 2010). While all of these policies called for transformation and redress, the implementation was poor and was referred to as an “implementation vacuum” (Cornell, 2015, p. 2).

Cornell (2015) notes that although the number of black, Indian and Coloured students has increased, the participation rate of these race groups in comparison to white students remains much lower. Additionally, both the retention of students as well as the number of those students who graduate remains significantly lower in black, Indian and Coloured students when compared to white students (Cornell, 2015). Badat (2010) recognizes that because of this, there is “a critical and immediate need to reconceptualise and clarify the scope structure and landscape of the post-school system” (p. 9).

1.3.2. High school education in post-Apartheid South Africa.

Since the dismantling of the Apartheid regime, South African schools have faced their own challenges regarding integration (Soudien, 2004). Carrim (1998) contends, for example, that since the desegregation of schools, educational discourses have shifted from being race-centred to being ethnicity-centred, with a heavy focus on assimilationist discourses. Attempts to move towards a multicultural approach, that is, are hindered by homogenised and stereotyped conceptions, resulting in poor multicultural approaches being adopted – and amid this confusion remains a large body of learners attempting to engage meaningfully in a post-conflict society.

To be sure, research has demonstrated that many students in secondary schools feel ostracized and marginalised based on their skin colour, forcing them to neglect various aspects of their identities when entering schooling systems in order to succeed (Andrews, 2012). These feelings arise as a result of structural features within the schools that are instances of institutional racism. Black students often end up searching for cognitive alternatives in order to foster resilience if they intend on thriving in historically white schools.

On the one hand, Badat (2010) explains that although some difficulties have been encountered in the process of desegregation, the transition process has been relatively peaceful. With the exception of a few isolated events, such as the stabbing of a black learner by white learners at Bryanston High in Johannesburg and the racial attack led by a white mother, her partner and daughter on a black learner in Edgemoor High in Cape Town, the scale of these confrontations has been relatively minor. According to Jansen (2004), however, it should be noted that racially inflected incidents occur by the hundreds in our schools, on a daily basis. These incidents often go unseen and undocumented. Jansen (2004) contends that “in South African schools, the grouping of children, the dominant assessment

practices, the learner preferences of the teacher, the display of cultural symbols, the organisation of religious symbols, the scope of awards and rewards, and the decisions of 'who teaches what' are all organised in ways that show preference based on race" (p. 118).

Jansen (2004) reports that in study groups surrounding the issues of race in high schools, the central issues are discriminatory language with regards to race and social alienation. He suggests, moreover, that corrective action in the classroom is hindered because, when approached and confronted on the issue of race and racial identity, teachers frequently claim that they 'see children, not colour'. This, Jansen (2004) explains, demonstrates a lack of consciousness of the ways in which the school organisation, system and content are arranged, with lasting consequences for identity formation and the transformation agenda. Teachers can end up failing to allocate time for the teaching of, for example, African history that would "affirm the rich diversity of cultural and political experiences represented within the student body" (Jansen, 2004, p. 122). As a result, black students can feel out of place in historically white schools.

According to Ferreira (2015), the school classroom remains one of the most formative sites for the production of the subjectivities of young people. Apart from the need for curriculum reform that followed the establishment of a new political dispensation in South Africa (Cross, Mungadi, & Rouhani, 2002), the school classroom also serves as a space in which inter-racial relationships are forged. It is within this context, indeed, that many learners are faced with inter-racial interactions. Unfortunately, there is a relative paucity of South African literature on the experience of such phenomena in secondary schools, which is a key motivating factor for this study.

1.4. Defining microaggressions

Sue (2010) suggests that no individual is immune to the influences of society over them; all individuals are products and producers of social conditioning which instils in them biases, stereotypical ideas, and prejudices. One of these everyday biases and prejudices is called microaggressions: the everyday slurs, insults, invalidations and ignominies that oppress marginalized groups of people (Sue, 2010). Sue (2010) further contends that any marginal group can be a recipient of a microaggression; by this, Sue (2010) means any individuals who exist in the margins, in either the lower or outer limits, “of social desirability and consciousness (p. 14). Sue (2010) highlights how the power of microaggressions rests “in their invisibility to the perpetrator” (p. xv), and Atwood and López (2014) note that this power is deeply rooted in the elusiveness of microaggressions, meaning that the perpetrator is typically unaware that what they are saying is discriminatory in any regard. The perpetrators of microaggressions are individuals who think of themselves as being egalitarian who would under no circumstance discriminate against another person, but who, because it is outside of their realm of conscious awareness, demean other people whom they consider representative of minority groups (Sue, 2010). Simply stated, microaggressions are “brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership” (Sue, 2010, p. xvi) or “subtle, often automatic, and nonverbal exchanges which are ‘put downs’” (Sue, 2010, p. xvi). These exchanges are unconsciously conveyed through a person’s dismissive looks or rebuffs and are so pervasive in everyday talk and interactions that they often remain unrecognizable to the perpetrator, and it is only the recipient who feels its sting (Sue, 2010). Sue (2010) notes that that there are countless numbers of microaggressions which are expressed daily, without the knowledge or acknowledgment of this fact by the perpetrators. Again, though the intentions are good and, at the surface level, appear to be harmless, they remain pernicious in nature to recipients as “they result in

harmful psychological consequences and create disparities” (Sue, 2010, p. 15). Sue (2010) explains that these interactions sap the energy of recipients “and deplete or divert energy for adaptive functioning and problem solving” (p. 15). Sue (2010) emphasizes that the consequences of microaggressions are not limited to only psychological effects, but also include tangible effects such as lowering the quality of life and standard of living in recipients’ lives. While considered a secondary effect, microaggressions have the devastating effect of “denying equal access and opportunity in education, employment and healthcare” (Sue, 2010, p. 16). The difficulty with this, Sue (2010) contends, is that though seemingly minute in nature, the harm they produce is pervasive and resultantly operates at both a systemic and a macro level.

1.5. Taxonomy and forms of microaggressions

Sue (2010) contends that “it is the unconscious and unintentional forms of bias that create the overwhelming problems for marginalized groups in our society” (p. 23). Sue (2010) argues that the face of racism has changed. By this, he means that racism has transformed from overt forms of racism to more aversive forms of racism, where the expressions of racism have become more disguised and covert (Sue, 2010). While hate crimes against marginalized groups continue to be perpetrated by individuals and groups who express overt racist beliefs, Sue (2010) asserts that the most harmful form of microaggressions comes from those who are well-intentioned and in situations where it becomes difficult to identify. These individuals have been labelled by Sue (2010) as “unconscious-unintentional oppressors or bigots” (p. 23). What Sue (2010) notes is that because social forces act upon all people, each person becomes imbued with stereotypes and prejudices as a result of this social conditioning process, so while they may portray an

egalitarian approach, subconsciously they harbour pro-majority feelings. Here, one may perpetuate “the pattern of being overlooked, under-respected, and devalued because of one’s race” (Sue, 2010, p. 24). Sue (2010) proposes a taxonomy of racial, gender, and sexual-orientation microaggressions, which can be organized into three major categories: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. This is confirmed by Nadal and colleagues (2011), while Sue (2010) adds that these forms differ in terms of intentionality and level of awareness of the perpetrator. What they have in common is that they all convey overt, covert or hidden messages of discrimination to the recipient (Sue, 2010).

1.5.1. Microassaults

Microassaults refer to the explicit, deliberate derogations either through words or actions “as demonstrated through name-calling, avoidant behaviour, or discriminatory actions toward the intended victim” (Nadal et al., 2011, p. 235). Sue (2010) defines them as “conscious, deliberate, and either subtle or explicit racial, gender, or sexual-orientation biased attitudes, beliefs, or behaviours that are communicated to marginalized groups through environmental cues, verbalizations, or behaviour” (p. 28) and are intended to attack an individual on the basis of their group membership. This form of microaggression is much like old-fashioned, overt racism (Malott, Paone, Schaeffe, & Gao, 2015). The intention of these microassaults is to make individuals of groups feel less than human; to threaten, berate and taunt them (Sue, 2010). This is intended to convey the message that they are unwanted and unwelcome, and that they are sub-human (Sue, 2010). This is done by people who believe that there is a social hierarchy and that certain individuals do not belong on the same levels as others (Sue, 2010).

Telling jokes with racial undertones falls into this category. Sue (2010) regards this is similar to *old fashioned racism*, which is conducted on an individual level. However, because of the public intolerance for such actions, they are most likely to be expressed under three conditions which offer the perpetrator some degree of perceived protection. First, “when

perpetrators feel some degree of anonymity and are assured that their roles or actions can be concealed” (Sue, 2010, p. 29), perpetrators may feel more comfortable in expressing microassaults. Second, perpetrators may engage in microassaults when they feel somewhat safe, such as when they are part of a group or are in the presence of people who they perceive to share their opinions (Sue, 2010). Here, the perpetrator feels comfortable in sharing their attitudes and feels guarded against judgment. Safety, here, relies on the inaction performed by others when bias occurs. This happens because individuals over-predict how likely they would be to intervene in a situation of injustice, though when faced with a real situation they are far less likely to act in accordance with their predictions. Third, the majority of people who privately believe in minority inferiority will only outwardly express this when they lose their self-control (Sue, 2010). With microassaults, there is no need for guesswork when trying to pinpoint a racist encounter. Sue (2010) proposes, in fact, that in most instances blatant and direct racist remarks and actions are easier to cope with for marginalized groups. This is because the intention is clear and “the psychological energies of people of colour, for example, are not diluted by ambiguity” (p. 31).

1.5.2. Microinsult themes

A microinsult represents “subtle snubs, frequently unknown to the perpetrator, but clearly convey a hidden insulting message to the recipient of colour” (Sue, Capodilupo Torino, & Bucceri, 2007, p. 274). This differs from microassaults in that it is not overt.

- *Ascription of Intelligence*: a form of microinsult, this specific type is related to “aspects of intellect, competence, and capabilities” (Sue, 2010, p. 35). Sue (2010) adds on to this, stating “[s]aying ‘you are a credit to your race’ contains an insulting metacommunication (‘people of colour are generally not as intelligent as Whites.’)” (p. 35).

- *Second-Class Citizen*: this microinsult communicates the unconscious message that certain groups are superior to other groups, and the perceived inferior groups are deemed less deserving, less valued and deserve being discriminated against. These are often delivered by well-intentioned individuals or groups, which result in people of colour being accorded treatment in line with being lesser (Sue, 2010).
- *Pathologising Cultural Values/Communication Styles*: according to Sue (2010), this theme comprises two components, namely, the “belief that the cultural values/communication style of White... groups are normative” and “that those of people of colour... are somehow abnormal” (p. 35).
- *Criminality/Assumption of Criminal Status*: this theme of microinsult is targeted at race-related microaggressions. Examples of these are a White woman locking her car door when a Black person passes by, or a White man checking for his wallet in his back pocket when a group of Black individuals walks past him (Sue, 2010).
- *Assumption of Abnormality*: this theme is related to the perception that some aspect of a person’s identity, such as race, is abnormal or pathological (Sue, 2010).

1.5.3. Microinvalidation themes

Microinvalidations are distinguished by “communications or environmental cues that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of certain groups, such as people of colour” (Sue, 2010, p. 37).

- *Alien in One’s Own Land*: the premise of this theme is the pervasive perception of being a foreigner in one’s own country; the feeling of not belonging. This theme most often implies that someone’s allegiance belongs

to a country which is different to the one they are in and is rooted in a country's history and social consciousness (Sue, 2010).

- *Colour Blindness*: being colour blind means that an individual refuses to acknowledge someone's colour. Colour blindness is the most frequently delivered microinvalidation toward people of colour. These messages, when delivered, contain multiple implied messages. At one level, Sue (2010) notes, the message relayed is that the receiver, a person of colour, not bring race into the discussion. Additionally, they communicate that people of colour must acculturate and assimilate. Sue (2010) explains that, on the one hand, they are intended as defensive mechanisms so as not to appear racist, and on the other hand, as a method to deny the experiential realities of people of colour. This denial is an inadvertent denial of difference, privilege and power relations, which is to say that White people deny the accrual of benefits as a direct result of skin colour as "the denial that we profit from racism is really a denial of responsibility for our racism" (Sue, 2010, p. 38). Denying this racism allows the perpetrator to deny that it is necessary to take action.
- *Denial of Individual Racism*: this theme is related to the above (colour blindness) as it is another form of denial and constitutes an individual refusing to confront their personal racism. *I cannot be racist, I have Black friends* communicates the message that one is immune to perpetrating racism (Sue, 2010). When statements like these are made, they deny the lived reality of the recipient.
- *Myth of Meritocracy*: this theme insinuates that the role of race does not influence success; that the two are mutually exclusive (Sue, 2010). It assumes that each person starts on an equal footing despite their skin colour, and as

such, each person has an equal and independent opportunity to achieve success. Because of this, success is attributed to other factors such as intelligence or work ethic, but conversely communicates that people who do not succeed suffer from a deficit (Sue, 2010). In terms of people of colour, it is not widely acknowledged that “higher unemployment rates, lower educational achievement, and poverty may be the result of systemic racism” (Sue, 2010, p. 39), the outcome of which is victim-blaming.

1.6. Racial microaggressions

The luxury of living in a world which does not judge on the basis of colour is not afforded to people of colour. Atwood and López (2014) reveal that each time a person of colour feels a sense of success, something occurs that reminds them of what a racialized society they live in and what their position in that society is. While sometimes taking more identifiable forms such as a White woman locking her car door when a Black man passes by, at other times such events are more difficult to detect as they appear to be innocent in nature such as the case of mistaken identity. Atwood and López (2014) describe how “Black people do not just *occasionally* experience racial microaggressions. Rather they are a constant, continuing, and cumulative experience” (p. 1135). The world that people of colour encounter is rife with inequality and plagued by power disparities and attributions of difference and otherness. The expression of racial microaggressions leaves people of colour in a difficult situation, where they cannot ignore the racist intent and simultaneously cannot confront the perpetrator due to a lack of evidence, as these come from a naïve space and are often difficult to navigate and pinpoint (Atwood & López, 2014). Racial microaggressions “are constant reminders that people of colour – irrespective of academic degree, title, where they work, how many articles they have published, or how much they earn – are reduced to an incessant

stereotype, treated as second-class citizens, presumed incompetent... or regarded as suspects” (Atwood & López, 2014, p. 1135). Jones and Galliher (2014) contend that racial microaggressions have likely morphed from hatred and racial bigotry to a form which has become more difficult to identify. Atwood and López (2014) liken this to the belief that even though racism does happen in everyday life only those who are infected with the *racism virus* enact it as such.

Though overt expressions of racism have declined, Sue (2010) suggests that its expression has morphed into a modern form that is concealed in our beliefs and attitudes and in the unconscious crevices of our minds, operating below the level of consciousness. This modern expression is known by a variety of names, one being aversive racism, to which racial microaggressions are closely linked (Sue, 2010). The power of the microaggression, Atwood and López (2014) detail, is in the unconsciousness and invisibility of it. What is particularly worrying is that the utterance and enactment of racial microaggressions reflect an individual's understanding of the world and the people who live in it. Atwood and López (2014) expand on this, stating that “... the good-intentioned perpetrator (usually a White person, but not always) often lives in a world where race is all but invisible, where racism is primarily seen as the enactment of occasionally evil, heinous or egregious ‘acts’ perpetrated by a bad person with a twisted mind” (p. 1135). As a result, it becomes possible to overlook the everyday racism encountered.

The two – aversive racism and racial microaggressions – are most alike in that they occur below the level of conscious awareness in people with apparently good intentions (Sue, 2010). The offender will always view herself as a reasonable, well-intentioned, liberal and educated individual who harbours no ill feelings towards another group of people. Atwood and López (2014) contend that these microaggressions can be in the form of a dismissive eye-roll, the locking of a door, or the holding on to a purse when a person of colour passes by.

These actions and comments are often made from a naïve space and “conform to a racist logic that is reified and reproduced with each utterance” (p. 1135). Atwood & López (2014) state that these slights constantly remind people of colour that they are reduced relentlessly to a stereotype, regarded as second-class citizens, and often treated as suspects.

1.7. Microaggression Process Model

Sue (2010) suggests that Maya Angelou likened racial microaggressions to small murders as opposed to grand executions in which the lethality is obvious. In spite of this, few researchers have tracked the process of microaggressions from beginning to end. This process is concerned with what happens from the moment a microaggression is received right up until considering how individuals cope with experiencing microaggressions. Sue (2010) and his team of colleagues tracked five domains through which an individual goes when experiencing a microaggression.

1.7.1. Phase one – Incident. This phase entails the perpetrating of a microaggression, which sets in motion a series of psychological events which may affect, directly or indirectly, the nature of the interpersonal interaction. These may be the result of ongoing interpersonal interactions, passive relationships between perpetrators and recipients, or of environmental cues which signal the devaluation of some given group's identity. The mediums through which these microaggressions are passed are verbal, behavioural, and/or environmental.

1.7.2. Phase two – Perception and Questioning of the Incident. This refers to attempts by the recipient to discern whether the events of the interaction were racially charged and motivated or not. Sue (2010) explains that this is a more complex phenomenon than simply arriving at a dichotomous yes/no answer as it is dynamic. He is of the opinion that there is an internal struggle which is faced by the recipient, due to the nature of the microaggression being ambiguous. Here, the overt message is often in opposition to the

hidden message. In questioning the incident, the recipient negotiates with themselves whether the incident was indeed racially motivated or not. Numerous factors contribute to this, such as the “relationship to the perpetrator (relative, friend, co-worker, or stranger), the racial/cultural identity development of the recipient, the thematic content of the microaggression and personal experiences of the target. All are factors in construing meaning to the event” (Sue, 2010, p. 72).

1.7.3. Phase three – Reaction Processes. Here, a more integrated response of the person is crucial in processing an event which is perceived to have been offensive in nature, in terms of the emotional turmoil caused as well as the need for self-care. This process, according to Sue (2010), “refers to the target’s immediate response that is more than a simple “yes,” “no,” or “ambiguous” perception of the event” (p. 73). This becomes representative of the inner tumult which, in turn, results in behavioural, cognitive and emotional responses. Sue (2010) observes that several outcomes are foreseeable: healthy paranoia, sanity checks, empowering and validating the self, and rescuing offenders.

1.7.3.1. *Healthy paranoia.* This is an extremely common response and is believed to operate before, during and after the microaggressive incident. Because people of colour experience racial microaggressions often, they develop a healthy suspicion of the motives of members of dominant cultures. Survival becomes dependent on the ability to discern the true intentions of others. Healthy paranoia entails a recipient giving equal weighting to incidents from past experiences of discrimination and prejudice, instead of only considering what the offending person has done in isolation (Sue, 2010).

1.7.3.2. *Sanity check.* It is believed that one of “the greatest oppressive elements of microaggressions is in the form of microinvalidations where the experiential reality and racial... reality of targets [is] challenged” (Sue, 2010, p. 74). Power, according to

Sue (2010), lies in the ability of a group to define reality. Because most messages exchanged contain both an overt and a meta-message, the recipients often find themselves in double-bind situations, which allows for perpetrators to attempt to convince recipients that their message was well-intended, or that they are being too sensitive. Sanity checks perform three functions: reaffirming one's experiential reality, creating a likeness between the recipient and other recipients, and creating a group experience that leaves its members immune against subtle racism (Sue, 2010).

1.7.3.3. Empowering and Validating Self. Victim blaming is an act that occurs often. This begs the question of whether the plight of Black people is due to their inherent undesirable traits or whether blame should be allotted to bigger external environments. One of the defensive strategies utilized is to shift the blame onto the perpetrator rather than the target, which has been reported as being empowering (Sue, 2010).

1.7.3.4. Rescuing Offenders. This entails recipients excusing or justifying the actions of aggressors (Sue, 2010).

1.7.4. Phase four - Interpretation and Meaning. Interpretation, in this context, refers to how a microaggressive incident is construed, as well as considering what its significance is. These include construals such as: *you do not belong*, *you are abnormal*, *you are intellectually inferior*, and so on (Sue, 2010).

1.7.5. Phase five – Consequences and Impact. The impact of microaggressions is interwoven with both short and long-term consequences (Sue, 2010):

1.7.5.1. Powerlessness. This results from the inability to control the definition of reality. It also encompasses the double-bind problem recipients face when attempts are made to affirm their sense of reality. When a recipient reacts and points out a microaggression, they

are branded as being hypersensitive, and this inability to define and control the definition of reality leaves the recipient feeling impotent (Sue, 2010).

1.7.5.2. Invisibility. This consequence can manifest in many forms. Recipients of racial microaggressions may feel ignored, that their opinions are worth less, that their contributions are not as valued and that they are overlooked compared to their White counterparts (Sue, 2010).

1.7.5.3. Forced Compliance/Loss of Integrity. The need to think and behave in a way contrary to one's true beliefs can result in recipients feeling disingenuous and inauthentic (Sue, 2010). This leads to feelings of ambivalence, confusion and exhaustion as Black people navigate their daily lives in two worlds: the White world and their own world. Conforming to White standards can lead to tumultuous feelings, which are seemingly linked to the loss of the recipient's felt sense of integrity (Sue, 2010).

1.7.5.4. Pressure to Represent One's Group. One of the most often-reported consequences is the overwhelming perception that the recipient needs to represent their group well (Sue, 2010). They possess an intensified awareness of every shortcoming and fault and agonise what effect that has on the perception of their group as a whole.

1.8. Other effects of racial microaggressions

Malott and colleagues (2015) highlight that this subtle form of racism has been shown to result in various negative consequences and impacts, which affect the confidence, self-worth, and social-emotional and economic wellbeing of people of colour. Jones and Galliher (2014) state that experiencing racial microaggressions has been consistently and significantly linked to poorer health and mental functioning, as well as compromised social functioning and other negative outcomes. In some instances, it is argued that the more subtle, confusing and difficult to navigate a social interaction is, the more of a negative impact it has on an

individual (Jones & Galliher, 2014). Although racial microaggressions appear to be trivial in nature, Sue (2010) states that studies reveal major consequences for persons of colour. In particular, racial microaggressions have been found to (1) attack the mental health of recipients, resulting in anger and frustration, as well as emotional turmoil and low self-confidence; (2) create an antagonistic work or learning environment; (3) perpetuate faulty generalizations and stereotypical behaviours; and (4) provide social cues which allow for the devaluation of minority groups.

1.8.1. Racial Battle Fatigue. Because race is omnipresent, all racially subjugated people experience racial microaggressions (Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011). Smith, Allen and Danley (2007) contend that racial battle fatigue is a direct consequence of racial microaggressions, involving “the physiological and psychological strain exacted on racially marginalized groups and the amount of energy lost dedicated to coping with racial microaggressions” (Smith et al., 2011, p. 555). This comprises an interplay between psychosocial, psychological, physiological and behavioural responses (Smith et al., 2011). Smith and colleagues (2011) build on this by adding that Black people face oppressive agents and situations constantly, and this in turn limits their energy and time. Smith and colleagues (2007) note that these cumulative experiences create a chronic exposure to distressing situations. As a result, Andrews (2012) notes that Black students feel the need to neglect various aspects of their identities in order to fit in and succeed in predominantly or historically White institutions, thereby creating psychological distress in persons of colour.

1.8.2. Invisibility Syndrome. Franklin, Boyd-Franklin and Kelly (2006) discuss the experiences of invisibility syndrome by people of colour, which result from the cumulative experience of race-related stress caused by racial microaggressions. White privilege, according to the authors, is something which begins at birth and accrues over a lifetime. It therefore refers to the unearned privileges and power held by White people as a result of their

skin colour. By contrast, black people who hold less privilege and less power often find themselves in situations in which they find the need to protest unfair and unjust treatment. Their protests are often deemed unnecessary or unworthy because beneath their spoken words, they challenge White privilege. When consistently put in these sorts of situations, Black people feel as though they are undervalued and overlooked, and as if they are invisible. Facing these cumulative race-related and stressful situations, according to Franklin and colleagues (2006), results in Invisibility Syndrome. These authors highlight the severity of invisibility syndrome, noting that it has profound impacts on mental health. It has a negative impact on the self-efficacy and perceived self-potential Black people possess, and an under-utilization of their personal resources. Racial slurs fuel indignation and emotional turmoil as they are based upon beliefs and attitudes (Franklin et al., 2006). Thus, as people of colour are increasingly confronted with racial slurs inflicted by well-intentioned individuals, the mental health of the former is irrevocably affected as their personhood is disregarded.

1.9. Aim and Research Question

In South Africa, a growing level of distress affects people of colour who attend historically White institutions. By way of context, in 1948 the National Party, which was the ruling political party in the country at the time, established a formal system of racial segregation, which came to be known as 'Apartheid' (Laher, 2012). Laher (2012) suggests that Apartheid operated in order to ensure the reservation and preservation of social, economic and political privilege for White South Africans, where, on the contrary, Black South Africans were denied access to basic material resources, opportunities and freedom. Model C schools were, during this time of racial inequality, only accessible to White children. As the Apartheid regime came undone, segregation became intolerable and Black

children were integrated into these now former model-C schools. These schools continue to provide education of a high standard to anyone who can afford to attend them, though it brings racial differences to the fore as racial groups begin to interact. Jansen (2009) provides an explanation for why, even though born-frees (those born post-1994, after the dissolution of the Apartheid regime) have not directly encountered violent oppression, racial tensions still exist among young South Africans today. He suggests that historical knowledge is disseminated across generations, thus leaving both Black and White children with firm views about racial differences informed by the past. Jansen (2009) terms this *knowledge in the blood* – that is, knowledge handed down between generations, providing a lens through which children view the world. It is the experience of racial microaggressions among young South Africans I would like to investigate. Accordingly, the research question in this study is as follows:

How do former Model-C school learners speak about their experiences of racial microaggressions?

Chapter Two: Methodology

2.1. Research Design

This chapter presents the qualitative approach of this study by outlining the parameters within which a qualitative study is able to operate. Beginning with a broad demarcation of qualitative research, the chapter explains how social constructionism is consistent with the qualitative approach, and how this is congruent with thematic analysis as a data analytic method. My own position as a researcher and the implications of my identity are also discussed. Further, ethical considerations will then be examined.

2.1.1. Qualitative research. This study will employ a qualitative research design. This is because the qualitative approach is useful for gaining insight into experiences in context-specific settings (Ponterotto, 2005). Qualitative research utilizes the participants' own words to describe and understand a psychological event or experience (Ponterotto, 2005), allowing it to serve as a tool for capturing the "authenticity of human experience" (Silverman, 2013, p. 6). Accordingly, qualitative methods are appropriate for answering this study's research question as "it allows for participant-generated meanings to be heard through participant-led practices" (Chikte, 2012).

Silverman (2004) outlines three requirements that need to be satisfied which are related to the study of human activities:

- “1. the need for an empirical approach;
2. the need to remain open to elements that cannot be codified at the time of the study;
3. a concern for grounding the phenomena observed in the field” (p. 10).

2.1.1.1. The need for empirical research. Silverman (2004) asserts that this need is informed by the fact that the various phenomena under study cannot be deduced but rather require empirical observation. This, according to Silverman, aligns with

Durkheim's advice to treat social facts as things, implying that this is where it differs from the natural sciences.

2.1.1.2. *The need to remain open.* Silverman (2004) highlights the importance for researchers of remaining open to discovering the elements “making up the markers and the tools that people mobilize in their interactions with others and, more generally, with the world” (p. 11). This, Silverman notes, comprises the actual representations of the world, as well as the linguistic and paralinguistic resources in contact with the environment. The author outlines that the objective of this is to “distinguish between openness to new studies (in situ studies) and its opposite, as when individual activities are studied according to strict schedules and on the basis of previously defined items and rules (a priori codified studies)” (Silverman, 2004, p. 11). In methodological terms, Silverman (2004) explains, a study can be deemed as being in situ when it affords each subject with the opportunity to behave endogenously.

2.1.1.3. *Grounding observed phenomena in the field.* In order for a study to be ethnographic in nature, the data collector must be careful to connect what he/she is observing in light of the specific circumstances and physical environment, also considering the socio-historical and political climates of them (Silverman, 2004). These contingencies are crucial in order for qualitative research to be successful.

Relating the concept of racial microaggressions to an ‘autobiographic insiderness’ and to the chosen lens of social constructionism, one may discover how life experience, discourse, social interactions and ideologies dominate constructions. A qualitative focus on language, then, provides the opportunity to critically engage with the broader consequences that particular acts or events may produce, relative to current socio-political climates, times,

and spaces. Jones (1995) states that qualitative research attempts to “make sense of... phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 2). Thus, qualitative research rests on the premise that different people make sense of the world in different ways. This is consistent with the social constructionist perspective, which uncovers the way that meaning is created by different people in interaction. Qualitative research allows the researcher to delve into individuals' thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours in the way that individuals experience them, allowing them to speak freely, using their own vocabulary. In this way, the researcher is able to gain insight into how individuals make meaning of phenomena, without being restricted by certain language or forced-choice responses.

Because the ways that people interpret their social worlds are central to qualitative research, understanding the meanings that people attach to phenomena becomes possible only through qualitative research (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). Ritchie and colleagues (2013) note further that qualitative research provides an in-depth understanding of the social world of participants by exploring their social circumstances, beliefs, thoughts, attitudes and perspectives. Qualitative research is well suited to research that requires the explanation or understanding of social occurrences in their specific contexts. Moreover, a strong focus on voice and subjectivity in qualitative research allows the researcher to gain access to the authenticity of human experience (Silverman, 2013). Silverman (2013) advocates for the use of qualitative methods if one wishes to gain insight into people's everyday behaviour, which is useful for this study as it aims to explore racial microaggressions that are everyday occurrences for Black people who are socialized in historically White institutions.

2.1.2. Social constructionism. This study operated within a social constructionist framework, which is often used interchangeably with social constructivism (Coutas, 2009)

This is appropriate as social constructionism is an epistemological position which makes it possible to understand the ways in which day-to-day phenomena are the result of social interaction and shared meaning, relocating problems from the individual, “placing them directly into the realm of discourse, social relations, and the contextual decisions of the majority” (Zacko-Smith, 2007, p. 29). Durrheim (1996) argues that the impetus behind the turn to social constructionism is the realization that a predictive model of science has failed because it is not appropriate to the subject matter of psychology. The problem with the discipline, many agree, is simple: by remaining committed to a predictive science approach, psychologists have ignored the quintessential feature of being human, that is, the meaningful nature of our activity. The human subject has been treated as a natural scientific object (like atoms, molecules, gasses) which reacts in a mechanistic way to the environment. Instead of viewing mind and behaviour as ahistorical and asocial phenomena, a succession of critics has suggested that the subject of psychological investigation should be meaningful human activity.

Burr (2003) informs us, therefore, that “knowledge is...seen not as something that a person has or doesn't have, but as something that people do together” (p. 9). Hence when we encounter a phenomenon such as racial microaggressions, instead of locating the problem within the individual as traditional psychology prescribes, we challenge this view by looking at how it is a construction produced and reproduced through interaction. Raskin (2002) claims that constructionism focuses on the process of human beings creating and utilizing systems thus allowing for “meaningfully understanding their worlds and experiences” (p.1), which becomes crucially important to understand as individuals negotiate identities and create realities in response to their milieus. This may lead to a more thorough understanding of – in the context of this study – the way Black people are seemingly placed in relation to society rather than as part of society as a whole.

In the context of the proposed study, moreover, the idea that racial microaggressions are based on veridical categories of race can be challenged, with race itself being identified as a social construct that permeates society that results in race-based ideologies being woven into society (Ortiz & Jani, 2010). Such a social constructionist approach allows us to identify both dominant and marginalized discourses by understanding how society allows certain words to be given power over others, and how these discourses serve the interests of those in power. Muehlenhard and Kimes (1999) state that social constructionism provides a lens through which social problems such as racial inequalities may be explored. They suggest that dominant groups can construct events in ways that exclude their behaviour from interrogation and, consequently, what is defined as unacceptable serves the interests of those who are in power. Similarly, identifying the discursive enactment of 'racial microaggressions' permits the identification – and potential contestation – of hegemonic power configurations in society.

2.2. Data collection

2.2.1. Focus groups. Data collection was done by means of focus groups. Six focus groups consisting of between four and seven participants were conducted, with each session lasting for a minimum of one hour. A focus group is a variation of a group interview, which capitalizes on the amount and type of communication between the researcher and the participants (Kitzinger, 1995). Although individual interviews, surveys and observations have long been the preferred methods for the generation of reliable data collection in qualitative research, the risk of overuse arises (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). That is to say that the use of these methods risks only specific inquiries being asked and answered (Vaughn et al., 2013). The focus group, by contrast, brings together several participants for a discussion revolving around a mutual topic of interest (Morgan & Spanish, 2014). This method has been

espoused for the last eighty years (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009) and praised for its ability to identify “salient dimensions of complex social stimuli as [a] precursor to further quantitative tests” (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009, p. 2). One distinct advantage of the use of focus groups over individual interviews is the ability of the researcher to capture participants’ responses in real time within a context of face-to-face interactions (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). This method allows for the exploration of people’s perceptions, knowledge, attitudes and experiences as well as the rationale behind these facets (Kitzinger, 1995). In this way, the interaction becomes part of the method (Kitzinger, 1995) and, with the social constructionist focus on the individual in their social context, focus groups become a highly appropriate method for data collection. The focus group also allows for differing opinions and beliefs to be confronted, as they are often too complex for a forced choice response format (Banister, 2011) if one wishes to capture the essence as well as the reasoning given a certain topic.

Given that data collection is often longer in qualitative research, focus groups offer the advantage of economy, as many responses can be gathered in less time (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Onwuegbuzie and colleagues (2009) also credit focus groups with increasing participants’ sense of cohesiveness as they derive an identity through group membership, making it more likely that participants will feel less threatened when sharing their experiences. The biggest advantage of this method over other qualitative research methods is that when the group dynamics are productive, this allows for the participants to work alongside the researcher, steering the conversation and allowing the research to take on unexpected directions (Sim, 1998). Vaughn, Schumm and Sinagub (2013) explain that focus groups yield data that are astoundingly consistent with survey data. To arrive at this conclusion, these researchers conducted an item-by-item analysis and found a 97% correspondence in findings (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 2013). This confirms the fact that

a focus group allows the researcher to gain the same amount and quality of information of a survey, with added benefits which are unique only to focus group sessions. This group dynamic also allows for the researcher to familiarize themselves with the day-to-day rhetoric which participants engage in, as well as their interactions with each other and with the language used to perform jokes, teasing, arguing and anecdotes (Kitzinger, 1995).

The focus group method allows for the unearthing of social norms, values, and dominant social narratives, which is one of the main aims of qualitative research (Kitzinger, 1995). By analysing the operationalisations “of humour, consensus, and dissent and examining different types of narrative used within the group, the researcher can identify common and shared knowledge” (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 300). Focus groups are, moreover, a useful method when needing to be acutely sensitive to “cultural variables” (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 300), which is ideal when conducting cross-cultural research, as is the case with this research.

While the focus group as a data collection method offers many benefits, it presents some unique challenges, too. Kitzinger (1995) highlights the fact that the social group dynamics that allow for spontaneous response present the challenge that when there is a general group consensus, the dissent of one or few group members can be muted. Additionally, the mere presence of a moderator or facilitator threatens the integrity, as well as the confidentiality, of the session (Kitzinger, 1995).

Managing many different personalities and differing points of view can also be a challenge for the researcher (Banister, 2011). Striking a balance between the free-flowing conversation that this method offers and keeping the group on track presents its own difficulties for the researcher. Because of this, Banister (2011) suggests that the researcher assumes the role of a moderator in focus groups, the aforementioned limitation

notwithstanding. Though these are disadvantages, they are also what afford focus group discussions rich data (Banister, 2011).

In terms of rigour, the focus group as a data collection method lends itself to being similar to quantitative research methods in terms of selection procedures and participant information, in that it should include criteria for purposive sampling, how subjects were identified and included or excluded, how subjects were contacted as well as the response rate (Vaughn et al., 2013). While the generally accepted number of participants in a single focus group is recommended to be 8-12 participants (Sim, 1998), smaller groups are advocated for when studying sensitive topics. For the purposes of this study, data was collected by means of four guiding questions (see Appendix 1) after ethical clearance had been obtained (see Appendix 4) and participants had given informed consent (see Appendix 2). The focus groups were conducted in a private room in the University of Cape Town's Department of Psychology. In order to document the group discussions, an audio recorder was used, allowing for a fluidity of conversation that note-taking often hinders. Sessions typically lasted for a minimum of one hour during which all four questions were discussed.

2.2.2. The use of vignettes. Each session began with the participants viewing a vignette on racial microaggressions to gain an understanding of the term, as it is not one commonly encountered in everyday talk. This vignette is 3 minutes, 41 seconds in length, entitled *Racial Microaggressions: Comments that Sting* and was posted by The New York Times on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_85JVcniE_M). While widely used in social research, relatively little research is available on the use of vignettes as a data collection method in qualitative research (Barter & Renold, 2000). This includes all of the method, applications and the implications thereof (Barter & Renold, 1999). However, what the available literature “does clearly demonstrate is the ability of this technique to capture

how meanings, beliefs, judgment and actions are situationally positioned” (Barter & Renold, 2000, p. 308). Barter and Renold (1999) contend that there are three situations in which vignettes may prove particularly helpful: “to allow actions in context to be explored; to clarify people’s judgments; and to provide a less personal and therefore less threatening way of exploring sensitive topics” (para. 1). According to these authors, the use of vignettes allows for the participants to understand a specific situation in their own terms.

A vignette can be defined as “short stories about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances, to whose situation the interviewee is invited to respond” (Barter & Renold, 1999, para. 3). It can further be understood as “[c]oncrete examples of people and their behaviours on which participants can offer comment or opinion. The researcher can then facilitate a discussion around the opinions expressed, or particular terms used in the participants’ comments” (Barter & Renold, 2000, p. 308). Barter and Renold (1999) contend that the use of a vignette at the beginning of a focus group can facilitate a fruitful discussion amongst participants, and as such can be useful as an ice-breaker. It is cautioned not to ask participants how an individual in the vignette ought to have responded, as this does not necessarily reflect what the participant themselves would have done in the same situation (Barter & Renold, 1999). Some of the crucial aspects to consider when using vignettes is whether they are complementary to another data collection method or whether they are self-contained; in what light the story in the vignette is portrayed; how structured the responses are; and at which stage of the data collection they are introduced (Barter & Renold, 2000). The use of a vignette at the beginning of a focus group also allows for a rapport to be built (Barter & Renold, 1999), increasing the ease with which participants will participate. Vignettes allow a researcher to tap into participants’ feelings and attitudes. Here, the participant is able to gauge something about a cultural norm in response to a given topic or situation (Barter & Renold, 1999). This additionally affords the researcher the opportunity

“to explore participants’ ethical frameworks and moral codes” (para. 4). Vignettes are praised as being a complementary data collection technique to other methods and can be used to generate data on topics which have not been able to be studied in depth using other methods (Barter & Renold, 1999).

2.3. Sampling

A purposive sampling method was used to select participants. This was done to ensure that the sample was ideal and met the aims of the research. Coyne (1997) contends that all research which is qualitative in nature is purposeful. Devers and Frankel (2000) note that qualitative research, at most times, utilises a purposive sampling strategy for data collection. Implementation of purposive theoretical sampling is used when sampling is done based on availability, willingness to participate, as well as cases that are typical of the population. Terre Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim (2006) recommend this method as being congruent with qualitative design. This sampling strategy is appropriate as, in line with a qualitative approach, the findings need not be generalized but, rather, rich accounts of experiences are sought from individuals.

Purposive sampling is a form of deliberate sampling, which requires “deliberate selection of particular units of the universe for constituting a sample that represents [that] universe” (Kothari, 2004, p. 15). As Coyne (1997) contends, purposive research needs be directed at a specific purpose. The author explains that “[purposive] sampling is a practical necessity that is ‘shaped by the time the researcher has available to him, by his framework, [and] by his starting and developing interests’” (Coyne, 1997, p. 624). While this method of sampling can result in particular sampling where the emergence of new categories results in

the ever-specific sampling of categories, this study does not face this issue as all participants were chosen and data was collected prior to the recognition of themes.

In order to qualify for participation, the participants needed to be Black and in their first year of study at the University of Cape Town. They must have attended an ex-model-C South African high school. Individuals were identified through an advertisement (see Appendix 3) put out by the Department of Psychology's Student Research Participation Program (SRPP). This program, explained by the SRPP co-ordinator Lydia Wepener (2017) is one in which postgraduate students are given the platform to make contact with undergraduate students by means of having them participate in postgraduate research. Undergraduate students are rewarded with points in exchange for the time they take to partake in postgraduate research. Furthermore, undergraduate students must partake in postgraduate data collection, the amount of which varies by course, in order to earn a Duly Performed certificate for that course and thereby gain entry to the examination of that course. The program awards 1 point per 30 minutes of participation. This program also prohibits the giving of money or prizes as either a reward or an incentive. The requirement that each participant be in his/her first year of study was to facilitate easier recall of high school experiences. It was decided during the planning stages of this study, moreover, not to interview school-going children due to the various ethical issues involved that would have made it much more difficult to obtain the necessary ethical approval for the study.

2.4. Thematic analysis

After transcribing the discussions verbatim, a thematic analysis – which is theoretically robust and consistent with this study's social constructionist framework – was conducted in order to identify themes about racial microaggressions that emerged from the

experiences of these ex-Model-C school learners. Thematic analysis, in Braun and Clarke's (2006) view, should be seen as a foundational method in qualitative analysis. They assert that thematic analysis is theoretically flexible and, in particular, compatible with the constructionist paradigm in psychology. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis in a systematic and sophisticated way, revealing it to be a rigorous and robust data analytic method.

Thematic analysis is, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), "a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning across a data set" (p. 57). This method allows the researcher to "interrogate the latent meanings, the assumptions and ideas that lie behind what is explicitly stated" (p. 58). In my study, I attempted to delve deeper than what was explicitly stated to uncover the meanings and motivations behind the responses of the participants. I also utilized an inductive approach to thematic analysis. This is a strategy which is commonly used in the analysis of qualitative data (Thomas, 2006). This approach entails the use of raw data to generate themes (Thomas, 2006). Thomas (2006) explains that the researcher begins with an area of study and permits theory to arise from the data. This has the advantage of allowing the researcher to recognise emergent themes without the restraints of structured methodologies (Thomas, 2006). This is dubbed as goal-free evaluation owing to the fact that it permits the researcher to discover actual effects rather than only planned effects (Thomas, 2006).

In terms of the actual procedures that were utilized in analysing the focus group data, I followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) model for thematic analysis. Their six-phase approach is merely a method for thematic analysis and not an approach to research. The first phase, *familiarizing yourself with the data*, saw me becoming immersed in the data I collected by reading and rereading the transcripts of the focus groups. The second phase, which entailed *generating initial codes*, began with the systematic analysis of the data by means of coding,

which provided labels for the features of the data that I deemed relevant (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After I had identified the first code, I read through the data to find the next potentially relevant code. After deciding whether the same initial code could be used for this piece of data or whether a new code should be created for it, I reread the entire transcript to check that this had been done correctly (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thereafter, I set about identifying patterns in responses to each question obtained in the focus group, through the use of quotes and paraphrased ideas (Aronson, 1995). This is also known as *searching for themes* and is suggested as the third phase by Braun and Clarke (2006). This consisted of me reviewing the coded data and searching for overlaps between codes, which then generated themes.

Thereafter, I identified all data within the transcript that were associated with that pattern (Aronson, 1995). I then proceeded to phase four, *reviewing potential themes*, which involved a recursive process where the developing themes were reviewed in relation to the data I had coded, as well as in relation to the entire set of data. The penultimate phase, *defining and naming themes*, was where I decided what was unique to each theme, which resulted in descriptions of the themes that were not too ambitious, related but did not overlap, and that directly addressed my research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Here, I analysed the themes reflexively. The sixth and final phase, *producing the report*, involved writing up the themes in the form of a discussion (i.e. this dissertation), with supporting paraphrases and quotations used to support and substantiate my thematic analysis.

2.5. Reflexivity

The constructionist paradigm emphasizes the coproduction of knowledge between the researcher and the participants, accentuating the researcher's responsibility in the production of knowledge (Karnieli-Miller, Strier, & Pessach, 2009). It is recommended that in such a

relationship between participant and researcher, there is a need to create a balance between developing friendships with participants while maintaining boundaries that allow for the exercise of professional judgment. Reflexivity in research therefore encourages researchers to critically reflect on how their personal identity intersects with their role as a researcher and the effects that has on the research process, and on the type of data gathered as a result thereof (Chikte, 2012).

It is often the case that participants regard the researcher as enjoying superior knowledge of the topic of discussion. This may lead to participants being reluctant to answer questions, as they may feel embarrassed at not possessing what they think to be the correct answer. Correspondingly, participants may have viewed me as being more knowledgeable because of my position as a researcher and may have struggled consequently to converse freely in the focus groups. However, being a female researcher, female participants in particular may have found it easier to speak freely in my presence, as it has been noted that women are more comfortable and forthcoming with information when speaking with other women (Hollander, 2004).

As a coloured researcher, participants may also have found it easier to recount their experiences in my presence because they have felt I could relate to them, assuming me to have experienced similar discriminatory situations as them. However, being coloured and not African may have created a certain distance between me and African participants, as coloured people are often thought of as occupying a space of racial 'in-betweenity' that affords them opportunities to position themselves advantageously in racially inflected situations. Indeed, I have frequently felt that I am not White enough for my White friends, nor African enough for my African friends, and my own awkwardness around this – which I attempted to monitor carefully – may well have influenced the research process. Moreover, having attended a private school with no history of racial segregation meant that participants' revelations may

have presented a particular empathic challenge for me. On the other hand, being close in age to my participants assisted me, I believe, in earning their confidence as they may have felt that we had lived in similar times and therefore enjoyed a similar set of school experiences. In sum, the reflexive disposition demanded that I remained mindful of how my particular personal and social history intersected with those of my participants, and the impact my experiences may have had on the research process.

2.6. Ethical considerations

2.6.1. Informed consent. Autonomy, according to Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2001), is a mandate in research involving human participants. This principle demands that research be guided by justice, respect for participants and beneficence. The way this is achieved in qualitative research is by means of informed consent. The attainment of informed consent requires that the researcher strikes a balance between under-informing and over-informing (Orb et al., 2001). Additionally, this means that participants are given the authority over themselves to either accept or reject a request to participate in research. Consent, here, refers to “a negotiation of trust, [which] requires continuous renegotiation... Informed consent is dynamic” (Orb et al., 2001, p. 95). Accordingly, informed consent was obtained from the participants prior to the commencement of the focus groups. This was done by means of an informed consent form which was provided to the participants in a language understandable by them, in terms which were familiar to them (see Appendix 2).

2.6.2. Voluntariness. Participation in this study was entirely voluntary and no identifiable harm came to the participants, nor were there any negative consequences as a result of not taking part in the study.

2.6.3. Privacy and confidentiality. Participation was entirely confidential. No references were made to participant's names in the transcription process. Focus group discussions took place in a private setting. No information that might be used to identify participants was available in the final report. Only my supervisor and I had access to the audio files. Once transcription was complete, audio recordings were destroyed.

In a group-sharing situation, participants may end up sharing more than what they had initially intended with the group and this may cause anxiety or embarrassment for them (Barkhuizen, 2011). This was managed by ensuring that each participant felt secure that I would treat his/her responses as confidential. It was discussed in the groups that confidentiality was of utmost importance as each person should feel comfortable speaking in front of the next. Participants were reminded, however, that since confidentiality between themselves could not be guaranteed, they should therefore only divulge what was comfortable for them. On the other hand, the sharing process may also have proven to be cathartic as participants got to share feelings on a mutually relevant topic – hopefully without feeling judged – and hearing the stories or attitudes of others may have reminded them that the experiences they thought were unique to them, the ones they were embarrassed about, were perhaps common to them all. With it being a focus group, if respondents did not feel comfortable answering a question, they were able to keep quiet without feeling awkward, which is difficult to avert in an individual interview.

2.6.4. Debriefing of participants. Upon conclusion of the focus groups, the participants were debriefed. Here, the full reason for the study was explained, the participants' roles explained, and an opportunity given to ask any questions which were still of concern to them. No participants indicated any level of distress.

2.6.5. Significance. While South Africa places a large focus on reducing overt racist expressions, currently little research is being done with regards to racial microaggressions,

which underpin racial inequalities and shape the lived experiences of its citizens. The purpose of this study was to provide some insight into the lived experiences of students who experienced racial microaggressions in their school lives, such that efforts might be focused in this arena to disrupt everyday talk that perpetuates racism among young people.

Chapter Three: Analysis and Discussion

3.1. The second-class citizen: “Being Black means that I am inferior”

The first and most prominent theme identified was similar in nature to one labelled by Sue (2010), namely, that of the second-class citizen. This refers to the treatment of a Black person as less than a White person; the idea of Black people deserving less (Sue, 2010). This manifests itself in the differential treatment of a Black person from the dominant group, and sends the message that Black people cannot, and should not, occupy positions of high status. Sue (2010) classifies this as a microinsult, as it conveys an unconscious message to Black people that they are worth less, are less important, less deserving, and are deserving of discriminatory treatment because of the social and physical spaces they occupy. What is of importance is that, in these situations, often these actions and words are delivered unknowingly by individuals who would never deem themselves as being purposefully discriminatory. The discrepancy between what is experienced by the receiving Black person and what is intentioned by the dominant group is acute, as Black people are able to recognize these situations with ease. Participant A4² stated that “I just notice that being Black means that I am inferior, yes.” Spoken as matter-of-fact, this suggests that Black people are living in

² In this referencing system, each alphabet letter corresponds to a focus group according to the order in which the groups were conducted (i.e. A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4, E=5 and F=6). Each numerical value corresponds to the number speaker that participant was in that particular focus group.

realities where being Black is synonymous with being lesser than. Participant A5 adds to this, noting that the space Black people occupy and the spaces that Black people are allowed to occupy are prescribed to them, when he highlights that “that’s how he sees the standard of Black.” Here, the participant is cognizant that this is not in the realm of an objective reality, but rather of a subjective reality to which only White individuals are privy. This participant insinuates that they are able to recognise that this viewpoint is only enjoyed from the perspective of a White individual and is not necessarily reflective of the reality of a Black person.

Becoming aware that this is a shared opinion of Black people, participant A4 adds to her initial statement, noting explicitly that

[i]n South Africa, I see this hierarchy... being Black in South Africa means that as a Black child, I have to work hard because there is someone who is... on top, just because of their skin, because they are White...

At this point there was a general assent from the rest of the participants, prompting A4 to continue explaining that “...being Black means I am inferior and I have to work hard.” This participant picks up on her train of thought a little later, expressing the conclusion she has reached, which is “[D]on’t be Black.” Recognizing the salience of race and unrelenting oppression faced by Black students at historically White academic institutions (see Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007), participant A2 notes that this inferiority complex is not only a result of the external physical environment, but one that infiltrates and becomes innate, highlighting that “even Black people say... it’s become such an innate thing that we ourselves... make ourselves inferior and make other [White] race... above us even by the things that we say.” When further questioned regarding how, in this participant’s opinion, this process occurs, A4 took the opportunity to explain that “[B]ecause the environment, the atmosphere back then

[in high school] made me feel so inferior. Every Black child was just so inferior.” Participant B5 adds to this, explaining that “they [White people] almost associate Blacks [people] with stupidity.” In this regard, my identity as a Black woman may have allowed participants to identify with me, making them feel comfortable enough to share what they believed to be a common reality. This was made clear by hand gestures and often murmurs of assent, along with phrases such as, “you know?”

The dominant social narrative that Black people are underprivileged both socially and economically has its roots in something tangible given the tumultuous history of the country. This is a direct result of the economic and social oppression instituted by the Apartheid regime, as explained by Seekings (2012). However, the indiscriminate projection of this stereotypical idea onto every Black person is not always welcomed by Black people. Participant B3 notes the error of attribution, explaining that White people tend to paint Black people with the same brush, assuming their biggest problems are all economic. B3 said “not every Black person is under-privileged” and, in this regard, contests the idea that a Black person need always be on the receiving end of charity from White people.

In a similar vein, drawing further on the notion of the underprivileged, Black people view their access to social capital as being blocked by White people because social capital demands exclusion (Dottolo & Kaschak, 2015). B5, speaking about her schooling experience, states that “...in my school – in primary and high school – the leadership roles were often taken by White people alone.” This was, in the shared opinion of the participants across sessions, a direct result of the widely spread social idea that Black people are incompetent, and resultantly, only White people may occupy positions of authority and have access to the power that is consequently afforded to them. B4 substantiates this, adding that “our head girl got elected and she was, you know, Black. And I think um some people and some of the teachers, actually, would, like, treat her as incompetent. Just because, like, you know, she’s

Black...” This supports the notion by Andrews (2012) that in order to realize one’s ability to succeed, one must demonstrate resilience in a school system in which racism serves as a structural barrier. This, Andrews (2012) explains, is a manifestation of the more objective reality of racial oppression.

Because of a lack of confidence in the abilities of Black people, Black students are often viewed as being incompetent (Henfield, 2011). Sharing this sentiment, participant B2 described the moment of realization when he realized that there were no teachers of colour in his school. This participant went on to explain that, when attempting to count the number of teachers of colour, he made the startling discovery that the only Black people employed at his high school were “...the cleaners and the workers on the ground.” Similarly, speaking to the associated invisibility of Black people (see Henfield, 2011), participant B3 claimed that voting systems put in place in his school were not indicative of the meritocratic and democratic system the school suggested it valued and followed, as leadership positions in the school were not held by Black people. This participant revealed that “...we noticed they were vetoing our people,” undermining the premise of equality and equity at the high school. The same participant went on to describe the tangibility of the imputed inferiority of Black people, stating that when given a coveted spot on a prominent sporting team at high school and being shocked by being the only Black person on the team, the participant brought it up with his father, who responded to his son that he had earned a place because he was as good as them. This individual questioned his father, querying explicitly, “...as good as them? Or are they supposed to be better because... of their race?”

In aspiring only to achieve a level or status associated with Whiteness, participant B3 recounts that at high school, he spent much of his time striving to be “as good as them” because the internalization of White superiority was rife (see Harper, 2006), resulting in Black people being treated in their daily lives as being “...lower than them [White people].”

Adding to this, participant F5 discussed the idea of White skin being synonymous with being better: when she told a friend that she looked good in a certain colour garment because her skin was fair and the colour suited her skin tone, her friend thanked her. This participant realized that "...by her saying thank you, [she] insinuated that that was a compliment [about her being fair], therefore saying that if she was dark, it would have been an insult." In a similar vein, participant D7 expanded further on this, saying that "the Whites think they were... in a higher status than us." This association of Whiteness with superiority is further demonstrated when participant D6 recalled that at high school, "if I sit with my White friends, people say oh, you got upgraded," confirming directly the definition of racial microaggressions, that these acts "stem from unconscious attitudes of White superiority and constitute a verification of [b]lack inferiority" (Andrews, 2012, p. 5).

After reflecting on this point, participant F5 re-entered the discussion space:

"I hate when, like, just anything that um – that resembles Whiteness, they will compliment you on it," while behaving in a stereotypically Black fashion causes White students to question why the Black student behaves "...like that. They're saying that as an insult."

The hesitation noted in the 'um' indicates a level of discomfort, as the participant in that moment looked to her peers for reassurance to continue her statement. Similarly, D3 stated: "we just understood that okay, they are supposed to do that, we are not supposed to do that." This is a powerful description of a role to which individuals are assigned, which, usually, dictates the trajectory of their entire life experiences, reaffirming for the Black learner that only certain spaces are available to them.

3.2. “You surprise me!” – Patronizing ascriptions of intelligence

When people credit certain individuals as being out of the ordinary and exceptional in comparison with their race group – for example, through ascriptions of intelligence – this “contains an insulting metacommunication... [that] people of colour are generally not as intelligent as Whites” (Sue, 2010, p. 35). Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal and Torino (2007) assert that this form of discrimination can be considered to be a microinsult. As South Africa attempts to redress inequalities experienced by Black people under the Apartheid regime, entry quotas have been implemented in institutional life to ensure that Black individuals have access to opportunities (Stinglhamer, 2016). As a result, a common train of thought is that Black people are granted access to spaces of learning because of quotas that need to be filled rather than on the basis of merit. As a result, students’ self-esteem and confidence are affected negatively (Kessi & Cornell, 2016).

Black people, particularly speakers of indigenous African languages, are frequently assumed to be uneducated and less-intelligent than their White counterparts (Cokley, 2006). As such, participant A2 describes her ability as being questioned when she is asked: “Where do you come from? Because you speak so well.” This results from a pervasive social discourse that positions Whiteness and English as superior to anything associated with Blackness. Considering the dissonance encountered, and not having access to the language to express his experiences, participant A5 describes an event in which a seemingly non-racist White peer revealed his internalization and reproduction of this discourse. A5 explains how

I went to [X] High, it’s more like – was Boer³ environment back then, small town. Then this is the school I went to, and then in grade 10- I came there in grade 9, and then in grade 10 you get in- you get prize-giving, right? I was fifth. And then one group comes

³ Afrikaner; a person who participates in Afrikaans culture.

up to me... these White guys behind me mos⁴, and they were going to class. Marko comes up to me, he's a cool guy, he's nice, né. He's nice, he's not racial in any way, he's nice, friendly. He comes up to me, like, '[A5], you know the first time I met you, I thought yoh, here comes another 50, 40 percenter. But then you like- you surprise me!' And I was like, that's a back-handed comment. You know? It's a back-handed comment. And I know he probably didn't mean it in such a way, but [general agreement in the group] just because it- like, just because I'm Black, I look stupid.

It is clear that this participant, while speaking, recognizes the seriousness of the event. He realizes that what was once innocently filed away as something not racially charged, was, in retrospect and having been equipped with the tools to recognise discrimination, indeed discriminatory in nature. Boysen (2010) describes this cognitive dissonance as a tension one seeks to reduce when one's cognitive beliefs and reality do not coincide, and this reduction is achieved by trying to change mental representations in order to align them with one's experience, or vice versa. Here, this participant was attempting to navigate this experience which did not correspond to his mental representation of his friend, Marko, and reduced this tension by changing his understanding of the experience, mentally manipulating the event and concluding that it was a non-racist interaction. However, when, confronted with new information about racial microaggressions, he acknowledged this and experienced some discomfort when trying to make sense of it.

Another participant, A7, used the platform to recount an experience and enquire from the group whether they believed that what she had experienced was indeed a microaggression, as she was not sure that she had arrived at the correct conclusion. Being an Indian student, she described how another student said to her "...the best doctors and the best scientists are Indians!" at which point she wondered whether this statement was "...inherently racist." Some participants used this platform to discuss the erasure of accents associated with Black

⁴ Afrikaans word used colloquially, meaning "right".

people, resulting from an expectation to speak English in many social situations. While many people find those who speak in a foreign accent exotic, my participants detailed experiences in which accents associated with African-language speakers were inferiorised. This effectively makes intelligence contingent on a non-African accent, rather than the two being aspects that exist independently. Another participant added that "...by popular standard... people always compliment you if you can speak good English and aren't White." A third participant, D4, builds on this, explaining that

...I've always had this, um, kind of- this Whitish accent, you know, it's never been, like, so um- I don't know, South African... When I would, like, talk to a teacher, you know, and she would look at me, like, wow, you- you actually have, like, a normal accent. I- I was like, what? Normal? How is it, like, normal? So, like, you don't speak like everyone else? I was like, okay, I'm not everyone else.

Here, in order to be regarded as well-spoken, Whiteness once again becomes the standard.

In a similar vein, participant F3 retells a story from her own experience:

My friend and I- so we were at my mom's office actually the one- a while back, and we were just having a conversation and one of the colleagues came over and she's a White Afrikaans lady. And we were talking, then she was like, wait, wait, just stop for a second. So then we, like, looked at her 'cause we were having, like, our own conversation, and she was like, you guys speak beautifully, I didn't expect that coming from you! And we were like, what? And she was like, ya, I didn't-like, where- what school did you go to? And then we were like [the name of the school]. And then she's like, wow, you- you guys speak so beautifully. And she, like, looked genuinely shocked, and I looked at my friend and my friend looked at me and we were like, what?

Participant F7 took the opportunity to talk about a similar experience:

...same with me, like, if I speak, I know a friend of mine, her mom doesn't really have a filter, she kind of says what's on her mind, and um it was kind of like of the first time I'd met her. And as I was speaking, the same kind of thing happened. I was done speaking and she's like, you know, you're so eloquent, like, you have- you speak so well. And I was like, well, what does that mean? Like, what are you implying? Are you expecting me to speak another way?

Much like the vignette used to introduce the focus group discussions explained, when asked why individuals did not speak out against these racialized messages, their explanations included that they did not wish to offend and that it's easier to rather just say nothing.

3.3. #HandsOffMyCrown

This theme is classified as a microinvalidation (Sue, 2010) as it describes the nullification of the experiential realities of Black people, as well as how the physical and psychological linkages between race and hair are denied. Following the movement that began at Pretoria Girls High School in 2016, a pattern of systematic racism at schools was uncovered across the country (Ngoepe, 2016). Amandla Stenberg (2015) brought to the fore the relationship between Black culture and Black hair – that Black hairstyles were neither merely trendy nor fashionable, as was being portrayed in the media at the time, but rather served the function of keeping Black hair neat. Not long after the release of her video, in 2016, South African high school students, specifically girl children, expressed exasperation at the policing of their hair in schools (Ngoepe, 2016). Recognizing inherently racist school policies that outwardly seemed innocent, Black students articulated the racist outlook that these policies served (Ngoepe, 2016). Participant A7, for example, described how

...when it was the Pretoria Girls' situation, um a lot of us, like, looked at our code of conduct and, like- like the tone of the code of conduct and the underlying issues of

racism were so prevalent because, like, the whole idea of, like the hair, it was- it's basically stating that there is a norm, the norm is a White girl's hair.

Stenberg (2015) explains the importance of hair maintenance and styling in Black culture, which served as the basis upon which this movement was based. The #HandsOffMyCrown hashtag became the handle on social media which students and supporters alike across the country could use to share their stories. Similarly, my participants used the focus groups as spaces for sharing their experiences about hair. For example, participant A2 spoke about how the school had in place methods to measure

...the circumference of our bun. They told us how big our bun should be and they said that we should plait our hair around and leave it in the middle, so that our- our bun is like not so big, and they would tell us that we should cut our afros and dreadlocks as... African natural hair was not allowed. Like, we were asked... why don't you relax it? So imagine going from being natural to being like you, you're asking me to be like you, basically.

Participant A5 quickly added a similar experience from her high school, noting that

...they said you can't go from Black to blonde; or you can't go from blonde to red, like extreme ranges in colour. Then I came to school... [another White girl] dyed her hair, she was naturally blonde, I think, she dyed her hair Black. That's extreme mos, dyed her hair Black, it's fine. Right? So I came with my red braids and they asked me, you can't come like that to school, and I'm like why not? Because um you can't go extreme colours, like, she did her hair. But it's her real hair!... Then I took them out [the braids], I dyed my hair blonde. And she [the principal] said you can't come to school with your- it was my natural hair, okay, so it's obvious going to be brown, brownish-Black, then blonde. And she's like, you can't come here with the blonde hair. I'm like why? It's an extreme colour.

The problem here was that this was the participant's own, natural hair. The yardstick according to which hair maintenance was deemed acceptable, had been amended on the basis of skin colour. Participant B5 identified with this experience, detailing an experience at her school:

[I]n my community... there's not a lot of them [Black people] with natural hair, and when they see people with natural hair, they think it's disgusting. Revolting to look at. So bad. And so they'd always relax their hair and stuff like that, because they just didn't appreciate the beauty in natural hair. So ya, I just don't like how our- our- our society is so um- just so fixated on this um European ideal of beauty.

Indeed, across most of the focus groups, participants described experiencing discrimination on the basis of their hair-care practices. For example, three participants in Focus Group C articulated their experiences as follows:

C4: I had long, um, relaxed hair, and I had a bun, like where it is right now [motions to the middle of her head]? I'd have it here. And she [the Head of Department at high school] always told me to take it down, because um apparently people behind can't see um the overhead [projector]. I used to get sent to the office every time I had a bun on my head.

C3: In grade 11, I had an afro, and so um usually we have chapels- chapel services in the morning and they would check our hair and nails before we enter... the deputy principal, she came to me and said that um I should quickly ask someone to plait my hair, because I had combed it out. And I asked why? Because, like, this is the way my hair grows, you know, and I combed it. And she said that um it was just too puffy.

C6: the... principal... said that, um, Black girls only have Black hair, and that we don't- um, so the braids were wrong because they did not match the colour of my hair

[after the participant added brown braids to her natural hair], because all Black people have Black hair.

Similarly, in Focus Group D, participants described the problematization of Black hair:

D3: ...at my school, like, Black girls were told to tie our hair back. If your hair just reaches this height [length] you tie it back. Your hair was supposed to be Black. You find White people, this girl comes with highlights, lemon, green, pink, and no-one does anything to that girl.

D5: ...there was once a time where the principal like, called everyone- the- they actually literally made an announcement over the intercom, all girls with braids please come to the office. They were saying, like, why are you guys wearing braids? And then it's like, you shouldn't have them.

And again – this time in Focus Group F – experiences of discrimination against the hair maintenance practices of Black learners were reported:

F4: we had assembly, and then our principal said, all the girls that wear... their hair in braids, stay behind. So obviously it's the Black girls, 'cause we wear braids. And then she told us that, number one, our braids were littering the school-

F5: Oh my gosh!

F4: -and that our braids were starting to look like jump rope, because the- box braids were in that time, so then people were doing box braids... she said she didn't realise that she was being racist [when confronted].

While this issue was one faced mainly by female learners, their male counterparts reported similar experiences at their high schools. Participant B2 explained that,

funny enough... it's not only with girls now. We'd notice people's hair just got straighter, like, the coloured guys, their hair got straighter... a lot of the coloured boys feel that they have to act um White, and I mean act White in the sense that uh they would only say- they'd only date White girls, or they'd relax their hair. Uh or use some of the jargon, some White jargon.

...in my school, they used to have a rule where they said that you can't wear dreadlocks 'cause it's-it doesn't look neat enough. Or the thickness of your braids had to be small and not thick, so that it looks neat enough for their eyes, you know?

'Their' eyes refer here to the eyes of White people. This, once again, reinforces the notion of Whiteness representing an idealized standard. Black learners had their own cultures to draw from yet were consistently held to the standards of their White peers.

Participants also referenced the phenomenon of cultural appropriation, which featured strongly in the #HandsOffMyCrown movement. The sentiment here was that an obsession with what was on the heads of Black people represented a fetish – echoing a colonial era history that involved the relentless objectification of Black bodies (Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1994; Netto, 2005)– rather than an attitude of cultural respect or understanding.

Below are relevant excerpts from Focus Groups B, D and E:

B3: I get so irritated when White people try to copy that [Black culture]... this is not a-like, some fashion statement for you to say, like, oh, look at this new style I have. This is literally my hair, this is curls. Like, this is what it is, and I just- I get really irritated when um White people wear braids.

D2: ...my hair is long, so I got it all the time, can I touch your hair? My teacher said to me, um [XY]... I met this other Black lady and she said to me, if a Black person has long hair then she is mixed. And I'm like, no? I'm not mixed. And then some people would say, are you sure your parents are telling you the truth? It puts this doubt.

D4: ...like, almost incompetence on Black people's history, like, you can't go up to someone and ask them about their hair and touch their hair, and can you twerk for me, show me how to do this.

D4: ...so, like, Black girls usually wear braids, right? So this one time, like, this guy in my class, he tried to burn the braids, 'cause he wanted to see if it's- it's going to burn like normal hair would burn.

E3: something that I've experienced a lot at school is just with my hair? Just randomly having White kids walk up to me, and just start pulling on it, playing with it, touching it, asking me is this natural, what did you do? I wish I had hair like that.

3.4. The invisibilization of race and privilege

The fourth theme identified was that of invisibilization in which participants described how White learners resorted frequently to attempts at denying both the salience of raced experience and the existence of White privilege. According to Sue's (2010) classificatory scheme, such moves can be described as microinvalidations, the colour-blind stance representing, that is, a defensive unwillingness to acknowledge seeing colour. Pressure is exerted on Black people to not raise the question of race, which involves, also, "messages that indicate people of colour should assimilate and acculturate. What defines these as being microinvalidations is that while they are intended as maneuvers to defend White people and allow them to appear not racist, they convey the message that the lived experiences of Black people are not valid" (Sue, 2010, p. 38). Sue describes step by step how the denial of race involves ultimately the preservation of a racist *status quo*:

Denial of colour is really a denial of differences. The denial of differences is really a denial of power and privilege. The denial of power and privilege is really a denial of

personal benefits that accrue to certain privileged groups by virtue of inequities. The denial that we profit from racism is really a denial of responsibility for our racism. Lastly, the denial of our racism is really a denial of the necessity to take action against racism. (Sue, 2010, p.38)

For example, participant A7 explains her disagreement with the non-racial approach of the #AllLivesMatter movement in the following terms:

And you can't just say all lives matter, because yes, we know all lives matter!
[laughter] That's why we don't have to say it. But we have to say Black lives matter because Black lives are not being val- like, there's a reason why there's the Black lives matter [movement]. There's not an all lives matter movement because not everybody is being discriminated against.

Jesse Williams, a Black actor, in his Black Entertainment Television (BET) Humanitarian Award acceptance speech stated that

...what we've been doing is looking at the data and we know that somehow police manage to deescalate, disarm and not kill White people every day. There has been no war that we have not fought and died on the front lines of. There has been no job we have not done. There is no tax levied against us – and we've paid all of them. But freedom is somehow always conditional. (Williams, 2016).

Williams foregrounds the struggle of Black people and proceeds to offer a commentary on the ways in which Black bodies have been treated and mistreated in the past, which stands in complete contradiction to the contribution they have made socially, culturally and economically, both historically and in contemporary society.

Returning, then, to the relegation of considerations of race, participants in Focus Group B described how their White peers at school would invisibilise race:

B2: ...for example you'll be talking about something racial in- obviously in your- In your ethnic group. If coloured- if... guys are talking, and then a White guy will, like, overhear, and he says, like, why... are you looking at colour? They almost- almost, like, guilt trip, like – why are *you* looking at colour. I don't see colour. I'm colour-blind.

B3: I hate that. I get so pissed off.

B2: -like, they are telling you to stop looking at colour, or like, it's not important, ah, Apartheid is over, you're not supposed to see these things. But the- I don't think they don't realise that we see- we see these things at home, like, our parents still talk about these experience[s] of what happened.

B5: I know that, um, when they say you don't want to see colour, I feel like your race is part of your identity and it's something that should be valued and shouldn't be ignored. Um, so I don't really like White people saying I don't see colour or anything. They say it a lot on- online.

This exchange is a vivid representation of the disavowal of race by White learners.

Participants described becoming increasingly wary of the mythologized idea of a colour-blind society, such as participant B3, who shared the following experience with the group:

B3: [T]his guy's just like- this White guy is like, talking about how, like, there is no um White privilege, and I just looked at him. I was like, bru⁵, like, are you being for real right now? [The White learner responded that] there is no White privilege, like, I came from a background where we had to work for things, and I was just like, listen here, bru, it's not only about money, like, you need to understand that it's a colour thing.

B2: Like, they- they try to go around it, maybe?

B3: Yes, like, it's about stigmas and stereotypes that they are not- they are never, ever, made to feel inferior because of the colour of their skin. I'll never, ever let someone say that to me, that- that- that White privilege is, like, not a thing, because it's absolute bullshit.

⁵ Slang word for 'brother.'

In Focus Group F, participant F5 voiced a similar sentiment, that “I think the worst thing as well is, like, when White people say, ‘I’m poor, I can’t- I don’t have any White privilege.’ It goes so far beyond that.” Fellow participant F7 concurred in the following excerpt:

F7: [M]y White friends choose not to listen. Like the other day, um, I was trying to explain, as best as I could, or how I understood as, White privilege, to them and why we’re different, and, like, why we didn’t go through the same things. And it doesn’t click for them, it’s like, ya, but that doesn’t make sense. I’m like, but it does!

Feeling annoyed, participant B3 highlighted how White privilege remained contested by some White people (see McIntosh, 1988). To be sure, White privilege is not primarily about economic status but also about the social capital afforded to White people (Atwood & López, 2014). Sue (2010) confirms that the privilege of living in a world where colour does not affect lived experience is one not afforded to Black people. Participant C3 describes just such an event in the following excerpt:

C3: A boy who was actually my friend called me a half-breed once in class, and I went to the deputy [principal] and she was also White [like the boy], and [I] reported it and she was laughing, she was like, you know, he must have been joking, he couldn’t have meant it- and so I felt crazy, I was like, okay, I am being dramatic, like, she’s right, he couldn’t have. Um, and it was years, years, years later when I thought about it... and I was so angry, I took offense!

In this example, the existence of a racial inflection to this learner interaction is placed under question, making the Black learner doubt whether the interaction is in fact racially charged. The Black learner is made to believe that it was framed in another light and intentioned

differently, with the blame inadvertently being placed upon the Black person for misreading the interaction.

Participants suggested that such rationalizations were used defensively by White people – but that this overcompensation to not appear racist, paradoxically, only made Black learners even more uncomfortable:

E2: [E]ven if they're not racist but they want to maintain that thing of not being racist, because at times, you're walking past a White person and then they smile at you randomly, like [laughter]- even if they're not racist, they just don't want to be racist in a way, so they, like- I don't want to say overdoing it, but they just don't want to be racist.

E3: They're trying too hard to compensate. [General agreement in the group]

It became clear that some participants doubted the sincerity of White learners, describing – in the following two excerpts from different focus group discussions – how the latter appeared to relate to the anti-racism struggle in almost narcissistic fashion. In this way, when the issue of race was acknowledged by White learners, it was done so in a manner that invisibilised Black agency:

E3: ...White kids just don't understand and then... they all act like they- yeah, it's wrong what happened to Black people, it's wrong what's going on and all stuff, and they try to act as leaders of that movement, it's kind of, like, guys, sit back, this has nothing to do with you, this is our battle. But then they'll just keep on trying to relate the situation to themselves, like, almost trying to diminish your problems.

F2: I had a White acquaintance, and she used to go on about White privilege and how- when the RMF (Rhodes Must Fall) protests were going on last year, she used to talk about those all the time, and then the thing that annoyed me so much was just like my- I had my family here, they were talking about how at some point things went out of hand. And I said... it's not entirely your place to just be talking about this, 'cause you

can say. "I'm totally for the RMF things, I'm totally for this and that", but in the end you go home to a home in Constantia. You're not one of the students who's literally risking their entire university career to- has to either go home to a township, maybe, who doesn't even have food at the end of the day. You're, like, getting in with this um- I don't want to s- it's as if, like, when Black people, people of colour, when they try and stand up for themselves, it almost becomes like a fashion or a fetish to say you're in with this crowd of people who are against the problems. [General agreement]

F4: I feel like people are using it for aesthetics now... [a]nd it's sad, because it's, like- these- it's actual people's struggles, like, people cannot afford to come to university, and they are fighting, and then you get people that are like, ya, I'm with you-

F7: But I'm not there with you.

F4: Exactly! I'm with you for the pictures so people can say that, ya, I was there too.

3.5. Morphing bigotry or innocent preference?

An interesting theme to emerge from the focus group discussions had to do with participants' preference for socializing with Black learners, and their musings on whether this represented a type of morphing bigotry or, conversely, an innocent attempt at finding someone 'like me.'. Participant A4, for example, when asked whether the decision to be around people who are more 'like me' represented a matter of preference or constituted a form of racism, explained the choice as follows:

A4: I do have friends that are White, but then some[times] I just- we just don't click. We just don't like.

A5: I think, né, it's the way you were raised. If your parents install a sentimentality in your mind, you will stick with that mentality until Jesus comes and changes it.

A7: I think maybe you cl- maybe we click, like, with certain types of people because... our upbringing, but also, I think because of Apartheid, people were grouped together, so Indians, Blacks, Whites, Coloureds and so forth, and people had this sense of

community, they were raised in a c- different way, like, for example, my White friend has different values than I do.

This exchange in Focus Group A is a fascinating reference to what Jonathan Jansen (2009) calls 'knowledge in the blood,' a set of blueprints informing attitudes and social interactions where historical information is passed down inter-generationally – a separate theme discussed later in this chapter. When discussing the physical setting of a classroom, for example – as in Durrheim and Dixon's (2005) study – one participant observed a form of racial segregation:

B3: I walked in... coloured people were sitting together, White people, and the Black people were sitting- you all just- you- like, people just automatically went to their own race. I think everyone has said that that's what happens. The- every time they walk in... they just go to their own race group.

B4: I think it- you go to what you identify, or feel comfortable. Maybe.

B5: An unintentional bias towards your own race.

B2: Almost like you feel safe there. 'Cause you don't want to- you don't want to sit in a place where you think that you might feel judged [general agreement]. Are they [White people] supposed to be better because- 'cause- 'cause of their race? And I intentionally didn't want to be in- in that environment, because I felt almost unsafe.

This excerpt demonstrates almost visually the continuum between unconscious racism and racial preference. In a heavily racialized society such as South Africa, a palpable anxiety is present in interracial interactions, as demonstrated in the following excerpt:

B2: I think it's almost masking, like, a fear. Like, you won't know what to say. Like, I- my father was- was- was very- he worked with a lot of Black people, so every time he'd see a Black [person] he'd say, "ya, hi chief, morning chief."

Even my own identity as a Black female researcher afforded me access to information that I may not have obtained otherwise, had I not been a person of colour:

E3: I feel just a genuine discomfort around White people. I was low-key so glad when you walked in, 'cause I was thinking, like, the entire time, is this girl White or? Um, and just when- when you talk to them, there's a way that they communicate with you, and look at you, and they'll say things and it sounds so patronizing.

While debating whether such preferences represented an unconscious form of racism, participant C3 voiced her opinion as follows:

C3: I think it's also the fact that when you come into a new space, you- you want something- or you crave something that's similar. Yeah. You don't want to just come somewhere, like, everything is unfamiliar and then now you also have to change yourself to fit in. No.

Participants in Focus Groups C, D and E voiced similar sentiments:

C2: I think it's more along the lines of, I can sense my- my different-ness, like, I- it's too obvious [agreement in the group]. It's obvious that it's off-putting, and I'm just like, you know, it I'm sensing it this much, they probably will as well, and you can also sense how closed off they are as well, so you just, like, might as well, not really try. Not preference, just- it's there; you can feel it.

C7: I think it's a bit of both, 'cause, like, you- you do find those people who are, like, genuinely willing to engage with you regardless of your skin colour, but sometimes you just really find, like- especially 'cause a lot of the White people in my school were Afrikaans speaking, so with them, um, sometimes you could just feel that they're so racist in every little thing that they do, like, when you're walking past a corridor, she'll

move a bit to the left just to be a bit further away from you. So you would experience such things, so I guess it's a bit of both to me.

D7: In my school there was segregation, so I used to stick with my Black friends, not the Whites. 'Cause the White[s] think they were- were in a higher status than us... they would separate themselves from us so we were always segregated.

D6: Similar thing also at my school, it happened a lot, like, in class; it's different people interact with each other but at break time you can see the different race groups. You see the White people sit together, the coloureds and the Blacks. Maybe sometimes coloureds and Blacks sit together, but you never see White and- like, you don't see all three in the same group [including Indian learners].

E3: If you were, like, forced to sit next to them and obviously they'd be all buddy-buddy with you, and as soon as you walk out, [clicks tongue].

E4: I think it's like, a thing where you know you get along and everything, but, uh, somehow you know that you're always going to go back to your Black friends and they're always going to go back to their White friends.

This theme highlights the paralyzing double bind that Black learners face when confronted with the dilemma of integration. Regardless of their personal values, the social spaces in which they move are raced and filled with anxiety. Accordingly, should a Black learner decide to integrate, he or she may have to contend with a variety of demeaning remarks – as in the excerpt below – but on the other hand, should he or she opt for the familiar company of fellow Black learners, then racial divisions are perpetuated:

D6: I think it's a- it's a lot easier to make friends with someone if they've got a similar background. But I- at my school people judge you a lot so- like, if sometimes, if I sit with my White friends, people say oh, so you got upgraded.

3.6. Under-representation of Black staff and learners

In general terms, participants noted the fact that there was little representation of Black people in their schools. Compounding the situation further, Black people did not have the social capital to access leadership positions in their schools. Not only were Black students restricted in this way, it was reflected also in the positions occupied by staff – demographically speaking – in the schools. In Focus Groups B, D and F in particular, participants described the lack of Black learners in leadership positions:

D6: ...in my grade, it was no Black prefects, just White.

Interviewer: And how did- who chose the prefects?

D6: The school votes, and all the teachers. But I think it's difficult because we had, like- in my grade, we had, like- there was, like, five Black people, so it's difficult to pick, I guess... and maybe they could at least include one or two Black people of out the five. So usually, what happens is, the most popular people get voted as prefect, they don't know what- what academics, so- so, like, there's five Black people, and like, the rest- like, the rest is White. Obviously, the White people is going to be more popular, so, that's why they get voted in.

D7: Ya, in school it depended on how intelligent you are, and uh in terms of if you pass the interview, because we were being interviewed speaking English, if you speak fluently and you don't mess up anything, ya, you'll be given the leadership role but, if you fail, that was bad. 'Cause the ratio, it was... 70% of the prefects were White, and then 30% were only Black. But they did not get into senior, like, senior prefects and stuff, you know?

F3: ...in our Matric year there were only four Black girls.

F4: And then with leadership, we've never had a Black prefect. I mean, head girl. We've never had a Black- it's always White. Never, ever, since the school started, they've never had a Black head student.

F5: ...I think it's... like, 100 years old? Ya, no, it's like 150 years old. The school. And last year was the very first time that girls of colour was elected as a head girl. It was a

Black girl and the vice head girl and the vice head girl was a Coloured girl. That was the first time ever that that has ever happened. And literally the entire school went crazy, but, like, in a good way, like, every- like, there were girls, like, crying and it was- it was so intense, like- 'cause I think it was also around the time where people were speaking about these issues.

F7: ...every grade was allowed to kind of pick 15 names out of the Matric... it's not like we're voting for this person, and every time this happened, it was always four White heads of school. Always. It was never like- we never had, like, a mix, until I think last year as well, when we had our deputy head boy [who] was Black. And it was, like, kind of the first time as well.

B5: ...in primary and high school, the leadership roles were often taken by White people alone. And really, we lacked any Blacks, Indians, or any other race besides White.

B4: ...I was on the prefects' head school- head of school things, and our White girl- I was deputy, and um our head girl got elected and she, you know, Black. And I think, um, some people and some of the teachers, actually, would treat her as incompetent. Just because, like, you know, she's Black and whatever... [j]ust because she identifies as that colour.

B2: ... A lot of the leadership roles were taken by- by White guys. And there was, like, one or two Coloured guys. And obviously over the years, I've seen, like, obviously the amount of Coloured guys just gets slightly bigger, slightly bigger. But what I realized with that is, you'd have to be an almost- be elite of the most elite of the Coloureds to be able to reach that point.

In their study, Brooks and Jean-Marie (2007) describe a similar reality, that the problem of under-representation is still rife in schools where it remains the proverbial elephant in the room. Recognising a need for transformation, participant D3 detailed how learners' active struggle for change could result in better racial, cultural and ethnic representation:

D3: ...if we did not get what we want, we would resort to other measures. You put a White person on the seat, we do not like that. No matter how intelligent that White

person is, no. This is a democratic South Africa, put a Black person! But then it also comes down to that- you have to have *that* English.

Moreover, when asked about the racial composition of staff bodies, participants across a number of the focus groups described comparable situations in which Black staff was significantly under-represented at these ex-Model C schools:

D4: Whites, and then we had a Black- I think it was a rugby coach. And that was it.

D6: Ya, for us, mostly White as well. Four Coloured teachers, and then, like, two Blacks. But then principal's White, and all the deputies are White.

D7: It was Whites. Only Whites. [Laughter]

D2: ...most of the teachers were- were White, and then there were, like, a few- not even- there were, like, I don't know, they were very- there were few Blacks. And then I remember when they said that next year, there's a Black principal coming to [Z High School]. And like, people were like, oh no! That can't happen! Like, imagine, this school is just going to go down, it's going to fall, it's going to- so, no. I don't think they would trust a Black person in that position of, I don't know, of being a principal in this school. I don't know why, but they don't take them [Black people] seriously.

E3: Most were White, and then we have few Black, ya, here and there.

E4: ...we had maybe about nine teachers of colour? Out of, like, 40-odd.

E3: ...like, maybe out of 50 we had two Black, maybe four Indian, and the rest were White. So you could definitely see [the under-representation].

E5: I would say mostly White as well.

E2: All White.

Interviewer: You as well?

E6: Oh no, mostly White.

F4: At my school, we only had one Black teacher. She taught isiXhosa, but she had- she could- she could teach other subjects, like, she had a degree for other subjects, but she taught isiXhosa.

F2: ...with my school, um sort of the teacher structure, uh- my entire Physics department were all Coloured Muslim people. Like, realizing it now. Um we only had one Black teacher, he was teaching Xhosa... I don't think there was ever another Black teacher there.

B2: ...what colour teachers are there? Even in high school. None. Well, the cleaners- the cleaners and the workers on the ground are Coloured. And then in my Matric year, we- they did get- they finally got uh a Coloured staff member, but he was a librarian. And we thought, like, why- why- why- there are so many good Coloured teachers out there, like, why- and we noticed all the students we got as well were White, like the student teachers were all White.

A6: ...my school all the teachers were White, and majority was actually Afrikaans, so a lot of comments that teachers would make would be like, this is not the township and things like that, so ya, that was kind of deep.

C3: In my school, it was mostly White teachers, and maybe, like, five teachers of colour. Ya. Like, one Black person, two Coloured, one Indian and the mixed one.

C4: ...there were, like, literally only two Black teachers, and it was because they taught [isi]Zulu. But it was just White, Indian. Ya.

C3: ...in the staffroom, they would be, like, segregated there.

To be sure, the reported lack of Black learners and staff in positions of authority intersects with earlier themes in this chapter that documented certain discriminatory practices at some ex-Model C schools. In other words, without adequate representation of Black staff and learners at these schools, it becomes very difficult indeed to imagine – let alone create – institutional climates that will be experienced as welcoming by a majority of South Africans.

3.7. Cultural assimilation

Previous studies have detailed how, in post-Apartheid South Africa, White subjectivities remain normative by assuming hegemonic status as both “normal and appropriate” (Steyn & Foster, 2008, p. 26). The implication is that pressure – whether subtle or explicit – is exerted over Black people, who are then ‘nudged’ into becoming more Eurocentric, rather than embracing and celebrating their own cultures. In the following excerpt, for example, an exchange in Focus Group A describes just this kind of pressure to adapt to White standards of beauty:

A2: But now you can just bleach your skin, it’s a trend. [Laughter] And that bleaching of skin thing, it’s also kind of, like, people trying to- going to extremes, trying to be White. Why? It’s like, I’m going to- I’m going to bleach my skin, then I’m going to put on my weave, you know... [t]hey’re trying to put on the weave, be bleached, be proper White. You know? Trying to fit into [a mould].

A5: ...for some it is standards of beauty but there was this thing... yellow bone, people who are lighter are prettier.

A3: I think most standards of beauty, I think for mostly every race uh lean more towards being fair, being White, besides even White- even in the White race.

Another example of cultural assimilation – expressed across several focus groups – involved several participants who detailed the awkwardness they felt around language use and, in particular, the adoption of White accents. This implied a felt dissonance among Black learners regarding the appropriate enactment of identities (see Steyn & Foster, 2008).

A2: I’m like yoh guys, it’s a public holiday, can I just abstain [laughter] from English just for once? Because- I’m like, why can’t I just answer in my own language and she

just gets the point? Because just fitting in all the time, in Eng- it's just- it's so frustrating being English all the time, it is.

A4: Oh, my goodness!

A2: I can't!

A1: Um just to sort of feel like I needed to- to fit in, and not be the sore thumb, I used to speak with a White accent. It was very tiring for me [laughter] because you get home, and it's a whole different life. And then your friends want to visit- the stress, it's overwhelming, 'cause how are you going to talk, your mother's there and there's a friend [laughter], like, what is going on? And just carrying that stress, and, like, every single day for years, five years of high school is a long time [agreement in the group] to carry that um until you feel comfortable enough to just- and that only happened for me in varsity when I moved away and just met completely different people.

B2: ...I'd still feel a sort of discomfort, because as- as White as my other family are, they- they almost speak Coloured, so they- they talk ya, [Coloured accent], but- but they're White. So I was always familiar with that way of speaking and then when I came into school, and they're like, okay cool. I went- I did go to Cambridge for a while, and then I developed this- this accent, and then when I went to go visit my mother then, they're like, why- why are you talking funny? Why- why you talking White?

B3: ...when I was in grade eight, I noticed this, this annoyed me. To the fact where, like, I started speaking differently [speaking White].

A3: ...I noticed I a lot of u, older- um older generations and um kind of our generation, where um people- Coloured people and I also noticed Black people, kind of like change who they are, usually, with their other friends, just to be- and fit into that um group that they are with at the moment, which could be, like, they are White. So they're like, ya, no, like this, and so we like, talk, and, like, ya [White accent].

A5: ...I hate it when people underestimate a certain race by how they talk or the language they speak. Um in my school they said, okay- 'cause we only had to speak Afrikaans or English. So when a student would speak uh siSwati, they'd be like, don't speak that language... [a]nd it always bothered me, how English is seen as such a superior language compared to all the others, all the other languages.

E3: ...my accent has definitely changed, it was more a subconscious thing. My parents would also make comments, like, at home, they'd be like, you sound different. Um and it upsets me that it- that did happen, but ya.

E5: ...they change their accent and they slow it down, that seems like they're talking to somebody who's, like, not educated, like- like you don't understand, like, you're foreign to them, and, like, they're trying to associate themselves or like get on to your level. So that's what it seems like, like, we're lower than them, in a sense.

3.8. Knowledge in the blood

Although young South Africans never lived during the Apartheid system, Jonathan Jansen (2009) describes a process of inter-generational communication that results in born-frees thinking and behaving *as if* they were alive during the Apartheid years. Jansen (2009) terms the knowledge that is passed down from one generation to the next, 'knowledge in the blood,' which allows him to make sense of the ways in which young South Africans enact a brutal past of which they were never a part. By the same token, it became evident in several focus group discussions that Black learners and their White counterparts were mobilizing inherited knowledge that structured their value systems and behaviour, and what was equally clear was that, in some instances, this knowledge was embodied in almost unconscious ways. In the following exchange in Focus Group A, however, Black learners recognize the transmission of racial knowledge from parents to themselves:

A8: Uh okay, I just want, like, to say uh yes, we always... I think we are just, like, conditioned, like, the way- it doesn't change, we still- racism is still there.

A5: I think né, it's the way we raised. If your –parents install a mentality in your mind, you will stick with that mentality unless Jesus comes and changes it... [s]o if- if

someone- say- if someone if born and told, this is how it is, and feel sorry for those people because they didn't have a choice to make that decision, you know?

A7: I think maybe you... click... with certain types of people because, like you said, our upbringing.

In this excerpt, another participant in Focus Group A reflects consciously on the fact that the experiences of past oppressed generations lives inside him:

A5: ...I'm not going to say, okay, because I've been through it, my bloodline- who I am today is who I was before, angithi⁶? It's who I was before. So my bloodline, I don't care if I know who were they 400 years back, it's still in my blood, they've been through, probably one of them, some of them could've died under slavery... it affects you, even though you don't know what they've been through, you think about it, it's something that's in you. You know it.

Inevitably, such 'knowledge in the blood' reinforces racial stereotypes that are drawn upon by learners as they attempt to process and interpret social cues. For example, participant E3 (below) explains how the experiences of his oppressed ancestors – despite these not being his own, personal experiences – structure his mode of interaction with, as it were, the oppressors' descendants:

E3: It's kind of also like this whole reverse racism debate. Um I don't think it is, it's just because of what's happened to people of colour in the past, that you feel wary around- like if you get bitten by a dog you're going to be wary of dogs, if you were enslaved by a group of- your ancestors were enslaved by a group of people, you're going to be wary of that group of people.

⁶ isiZulu meaning 'isn't it?'

On the other hand, the powerful influence of this 'knowledge in the blood' appears at times to be exercised unconsciously. For example, in Focus Group F, participants discuss the issue of interracial attraction, which, instead of being attributed to a latent 'knowledge in the blood,' is explained matter-of-factly as a question of conscious preference:

F8: Also, like, when White people say, oh coloured people are so attractive, like, as if they're not attractive, and also like-

F4: It's a fetish, it's like you're almost a fetish.

F8: And like- they would, like, say, oh, like, I only like coloured girls but I- but they would only, like, like a certain coloured girl

F2: ...a friend of mine, actually, I'd known him for years. And he said, I could never find a Black woman attractive... And I kept telling him, like, I was kind of, like, that's- think about what you're saying there. Like, think about what you said there. And he didn't understand, he was like, it's just my preference.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

This thesis aimed to explore and analyse ex-model-C school learners' experiences of racial microaggressions. The results of this study indicate that the ways in which South African learners experience racial micro-aggressions differ in certain respects from those of past studies. Interestingly, learners' experiences presented more viscerally than psychologically until such time as they became equipped with the necessary vocabulary to articulate adequately their experiences. In this concluding chapter, a summary of the findings from this study will be presented. Thereafter, the social implications of the study will be discussed. The chapter concludes with an account of the study's limitations and suggestions for future research.

4.1. Summary of findings

The experience of racial microaggressions is not limited to certain members of certain groups. These experiences are cumulative and affect Black individuals both consciously and subconsciously. While some of the identified themes invite parallels between this study and the findings of studies already conducted in the Americas and Europe, such as being made to feel like a second-class citizen, patronizing ascriptions of intelligence, and the invisibilisation of race and privilege, other themes appear to be – relatively speaking – more pressing in the South African setting. These themes – #HandsOffMyCrown; morphing bigotry, or innocent preference?; under-representation of Black staff and learners; cultural assimilation; and 'knowledge in the blood' – appear to reflect issues that are especially salient in the South African milieu.

This can be attributed to the unique history of South Africa, in which the Black majority was – and, in an important sense, still is – economically and socially oppressed by a White

minority. As a result, talk of a 'rainbow nation' and its allusions to equality or tolerance can have the ideological effect of smoothing over, in a manner of speaking, deeply troubled waters. I am referring to lived experiences that, frequently, remain largely unnamed though widely felt, and this is what we have come to know as racial microaggressions.

Both the participants and I entered our discussions with preconceived ideas and expectations about what we imagined might unfold; thus the meanings created in the focus group settings can be said to have been co-constructed between myself and the participants. This created a site where both participants and myself could examine historical, seemingly well-intentioned incidents for what, in many instances, they instead appeared to be: acts that involved, quite fundamentally, racial discrimination.

Through shared meaning-making participants were able to establish a vocabulary specifically pertaining to racial microaggressions that they did not previously possess. This allowed for them to delve into previously unexplored meanings behind their experiences. In this way, several participants reported how interactions they had perceived as being personal and occurring in isolation were actually commonplace among their peers.

In the first theme, *Being Black Means I am Inferior*, Black participants started to distinguish between routine interactions and racially inflected ones at their respective schools. Here, racial microaggressions were experienced in the form of negative feelings that participants reported as a consequence of being treated as 'less than.'

In the theme, *You Surprise Me*, participants detailed how, as learners, they were ascribed the trait of intelligence as *individuals* who were not representative of their racial groups. Participants described how instances in which they demonstrated any kind of excellence were seen as extraordinary. Participants' excellence seemed conditional in the sense that they did not exhibit what was – in the eyes of their White counterparts – the expected level of

distinction; rather, their performance rendered them exemplary and therefore exceptional apropos their racial identities.

In the theme, *#HandsOffMyCrown*, many participants described incidents involving discrimination against Black learners on the basis of their hair maintenance practices. Such experiences attest to the ongoing problematization of Black bodies that resonates powerfully in colonial histories around the world. These histories are replete with examples of the fetishization of Black bodies, which participants again articulated in terms of – as they interpreted it – White learners' fetishistic appropriation of Black hair-care practices.

Participants also described how White learners would engage in micro-invalidations by perpetuating *the invisibilization of race and privilege*. This could affect Black learners in different ways, for example, by confusing them about the nature of interactions or, alternatively, by making them increasingly sceptical about the notion of a colour-blind society. Paradoxically, some participants noted that, when White learners did acknowledge issues of race and privilege, they did so in a narcissistic style that reinforced the relegation of Black agency.

Morphing bigotry or innocent preference? was another interesting theme in which participants reflected on their own racial beliefs and behaviours. What emerged was a dilemmatic situation that faces Black learners in which they have to decide between integrating with their White counterparts or enjoying the familiar company of their Black peers. Indeed, the theme demonstrates – almost poignantly – how the experience of racial micro-aggressions presents Black learners with choices that can be agonizingly difficult to make.

In the next theme, participants reflected on how *the under-representation of Black staff and learners* affected their experiences at high school. Participants described their consequent impressions – as learners – that leadership positions for people who looked like

them did not exist. When they were afforded these positions, they remained uncertain about whether they occupied these positions because they were deserving of them or whether they were used as token benchmarks for transformation.

In the theme, cultural assimilation, participants discussed the centring of Whiteness and White standards as benchmarks for success. For example, participants examined experiences at school of having to confront their Blackness as something 'other' – rather than as something worthy of celebration. By contrast, they recalled other instances where they were celebrated for exhibiting traits stereotypically associated with Whiteness. Moreover, the navigation of differentially raced spaces proved a particularly confusing experience.

While racial integration came at the end of the Apartheid era and legislation rendered segregation on the basis of race illegal, attitudes did not simply change as result. The theme, *Knowledge in the blood*, confirms Jansen's (2009) thesis about how South Africa's born-free generation of learners – while raised in an era of legislated freedom and equality – can still participate in the enactment of raced interactions. In this regard, participants described how implicit beliefs about race could travel across generations. It also emerged in participants' discussions, however, that such processes could occur unconsciously, resulting in raced beliefs being rationalized as questions of preference.

4.2 Social implications of the research.

The social value of this study rests in the fact that it equipped participants with a new language for detailing and making sense of their experiences. These participants made known that they had not – until participating in this research – felt that their experiences were real nor that they were valid. Participants had not recognized the importance of possessing a vocabulary that could potentially assist them in metabolizing their experiences. This was a

pleasing aspect of the study, apart from its primary objective of examining how Black people experienced racial microaggressions in everyday life, particularly in ex-Model C schools.

In the socio-political climate of post-Apartheid South Africa, schools have become important sites of socialisation. Given that many Black learners are now attending historically White, ex-model-C schools, they are likely to encounter institutional cultures that remain largely untransformed. Indeed, this study may explain why that is the case, where racial microaggressions that are so tangible and visceral to Black people can be invisible to White people. In this respect, the study has the twin benefits of reassuring Black learners that their experiences of racial microaggressions are indeed real, while offering their White counterparts an opportunity to reflect on the work that must yet be done to make our schools truly inclusive spaces.

4.3 Limitations and recommendations for future research

Perhaps the glaring limitation of this study was its reliance on university students who had attended ex-Model C schools, rather than on current school learners. Given the potential administrative hurdles involved in obtaining ethical approval from the Department of Basic Education – not to mention possible discomfort on the part of school governing bodies around a topic such as this – the decision to approach former learners as informers had strategic advantages but clear drawbacks too. Specifically, the rise of identity politics on university campuses around the country – as well as UCT's positioning close to the center of national debates around transformation and decolonization – meant that participants' recollections of their school experiences would almost certainly have been coloured by the rapidly changing climate in higher education institutions. It is probably, therefore, that participants' points of view were modified in significant ways by post-matric developments.

The tradeoff, then, involved contrasting considerations around convenience and believability. Nonetheless, I believe this study offers a useful entry point into an area of study that has become increasingly important in the very recent past. Future studies should – where possible – be located within ex-Model C schools, in so doing contributing still further to an important national conversation around themes of institutional redress, diversity and inclusivity. Lived experience has emerged as an important category of analysis in decolonial frameworks – this study is perhaps best viewed as a modest contribution in that direction.

References

- Andrews, D. J. C. (2012). Black achievers' experiences with racial spotlighting and ignoring in a predominantly White high school. *Teachers College Record, 114*(10), 1. Retrieved from: <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1033743754>
- Aronson, J. (1995). A pragmatic view of thematic analysis. *The Qualitative Report, 2*(1), 1-3. Retrieved from: <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol2/iss1/3>
- Atwood, E., & López, G. R. (2014). Let's be critically honest: Towards a messier counterstory in critical race theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 27*(9), 1134-1154. DOI: 10.1080/09518398.2014.916011
- Balsam, K. F., Molina, Y., Beadnell, B., Simoni, J., & Walters, K. (2011). Measuring multiple minority stress. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 17*(2), 163-174. DOI: 10.1037/a0023244
- Banister, P. (2011). *Qualitative methods in psychology* (2nd ed.). Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Barkhuizen, L. (2011). *Dating violence in young adult intimate relationships* (Unpublished honours dissertation). University of Cape Town, Cape Town.
- Barter, C., & Renold, E. (1999). The use of vignettes in qualitative research. *Social Research Update, 25*(9), 1-6. Retrieved from: <http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU25.html>
- Barter, C., & Renold, E. (2000). 'I wanna tell you a story': Exploring the application of vignettes in qualitative research with children and young people. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 3*(4), 307-323. DOI: 10.1080/13645570050178594
- Boysen, G. A. (2010). Integrating implicit bias into counselor education. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 49*(4), 210-227. DOI: 10.1002/j.1556-6978.2010.tb00099.x

- Branscombe, N. R., Daniel, L. W., Noel, J. G., & Coleman, J. (1993). In-group or out-group extremity: Importance of the threatened social identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 19(4), 381-388. DOI: 10.1177/0146167293194003
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Brooks, J. S., & Jean-Marie, G. (2007). Black leadership, White leadership: Race and race relations in an urban high school. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 45(6), 756-768. DOI: 10.1108/09578230710829928
- Burr, V. (2003). *Social constructionism*. London: Routledge.
- Carolissen, R., van Wyk, S., & Pick-Cornelius, M. (2012). 'I want my family to be White': Coloured adolescent schoolgirls' articulations of identity in a South African peri-urban community. *South African Review of Education*, 18(1), 39-55. Retrieved from: https://journals.co.za/docserver/fulltext/sare/18/1/sare_v18_n1_a4.pdf?expires=1543228408&id=id&acname=57709&checksum=4ABEBE20200B2BE714AB4529950E0A45
- Chadwick, B., Gill, P., Stewart, K., & Treasure, E. (2008). Methods of data collection in qualitative research: Interviews and focus groups. *British Dental Journal*, 204(6), 291-295. DOI: 10.1038/bdj.2008.192
- Chavez-Dueñas, N. Y., Adames, H. Y., & Organista, K. C. (2014). Skin-color prejudice and within-group racial discrimination: Historical and current impact on Latino/a populations. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 36(1), 3-26. DOI: 10.1177/0739986313511306
- Chikte, Z. (2012). *Young people's constructions of partner violence in intimate heterosexual relationships* (Unpublished honours dissertation). University of Cape Town, Cape Town.
- Cokley, K. (2006). The impact of racialized schools and racist (mis) education on African American students' academic identity. *Addressing Racism: Facilitating Cultural*

Competence in Mental Health and Educational Settings, 127-144. Retrieved from:
[https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/6071/The%20Impact%20of%20Racialized%20Schools%20and%20Racist%20\(Mis\)Education%20on%20African%20American%20Students'%20Academic%20Identity%20.pdf?sequence=1](https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/6071/The%20Impact%20of%20Racialized%20Schools%20and%20Racist%20(Mis)Education%20on%20African%20American%20Students'%20Academic%20Identity%20.pdf?sequence=1)

Condor, S., Figgou, L., Abell, J., Gibson, S., & Stevenson, C. (2006). 'They're not racist...'
Prejudice denial, mitigation and suppression in dialogue. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 45(3), 441-462. DOI: 10.1348/014466605X66817

Cornell, J. (2015). *Black Students' Experiences of transformation at UCT: A Photovoice study* (Masters dissertation). University of Cape Town.

Coutas, P. (2009). Social Constructi-on/v-ism: Same-same lah but different? Retrieved from
<https://www.slideshare.net/pcoutas/social-constructionvism-samesame-lah-but-different>

Coyne, I. T. (1997). Sampling in qualitative research. Purposeful and theoretical sampling; merging or clear boundaries? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 26(3), 623-630. DOI: 10.1046/j.1365-2648.1997.t01-25-00999.x

Cross, M., Mungadi, R., & Rouhani, S. (2002). From policy to practice: Curriculum reform in South African education. *Comparative Education*, 38(2), 171-187. DOI: 10.1080/03050060220140566

Devers, K. J., & Frankel, R. M. (2000). Study design in qualitative research--2: Sampling and data collection strategies. *Education for Health*, 13(2), 263. DOI: 10.1080/13576280050074543

Dottolo, A. L., & Kaschak, E. (2015) Whiteness and White Privilege. *Women & Therapy*, 38(3-4), 179-184, DOI: 10.1080/02703149.2015.1059178

Durrheim, K., & Dixon, J. (2005). Studying talk and embodied practices: Toward a psychology of materiality of 'race relations'. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 15(6), 446-460. DOI: 10.1002/casp.839

- Ferreira, A. (2015). 'A sort of Black and White past and present thing': High school students' subject positions on South Africa's recent past. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 19(6), 1247-1261. DOI: 10.1080/13613324.2015.1095175
- Franklin, A. J., Boyd-Franklin, N., & Kelly, S. (2006). Racism and invisibility: Race-related stress, emotional abuse and psychological trauma for people of color. *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, 6(2-3), 9-30. DOI: 10.1300/j135v06n02_02
- Harper, S. (2006). Peer Support for African American Male College Achievement: Beyond Internalized Racism and the Burden of "Acting White". *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 14(3), 337-358. DOI: <http://dx.DOI.org/10.3149/jms.1403.337>
- Henfield, M. S. (2011). Black male adolescents navigating microaggressions in a traditionally White middle school: A qualitative study. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 39(3), 141-155. DOI: 10.1002/j.2161-1912.2011.tb00147.x
- Hollander, J. A. (2004). The social contexts of focus groups. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 33(5), 602-637. DOI: 10.1177/0891241604266988
- Howitt, D., & Owusu-Bempah, J. (1994). *The Racism of psychology: Time for change*. Hemel-Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Jansen, J. D. (2009). *Knowledge in the Blood: Confronting race and the Apartheid past*. Cape Town, South Africa: UCT Press
- Jones, M. L., & Galliher, R. V. (2015). Daily racial microaggressions and ethnic identification among native American young adults. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 21(1), 1-9. DOI: 10.1037/a0037537
- Karnieli-Miller, O., Strier, R., & Pessach, L. (2008). Power relations in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 19(2), 279-289. DOI: 10.1177/1049732308329306

- Kessi, S., & Cornell, J. (2016). Coming to UCT: Black students, transformation and discourses of race. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 3(2) DOI: 10.14426/jsaa.v3i2.132
- Kitzinger, J. (1995). Qualitative research. introducing focus groups. *British Medical Journal (Clinical Research Ed.)*, 311, 299-302. DOI: 10.1136/bmj.311.7000.299
- Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques*. New Age International.
- Laher, S. & Cockcroft, K. (Eds.). (2012). *Psychological assessment in South Africa: Research and applications*. Wits University Press: Johannesburg.
- Malott, K., Paone, T., Schaeffle, S., & Gao, J. (2015). Is it racist? Addressing racial microaggressions in counselor training. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 10(3), 386-398. DOI: 10.1080/15401383.2014.988312
- Marais, B. (2012). *Queering ubuntu: The self and the other in South African queer autobiography*. Retrieved from:
https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/31495944/MA_Dissertation_BM_Marais_2012.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1543231227&Signature=9eFiLoO%2BQmDyeuQigq383wG7xtw%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DQueering_Ubuntu_The_Self_and_the_Other_i.pdf
- McIntosh, P. (2018). White privilege and male privilege: A personal account of coming to see correspondences through work in women's studies (1988). Retrieved from:
<http://www.collegeart.org/pdf/diversity/white-privilege-and-male-privilege.pdf>
- Modica, M. (2015). Unpacking the 'colorblind approach': Accusations of racism at a friendly, mixed-race school. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 18(3), 396-418. DOI: 10.1080/13613324.2014.985585
- Morgan, D. L., & Spanish, M. T. (1984). Focus groups: A new tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Sociology*, 7(3), 253-270. DOI: 10.1007/BF00987314

- Muehlenhard, C. L., & Kimes, L. A. (1999). The social construction of violence: The case of sexual and domestic violence. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 3(3), 234-245. DOI: 10.1207/s15327957pspr0303_6
- Nadal, K., Issa, M., Leon, J., Meterko, V., Wideman, M., & Wong, Y. (2011). Sexual orientation microaggressions: "Death by a thousand cuts" for lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 8(3), 234-259. DOI: 10.1080/19361653.2011.584204
- Nadal, K. L., Davidoff, K. C., Davis, L. S., Wong, Y., Marshall, D., & McKenzie, V. (2015). A qualitative approach to intersectional microaggressions: Understanding influences of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and religion. *Qualitative Psychology*, 2(2), 147-163. DOI: 10.1037/qup0000026
- Netto, P. (2005). Reclaiming the Body of the 'Hottentot' The Vision and Visuality of the Body Speaking with Vengeance in Venus Hottentot 2000. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 12(2), 149-163. DOI: 10.1177/1350506805051235
- Ngoepe, K. (2016). *Black girls in tears at Pretoria school hair protest*. News24. Retrieved 15 January 2018 from <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Black-girls-in-tears-at-pretoria-school-hair-protest-20160829>
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Dickinson, W. B., Leech, N. L., & Zoran, A. G. (2009). A qualitative framework for collecting and analysing data in focus group research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(3), 1-21. DOI: 10.1177/160940690900800301
- Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L., & Wynaden, D. (2001). Ethics in qualitative research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 33(1), 93-96. DOI: 10.1111/j.1547-5069.2001.00093.x
- Ortiz, L., & Jani, J. (2010). Critical race theory: A transformational model for teaching diversity. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 46(2), 175-193. DOI: 10.5175/jswe.2010.200900070

- Paone, T. R., Malott, K. M., & Dwyer, B. (2014). Privilege and Power: Identifying and Addressing Whiteness in. *Today's college students: a reader*, 151-164. Retrieved from [https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/38264774/Privilege_and_Power_Indentifying_and_Addressing_Whitniss_in_the_University_Systems.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1531331818&Signature=K%2BRrtIr1LBdfClfW%2FMcdEf2AEo4%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DPrivilege_and_Power_Indentifying_and_Add.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/38264774/Privilege_and_Power_Identifying_and_Addressing_Whitniss_in_the_University_Systems.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1531331818&Signature=K%2BRrtIr1LBdfClfW%2FMcdEf2AEo4%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DPrivilege_and_Power_Indentifying_and_Add.pdf)
- Ponterotto, J. G. (2005). Qualitative research in counseling psychology: A primer on research paradigms and philosophy of science. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 126-136. DOI: 10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.126
- Raskin, J. D. (2002). Constructivism in psychology: Personal construct psychology, radical constructivism, and social constructionism. In J. D. Raskin & S. K. Bridges (Ed.) *Studies in meaning: Exploring constructivist psychology* (p. 1-25). New York: Pace University Press. Retrieved from: <http://cepa.info/3744>
- Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M., & Ormston, R. (Eds.). (2013). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. Sage.
- Robinson-Wood, T., Balogun-Mwangi, O., Fernandes, C., Popat-Jain, A., Boadi, N., Matsumoto, A., & Zhang, X. (2015). Worse than blatant racism: A phenomenological investigation of microaggressions among black women. *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research*, 9(3). Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Oyenike_Balogun-Mwangi/publication/280742973_Worse_Than_Blatant_Racism_A_Phenomenological_Investigation_of_Microaggressions_among_Black_Women/links/55c551c708aebc967df38a58.pdf

- Seekings, J. (2008). The continuing salience of race Discrimination and diversity in South Africa. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 26(1), 1-25. DOI: 10.1080/02589000701782612
- Silverman, D. (2004). *Qualitative research* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE.
- Silverman, D. (2013). *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*. SAGE Publications Limited.
- Sim, J. (1998). Collecting and analysing qualitative data: Issues raised by the focus group. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 28(2), 345-352. DOI: 10.1046/j.1365-2648.1998.00692.x
- Smith, W. A., Allen, W. R., & Danley, L. L. (2007). "Assume the position . . . you fit the description": Psychosocial experiences and racial battle fatigue among African American male college students. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 51(4), 551-578. DOI: 10.1177/0002764207307742
- Smith, W. A., Hung, M., & Franklin, J. D. (2011). Racial battle fatigue and the Miseducation of Black men: Racial microaggressions, societal problems, and environmental stress. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 80(1), 63-82. Retrieved from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41341106>
- Sofaer, S. (1999). Qualitative methods: What are they and why use them?. *Health services research*, 34, 1101. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1089055/pdf/hsresearch00022-0025.pdf>
- Soudien, C. (2004). Constituting the class': An analysis of the process of 'integration' in South African schools. *Changing class: Education and social change in post-Apartheid South Africa*, 89-114. Retrieved from: https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/30481635/1937_03_Changing_Classes22122004024711PM.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires

s=1531332447&Signature=vj05BvOMLf9ofVnNJazEFeiOKfw%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DConstituting_the_class_An_analysis_of_th.pdf

- Steyn, M., & Foster, D. (2008). Repertoires for talking White: Resistant Whiteness in post-Apartheid South Africa. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 31(1), 25-51. DOI: 10.1080/01419870701538851
- Sue, D. W. (2010). *Microaggressions in everyday life*. US: Wiley. Retrieved from http://ebooks.ciando.com/book/index.cfm/bok_id/496652
- Sue, D. W., Bucceri, J., Lin, A. I., Nadal, K. L., & Torino, G. C. (2007). Racial microaggressions and the Asian American experience. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 13(1), 72-81. DOI: 10.1037/1099-9809.13.1.72
- Terre Blanche, M., Durrheim, K., & Painter, D. (Eds.). (2006). *Research in practice*. Cape Town: UCT Press.
- Thathiah, D. (2016). *VIDEO: Woman's racist rant caught on film*. *Enca.com*. Retrieved 20 June 2016, from <https://www.enca.com/south-africa/womans-racist-rant-caught-on-film>
- Thomas, D. (2006). A General Inductive Approach for Analyzing Qualitative Evaluation Data. *American Journal Of Evaluation*, 27(2), 237-246. DOI: 10.1177/1098214005283748
- Vaughn, S., Schumm, J. S., & Sinagub, J. M. (1996). *Focus group interviews in education and psychology*. SAGE.
- Wepener, L. (2017). Student Research Participation Program Researcher Guide 2017 [Email].
- Wicks, J. (2016). *'It's just the facts' - Penny Sparrow breaks her silence*. *News24*. Retrieved from: <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/its-just-the-facts-penny-sparrow-breaks-her-silence-20160104>
- Williams, J. (2016). *BET Awards Acceptance Speech*. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=orXogk3euMA>

Wilson, J., & While, A. (1998). Methodological issues surrounding the use of vignettes in qualitative research. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, 12(1), 79-86. DOI: 10.3109/13561829809014090

Zacko-Smith, J. *The leader label: Using social constructionism and metaphor to influence the leadership perceptions of graduate business and public administration students* (unpublished doctoral dissertation). Seattle University.

Appendix 1

Focus group questions

1. How do you understand the term 'racial microaggression'?
2. Did you experience any microaggressions at school? Recount some examples.
3. How did these events shape your schooling experience? Are you able to recount any of these events specifically? Give examples.
4. What effects did these events have on your life in general? Give examples or tell stories.

Appendix 2

Ethical clearance

Ethical clearance has been removed to avoid exposing the signature of the authority

Appendix 3

Informed consent



Department of Psychology
University of Cape Town
Rondebosch 7701
South Africa
Tel: +27 21 650-3417
Fax: +27 21 650-4104

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Project Title: Ex-Model-C school learners' experiences of racially oriented microaggressions.

1. Invitation and purpose

You are invited to participate in my Master's research study which identifies and explores racial microaggressions experienced by learners in South African high schools. I am a student at the University of Cape Town, from the Department of Psychology.

2. Procedures

If you agree to participate in this study, the following will happen:

- A short video clip will be played for you, after which a discussion will be held.
- The focus group will last for a minimum of 1 hour.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and no harm will come to you as a direct result of you choosing not to take part in the study.

3. Risks, discomforts and inconveniences

No foreseeable harm is detected. However, if the content of the questions brings about any unease or discomfort to you which is not sufficiently dealt with during debriefing, you will be referred to Cape Mental Health for counselling.

4. Benefits

Your participation will aid in the understanding of the sources of certain types of discrimination in schools, as well as understanding how racism is being kept alive in schools.

5. Privacy and confidentiality

Your participation is entirely confidential. Your focus group will be allocated a code for reference, and no reference will be made to your name in the transcription process. Interviews will take place in a private setting. No information which may be used to identify you will be available in the final report. Focus group discussions will take place in a private setting. Recordings will only be available to my supervisor and myself, and will be destroyed once transcription has taken place. While I can guarantee confidentiality in the writing up of the report, the importance of confidentiality between focus group members will be emphasized during the focus group sessions.

6. Contact details

If you have anything you would like to discuss, please contact:

Toni Canham (the researcher) on CNHTON001@myuct.ac.za

Dr Wahbie Long (the supervisor) on 021 650 3419

Rosalind Adams (for any further ethical enquiries) on 021 650 3417

I, have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

.....
Participant's signature **Date**

I, consent to having the focus group audio-recorded.

.....
Participant's signature **Date**