Exploring the affective-discursive dynamic of how South African Black women negotiate public spaces in Gauteng

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis titled “Exploring the affective-discursive dynamic of how South African Black women negotiate public spaces in Gauteng” is my own unpaid work. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.

This research project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MA by Coursework and Research Report in the field of Psychology (Psychosocial Studies) in the faculty of Humanities at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

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Abstract

Public spaces are far from neutral – as they are historically marked by race and gender, connoting exclusivity. For women, their presence in public spaces contradict their role of domesticity and femininity. Additionally, South African public spaces have been historically used as geo-political tools in producing and maintaining racial segregation legitimised by Apartheid laws and policies. Although spaces are discursive and affective in nature, very few studies explore the interplay of these dynamics. Through affective-discursive practice (ADP), this study examines the experiences of Black South African women, aged 18-28, studying at the University of the Witwatersrand, to unveil the ways in which race, gender, and power, fashion their navigation of public spaces.

The findings produced safety as the dominant theme in the conceptualisation of public spaces. Spaces are constructed as safe or unsafe, creating for an affective atmospheric public environment, that fuels fear and hypervigilance. Governmental surveillance is a prominent determiner of how women move and interact in public settings. Racial, gendered, and cultural stereo-normative perceptions, impose further restrictions – dictating how Black women ought to look, behave, or exist in public environments. These harmful perceptions create a shared affective economy, fortifying historical biases and regulatory public behaviour. In highlighting the interplay of societal norms, power, and emotions, the study reveals how public spaces remain contested terrain for Black South African women.

Keywords: Affect, attachment, behaviour, discourse, gender, identity, intersectionality, movement, performativity, places, power, public spaces, race

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Throughout time and space, the term 'public space' has been defined in a variety of ways (Hanzl, 2013). Relative to its binary counterpart, private 'spaces', public spaces are denoted as accessible to all and as not being constrained by exclusions based on race, gender, age, or physical disabilities (Hanzl, 2013; Altman & Zube, 2012). However, contrary to that denotation, public spaces are historically marked by race and gender leading to the connotation of exclusivity (Day, 2001; Kwan, 2010; Sewell, 2011; SAHO, 2018; Strauss, 2019; Tandogan & Ilhan, 2016; van der Burgt, 2013; Wiley & Shiffman, 2012; Wiesmann, 2012). Therefore, Kaur (2021) suggest that we take a fluid view of 'public' and 'private', as opposed to a dichotomous view – given that from an ideal perspective public space may be considered as sites of democratic and public life, patterned with freedom of expression and universal access; however, with public spaces being a product of unequal social relations, in reality, public spaces are highly gendered and racialized (Anderson, 2021; Brown, 2000; Day, 2001; de Certeau, 2014; Jalalkamali & Doratli, 2022; Kaur, 2021; Mokoena, 2020; Pirtle, 2022; Richeson and Sommers, 2016; Roy & Bailey, 2021; Sundstorm, 2003; Tandogan & Ilhan, 2016; van der Burgt, 2013).

Women tend to face more constraints within public spaces, due to the perceived fear in public spaces that have a negative impact on women's lives (Day, 2001). Public spaces include people's movements and interactions with both the space itself and other individuals (Ahmed, 2000). Public spaces have long been described in terms of perceived risks, danger, criminality, and safety, where women tend to experience higher levels of risks, danger, and safety issues (Day, 2001). Women's freedom in public places are restricted because of the fear of harassment and criminality (Day, 2001). Whatever the definition of 'public space', it seems to be established with regulatory behaviour (Han et al., 2022). Furthermore, spaces have been used as divisive tools in racial segregation demonstrating socio-political hierarchies, where such geo-politics are still relevant as they are currently reflected and experienced (Anderson, 2021; Brown, 2000; Mokoena, 2020; Pirtle, 2022; Richeson and Sommers, 2016; Sundstorm, 2003;)

How the conceptualization of a place leads to the construction of the function and use of the space, has been the subject of much writings (Han et al., 2022). Even though public spaces like schools and libraries have established rules and codes of conduct that guide behaviour, some places as a result of how they are conceptualized develop their own subjective set of rules (Han

et al., 2022). Additionally, it is important to note that as a city or area transforms into the modern age, so too does the character and/or function of its public spaces (Kaur, 2021). Due to political, cultural, and economic developments as South Africa transitioned from apartheid rule into the post-apartheid era during the past 20 years, there has been a considerable change in public spaces (Landman, 2015). In light of these changes, I examined how South African Black women navigate public spaces in Gauteng in my study. Regardless of how low the risk of danger may appear, the concept of women being endangered in public areas persists (Day, 2001). Through this investigation, I hoped to uncover the complex forces and interconnected factors that influence the movements and behaviours of Black South African women in public settings in Gauteng.

In chapter two, I review the literature on public spaces, in relation to gender, culture, race, and the South African context under the socio-political lens. Following, in chapter three, I provide the theoretical framework of the study, consisting of the dominant theories that appear in the literature; being discourse, affect, affective-discursive practice, intersectionality, and performativity. This section ends with the research question based on the literature review and the theoretical framework. The fourth chapter outlines the methodology of the study, based within the qualitative studies. This is then followed by the findings and discussion of the study in chapter five, and the report then ends with the conclusion in chapter six. To summarise, the report consists of six chapters, providing a perspective on the negotiation of public spaces by South African Black women.

1.2 Rationale

In light of the review on a variety of studies that highlight key themes of body-consciousness, perceived safety that operates on the emotions of fear and trust, bodily capacity in terms of physical strength, culture, patriarchy, supremacy, racial hierarchy, gendered race, racial biases and stereotypes, prejudices, avoidant behaviour, planned behaviour, and embodied behaviour, it appears that gender and race are the core influential factors in navigating public spaces (Day, 1999; Kwan, 2010; Nkooe, 2018; Roy & Bailey, 2021; Tandogan & Ilhan, 2016; van der Burgt, 2013; Wiesmann, 2012). Given that South Africa popularly known as the rainbow nation, has a population that consists of a wide range of cultures and religions, and given the political transitions made in the country, it is vital to analyse these factors within the South African context when exploring the movement of Black South African women who come from a multitude of cultural and religious backgrounds, and who are constantly in contact with

difference (Day, 1999; Kwan, 2010; Nkooe, 2018; Roy & Bailey, 2021; SAHO, 2014; Tandogan & Ilhan, 2016; van der Burgt, 2013; Wiesmann, 2012).

Racial segregation has had a significant role in South Africa's political history (SAHO, 2018). Racial segregation was advocated by apartheid, which was first implemented in 1948 by the National Party (NP) government of South Africa (SAHO, 2018). Spatial injustices resulted because of this (Strauss, 2019). Laws like the Group Areas Act of 1950, which also allowed for the eviction of specific groups from areas, legitimized the idea of racial segregation, and served as the foundation for urban planning and land-use management (SAHO, 2018; Strauss, 2019). However, according to Landman (2015), a place's uses and functions change as the place itself does. As a result, it is reasonable to assume that South Africa's public spaces are changing in the context of the post-apartheid era (Landman, 2015). Given that historically, public urban environments were created by and for the benefit of males, women in public spaces from as late as the eighteenth century remained a problematic site (Sewell, 2011).

As was already mentioned, there is a gendered component to how people use and traverse public places. Women's interaction with public spaces is often associated with perceived fear, crime, violence, and safety (Day, 1999; Day, 2001; Nasser & Hassan, 2021; Roberts et al., 2020; Roy & Bailey, 2021; Sewell, 2011; Tandogan & Ilhan, 2016). When looking at the individual crime levels in South Africa, the experience of crime has increased, with women being more likely to experience the theft of personal property and street robbery (Statssa, 2022). While Black Africans and women are less likely to have done something to protect themselves against a crime, with the main reasoning being that there is nothing that can be done about it (Statssa, 2022). Furthermore, women generally felt more unsafe than men when walking alone in their public residential area during the day (Statssa, 2022). When concentrating on Black women in particular, it is critical to remember that their race has historically had an impact on how they occupy and move through public areas (Day, 1999; SAHO, 2018; Strauss, 2019). Additionally, because historically speaking, public spaces have been seen as belonging to men, race and patriarchy have frequently intersected, resulting in Black women's movements in public places being evasive (Day, 1999; Strauss, 2019; Wiesmann, 2012).

Urban planning, which places a strong emphasis on form, function, and aesthetics while paying little regard to the socio-political aspects of public spaces, is typically the field that examines public spaces (Gehl & Matan, 2009; Hanzl, 2013; Landman, 2015; Landman, 2019; Ruppert,

2006). Although there is a need for a change in the field of urban planning, and many theoretical studies suggest that we should incorporate other disciplines and develop a wholistic approach when analysing public spaces, there does not seem to be much being done in practice (Gehl & Matan, 2009; Hanzl, 2013; Landman, 2015; Landman, 2019). The majority of research typically concentrate on the discourses and power dynamics, particularly the role of political identity, when it comes to the psychological and sociological aspects of public places (Feely, 2016). There are not many studies that demonstrate how emotions influence how individuals use public spaces and how it shapes dialogue, despite the significance of this topic. This is especially relevant to how women view and interact in public spaces (Feely, 2016).

According to Durrheim and Dixon (2001), once we begin to look at the rhetorical contestation of spaces, we may begin to understand how practices of racial exclusion continue to be perpetuated across evolving contexts. For example, the persistence of racism displayed explicitly during apartheid, and displayed more covertly in a democratic post-apartheid era. The same can be said for gendered exclusion, in that the narratives of patriarchy continue on today. Furthermore, Sundstorm (2003) describes spaces as being a consequent and are constitutive of the social world, forming a vital part of human identification and categorisation. Therefore, transformation in the social world, requires transformation in spaces.

South Africa, being culturally diverse, the cultural and contextual angle is very important when considering gender-based public behaviour (Jalalkamali and Doratli, 2022). Further, when looking at the political history of apartheid in this country, where spaces were a primary component in racial segregation, it is of great interest to analyse these spaces in the context of democracy, where Black women in particular were and are racially gendered, giving them a unique lived experience of the world and spaces that is not well documented in literature (Jalalkamali and Doratli, 2022). Therefore, my research addresses a methodological and contextual gap in accounting for the knowledge gap on the negotiation of public spaces by Black South African women. Theoretically speaking, literature shows that spaces are discursive and affective in nature; however, methodologically very few studies or papers display an affective analysis of the topic. Furthermore, given the context of a post-apartheid era, little research is provided on the experiences of public spaces, particularly through the lens of Black South African women. Given this, current literature is deemed ungeneralisable, further speaking to the importance of this study.

1.3 Aim

Based on the rationale, this study aimed to examine how Black South African women conceptualized public places on an emotional and discursive level. My goal in doing this study was to gain a better understanding of how Black South African women move through public spaces and how those spaces affect those movements. The affective-discursive analysis of public spaces focused on a comprehension of the different powers and forces related to race and gender that underlie the ontology of public places and the corresponding human behaviour.

1.4 Research Question

Navigating public spaces, factors such as gender, race, and culture often have a role to play in constituting public spaces (Kwan, 2010; Nasser & Hassan, 2022; Roberts et al., 2020; Roy & Bailey, 2021; Tandogan &Ilhan, 2016; van der Burgt, 2015; Wiley &Shiffman, 2012). Spaces are affectively and discursively laden, and further go on to dictate associated movements and behaviours. Within the context of affective-discursive practice and integral related components of social performance, intersectionality, and spaces, in unpacking public discourse; along with empirical factors already discovered in negotiating public spaces, the study attempted to respond to the following questions:

Main question:

1. How do Black South African women experience public spaces in Gauteng?

Secondary questions:

1. How are public spaces defined by South African Black women in Gauteng?
2. What factors are associated with the conception of public spaces in Gauteng?
3. How do public spaces influence the movements and behaviours of South African Black women in Gauteng?

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In exploring the navigation of public spaces, understanding the connotations attached to the term and the context of said public space, are vital in uncovering how and why spaces attain meaning and how this relates to human behaviour (Hanzl, 2013). This is central to the aims of this study, which look to reveal the experiences of Black South African women in public spaces, in order to provide an understanding on the conception of public spaces in Gauteng in relation to the powers and forces associated with race, gender, and human behaviour. The topic of public spaces is heavily centred around the disciplines of urban planning and architecture; however, a shift has occurred, where other disciplines such as law, sociology, psychology, physiology, and economics are incorporated – providing a multidisciplinary approach to our comprehension of public spaces. The cardinal theme of this multidisciplinary approach is that of bridging the gap between the physical and social aspects pertaining to the use and occupation of space (Ahmed, 2000; Altman and Low, 1992; Altman and Zube, 2012; Böhme, 1993, 2014; Canter, 1977; de Certeau, 2014; Han et al., 2022; Hanzl, 2013; Lefebvre, 1974/1991; Tuan, 1977; Wetherell; 2012, 2013; Wiesmann, 2012, 2013).

With this, a shift in theoretical and methodological focus occurs. Previously, studies placed sole emphasis on the physical domain of spaces within the objectivist worldview. The study of spaces as we know it today promotes an all-encompassing lens that highlights historical socio-cultural contexts, identity and belonging, interactions and emotions, as well as power and knowledge structures related to social hierarchies (Ahmed, 2000; Altman and Low, 1992; Altman and Zube, 2012; Böhme, 1993, 2014; Canter, 1977; de Certeau, 2014; Han et al., 2022; Hanzl, 2013; Landman, 2015, 2019; Lefebvre, 1974/1991; Nkooe, 2018; Tuan, 1977; Wetherell; 2012, 2013; Wiesmann, 2012, 2013). Great efforts have been made in providing a layered grasp on the conception of public spaces. However, more research is required in the South African context, given the rich socio-political history of the country, where the use and occupation of spaces were legally designated and socially circumscribed along racial and gendered lines. Some of the remnants of this history can still be felt and experienced in the present, often with very negative effects on how women in general and Black women in particular occupy and use space (Ahmed, 2000; Altman and Low, 1992; Altman and Zube, 2012; Böhme, 1993, 2014; Canter, 1977; de Certeau, 2014; Han et al., 2022; Hanzl, 2013; Landman, 2015, 2019; Lefebvre, 1974/1991; Nkooe, 2018; Tuan, 1977; Wetherell; 2012, 2013; Wiesmann, 2012, 2013).

2.2 Bridging the gap: Space vs Place

Public spaces are formed in relation to the relationship between the physical and the social structures of the space, and are associated with the semiotic properties of human behaviour and interaction, experienced in everyday life (Ahmed, 2000; Altman and Low, 1992; Altman and Zube, 2012; Böhme, 1993, 2014; Canter, 1977; de Certeau, 2014; Han et al., 2022; Hanzl, 2013; Lefebvre, 1974/1991; Sundstorm, 2003; Tuan, 1977; Wetherell; 2012, 2013; Wiesmann, 2012, 2013). According to Sundstorm (2003), a place consists of a geographical location and a social station, where the two properties are constitutive of each other. This is noted by Tuan (1977) who conceptualised 'place' as merely 'space' with value and meaning – a 'space' only becomes a 'place' through the psychological and/or symbolic attachments invested in it (Altman and Zube, 2012; Tuan, 1977). Similarly, de Certeau (2014) describes a 'space' as structured and functional, and a 'place' as a lived, experienced space – making 'space' a conceptual construct, and 'place' more emotionally charged (de Certeau, 2014). These everyday experiences include talking, walking, and cooking, for example. Thus, space is performative, practiced – fashioned by human activity, movement, and interaction (de Certeau, 2014).

Hanzl (2013) explores the sociometric layout of spaces, which uncovers the social relationships within a group in a given space, revealing social dynamics and group social networks. Both the historical and present contexts are considered, promoting a temporal view on socio-spatial relations (Hanzl, 2013). Lefebvre (1974/1991) highlighted how spaces evolve from concrete, absolute and geometric aspects to having abstract and socially meaningful attributes. This viewpoint necessitates considering both the temporal and performative aspects of spaces mentioned above, to enhance our understanding of their utility and significance for the social actors that inhabit them, as we move along this so called 'gap'.

Social interaction, power dynamics, and cultural meaning impact and are impacted by the design of space (Lefebvre, 1974/1991). If the space has an open or closed layout, social interaction can either be encouraged or discouraged, affecting chance encounters and social mingling (Lefebvre, 1974/1991). At the same time, seating arrangements and wayfinding design are a significant influence in either opening or closing the space layout and the degree to which social interaction is enabled (Lefebvre, 1974/1991). Institutional spaces such as capital buildings, monuments and/or memorials, for instance, frequently reflect the prevailing political power dynamics through serving as symbols of commemorated, celebrated, or erased histories (Lefebvre, 1974/1991). Spatial hierarchies map on to power structures (Lefebvre,

1974/1991). Think of seating arrangements in lecture halls, airports, or waiting rooms – they reveal social status. In this case, access or exclusion are moderated by entrance qualifications, zoning regulations, as well as the capacity thresholds of spaces (Lefebvre, 1974/1991).

Alternatively, power relations are established and maintained in spaces through surveillance. One's movements and behaviour are constantly monitored either by security guards and/or cameras, or by other individuals in the space (Lefebvre, 1974/1991). Space design serves as a vehicle for cultural narratives and values. We commonly observe this in the way that distinct colour patterns, designs, and material selections can correspond to the diverse cultural symbols and meanings of members of a community (Lefebvre, 1974/1991).

Epistemologically speaking, spaces are multidimensional and function on a flat ontological structure, established by four structures, where various components work simultaneously to form the identity of a space (Jabareen & Eizenberg, 2020). Firstly, the flexibility, openness, and dynamic nature of space and spatiality – where spaces are not fixed and exist in a matrix of social relations (Jabareen & Eizenberg, 2020). Secondly, the political theory of the discursive play of difference in spaces that perpetuate social divides and act as barriers to inclusion (Jabareen & Eizenberg, 2020). Thirdly, ontological realism, that views real objects outside the context of discursivity, regardless of whether we perceive it or not (Jabareen & Eizenberg, 2020). Lastly, the component of fantasy and 'ontological lack' – viewing spaces as made up of real and sensual objects/and or qualities. Here, spaces are non-discursive with real or empirical features, for example, housing types, land-use profiles, and densities; and are objects of human consciousness because they are sensory objects (Jabareen and Eizenberg, 2020).

Continuing with space identity, Böhme (1993) believes that the semiotic property of spaces is atmospherically marked, where the atmosphere is defined as something that is difficult to express, undetermined, all engulfing, and affectively and discursively layered. Böhme (1993, 2014) interestingly implies that an atmosphere operates both on the objective and subject sphere, given that an atmosphere is a shared experience representing the common reality of both the perceived and the perceiver – with the perceived reflecting the presence of the atmosphere itself, and the perceiver illustrating the bodily presence in response to the atmosphere. This bodily response can be considered the affective component of a space – accounting for the sensual quality of space according to Jabareen and Eizenberg (2020). Atmosphere at work can be seen in the serenity of a valley – a valley is considered serene, as it emits a serene atmosphere that is imposed on the body, placing one in a serene mood (Böhme,

1993; 2014). The atmosphere of a space is both sensed by the body and serves as an imposed bodily state of being (Böhme, 1993; 2014).

Böhme (1993, 2014) further argues that spatial atmosphere encompasses the movement of affective intensities between bodies in a given area, where sensed experiences transform into personal emotions and seamlessly integrate back into the space as affective currents – this is the mechanism underpinning the objective-subjective character of atmospheric spaces. Schmitz (2019), however, believes that atmospheric space is subjective, projecting one's internal psyche. On his view, even though objects are capable of capturing the atmosphere, it is a bodily experience that occurs in relation to other subjects and objects in a space that is at play (Schmitz, 2019). It is the body with feelings that develops ways and mechanisms to move in public spaces and to design these spaces since it is the body's emotions and atmospheric needs that are fundamental to these operations and extend throughout a given space.

One could argue that Schmitz (2019) seems to provide a more accurate understanding of atmospheric spaces. In using a framework for analysing space that incorporates the context of history, culture, politics, power, experience, and interaction, one is able to adopt and apply a paradigmatically subjective lens in analysing the ontology and epistemology of public spaces. Conversely, Böhme's (1993; 2014) framework, offers a more complete understanding. Here, what is understood by objectivity encompasses a critical engagement with taken for granted and commonly shared knowledge and understandings of space and how this could limit alternative perspectives. Returning to the previous example of the valley and its association with serenity, one could argue that this association imposes itself on the body and blinds one to the risks that such space may pose to some of its occupants or inhabitants by limiting perceptions about it to the most common or shared understanding. Böhme (1993, 2014) also provides a framework that is built on a cycle of objective and subjective realities that feed into each other, creating for a more layered understanding. Schmitz's (2019) framework, although insightful and impactful, seems to neglect or downplay the objective and discursive realities constitutive of atmospheres.

Another insightful framework in understanding space outside the range of the physical, can be seen in the place attachment (PLA) theory proposed by Altman and Low (1992). Here, affective ties are created to a particular area, as an individual forms an emotional affiliation with a specific place. Thus, people form emotional bonds to places. PLA helps us understand how individuals are connected to their physical environment (Altman & Low, 1992). It is a

multifaceted perspective, fundamentally multi-disciplinary in its make-up, it drawing on biology, psychology, and environmental and sociocultural factors, where elements such as cultural background, personal experience, and social interactions have a role to play in the advancement of place attachment (Altman & Low, 1992). Moreover, it accounts for identity, assuming that there are links between self-image, sense of integrity and attachment to place – It is an emotional connection to a place or space that tie's identity to it (Altman & Low, 1992). PLA also takes into account the construction, reconstitution, and maintenance or preservation of people, groups, and cultures in or via space.

2.3 The Plexus of 'Place'

Spaces encapsulate a multi-dimensional form of reality, consisting of an interplay of social dynamics, power, and atmospheric properties, which layer over and through each other. The simultaneous occurrence of these properties leaves one in an enveloped continuous flow of activity. Lefebvre (1974/1991), de Certeau (2014), and Böhme (2014) layout this interplay where 'place' becomes inhabited and expressed through existing – rending individuals as having and being had by experiences.

Lefebvre (1974/1991) describes three aspects or types of spaces: social, contradictory, and differential spaces. Social spaces are produced and shaped socially, they are something to be experienced, and entail lived experiences, representations, and spatial practices (Lefebvre, 1974/1991). Lefebvre (1974/1991) highlights the sociality of space in its ability to create social relations and express the experience of social living. The transformation of higher education institutions from learning spaces, into sites of political conflict during fees must fall, can be considered as the contradictory aspect of spaces (Lefebvre, 1974/1991; Luescher et al., 2016). Disruption to the daily usage of the institution occurs – highlighting the disharmony and contention on the usage and meaning of specific spaces (Lefebvre, 1974/1991; Luescher et al., 2016). The differential aspect for Lefebvre (1974/1991) represents the evolving and dynamic nature of spaces, their multiplicity of social practices, and how they are constantly re-appropriated. As a differential entity, spaces are constituted and characterised by the connection and interplay between lived experience, social relations and power struggles (Lefebvre, 1974/1991).

de Certeau (2014) provides nuances to 'place' by describing how spaces are both geometric and anthropological – where flexible anthropological practices interfere with the rigidity of geometric components, resulting in a tension that introduces adaptability, fashioning urban life.

Through the geometric lens, spaces are planned structured, regulated and designed with a particular purpose in mind – created by urban planners, institutions, and authorities (de Certeau, 2014). Spaces impose order with elements of control and surveillance, uniformity, and legibility – where subjects function according to predetermined rules and regulations related their movement or behaviour (de Certeau, 2014). Here, spaces further operate according to a structured layout that makes them easily navigable. Airports, shopping malls, government buildings, and planned residential neighbourhoods are good examples of geometric spaces (de Certeau, 2014).

Anthropologically, spaces speak to power dynamics atoning for human agency and creativity, materialized through everyday practice, actions, and movements (de Certeau, 2014). Encompassing informal, unplanned, and collective improvisation, spaces are lined by tactics and strategies – being that they consist of adaptations and manoeuvres that assist in navigating, such as shortcuts or hidden paths and gems (de Certeau, 2014). From this viewpoint, spaces are further lined by resistance and subversion, and local knowledge – as they undermine established powers and authorities of a space by challenging the hegemonic order of the area (de Certeau, 2014). Narrow alleyways, street markets, community gardens, or informal gathering spots are common illustrations of anthropological spaces (de Certeau, 2014).

In this matrix of rigidity, resistance, controversy, differentiation, and sociality, we are engulfed by an overarching atmosphere that penetrates our experiences (Böhme, 2014; de Certeau, 2014; Lefebvre, 1974/1991). This atmospheric pressure is characterised by 5 properties. Firstly, spaces covey a general mood, such as a playful or serious mood (Böhme, 2014). Secondly, spaces function in a synthetic manner, initiating a vibrant interplay of sensory experiences – for example, a sense of warmth or coldness can be translated through colour (Böhme, 2014). Third, spaces communicate a disposition for movement (Böhme, 2014). Fourth, spaces impact and are impacted by the bodies within them (Böhme, 2014). Lastly, spaces are social, carrying values and cultural meaning (Böhme, 2014). Böhme (2014) notes that material and aesthetic properties act as generators as they serve to modulate and manipulate these characteristics of a space, with some of the well known generators being light and sound.

2.4 Socio-Spatial Realities

Human behaviour is at the forefront of ‘place’, bringing to the surface socio-behavioural norms, where spaces mediated and dictated by social forces and structures are experienced and expressed by its inhabitants (Canter, 1977; Hanzl, 2013; Sundstorm, 2003; Young, 2005). A

recent systematic review of 116 research papers by Han et al. (2022), found that behaviour and social activity are tied into the contextualisation of space. Wetherell (2012, 2013) describes social activities as 'situated activities', where the activity emergences as patterns of internalised codes of behaviour that occur in a particular context. These internalised codes are familiar to the subjects involved in the activity (Wetherell, 2012, 2013). This results in embodied interactions, which are typically repetitive and ordered in nature (Wetherell, 2012, 2013).

Alternatively, Ajzen (1991) argues that during interactions, humans behave in ways that are planned or premeditated. We can infer that our behaviours are intentional and are anchored by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. One's inclination to increase the intention to perform a particular behaviour is based on a positive behavioural evaluation – where the behaviour aligns with the self-concept, or socio-cultural acceptance of the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Unlike Wetherell's (2012, 2013) concept of situated activities, Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behaviour allows for agency, though this agency is often unattainable or constrained by our social responsibilities, which arguably reflects the limitations imposed by socio-historical contexts. By focusing on the theory's key concept of perceived behavioural control, we can integrate it with Wetherell's (2012, 2013) theory of situated activities to deepen our comprehension of subjective behavioural awareness.

Jabareen and Eizenberg (2020) offer three concepts of the socio-spatial context, namely the logic of difference, the logic of equivalence, and the fantasmatic logic. The logic of difference establishes in and out groups by focusing on the social differentiation between people according to their social categories, for example, class, gender, race, religion, or culture – ultimately driving spatial segregation (Jabareen & Eizenberg, 2020). The logic of equivalence constitutes the in-group, the 'we' or 'us', based on shared differences, determining who should live together (Jabareen & Eizenberg, 2020). This logic is based on a togetherness, or shared qualities and identities, that oppose the discursively constructed 'other', with the excluded out-group facing a common rejection (Jabareen & Eizenberg, 2020). Rejection is not one dimensional, as individuals may belong to multiple categories, but it can be generalised in public spaces based on common views of in-groups and out-groups.

The fantasmatic logic is the motivating source of the two logics (Jabareen & Eizenberg, 2020). It stems from a perceived lack of wholeness in human existence, creating desire for an ideal image of completeness and producing fantasies that conceal this lack while introducing obstacles to achieving it (Jabareen & Eizenberg, 2020). Consequently, this unattainable ideal,

fosters a promised future for the 'us' while leaving the 'them' to envision a better life (Jabareen & Eizenberg, 2020).

The social categories underpinning the above logics, are considered the social structures that enable the formation of social practices, industrial rules, and social norms (Young, 2005). With this, relations of power and subordination are established (Sundstorm, 2003; Young, 2005). Sundstorm (2003) describes these social categories as a product of social forces constructed from a variety of political, economic, cultural, and governmental instruments; institutionally and behaviourally expressed and enforced. This is force divided into firstly, the labelling force used to externally assign a particular label to a subject and/or object. Secondly, the force from below, which entails the up taking of the assigned name or label by the subject – serving as an internal acceptance of the imposed label (Sundstorm, 2003). Lastly, the lateral normative force making up the third division, acts to support the other two forces – accounting for the normative pressures placed on subjects that fall under or out of said labels (Sundstorm, 2003). Functioning as a maintenance tool, the lateral normative force is fashioned by discursive and affective elements, ensuring the continuation of internal and external forces (Sundstorm, 2003).

2.4.1 Gendered Space

Three fields typically explore gender-based public behaviour: urban planning, gender studies, and feminist geography (Jalalkamali & Doratli, 2022). Urban planning examines gendered spatial behaviour, exploring aspects like physical space, privacy, safety, crime fear, environmental characteristics, and the right to the city, the shades of socio-political subordination (Jalalkamali & Doratli, 2022). Gender studies, focuses on gender rights, exploring unequal access to open public spaces (Jalalkamali & Doratli, 2022). While feminist geography highlights the socio-economic properties of gender relations, from a political lens in understanding the unequal use of public spaces (Jalalkamali & Doratli, 2022). The socio-political reference to gender is the common thread in all three fields, where gender, through gender role theory, is a social construct which governs human behaviour (Jalalkamali & Doratli, 2022).

Gender role theory assigns sexed based roles to individuals fashioned by societal beliefs and values – shaping expected social behaviour (Jalalkamali & Doratli, 2022). Domestic roles are commonly imposed on women instead of the more active and public roles assigned to men, suggesting that women are more domesticated, and less likely to be present or active in public spaces (Jalalkamali & Doratli, 2022). Gendered roles are put in place and supported by

structures and/or institutions such as schools and family structures that teach boys to be more independent and adventurous, and girls to be more nurturing and co-operative (Jalalkamali & Doratli, 2022). The tutelage is reinforced by gender stereotypes that act as socialised models, suggesting that girls should be less explorative, less physically active, and more fearful or cautious, giving young girls less spatial range.

This, coupled with the domestic role imposed on grown women, accounts for the difference in gendered place identity, and gendered-based public behaviour (Jalalkamali & Doratli, 2022). Gender roles are correlatively expressed spatially, with the public realm being associated with and dominated by men, and the private realm being the woman's place, viewed as inferior to masculine public spaces (Arendt, 1998; Kaur, 2021). However, for working-class women, the work-home binary is superfluous, as they are expected to navigate masculine spaces, and assume the domestic role at home (Kaur, 2021). The perceived fear or risk of crime are considered to be popular points of reference in relation to place identity, public behaviour, and the navigation of public spaces, with masculinity being characteristic of unsafe spaces for women (Kaur, 2021; Roy & Bailey, 2021; Tandogan & Ilhan, 2016; van der Burgt, 2013).

A study by Imperial College of London, found that women are 10% more likely to feel unsafe with men present, with 55% feeling unsafe on metro trains (Kaur, 2021). Roy and Bailey (2021) found that women in Kolkata, India, navigate public spaces through a spatial hierarchy, perceiving busy or lively spaces used for commuting or trading as less threatening. Additionally, the male gaze, male behaviour, the presence of middle-aged strangers and men, appearance, locations with a history of harassment, and cultural differences were the main influencers on the notion of safety (Roy & Bailey, 2021). Time of day was another factor influencing perceived safety (Kaur, 2021; Nkooe, 2018; Statssa, 2022; van der Burgt, 2013).

A UK based study also found that 50% of women experienced feeling unsafe when walking alone at night (Kaur, 2021). While van der Burgt (2013), found that Swedish teenagers would not avoid going out at night, but rather avoid places categorized as unsafe at a certain time. Similarly, in Mangaung, South Africa, spatial practices of a space are reported to be influenced by the time of day, with the latest statistical results of the governance, public safety, and justice survey in South Africa showing that people feel more unsafe walking alone in their area of residence when it is dark (Nkooe, 2018; Statssa, 2022). Interestingly, Tandogan and Ilhan's (2016) found that a high perception of crime fear is located in urban and deserted streets and spaces, dark subways and other public transits, empty parks and woodlands, and poorly lit

streets. Although, Tandogan and Ilhan's (2016) fail to mention time of day as a factor, in using Böhme (2014), we can recognise dark, empty, poorly lit areas as generators that modulate a night-time atmosphere placing subjects in a fearful affective state.

Public safety notably affects women differently. van der Burgt's (2013) also found that the inferior physical capacity of women linked to a lack of agency was a major deterrent in navigating public safety, highlighting the masculinisation of public spaces. Demonstrations of body consciousness were made apparent masculine public spaces, influencing dress code, as women reportedly wear less revealing clothes when the perception of fear is high (Roy & Bailey, 2021). Kwan (2010) further found that overweight women, suffering greater body oppression, are more body conscious when navigating public spaces. Tandogan and Ilhan (2016) also noted that women frequently move in pairs or groups to manage risks and fears in public settings. With factors like time of day, physical strength, appearance, body consciousness, and the dominance of men in public spaces, gender arises as a key theme in the masculine categorisation of space, accounting for the difference in public experience as women operate from the opposing female gendered identity (Kaur, 2021; Roy & Bailey, 2021; Tandogan & Ilhan, 2016; van der Burgt, 2013).

2.4.2 Gendered Encounters

With public spaces being historically masculine, women's behaviour often shits when they do enter this 'off-limits' environments, influencing their conduct (Arendt, 1998; Jalalkamali & Doratli, 2022; Kaur, 2021). Historical literature suggests that women venturing into public spaces, such as working-class women, sex workers, and bourgeoise women, have been evident since the 19th century (Kaur, 2021). Exploring the role of social cognition as a relay point for social and cultural authority on gender-based public behaviour, assists in the wholistic grasp of the effects internalised codes of conduct have on situated encounters in public environments (Jalalkamali & Doratli, 2022; Wetherell,2012, 2013).

Sex workers are often viewed as 'deviants' contributing to societal decay, while bourgeois women, typically accompanied by men, are generally not expected to be alone in public (Kaur, 2021). Women's presence in public is accepted under socially approved conditions (Kaur, 2021). 'Deviant femininity' is excluded, while acceptable behaviour allows entry, often with male accompaniment, where working-class women can participate if they maintain domestic roles. Kaur (2021) found that women in Mumbai felt they could not loiter like men in public spaces and had to appear as if they had a purpose for being outside – as they operate outside

their perceived ontological role, affecting their sense of belonging, these women go against the socially approved spatial conditions tied to their gender.

Glancing at the affects of cultural authorities, Jalalkamali & Doratli (2022) found that in Iran, women from traditional areas felt more inclined to restrict themselves in public expression, social interaction, and physical activity than those from modern neighbourhoods. While Wiesmann (2012) found that Turkish women were perceived as leading subjugated lives that support the superiority of Turkish men. South Africa, being a multicultural nation, produces varying forms of womanhood and femininity, resulting in variations in the cultural standards of appropriate public behaviour (Maluleke, 2017; Ntuli, 2012; SAHO, 2019). Therefore, when considering South African social encounters, where intercultural misunderstandings are inevitable, African women hold more traditionalist views of womanhood that prioritise respect and submission (Ntuli, 2012).

Once these conditions or standards are internalised through environmental socialisation, self-realisation and self-regulation based on socio-cultural norms is fostered, producing masculinity and femininity not only as regimes of truth and normality, but as tools of surveillance that govern and police human behaviour (Acker, 1992; Blackstone, 2003; Jalalkamali & Doratli, 2022). This can be linked to place attachment (PLA) as affective or emotional bonds to places influence social interactions, as gender norms are sustained by interactions with the environment, limiting behaviour in ways that align with masculine or feminine expectations (Altman & Low, 1992; Blackstone, 2003). Nevertheless, to fully explore the relationship between gender and public spaces, a multidimensional approach considering the racial influence on spatial experience is vital, as race is a key identity structure for Black women (Kaur, 2021; Settles et al., 2008; Young, 2005).

2.4.3 Racialised Space

In literature, race is considered to be socially constructed, historical and contextual, malleable, and dynamic (Richeson & Sommers, 2016). Social psychology, and the social sciences typically study race, racism, and racial hierarchies, with focus being placed on psychosocial factors like racial categorisation that include stereotypes and affective orientations, group identifications, prejudicial attitudes, and political ideologies (Richeson & Sommers, 2016).Three main theories which work together at some point to account for the various psychological processes that maintain, justify, produce racialisation, are the social categorisation/ group cognition approach, and social dominance theory.

Social identity theory examines the establishment of ingroups (us) and outgroups (them), based on self-identification – where ingroups are often favoured and protected, facilitating biases influence perception, behaviour, and cognition (Richeson & Sommers, 2016). Feeding into the second theory, social categorisation/ group cognition accounts for the knowledge structures formed by ingroups and outgroups, such as stereotypes, prejudices – that perpetuate discriminatory behaviours and reinforce by racialised common sense knowledge (Richeson & Sommers, 2016). Lastly, the social dominance theory (SDT), states that individuals of dominant groups are disproportionately allocated a larger number of valuable resources, such as homes, jobs, and schooling – highlighting a patriarchal system that is ageist, sexist, racists, and classist in an arbitrary nature – operating on a societal, institutional, and organisational level (Richeson & Sommers, 2016).

In investigating racialised spaces, race is understood to be expressed, experienced, and re/produced spatially (Sundstorm, 2003). Race functions as a social structure that influences public behaviour, creating a racial common sense in racialised spaces through social, cultural, political, and economic forces (Sundtorm,2003; Young, 2005). A fundamental aspect of racialised spaces is the hierarchical patterning of race, with the dominant at the top and the most subordinated at the bottom (Sundstorm, 2003). This structure privileges the most dominant race, allowing it control over others whose privileges and resources are consequently constrained (Pirtle, 2022; Sundstorm, 2003). This results in racialised geographical life shaped by residential patterns, education, and environment, affecting access to housing, jobs, schooling, healthcare, and infrastructure (Brown, 2014; Sundstorm, 2003). The discrepancy in access impacts one's quality of life, life expectancy, and mental well-being, highlighting the controlling power of racialised spaces on individuals (Sundstorm, 2003).

In South Africa, a formal or legalised racial hierarchy – whites at the top, Blacks at the bottom, with Indian and Coloureds in between – was legitimised and entrenched by Apartheid's Race Classification Act/ Population Registration Act, which classified people by race (Brown, 2014; CoGTA, 2009; Jürgens et al., 2013). Today, as in the past, apartheid era racial designations continue to influence where people live, work, or go to school (Anderson, 2021; Brown, 2014; Mokoena, 2020; Sundstrom, 2003). Moreover, these ongoing historical patterns continue to favour areas that were once designated for white people, providing better housing, schooling, jobs, opportunities, and services than those for oppressed groups, thus reinforcing ingroup protection and sustainability (Anderson, 2021; Brown, 2014; Mokoena, 2020; Richeson & Sommers, 2016; Sundstrom, 2003).

For instance, areas such as South African townships, built on the margins of cities, emerged as a living area for the non-white labour force, with the key demographic inhabitants being Black South Africans (CoGTA, 2009; Jürgens et al., 2013). As townships are conceptualised as "the ghetto", racialised common sense attaches this label to its subjects – resulting in place identity and relational self-identity formation. Characterised by low status, inadequate amenities, rudimentary infrastructure, and poor living conditions, townships socially described as Black spaces, were and are predominantly associated with the Black South African race – producing Blacks as low status, uneducated, poor, and unclean individuals, while whites are conversely associated with high-value items and/or qualities correlating with socially deemed 'white spaces' (Anderson, 2021; Banaji et al., 2021; Brown, 2000; CoGTA, 2009; Jürgens et al., 2013; Mokoena, 2020; Pirtle, 2022; Sundstrom, 2003; Traast et al., 2024). Whereas the intermediate races, such as Coloureds for example, would potentially receive better benefits and more positive social associations than Blacks, due to their proximity to whiteness (Anderson, 2021; Brown, 2014; Mokoena, 2020; Sundstrom, 2003).

This geographical marginalisation was legitimised and sustained by the lateral forces of legislative Apartheid laws from as early as 1866 when the Pass Law was implemented to control, restrict, and monitor the movement of Black Africans (CoGTA, 2009; Jürgens et al., 2013; Sundstrom, 2003). Further laws and policies that institutionalised white supremacy, maintained segregation; and limited the movement, residential, and land options of non-white South Africans that were passed between 1913 and 1953 included the Native Land Act/ Black Land Act, the Native (Black) Urban Areas Act, the Development Trust and Land Act, The Group Areas Act, and the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (CoGTA, 2009; Jürgens et al., 2013; Pirtle, 2022; Sundstrom, 2003).

2.4.4 Racial Encounters

Given the implicit association of Black with 'bad' and white with 'good', social encounters between whites and non-whites are heavily patterned by racial biases and attitudes – causing tensions in public encounters, and affecting public behaviour (Anderson, 2021; Banaji et al., 2021; Brown, 2000; CoGTA, 2009; Jürgens et al.; 2014; Mokoena, 2020; Pirtle, 2022; Sundstrom, 2003). Stillerman et al. (2020) found that more positive rewards were associated with members from positively stereotyped groups, than members of negatively stereotyped groups which is manifested in subject behaviour, as opposed to self-report. Building on this, Traast et al. (2024) found that in these racially biased encounters, a preference for whites than Blacks is apparent, where this preference is mediated by an internal motivation system (IMS),

potentially influenced by a drive to avoid public scrutiny and/or disapproval. Arguably, this positions IMS as planned behaviour imposed by external social pressures (Ajzen's, 1991; Traast et al., 2024).

Additionally, avoidant and condescending behaviour can be seen in whites in such encounters, as Banaji et al. (2021) found that whites display discomfort, and dumb-down their speech on the presumption of Black incompetence. Therefore, when Blacks find themselves in white spaces, attempts to disassociate themself from said negative associations occurs through performative behaviours such as code switching (Anderson, 2021; Banaji et al., 2021; Brown, 2000; CoGTA, 2009; Jürgens et al., 2014; Mokoena, 2020; Pirtle, 2022; Sundstrom, 2003). Here, Blacks present themselves as what is considered to be well dressed, educated, and well spoken (Anderson, 2021; Banaji et al., 2021; Brown, 2000; Mokoena, 2020; Pirtle, 2022; Sundstrom, 2003). Arguably, Black planned behaviour that superficially moves the Black subject up the racial ladder, which is later associated with assimilation, and/ or situated activities once this code-switching is expressed as an embodied automated response to be being in white spaces (Ajzen, 1991; Anderson, 2021; Brown, 2000; Mokoena, 2020; Sundstrom, 2003; Wetherell, 2012, 2013).

2.4.5 Racialised Gender

Historically, in both the global and South African context, divergences in the experiences of Black and white women are a product of sociopolitical conditions that have framed labour opportunities, family and domestic roles, as well as stereotypical societal insights of womanhood (Settles et al., 2008). Therefore, instead of gender being a universal experience, it feeds on the intersecting forms of identity, such as race, class, and culture (Kaur, 2021; Settles et al., 2008; Young, 2005). For instances, drawing on the initial establishment of womanhood in the 1800s, white middle class women were likened to purity, modesty and domesticity, aligning their values as wives and mothers within the patriarchal system, where such roles were of utmost importance (Settles et al., 2008; Welter, 1966). Contrary to this norm, Black women were historically viewed as animalistic, hypersexual, and not 'true' women (Settles et al., 2008). This produced stereotypes, that continue to inform modern social attitudes, as white women are currently considered to be submissive or agreeable, emotional, and dependent; while Black women are currently viewed as masculine, difficult, independent or strong, hypersexual, and as subjects required to show respect (Settles et al., 2008; Johnson, 2013).

Global racialized gender norms can be observed in South Africa, as womanhood during the 1900s was established on the ideology of the 'Volksmoeder' (Mother of the nation), framed on the idea of the Afrikaner woman, positioned as a symbol of domesticity and motherhood, patriotism, purity and virtue, and moral sensibility (Brink, 1990). This ideology was grounded in the fact that Afrikaner women were not only caregivers, but political figures, embodying and exercising resistance against British colonialism during the Transvaal War of Independence, while preserving their purity through the exclusion of and contempt held against Black South Africans – ultimately, maintaining their stance as the pinnacle Boer (Brink, 1990). The construction of the 'Volksmoeder' reiterated racial and gendered hierarchies, as Black women's recognition as women and humans, was only established in the post-apartheid era (Brink, 1990; Segalo, 2015).

These intersecting oppressions can further be reflected by research by Settles et al. (2008), examining the nuances in the differing perceptions of gender between Black and White women. The results show that themes of caretaking, highlighting motherhood and being a wife; and work-family balance were predominantly expressed by white women in relation to their privilege of choice rather than necessity (Settles et al., 2008). While Black women noted a lack of choice in work-family balance, and uniquely expressed the role of inner strength built on the personal and emotional labour required to navigate and overcome a racial society – culminating the archetype of the 'Strong Black woman' (Settles et al., 2008). Overall, we see a far more positive experience and outlook of womanhood by White women aligned with their positive societal appraisal, while Black women are subject to the interwoven effects of racialized sexism.

Public spaces further echo racialised and gendered experiences, calling attention to the orientation on safety. Although research has displayed shared fear of sexual harassment by all women in public environments, Day (1999) found an increased fear in women of colour, as they face historical sexualisation by men of all races. Additionally, women of colour – specifically Black women – navigate the fear of racialized violence and discrimination, based on an historically established racial hierarchy (Anderson, 2021; Banaji et al., 2021; Brown, 2000; CoGTA, 2009; Day, 1999; Jürgens et al.; 2014; Mokoena, 2020; Pirtle, 2022; Sundstrom, 2003; Traast et al., 2024). Contrary to this, Day (1999) study found that white women's perceived fear of public threats increased as the racial identity of a city moved from 'White' cities to racially diverse cities, showcasing the entrenched stereotypical associations between Blackness and crime, or untrustworthiness.

2.4.6 Place in Context: Post-Apartheid Era

The integration of gender, race, and space showcase the layered dynamics of fear, safety, self and place identity formation, and environmental interactive patterns in South Africa, fostered by the apartheid era (CoGTA, 2009; Jürgens et al., 2013). Thus, for Black South African women the navigation of social spaces entails negotiating the history of racial and gendered segregation, and social exclusion that have left public environments laden with unique tensions and meanings (CoGTA, 2009; Jürgens et al., 2013). Landman (2015) highlights that post-apartheid South African public spaces have deteriorated due mismanagement, poverty and crime, with behaviours reflecting survival; where privatised "pseudo-public spaces", and "public-private spaces" have arisen as controlled responses to disorder, with historic public spaces continue to be celebrated for their symbolic value.

Approaching late apartheid, the dismantling of apartheid laws and policies began, resulting in non-white South Africans migrating into white spaces, as the removal of living and mobility restrictions occurred (CoGTA, 2009; Jürgens et al., 2013). This shift marked the legitimisation of Black spaces and Black experiences, as the gathering of data on township life was initiated, and townships in the Johannesburg, Pretoria, and Vereeniging region were officially identified and recognised (Jürgens et al., 2013). Consequently, desegregation left South Africa with urban landscapes structured by apartheid, reflecting two economies: one white and affluent, and the other predominantly Black and characterised by poverty and crime (CoGTA, 2009; Jürgens et al., 2013).

Three decades in the post-apartheid era, changes in socio-spatial structures along with corresponding public behaviour in South African spaces can be seen. (CoGTA, 2009; Jürgens et al., 2013). Dlamini et al. (2020) found four themes on place identity in post-apartheid South Africa – identity and belonging, social identity and discursive practice, cultural symbolism and group identity, and social inclusion and exclusion. Attesting to the social fashioning of place identity orientated on cognitive and affective bonds in relation to the environment, we see in typical illustrations of places being categorised as white or Black, or as masculine, just how Black women for example, experience racialised and sexualised fears, in white spaces that are misaligned with their self-identity and framed by the historical investments of stereotypical discourses on Blackness (Ahmed, 2004; Altman & Low, 1992; Dlamini et al., 2020).

Black spaces continue to be avoided by whites, while the navigation of white Spaces are still expected of Blacks as a condition of their existence – making Blacks feel out of place, and

whites feel as though their space is being invaded (Anderson, 2021). Displaying how even in the climate of desegregation, biases are still at play, subjects gravitate towards their own race in social settings or avoid interracial interactions (Anderson, 2021; Traast et al., 2024). In using Dlamini et al. (2020), these factors affect Black women's sense of belonging in white spaces which evokes particular public behaviours, that serve as tools in negotiating public spaces.

2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, we see that spaces are gendered and raced, which falls into one's identity and sense of belonging, that is historically, discursively, emotionally, and affectively charged – ultimately defining spaces as places, given the semantic value added to the space. Furthermore, we see that spaces operate primarily in the social and political sphere of everyday life lined by social structures and forces that bear on social activity and public behaviour, which go on to lend itself as measures of appropriateness established on the grounds of social norms and truths.

Moreover, spaces are heavily infused with identity and attachment, where the logics of difference and equivalence are primarily in play with regards the consistent subthemes of ingroups and outgroups throughout the literature. Additionally, literally insights correlate self-identity to established place identity, which is reflected historically, and echoed presently in both the global and South African context. In light of this study, this underscores the significance of exploring the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in public spaces which become contested sites within interpersonal and intrapersonal domains, indicating the relevance of theories of performativity, intersectionality, discourse, and affect.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

Affective and discursive research aims to give a nuanced understanding of those 'invisible' mechanisms that generate behaviour (Miller, 1989; Ott, 2017; Wetherell, 2012, 2013). Affect and discourse are interconnected and offer an understanding of the complexities of human experience pertaining to embodiment – providing a comprehensive lens for investigating how individuals navigate and engage with the social world, particularly in the continuous construction of identity and negotiating public spaces (Ahmed, 2004; Arnason, 2012; Bazinet and Van Vliet, 2020; Miller, 1989; Ott, 2017; Wetherell, 2012, 2013).

3.2 Discourse

Discourse spans over a variety of definitions, which can create for confusion at first glance. Alvesson and Karreman (2000) offer a multidimensional explanation of discourse that incorporates perspectives on how language, ideology, and power function within social, political and organisational life. Discourse can be broken down into two main concepts – discursive practice, denoted as '*discourse'*, and discourse denoted as '*Discourse'* (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000). The former is associated with localised situated language used in specific interactional contexts, such as everyday talk, and the latter is more abstract, referring to the broader contexts of social reality that encompass meaning and ideologies, influencing how subjects think and act (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000).

Four approaches of discourse, as described by Alvesson and Karreman (2000), based on varying degrees of sensitivity to social context and language. In localised and situated language as used in specific interactional contexts, there is *micro* and *meso* discourse (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000). Micro-discourse is produced in everyday interactions (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000). For example, a conversation among a group of friends on their experiences of discrimination in high-school as Black women. Meso-discourse involves the social practices and texts displayed in a specific context, and an example is a news article covering school hairstyles. Drawing again from Alvesson and Karreman (2000), there is a further distinction to be made with discourse involving the split between *grand* and *mega* discourse. The former focuses on larger societal discourses and ideologies, and institutional forms of thinking, such as the notion of femininity and how one ought to present oneself in society. Mega discourse includes power, possible policy and institutional changes, such as governmental or state directives to address hair policies in schools that shape the code of conduct.

Grand and mega discourse takes on a critical lens which is popularly encompassed in literature by Foucault's concept of critical discourse – accounting for social processes that shape reality and objective truth in constructing legitimised modes of knowledge that serve as the basis of normality and common-sense (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000; Arnason, 2012; Briscoe and Khalifa, 2015; Heracleous, 2006; Miller, 1989). Common-sense knowledge is intertwined with power relations and is made apparent at points of conflict and/or difference, where dominant discourses and social groups support and relegitimise dominant or prevailing forms of knowledge (Briscoe and Khalifa, 2015; Miller, 1989). Weber (1992) defines common-sense knowledge as universal knowledge as it acts as an objective system of knowledge, and Habermas (2002), further explains that universal or objective knowledge is an instrumental form of knowledge.

Indeed, dominant discourses become functional through prior or existing investments that are reproduced socialy, politically, structurally, and institutionally in the present – lending themselves to a governmentality that serves to police human and social behaviour (Briscoe and Khalifa, 2015; Heracleous, 2006; Miller, 1989). This results in a biopolitical population – describing an optimal population established in socio-public surveillance and self-governance (Arnason, 2012; Heracleous, 2006). Drawing on this allows for a critical understanding of the discursive forces at play in the facilitation of Black women's navigation of the public domain – theoretically highlighting the underpinnings of common appropriate public behaviour.

Lastly, the four approaches occur in two spheres – discourse determination and discourse autonomy, expressing the extent to which discourse is constrained by and/or shapes social reality (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000). Discourse determination implies that discourse is determined by and constitutive of organisational structures, social reality, and individual behaviour, which construct and are constructed by power dynamics, identity, and relationships (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000). On the other hand, discourse autonomy is independent from external social forces, and not entirely constrained or shaped by existing structures (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000). Here, meaning, concepts, or practices differ or go against dominant social structures, highlighting the possibility for resistance and innovation (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000). Gaging the degree to which the movements and behaviours of Black women in public spaces are influenced and limited by discourse, creates for a comparison in the variation of public displacement – as the discursive determination or autonomy of a Black woman in a taxi rank may differ to that of a mall.

3.3 Affect

Affect is a complex concept that can be explained, understood and used in various ways (Canham, 2017; Feely, 2016; Milani & Richardson, 2020; Ott, 2017; Wetherell, 2012, 2013). One of the earliest theoretical and philosophical work on affect is by Spinoza (1677/2014), who conceptualised affect as the 'capacity to affect and be affected' - or affectus and affection - with the former indicating the body's capacity to act and the latter being the body's response to other bodies. The body's capacity for acting is either increased or diminished when it is affected. Based on this viewpoint, the mind and body are inseparable, making affect both an elemental state and an intensive force (Spinoza, 1677/2014).

Similarly, Tomkins (1982) proposed that affect functions in degrees of intensity, "where good things are made better and bad things made worse" (Tomkins, 1981, p.322). For instance, wrath is an increased version of anger, while excitement is an intensification of interest (Ott, 2017; Tomkins, 1981). According to Tomkins (1981), affect is the motivational mechanism of behaviour, thought, perception, and memory, a biological and innate mechanism that comes into play once triggered neurologically – yielding known patterns of facial and bodily displays and events. Affect is therefore an overarching term encompassing emotion, mood, and feelings, blurring the lines between affect and emotion (Ott. 2017; Tomkins, 1981).

The most common view of affect, which is typically associated with the so-called 'affective turn' in the social sciences and the humanities, is that it is non-representational (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994; Leys, 2011; Massumi, 2002; Ott, 2017; Thrift, 2007; Tomkins, 1982; Wetherell, 2012, 2013). Here, affect is understood to operate on the nonconscious, pre-conscious, or pre-personal plane, entailing affective autonomy, that precedes reason, intention, belief, ideology, and meaning making (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994; Leys, 2011; Massumi, 2002; Ott, 2017; Thrift, 2007; Tomkins, 1982; Wetherell, 2012, 2013). The result of this view is that affect is inexpressible, separating affect from the socio-linguistically and ideologically tainted emotion as bodily (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994; Leys, 2011; Massumi, 2002; Ott, 2017; Thrift, 2007; Tomkins, 1982; Wetherell, 2012, 2013).

Deleuze and Guattari (1994) contend that affect is neither emotion nor sentiments. Their perspective of affect is that it encompasses yet also transcends bodies as an intense energy. Echoing Spinoza (1677/2014), Deleuze and Guattari (1994) view affect as two dimensional: the mind and body work relationally. Like Spinoza (1677/2014), for Deleuze and Guattari (1994) affect involves both 'affectus' and 'affection', or the ability to affect others and to be

affected by them with the result that the body's capacity for acting increases or decreases. For Deleuze and Guattari (1994), affect is a pre-personal and nonconscious, intensity. Only once affect is captured or 'fixed' into meaning does it become emotion (Glapka, 2019).

For Massumi (2002) as well, affect is intensity made visible, for example, through the autonomic reactions of the skin as the surface of the body comes into contact with the external world. These autonomic responses are not immediate but occur a millisecond after stimulation and are only recognised a while later by thinking subjects (Massumi, 2002). Affect is therefore pre-cognitive. This framework, initiated by Spinoza (1677/2014) and later developed by Deleuze and Guattari (1994) and Massumi (2002), highlights the challenge of attributing signification to affect. However, as Ahmed (2004), Glapka (2019), Ott (2017), Thrift (2007) and Wetherell (2012, 2013) argue, the distinction between affect and emotion is not absolute. Even in a pre-cognitive, purely affective state, the body moves within a system of socially meaningful significations, and emotion inherently involves bodily sensation and stimulation.

3.4 Affective-Discursive Practice

Wetherell (2012, 2013), proposes that affect exists in relation to meaning making, and to analyse affective-practice as non-representational would only reduce and/or falsify our understanding of affect. She proposes affective-discursive practice, where the social and the affective are entangled, linking the social being to semiotic processes that are rooted within and go beyond the present moment. Therefore, Wetherell (2012, 2013) defines affect as intersubjective and interobjective, pertaining to bodies that have thoughts and feelings, personal histories, social relations and interactive patterns, narratives, as well as interpretive repertoires. Ultimately making sense of the representational aspects that occur as Black women interact with a space, and with others within that space.

While maintaining that affect is one's ability to affect and be affected through encounters of bodies, Wetherell (2012, 2013) also argues that such a view of affect requires an awareness of how bodies and/or identities, as well as their encounters are shaped and constrained by categorisations, discourses, and social attitudes – such as the categorisations of Black and female, that fall within the discourses of racialized womanhood, which ultimately foster social attitudes that bear on the social role of the Black woman. For Wetherell (2012, 2013), meaning making is continuous, having no stopping or starting point. It is this context along with the histories that form these encounters between events, subjects, and bodies, that cannot be ignored when we analyse affect (Wetherell, 2012, 2013).

Wetherell (2012, 2013) emphasizes an all-encompassing approach to affect that views the neural, developmental, phenomenological, somatic, discursive, cultural, relational, economic, and historical as patterns that de/construct, interrupt, and mediate, while intertwining with one another. Similarly, Ahmed (2004), drawing on Marxism and psychoanalysis, suggests that affect emerges from the interaction of social, psychological, and historical processes with the circulation of meaning between bodies. This perspective enables an investigation into how ideologies, discourses, and power relations shape affective attachments, alignments, modes of belonging, and exclusion. It also highlights how individuals and groups experience belonging or displacement and the ways they navigate or are constrained in public spaces.

3.5 Intersectional Performativity

Goffman (1959, 1974) conceptualises the self as a product of its performance in relation to others, where one's autonomy is restricted and shaped by social frameworks. Similarly, Butler (1988) describes life as being dependent on reoccurring social performances laden with already meaningful and symbolic re-enactments and/or re-experiences (Butler, 1988). Butler (1989) insists that the body is not an inherent reality; rather, it is a concept shaped by historical ideas and acquires significance through its representation within a specific historical discourse. Crenshaw's (1989) notion of intersectionality enhances the above theories by recognising the interconnectedness of social categories such as gender, race, and class, in order to shed light on the experiences of Black women. With this, simultaneously intersecting axes confer experiences of privilege or oppression, constructing an experience of advantage or discrimination (Al-Faham et al, 2019; Brown, 2014; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Gouws, 2017; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Gender is understood to be social and cultural, displaying fixed public somatic performances, consisting of and maintained by set rules of engagement, which produce a compulsory heterosexual dichotomy – masculinity and femininity (Butler, 1989, 1990; Lloyd, 2016). Gender is a verb, established in doing, not in being. One is not born a woman, but rather becomes a woman, entailing a process of repetitive bodily actions and movements – it is in the way one talks, walks, behaves, and dresses (Butler, 1990; Singh, 2002). According to Butler (1989, 1990) and Lloyd (2016), the performance of gender is not consciously directed by gendered subjects; instead, the doing of gender yields gendered subjects. Performativity can also be linguistic in the sense of how someone speaks or uses language enacts, constitutes, and reinforces gendered norms (Austin, 1962; Butler, 1990).

According to Austin (1962), there are three types of speech; locutionary speech, referring to the surface or literal meaning of written or spoken words without taking into account the speaker's intentions or the listeners interpretation – for example, "The sun is shining.". Second, illocutionary speech, or performative utterance – a word or phrase that performs an action. For instance, a doctor uttering "It's a girl", performatively brings about the process of becoming a girl, or 'girling' (Austin, 1962; Salih, 2002). Lastly, perlocutionary speech, refers to the consequential effect an utterance has on others (Austin, 1962). Here, focus is placed on the intended impact of speech on its listeners, making it dependent on the listener's interpretation of the speech – relying on their emotions, beliefs, and attitudes (Austin, 1962).

Austin (1962) and Butler (1993) note that performances and speech acts make reference to already established discourses – such as discourses of race and gender. Butler (1993) emphasizes that a speech act is not an isolated event but rather spans across time, as these utterances exist within past, present, and future iterative contexts. Therefore, femininity is understood as a citation or reference of a commonly known gendered norm, which governs and maintains the regulatory standards of said norm (Austin, 1962; Butler, 1993). Although some contend that one cannot investigate or theorize the gendered body in the same manner as the raced body, with the category of gender intertwining with that of race to shape identity and performativity, Bulter (1993) considers racial performativity, given that these discourses are intersectional in nature.

Given the intersection between race and gender, neither category can be explored in isolation. hooks (1981) claims that the absence of intersectionality, presumes all women as being white, and all Blacks as men. This is based on the understanding that antiracist strategies were built on the experiences of Black men, and that the experiences of white women were at the forefront of the feminist movement (Crenshaw, 1991; Gouws, 2017; Roth, 2013). Considering that the experience of racism for black women occurs differently to that of black men, and the experience of sexism for Black women surfaces differently to that of white women – the removal of intersectionality place Black women in an invisible domain, as their existence through a lack of recognition deconstructs them as subjects of society (Butler, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991; Gouws, 2017; Roth, 2013; Singh, 2022).

Butler (1990) and Singh (2022), describe public racial performance as an element that grants one access to and recognition in any given society. Race is verified through performativity, for instance, with signs of Black legitimacy linked to specific types of performances, expressions,

languages, and locations – established in how one speaks, their bodily and facial gestures, how they dress, and the spaces they find themselves in (Canham & Williams, 2016; Pfeifle, 2014). Racial performativity is also enacted linguistically in an illocutionary and perlocutionary manner (Pfeifle, 2014; Metzger, 2019). When looking at attempts to fit into certain environments, the concept of code-switching further illustrates racial performativity, as racialised spaces are navigated and negotiated through linguistic and behavioural adjustments (Butler, 1993; Stewart, 2022).

The performative identity of Black women is particularly fashioned by social environments. For example, the behaviours of Black women in a taxi rank which is a predominantly Black space, commonly known to be unsafe, requires the navigation of safety related to gender, calling for a gendered performativity (CoGTA, 2009; Jürgens et al., 2013; Landman 2015). On the other hand, in a predominantly white, affluent shopping mall, the categories of race and class are included in this spatial negotiation – calling for Black women to act and talk 'white' as an attempt to fit in (Butler, 1993; Stewart, 2022). This highlights the intersectional nature of race, class, and gender in performative behaviour, where performativity varies from place to place (Butler, 1989, 1990, 1993; Crenshaw, 1989; Goffman, 1959, 1974; Salih, 2002; Stewart, 2022). Therefore, to reduce performativity to a monolithic view, ultimately nullifies the intersectional subject, exemplifying the consequential 'nothingness' placed on Black women in this so-called invisible domain (Butler, 1989, 1990, 1993; Crenshaw, 1989; Goffman, 1959, 1974; Salih, 2002).

Chapter Four: Methods

4.1 Research Design

The aim of the study was to understand the participants point of view and experiences on the phenomenon of public spaces. Exploratory research is aimed to gain and discover new insights and knowledge on a phenomenon (Burns & Grove, 2003). Therefore, an explorative inductive study was conducted to uncover participants conception of public spaces, and how this conception governs their movement and behaviour in said public settings. An explorative approach was suitable for this study given that the phenomenon under analysis (public spaces) cannot be manipulated or controlled, and influential determinants cannot be established by the researcher, ultimately forcing one to take an inductive stance when investigating (Singh, 2021). Moreover, the main purpose of explorative research is to uncover a description of the relationship between variables, in this case it was able to describe the relationship between public spaces and human behaviour (Sing, 2021).

This study falls under the social constructionist paradigm, which was beneficial given that social constructionism focuses on how the world is perceived at a given point in time, where knowledge and understanding is dependent on discourses that shape reality (Burr & Dick, 2017). Here, discourse was specific to time and culture, never being fixed, producing a transformative society (Burr & Dick, 2017). This paradigm was optimal in investigating a phenomenon that has existed and exist in varying cultural political climates over time, that has also been tunnelled through social transformation (Burr & Dick, 2017).

4.2 Participants and recruitment

Due to the fact that the study was data driven and subsequently relied on information-rich data in order to be successful, purposeful criterion snowball sampling was used to recruit participants (Shaheen et al., 2019). Purposeful criterion sampling was most suitable as it is the ideal sampling method to produce an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon by producing a sample that is in accordance with the aims and objectives of the study (Shaheen et al., 2019). Typically speaking, this type of sampling is suited for small sample sizes, which allows for the obtaining in-depth data and analysis (Shaheen et al., 2019). With this type of sampling, respondents were required to meet a certain significant, pre-determined criterion in order to provide information rich data – this is generally done to increase the reliability and validity of the study (Shaheen et al., 2019).

After permission was granted by the Wits registrar, to further secure information-rich data, snowball sampling was implemented by sending out a mass email through the administrative office of the Wits Humanities Graduate Centre under the humanities faculty, to all students registered as humanities students, in the hopes that respondents would assist in the accumulation of a suitable sample size of information rich cases of at least 12 participants (Shaheen et al., 2019). This sample is adequate for an in-depth exploration of people's experiences of public spaces (Shaheen et al., 2019). The mass email contained a brief summary of the study, and a call for interested participants. Unfortunately, the email received little to no responses. Following the failed attempt of the mass email, I recruited participants by circling a research information poster (see Appendix A), serving as a call for participants, and by giving out participant information sheets (see Appendix B) on campus to individuals who seemed interested. From here the snowballing approach came into effect, as I was connected with several potential participants. In the end I had recruited 14 participants, 7 for each focus group. Once respondents had shown interest in my study, and met the criteria named below, focus group discussion consent forms (see Appendix E) were given to participants who showed up for the focus groups scheduled for the 18th and 19th of September 2023. Upon receiving informed consent, respondents became a part of the study, and the focus group discussion began.

Given that the sample was selected according to the needs and objectives of the study, respondents were selected to participate in the study based on 6 criteria, namely, age, gender, race, nationality, location, and experience. Considering that the aim of the study looked at the experience of South African Black women, respondents became participants provided that the respondent identified as a Black South African woman, where Black is defined according to the apartheid demographic system, given that the South African ethnic population count is done so on the basis of the racial separation between Black Africans, Coloureds, Whites, and Indians or Asians (SAHO, 2018; Statista Research Department, 2021). Given that the study aimed to focus on the phenomenon of public spaces within the post-apartheid era, participants were required to be classified as a 'born-free', meaning that the participant must be born within the post-apartheid era (Nkrumah, 2021). Furthermore, for ethical considerations, when it came to consent, all participants were required to provide informed consent – meaning all participants were required to classify as adults in agreement with the South African legal system, that serves as the supporting basis of the population categorisation of age in South Africa (SAHO, 2018; Statista Research Department, 2021). Therefore, respondents were considered as participants,

provided that they were between the ages of 18 and 28. Lastly, in light of the fact that a majority of the South African population resides in Gauteng (26%) (Statista Research Department, 2021), participants were required to be from Gauteng and were further required to have a personal lived experience of an engagement in and with a public space in Gauteng.

To summarize, the participants of this study were Black South African women, aged 18-28, who live in Gauteng, had a lived experience of an interaction with and in a public space, who were registered as students in the humanities faculty at the University of the Witwatersrand, and who have expressed interest and provided informed consent to participate in the study.

4.3 Procedure and Data Collection

Data was collected by conducting two focus groups made up of 7 participants each, where I was the mediator of the focus group. The focus groups were conducted in person, where participants were able to see each other. Typically, face-to-face focus groups are conducted by a moderator and an observer (Gill & Baillie, 2018; Hennink, 2007); however, I was conducting the focus groups alone, and the interaction was audio recorded. The first focus group was 80 minutes long, while the second focus group was 90 minutes long, and follow-up questions to the initial questions were asked in order to probe on interesting points made in the discussion. For the location of the focus groups, both focus groups were held in the writing lab at the Emthonjeni Centre at the University of the Witwatersrand (see Appendix C for the letter of permission from the Emthonjeni Centre). The first focus group was held on the 18th of September 2023 at 11:00, and the second focus group was held on the 19th of September 2023 at 14:00. It must be noted that the date and times of the focus groups were subject to change depending on the availability of the participants. After the focus groups were conducted, the audio recordings of the discussions were transcribed in order to prepare the data for analysis.

This form of data collection is constructed on the basis of open-ended questions which yields discussions anchored by the thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and perceptions of the participants on a particular phenomenon (Hennink, 2007; Kitzinger, 1995; Mishra, 2016). Therefore, given that the study placed a strong emphasis on the experience of public spaces, a focus group was best suited for the aims and objectives of the study seeing as it has the potential to produce information rich discussions that can provide for a more in-depth analysis, adding to the validity and reliability of the study (Hennink, 2007; Kitzinger, 1995; Mishra, 2016). Another factor that adds to the expected result of information rich discussions, is the flexibility in the nature of focus groups, considering that this form of data collection is semi-structured or

unstructured (Hennink, 2007; Kitzinger, 1995; Mishra, 2016). In this study a semi-structured data collection format was used.

One vital point to note when conducting focus groups, is how participation is influenced (Hennink, 2007). Some participants may feel more inclined to voice their opinions if they feel they have some sort of support from other participants – which can be influenced by the sense of same groupness that could potentially be achieved with a focus group (Allen et al., 2021; Hennink, 2007). However, due to the lack of anonymity, some participants may feel less inclined to participate, or at the very least less inclined to participate truthfully (Hennink, 2007).

In the case of this study, both the former and the latter appeared to be true. Another downfall to look out for when conducting a focus group is that some participants might take charge of the discussion influencing the extent of participation from other respondents (Hennink, 2007), which again, was the case for this study, as both focus groups appeared to have several participants who led the discussion more. Therefore, having a discussion style interview, participants may influence each other (Hennink, 2007). In this study, there was a general support or agreeance between participants on a majority of the points made, resulting in expressions of collective experiences.

However, in light of the fact that the aims of the study were to investigate the affective-discursive underpinnings of the participants experiences, this form of data collection can use the limitations mentioned as an advantage, as it allowed for the observation of discourse in the group dynamics and also created space for a lively discussion between participants on a shared topic of interest. Thus, speaking more to the suitability of the technique (Manuel & Kendall-Taylor, 2010).

4.4 Data Analysis

Once the audio recordings of the focus groups were transcribed, the transcriptions served as my data items that underwent analysis. According to Wetherell (2013), discourse cannot be understood outside of affect, and neither can affect exist independently from discourse. The two operate in relation with each other by continuously feeding back into one another creating an affective-discursive cycle of reality (Canham, 2017; Feely, 2016; Glapka, 2019; Ott, 2017; Wetherell, 2013). Therefore, in accordance with my theoretical framework, I used the affective-discursive practice to analyse the experiences of Black South African women in public spaces in Gauteng (Glapka, 2019; Wetherell, 2013). For the affective element of my analysis, I pulled from the combined approach of affect, where affect lies between being an elemental state of

emotion and an intensive force, that is produced through the encounters of bodies that have the ability to exert that force onto others (Ahmed, 2004; Canham, 2017; Feely, 2016; Ott, 2017; Wetherell, 2013). Regarding the discursive element of my analysis, I drew on the Foucauldian concept of discourse that encompasses elements of power and knowledge systems that are legitimised as fixed objective truths, where discourse is considered to be anywhere and everywhere as it is produced and mediated through the interactions between subjects and objects (Arnason, 2012; Briscoe and Khalifa, 2015; Miller, 1989; Takács, 2017).

This cyclic practice of affect and discourse places emphasis on embodiment as the core of one's identity and existence (Glapka, 2019). Thus, in analysing the transcripts on the discussion of the experience of public spaces, critical attention was placed on language (Glapka, 2019). Therefore, I searched for reoccurring sets of expressions made by participants (Glapka, 2019). The key ideas I focused on when searching for these expressions, were the subject positions taken up by the participants, as well as indications of embodiment made apparent by the participants within their talk (Glapka, 2019). This was done in relation to indicators of feeling or emotion that appeared to be attached to dominant societal discourses on race and gender placed within public spaces presented in the participants speech (Ahmed, 2004; Canham, 2017; Feely, 2016; Glapka, 2019; Ott, 2017; Wetherell, 2013).

4.5 Ethical Considerations

Firstly, and most importantly, my data collection process was only initiated once I had signed and gained my ethical clearance certificate from the Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-medical) at the University of the Witwatersrand (see Appendix G). In submitting my proposal and gaining ethical clearance, I received a letter of permission from the Emthonjeni Centre, allowing me to conduct the two focus groups in the writing lab at the Emthonjeni Centre (see Appendix C). Moreover, a letter of permission was received, offering free counselling for participants who may have potentially been emotionally and/or mentally triggered by my study (see Appendix D).

Other ethical considerations considered were anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent (Cacciattolo, 2015). Unfortunately, anonymity was not achievable, given that the data was collected by face-to-face focus group discussions where participants were in contact with one another (Cacciattolo, 2015). However, confidentiality was established by ensuring that all participant information and data gathered from the study was kept on a password protected computer, where the data and information was only accessible by me, the researcher, and/or

my research supervisor. Furthermore, no identifiable information was included in the research report, and pseudonyms were used for participants and any other identifiable mentionable entities in the study.

All respondents became a part of the study once informed consent was provided. All participants received a participant information sheets (see Appendix A), focus group consent forms (see Appendix E), in order to obtain informed consent. The participant information sheet gave a brief summary of the aims of the study, the procedure of the study, and what was to be expected of respondent if they chose to participate. Furthermore, the participant information sheet highlighted the status of confidentiality and anonymity. All participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study, and/or refrain from answering any questions. Participants were debriefed beforehand on the study in order ensure and clarify confirmation on consent. It is possible that the questions asked in the focus groups may have cause emotional responses from the participants; however, potential risk to the participants was not anticipated. In the event that participants were emotionally and/or mentally triggered by the study, participants were provided with the contact information of the Emthonjeni Centre where participants may seek free counselling (Please see Appendix D for the letter of permission from the Emthonjeni Centre).

4.6 Reflexivity

Generally speaking, researcher bias is often seen as the weak point in research as it appears to reduce the validity of a study (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022). However, seeing as researcher bias will always and inevitably occur in a study by virtue of the fact that all data interpretation and final conclusions drawn from a study are done so from the standpoint of the researcher, qualitative studies has highlighted the constitutive importance of this bias in knowledge production (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022). The process of acknowledging this bias, known as reflexivity, allows researchers to account for their ways of understanding the world and how this understanding shapes future knowledge (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022). Therefore, given the social constructionist epistemological stances taken in this study, my view of reflexivity is that my interpretation and representation of reality as a researcher influenced my research, which can go on to actively contribute to knowledge production and to the creation of reality (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022). Hence, my reflexivity acknowledges how my presence, experiences, values, and pre-conceived ideas or understanding of the world enhanced the outcomes of the study (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022).

The study aimed to focus on the experiences of Black South African women in public spaces in Gauteng. I happen to be a Black South African woman, who has her own lived experience of public spaces, and who also resides in Gauteng. Therefore, when conducting this study, I was influenced by that fact. Furthermore, I can acknowledge that my own pre-conceived understanding and knowledge on how Black South African women experience public spaces had a role to play in my interpretation of the data. Moreover, given that I was the mediator in my focus group discussions, where participants were required to identify as South African Black women, as a researcher, my presence as a South African Black female may have assisted in creating a sense of comfortability or rapport, due to the same groupness between me and my participants (Allen et al., 2021; Olmos-Vega et al., 2022).

However, I must importantly note that although me and the participants may belong to the same demographic, differences still occur, given that experience is subjective. When it came to reported white beauty standards expressed in the focus groups, I was singled out and indirectly referenced, as I am of a lighter skin tone – bringing me closer to whiteness and consequently closer to the white beauty standard. Coming into my study, I had not taken this into consideration, as my only anticipations were centred on a racial and gendered sameness with my participants. Reflecting on the topic of my skin tone, I am reminded again how I tie my racial identity more so to my hair rather than the colour skin, as I have thick, heavily textured hair – typical of Black Africans. Nonetheless, to further account for my researcher bias on the interpretation and understanding of the data, my report was viewed by my supervisor in order to provide a less bias lens.

4.7 Dissemination

The final research report includes quotes from the anonymized transcripts of the audio recordings of the focus groups. The final research report may be made available to all participants upon their request. The final research report will also be made accessible to the public online through the University of the Witwatersrand library or any other online platforms that provide open access to their materials.

Chapter Five: Findings and Discussion

The following chapter dives into the findings and discussion, highlighting the various aspects that shape the daily lives of Black South African woman. The data items analysed are drawn from two focus groups on the navigation of public spaces, producing primary themes of safety, public perception, social-relational expectations, and generational and structural influences – with the predominant theme being safety, as it was the consistent concern throughout both focus groups. Additionally, the findings presented with various subthemes, which along with the major themes, are encompassed by an interwoven network of discourse and power, affect, and intersectional performativity expressed on the gendered, racialised, cultural, and socio-historic planes.

Therefore, this analysis aimed to uncover the conceptualisation of space and/or place, how these conceptualisations were formed, and most importantly how these conceptualisations and their forming factors impact the movement of South African Black women with primary focus being on affective and discursive dimensions in relation to race and gender. An account for each research question can be found throughout the discussion, as the themes and corresponding sub-themes are explored.

5.1 Generators of Safety

Safety was fundamental to the day-to-day lives of participants – with the sub-themes of place identity, personal strategies, group movements, dress code and self-presentation, and familiarity. All of which are mediated by an embodied disposition that assists in the navigation of public spaces. Safety was reported in relation to being violated, assaulted, raped, kidnapped, robbed, harassed, or sex trafficked. In this relation, there was a general consensus that everyone is deemed as a threat, whether female or male, old or young, all should be approached with caution during interactions. However, men being the individuals to fear and avoid the most was emphasised, as participants described:

> P7: “Black, White, Coloured, Indian. Uhm, I'm scared of men. Like whether, uhm, the – the – the age, what – what you look like, for me your appearance, it doesn't count. Uhm I – I don't – I – I just – yeah. I just think they're horrible people.”

> P7: “…I feel like every time I go outside…I'm always at the mercy of men, how they treat me, I'm always at their mercy. Like if he decides that he wants to cat call me, he's going to. He decides to grope me, he's going to, whether I choose to let that happen or not, I don't have much control over that.”

The generalised fear of men expressed above leads to the impression that men as a whole pose a threat to women (Day, 2006). This is consistent with the alarming climate of gender-based violence and crime in South Africa, where, according to the latest national gender-based violence study, out of 42,289 reported cases of rape, women account for the majority of the victims, with 76% of men making up the greater part of perpetrators (Zungu et al., 2024). Moreover, a lack of autonomy for women is expressed when in public spaces, while relationally, agency is simultaneously afforded to men, as they are constructed as autonomous and superior subjects. This highlights the power imbalance between men and women that is expressed spatially, leaving women in a constat state of fear and vigilance in public environments – a further point which appeared in the findings:

> P1: "…I'm – I'm always paranoid! I'm always paranoid, and I'm just always self-conscious. I don't know why…"

> P3: "Safety, I think that's the first thing everyone, especially females, think of when they go out, because it's not safe. We're scared. Every time."

Johannesburg was generally understood as unsafe regardless of the time of day by participants. Johannesburg is reported to have one of the highest crime rates in Gauteng (Statista, 2024). However, emphasis was placed on the strong correlation of spaces appearing to be safer during the day, and less safe once it gets dark. Consistent with literature, the matter of time of day in relation to lighting can be reflected in the results (Anushka, 2022; Kaur, 2021; Nkooe, 2018; Statssa, 2022; Tandogan and Ilhan's, 2016; van der Burgt, 2013). Lighting was associated with levels of safety, where in using Böhme's (2014) theory of affective atmospheres, lighting is used as a modulator for safety creating an unsafe atmosphere and placing participants in an affective state of fear. Interestingly, time of day is referenced to foster a sense of isolation and restriction in movements:

> P4: "…I think the idea of having people being around, uhm, gives that sense of, at least maybe someone might come into my rescue, if anything happens. Rather than at night, where there's limitation of movement, there's fewer people. Uhm, so yeah, I think for me, everything must be – what needs to be done outside, must be done during the day until maybe like 6pm, unless I'm with people that I know would protect me or whatever might be the case, if we do it beyond 6pm.".

Further factors reinforce this atmosphere, as being in public spaces is contingent on the presence of other people, which is described to be rare at night. Anushka (2022) states that men

have better access to public spaces, as they are able to enter public spaces at all times of day. Additionally, Anushka (2022) describes poor transportation and poor street lighting as modulators of safety that frame women as vulnerable in public settings.

The reporting's, along with participants experiences, shed light on common narrative of men being the group to fear. This not only contributes to spatial common-sense knowledge, but further demonstrates how the fear of violence fashions the spatial navigation of Black women, while reinforcing the discourses of safe and unsafe spaces – as modulators of time of day, and presence of men, not only imbue a fearful atmosphere, but also serve as discursive signifiers of unsafe places. This forms the continual modification of the spatial reality of women which is revealed through the affective-discursive nature of safety, that dispositions participants to avoid men, avoid going out at night, and to travel in groups – all of which is further encompassed by the emotional or affective disposition of fear. This affective disposition was notably expressed in the findings, as an embodied response that occurs once participant step into public spaces – compelling the women to be vigilant and prepared for any and all encounters:

> P6: "Uhm personally, when I feel like when you – before you step out, there's like something that happens within you where you raise your guard as well. You like sharpen you're hearing, you sharpen your – It feels like your senses are being sharpened before you step out so that you can catch anything in the periphery, or you can hear anything. So that to make sure you are always ready for any type of scenario."

> P3: "…like shape shifting depending on like the – the climate of the condition you're in, so as not to be in danger…I think you – you just know how to react…I think women just know how to channel that…for the most part, you just know what, or what not do."

> P6: "…have you noticed that you can almost sense when men now want to grab you because your body already – like when they move to grab you, your reflexes – react before you've actually consciously registered it. So it's – it's kind of sad that as Black women or just women in general, that we've already – your body has adapted – to the environment in such a way that it can unconsciously react to a situation – before you register it."

Interestingly, a participant expressed the socialised or educated bodily state that occurs as she navigates unsafe spaces:

> P2: "…So like, when you come to spaces like maybe in CBD or anywhere. You just know that like, you are on your own… when you go to like spaces like groove or like, just unsafe – places that are not safe. You just know that, okay, you have to be safe, like you have to be, like – so like in a way it – it – I've grown to understanding that like, even if it's not safe, but like I have to make means to be safe. So it's no longer affecting me that okay, it's not safe. I know it's not safe, but I'm gonna survive…"

Encompassing the view of bodies having the ability to affect and be affected, operating on a scale of intensity, participants provide varying accounts of affect at play, where fear operates at a lower intensity for some in public settings (Massumi, 2002; Wetherell, 2012, 2013).

5.1.1 Impressions of safety

With places being identified as either safe or unsafe, the inner city was deemed as unsafe, while places such as malls and school campuses were deemed as safe. Moreover, spaces in transit, such as public transport – for example, trains, taxis, Ubers, and/or Bolts – were generally deemed as unsafe. In the following findings, variations in place attachment can be observed which is based on the participants' experiences in public spaces (Altman & Low, 1992).

Taxis and taxi ranks were reported as being the safer option out of the bunch, as they are imbued with a sense of community which foster comfort and familiarity, where help and assistance would seem to be more accessible in cases of danger:

> P4: "…for me, I feel safer going with the taxi than with an uber… there's already, like, marshals, there's other taxis coming, so people – like the taxi drivers know each other in that sense, so that's why I'm saying, I feel safer going with a taxi then an Uber."

> P7: "…I feel safer in a taxi than in an Uber, cause in a taxi I feel a sense of – even I don't know the person, I feel a sense of community. There's a mom who's my mom's age, who might stand up for me if something happens… like she said, there's the taxi association that you can go to."

A reliance on the surveillance of the taxi association can be noted, further, we see how the collectivist culture through a sense of community counteracts the threat to safety isolation may pose. With the collectivist culture prioritising shared responsibility and interdependency, a relational identity, more clearly established as Ubuntu in South Africa, creates a community of care and humanity among Black South Africans (Molose et al., 2018; Patel et al., 2024). Under the ideology of Ubuntu, Black women find themselves under a social safety net in their

dependence on others in the Black community who are obligated to practice ingroup protection (Molose et al., 2018; Patel et al., 2024). Ahmed (2004b) describes this sense or feeling of community as impressions created through intercorporeal encounters that cultivates a collective feeling of safety and security. Thus, we can argue that this impression of safety is a shared feeling that emotional attaches individuals to form a community and to exercise Ubuntu (Ahmed, 2001).

While a sense of community provides comfort and security for some in taxi ranks, interestingly, another participant highlights the dynamics of train stations. Particularly at rush hour time when it is overcrowded, women seek this communitive solace in each other:

> P7: "…for example in – I take the Gautrain, where people sit shows their level of comfort – And also, the mannerisms with it – which they act. So for example, around like rush hour, the Gautrain gets really full, but if there's a seat open, a woman will offer it, whereas a man won't. Like, I've seen that sometimes women are just more polite, especially towards each other –"

Ahmed (2001), emphasizes the role of difference, intensity, and attachment. Combining this with Böhme (2014), when looking at the dynamics of a train station, we can see how women from potentially varying backgrounds who are collectively experiencing intense fear, in an atmospherically unsafe space, cultivate an informal support network – as women offer open seats and extend politeness towards each other, leading to a deeper sense of solidarity, support, comfort, and safety.

Importantly noted by participants, the categorisations of safe and unsafe spaces, are based on a curated sense of safety – given that spaces like school campuses appear safer than spaces like the inner city. Seeing as there is more security and surveillance on campus, there is an increased likelihood of one policing their behaviour and conduct, as well as a greater vigilance and awareness of one's surroundings in the event of a crime. As participants mentioned:

> P7: "…I think, to a certain degree campus is more safer compared to the inner city. But I also think that it's packaged differently… Like on campus, you might get harassed by another student or you might have a weird guy following you, but it doesn't get deemed as. unsafe as the inner city, because it's not like – the inner city you might experience the same aggression, but it might be to a worse degree…"

> P4: "…it's also a thing of here on campus, we can – it's easier to track someone… Whereas in the inner city, someone you don't know, there's different things that can happen. And like, people use different things to know hurt. So, that's why it's deemed more safer than when you're walking in Braam."

Currently, university or education campuses generate a safe environment through CCTV surveillance, access control, campus safety services, where the movements of individuals are monitored and restricted, with security patrol and emergency response being made readily available (Tandiwe & Thompho, 2020). Lefebvre (1974/1991) argues that through surveillance public spaces become points of control where agency is constantly negotiated. As individuals police their behaviour and conduct, the biopolitical self-surveillance of men in such spaces provides the impression of safety, that reduces the intensity of fear experienced by women (Ahmed, 2001, 2004b). Participants acknowledge that this package of safety on campus, provides the perception that threatening situations and encounters may occur at a less degree, as opposed to not occurring at all.

5.1.2 Compelled group movements

Moving in groups in public spaces serves as a safety measure for women, as help and protection is made more readily available. However, participants importantly noted that this group movement is an imposed requirement for women, as a preference to go out in public spaces alone was expressed by participants. Some participants preferred to go out with family, as a means to stay safe, given the lack of trust and reliability friends bring – as participants report:

> P4: "…Because there's some girls that you will go out with them and then they'll just – if something happens, they'll disappear and you just alone…"

> P3: "…I feel safer when I am going with my family… Cause our friends pimp us now – You – you out, you get pimped…"

Commercial sexual exploitation has been a growing matter of concern for decades (Anderson et al., 2014). Anderson et al. (2014) found a prevalence of adolescent pimping in high schools, where selling sex as a favour or being sold for sex by one's intimate partner, under acceptable conditions was the general attitude among the youth. Additionally, in families, reports of mothers pimping their daughters to uncles, boyfriends, or stepfathers, is a common experience among victims (Raphael & Myers-Powell, 2010; Reed et al., 2019). Interestingly, in exploring the pathways of sexual exploitation via friends, family, and boyfriends, Reed et al. (2019) found

that among the typologies of relationships, friends were the most common in leading to commercial sexual exploitation.

However, in keeping with the common typologies of sexual exploitation, other participants also express that family too are a point of fear as male uncles and/or unrelated family male figures are highlighted as groups to be weary of:

> P5: "…South Africa has a very big rape problem and a very big sexualization problem, and you can find that you're at home, but your uncle is there, and you know – your mother knows that your uncle is someone – And your home is not safe enough for you to even be yourself in your body. You always need to be on – cautious around…"
>
> P4: "…like even when you're walking at home, umalume that you – you thought ukuthi, "ah ubaba ka sban sban", is now also – Obje – "Hao sissie haose muhle nawe", like dude I see you as an uncle – I see as a – a – a brother, I see you as a father. Why are You looking at me in that scene like…"

South Africa has a deeply rooted and pervasive rape culture, which reflects broader societal issues linked to gender inequality and sexual violence (Baloyi, 2010; Holtzhausen et al., 2011). The latest reporting's show that as of 2022/2023, 80% of the total sexual offences committed in South Africa (53 498) are reported as rape, with the second highest sexual offense being sexual assault (Cowling, 2023). Studies have shown that the issue is fashioned by the incessant sexualisation of women in society – produced and maintained by African culture and media (Baloyi, 2010; Holtzhausen et al., 2011). For instance, traditional cultural practices such as "Ukuthwala", where young girls are taken for marriage, reiterate broader patriarchal norms, as women are subject to the dominance and control of men, with men viewing women as property and/or objects (Baloyi, 2010; Holtzhausen et al., 2011). Media amplifies this objectification, through the portrayal of women as sexual objects – reiterating the sexualised stereotypes of women, and Black women in particular (Baloyi, 2010; Holtzhausen et al., 2011).

Consistent with the findings of this study, we can argue firstly, the discursive construction of pimp culture, as it is established as a norm among youth, family members, intimate partners, and friends (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000; Arnason, 2012; Briscoe and Khalifa, 2015; Heracleous, 2006; Miller, 1989). In highlighting South Africa's problem of rape and sexualisation, participants have linked the discourse of group movements with friends or family to the broader normalised social context of sexual exploitation. Here sexual offence is normalised by the discursive devices of culture and media – where women are constructed as

property and sexual objects, and where this construction is perpetuated and maintained. Thus, in operating within the reality of normalised pimp culture and female sexualisation, the fear of being victims compels participants to tread lightly in their friendship and family groups, and further influence their choice of group (Ahmed, 2000, 2001, 2004a, 2004b; Wetherell, 2012, 2013). This fear can be described as the affective motivation of movements by participants, as intersubjective encounters between participants and others within public spaces, laced with the historical discursive investment in culture and stereotypes, elicit the thought and feeling of fear through impressions or contact made in said encounters (Ahmed, 2000, 2001, 2004a, 2004b; Wetherell, 2012, 2013).

5.1.3 Coded elicitations in dress and self-presentation

As a protective measures, or means to enhance their safety, the actions of the participants involved making people aware of their whereabouts and/or potential whereabouts before they step out into or while they are in public spaces. These include telling parents or someone you know where you were going, or by sending your live location to someone you know or someone that is close to you. Other actions consisted of hiding personal belongings such as gadgets and devices when moving in these unsafe spaces to draw less attention to themselves.

Participants reported that their self-presentation was highly dependent on the nature of the spaces they would be stepping into. For instance, in safe spaces, the young women felt that they could dress whichever way they pleased; however, unsafe spaces called for a conservative and/or masculine dress code – as participants reported:

> P4: "…make sure that when we to the inner city, you're dressed like a gent – so that no one comes to you and thinks that you are a certain person because once you wear a short dress or anything, that's kind of like revealing – we already a prey…"

Another action can be seen in reported performativity when participants found themselves in unsafe spaces – here unsafe spaces were reported to elicit specific facial expressions, which called for them to look intimidating:

> P3: "…Even your facial expression, you must not look scared… You must always like, have that face. Yeah. "Don't mess with me"."

We see that participants present with a tailored self-presentation that correlates with the conceptualisation of space, where public spaces are identified as unsafe and masculine. There is a need to fit into masculine spaces. Previous literature highlights women feeling the need to

move with purpose as a means to blend into public spaces (Kaur, 2021). In this study, the young women take the route of dress code and how they present themselves, as they code switch from femininity to masculinity and intimidation – a coded behaviour which in using Wetherell (2012, 2013), comes into effect once women are situated in the context of unsafe, masculine public spaces. In code switching, the participants perform gender in a way that aligns with the social norm of the space, in the way that they behave and dress – actively constructing masculine gendered identity in this context (Butler, 1990). Discursively, a social authority is at play, not only in the construction of gender and its associated public behaviour, but in its dictation and governance on when to code switch – which relies on the social cognition of subjects that elicits an automated bodily response to being in public spaces, materialised as dressing masculinely and using intimidating facial expressions.

Additionally, lying about one's age, to present as a younger, is also perceived as protection from predators, as they are more likely to not want to face the consequences of engaging with an underage girl. As participants expressed:

> P4: "…I think as women, we also have to lie about our ages for our protection… I remember, I was in the taxi and this guy was like, "How old are you?", and I just – just so that he can see that I don't want him, I was like, "No, I'm 15" – and he's like, "15 and you dressed like this?", and I'm like, "Yes.", and then that's when he backed off…"

> P7: "…men only start to recognize the severity of rape when they are in the position of being disadvantaged…"

Paedophilia has long been a societal concern globally, where child predators are viewed as the prime target on a moral standard – constructing paedophilia as a popular theme in today's culture (Bowman, 2010; Furedi, 2015). Universally speaking, the preservation of the female child, is a discourse that has gained supplementary investment, in that to preserve the female child, not only speaks to the purity and innocence of children, but further speaks to the preservation of fertility and the reproductive sustainability of the population (Sidel, 1991).

However, in South Africa particularly, with the predominant nature of GBV against women and girls, a gendered moral obligation to protect young girls can be observed. This moral standard is further reinforced by the South African legal age of consent being sixteen. This may account for the participants reported choice of age, when lying about her age, and further account for why men would not persue the participant in this case – as an attempt to avoid legal consequences that would place men at a disadvantage. Deterrence theory in criminology,

describes the motivational behaviour behind not committing crimes, where the reduction in crime and offences to society are produced by the threat of punishment (Paternoster & Bachman, 2012). Ultimately, we see how women are able to use disciplinary power in their favour, as a protective strategy in public encounters, as the threat of punishment for being with an under aged girl deters men from making sexual advances to participants (Paternoster & Bachman, 2012).

5.1.4 Familiarity

Familiarity with the space itself and with the people in the space were factors that made women feel safe and conformable in public spaces. This familiarity, however, is not fostered by the notion that no harm or danger would occur, but rather that self-protection would be easier:

> P4: "…being familiar with the surroundings, like if I mean – okay, I'm from Soweto, so if I'm in Soweto, uhm, Vilakazi street, I know ukuthi aunty ban-bani or uncle ban-bani who's a family friend, lives right here, so if I'm in danger or I need help, I can easily go there, or even if I'm here in Braam, I'm walking down, I'm going to McDonald's, I know my friends that go to Boston always park here, and I know they always there, so if anything goes down, I can run to them or I can run to ah South – any South Point building and just seek uhm, safety."

> P6: "…personally, whenever I go to a place, I need to know all the exits…"

> P3: "…it's also a thing of familiarity. So, I feel safe on campus because I know this campus, I know where the bathrooms are, like I just know my way around the place. So if I've been somewhere before, I'm most likely to – to feel safe, because if anything were to happen, I know where to run…"

In the familiarity in people, participants reported feeling safer in the presence of men that they know, in that these familiar men would provide a valuable layer of defence and protection in any hostile or dangerous situations. As van der Burgt (2013) has found that women experience a lack of agency and protection, given the physical advantage men have over women, participants express similar sentiments:

> P4: "…So, most of the time, going out means having people and mostly having guys, uhm, around based on the sports that I do…"

> P5: "…she uses her male friends for protection and that just speaks to how women need to align with the men in order to feel safe in spaces at times – You cannot defend

> yourself in certain circumstances. You need to rely on another man, which tells me that I do not have power in my capacity to be able to protect myself and to ensure that I am safe, even if I'm with another woman, that – having another man is more valuable than being with another woman."

A study by Dubey et al. (2025) found that the presence of familiar people when in public spaces serves to generate a strong feeling of safety. With regards to men, biologically speaking, men generally have more muscle mass, greater upper body strength, higher bone density, and larger hearts and lungs, than women, resulting in men having greater physical strength and higher aerobic capacity and endurance (Hunter et al., 2023; Phillips et al., 2023). Studies have found that being accompanied by a male companion in public spaces produces a sense of safety for women in potentially dangerous situations that require more physical strength. Moreover, men are socially constructed as protectors, which additionally accounts for their presence creating a sense of safety for women.

Additionally, due to their commonly known aggressive nature and physical strength, men act as a deterrent to potential aggressors in unsafe spaces and circumstances (Dubey et al., 2025; Klasios, 2019). This deterring tactic has historically been used as a form of psychological warfare in the military, where showcasing signs of strength serve has a display of power and aggression, that intimidates and discourages the opponent from engaging in conflict (McNeilly, 2015). This is an ironic predicament that women find themselves in, being that the people that they fear the most, are the ones who they need the most. As stated above by participants, men are feared above all else in relation to sexual violence; however, in using the aggression of men to their advantage, women arguably condone and perpetuate the societal norm of men being the aggressor.

5.2 Functions of Stereo-normative Perceptions

Public perception spoke to how participants felt perceived by society, and how they perceived others when in public spaces. These reported perceptions were heavily rooted in gendered, racial, cultural, and societal norms that dictate a right way of being, where participants reported being stereotypically profiled – dictating the nature of their public impression. Ahmed (2001) explores how such public impressions are fundamentally mediated by emotions rooted in a web of social norms and power structures – where emotions are not only subjective, but go beyond the personal realm, acting as a public and political factor of socio-cultural contexts. This

emotional mediation dictates how one ought to feel, act, or be, based on their social categorisation, while othering those that do not conform to the social norm (Ahmed, 2001).

Reflections of Ahmed's (2001) sentiments can be seen in Wetherell's (2012, 2013) multi-dimensional approach to affective-practice, as the intensities in one's ability to affect and be affected by encountered bodies are said to be mediated by the constructs and constraints of social categories along with their corresponding discourses and social attitudes. Aligning with Ahmed (2001) and Wetherell (2012, 2013), participants report that these stereotypical public impressions, dictate how women are perceived and treated, affecting participants public behaviour and self-presentation. The following theme consisting of two functions of stereo-normative perceptions – physical appearance and identity – that encompass concepts such as dress code, body shape, beauty standards, sexual identity, cultural identity, and the female identity stitching together threads related to respectability, social commentary, political correctness, and societal or normative standards of behaviour.

5.2.1 Physical Appearance

Participants report having their dress code dictate the amount of respect they receive from people and the perceived respect one has for themselves, as dressing more conservatively presents the participants as respectable women who have high self-respect. While wearing more revealing clothes is considered as indicative of a lack of self-respect on the part of the participants. Moreover, wearing revealing clothes reportedly signals promiscuity, often inviting unwanted advances from men, leaving women feeling harassed and/or violated, both physically and verbally. Supporting this, studies dating as early as the 1980s have found that women who wear more provocative clothes, are more likely to be sexually appealing, and more likely to be raped than women who dress conservatively (Cahoon & Edmonds, 1987). While Abbey et al. (1987) found that women who wear more revealing clothes were described as sexy, flirtatious, promiscuous, seductive, and less sincere and considerate.

These studies display a narrative on clothing and respectability that has long been invested in, which is currently reflected in society as common knowledge, as recent studies have found that women who wear more revealing clothes are more likely to be objectified, and perceived as being more open to sexual encounters and as having lower moral standards – ultimately affording such women little to no social respect (Ahmed, 2004a; Sherman et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2023). Further historical investments into common social knowledge can be observed in

the objectification of Black female bodies – a particular narrative highlighted by participants were their high school experiences.

In this case, participants report having schoolboys looking up their skirts. With regards to their male teachers, participants would often feel uncomfortable, as they were subjected to harassment and/or their male gaze. Interestingly, participants voiced a noticeable difference in race when it came to the way in which the school uniform fit Black girls' bodies in relation to white girls' bodies. A general complaint among participants was that when white girls wore the same uniform or wore more revealing uniform it was deemed acceptable; however, the same could not be said for Black girls.

> P4: "…uhm, Black girls we had problems with our skirts, can be the same length as white girl. However, because we have hips – and then we try to sit down, it lifts and then I remember this one teacher she was, uhm, she was a white female and she used to like look down on all like the Black females, and that time her own daughter was wearing the shortest skirts and she would be like, "You guys need to fix your skirts because you guys know you guys have hips and they lift…"."

> P6: "…when I was at boarding school... in the boarding house, the girls would sometimes rotate clothing between each other, and one girl will be told that's too short and get – sent back to your room to go change, but another girl who would wear the same dress the next day would be like it's fine…"

Research has found that the school uniform dress code has been established by white heterosexual male norms as a mechanism for surveillance and discipline, children consequently receive negative reactions to dress that does not fit as expected (Edwards & Marshall 2018; Graham et al., 2017; Meadmore & Symes, 1996). However, with the stereotypical context of the Black female body in mind, studies have shown that Black girls are disproportionately disciplined compared to white girls when wearing school uniform that falls within the school guidelines but is deemed inappropriate on Black bodies (Shanks & Phelps, 2021).

Participants' account for this harassment and violation is based on being perceived as objects, resulting in their sexual objectification – pertaining particularly as seen above, to the Black female body, as they describe it as being naturally more curvaceous than other racial body types.

> P1: "…it's like it doesn't look wrong. Like, wabona, abelungu ma begqoka amabum shorts, it's like – "Ohh o apere bumshort". But nna, when I'm wearing a bumshort… It's a problem! But haibo, it's the same thing."

The sexual objectification and commodification of Black female bodies began as early as slavery, where dehumanising stereotypes framed Black women as morally inferior and hypersexual, based on their more curvaceous physique and deep a rooted fetishisation (Anderson et al., 2018; Reece, 2023). Given this dehumanisation, where Black people were generally traded as property, Black women in particular became vulnerable to sexual exploitation (Anderson et al., 2018; Reece, 2023). The case of Sarah Baartman is a prime example, reiterating the commodification of Black women, and reinforcing the associated stereotypes on Black women's bodies – as she was exhibited in Europe during the colonial era, feeding social curiosity by displaying her steatopygic body shape that was uncommon in Western culture (Qureshi, 2004).

This objectification reportedly occurs in early childhood, as participants describe being sexualised as early as the age of 11, when wearing shorts or revealing clothes. This again was compared to white female children who were not sexualised when wearing shorts:

> P7: "I agree as well, like even with – like with black kids and then white kids, like an 11-year-old white girl can wear short clothes and she'll be you got it as cute. But if a black kid is the same thing, it's like, "Mmmm, you're a bit promiscuous – You're seeking attention" – But umntwana…"

> P5: "When you're a child and you're wearing shorts, men will look at you in a specific way. Regardless of age, the Black female body is consistently sexualized…"

Highlighting the adultification of Black children, a study by Epstein et al. (2007) found that from as early as five years old, Black girls are perceived as more adult-like and less innocent than their White peers. Research indicates that this perception is founded in the stereotypical sexualisation of the Black female body that structures Black children as more mature (Stanton et al., 2022). Additionally, not only did participants express being objectified as young children, but further expressed being objectified by young children – as one recalled an experience with a young boy as she walked down the street in her neighbourhood:

> P3: "…I was at home and I'm walking with my friends, we were coming from the shop. So a group of kids, I think they were around about 10 years… and I don't know from

> where, but that child just spanked my ass and ran away… like that child was like literally 10 or 9 years old."

Importantly we see how women of today continue to operate within an affective economy of racialised and gendered historical discourses of body shape, that position participants in the face of sexual stereotypes, placing Black women within the discourse of racialised womanhood (Ahmed, 2004a; Anderson et al., 2018; Epstein et al., 2007; Reece, 2023; Stanton et al., 2022; Wetherell, 2012, 2013). This perception increases safety concerns in public spaces, as Black women are more likely to face higher levels of public harassment that can escalate to sexual and physical violence, contributing to the unsafe affective atmosphere of public spaces, and increasing feelings of anxiety, fear, and uncomfortability when moving in public settings.

Other accounts of body shape correlated with age – as respondents communicated that being plus sized results in being perceived as an older woman, which went along with stereotypical standards on age-appropriate dress code. According to participants, plus sized women feel the need to dress more conservatively as they are considered to be of an older age group. Further need to dress more conservatively was based on their fuller physique making clothes appear more promiscuous; thus, making plus sized women more inclined to cover up. Emphasizing the moral discourse of age, these accounts speak to an appropriate public gendered performance, where according to Twigg (2007), age disciplines and mediates the bodies experience of clothes. With that in mind, participants felt that according to social standards, plus sized women need to wear less revealing clothes compared to others when in public spaces.

Reportedly, being plus sized leads to less confidence in one's physical appeal – highlighting a standard of beauty centred around whiteness, as white women are naturally more petit. Respondents expressed that conventionally beautiful Black women who present with white features – being skinny, or of a lighter skin tone – are perceived as more beautiful and are consequentially taken more seriously in cases of rape and/or sexual assault allegations. With the reason for conventionally unattractive Black women not being taken seriously in such cases being that it is socially unfathomable that a man would find a plus sized woman physically appealing enough for sexual advances:

> P2: "…I've come to realize that it's people who are more beautiful – women that are more beautiful in which their problems are much more heard, or dealt – attended to faster than those who are, you know, not so attractive by societal standards."

> P4: "…I don't know, being dark skinned, I'm not – respected in that sense… because white women are seen as beautiful even like magazines and stuff, white women are seen as beautiful. So being a light skinned, you're closer to that race, being a coloured, you're closer to that - to being white…So if I was like – something happened between me and a – a light skinned, one of my friends who's light skinned, they would take her story seriously…"
>
> P3: "And sometimes they even like, say, "You should be happy that they did that because you don't deserve it, you're ugly…"
>
> P7: "…Desirability politics, play a big role in how desirable you're deemed… the more socially attractive you are, the better you get treated…things like fat phobia also come in, the bigger you are the less respect you get, cause it's like – it's like you get disregarded if you if you experience like a fatphobic attack or something, and you voice that it's like, "but you're not even desirable – so why would anyone, even"…or as a dark skinned woman you like – you will get the blame. It will be like – cause dark-skinned women are also like – there's this masculinization – of dark-skinned women, so it's like, "Okay but, awuyo baby girl anyway"."

Participants have highlighted an intersecting point of social desirability, where colourism, fatphobia, and whiteness are at play, in the discourse of sexual violence. Whiteness has long been the operating social standard of reality, constituting the historical ideology of white supremacy (Pirtle, 2022; Sundstorm, 2003). In keeping with this, we see how Eurocentric beauty standards dictate the social perceptions of participants (Pirtle, 2022; Sundstorm, 2003). Literature has shown a racial hierarchy reflected in beauty where being of a dark skin tone, overweight, and presenting with Black features (such as a larger nose or lips) is ideologically equated to Blackness, consequently equating this to lower status and desirability, incompetency, and untrustworthiness (Hunter, 2007; Strings, 2020).

As such, with public spaces being points of fear for sexual violence, when negotiating public settings, these ideological perceptions of beauty are attached to bodies and carried into social interactions – with said perceptions impacting the degree to which Black women are received, and/or acknowledged, speaking to variations in one's recognition in society. Literature emphasizes how this lack of recognition creates invisibility by deconstructing Black women as subjects in society (Butler, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991; Gouws, 2017; Roth, 2013; Singh, 2022).

5.2.2 Identity

Here the discussion on public perception occurs through the intersection of race, culture, gender, and sexual orientation. The overall consensus was that women are viewed as weak or overlooked by society. However, regarding culture, an interesting shift in perception is seen. It was expressed that with being a Xhosa Black woman, public perception and being accepted by society, is a vital layer to consider when interacting with people. Participants expressed:

> P4: "…But just being a Xhosa woman means I'm not respectful, I have disregard for men… because of the different stereotypes that are out there, and how that puts me sometimes in vulnerable positions, cause I've had different encounters when the person realizes that I'm Xhosa, they become more sometimes aggressive – cause they believe that we're stubborn…"

> P1: "…Like she said, Xhosa women are seen as being stubborn and so – and aggressive. And then there's this idea that, "Okay, well, if that is what a Black woman is, then why do I need to protect her? She can then protect herself"..."

Interestingly, another participant highlighted her Xhosa culture as a drawing point in threating social encounters:

> P1: "…Yoh! I don't know what happened neh, but the Xhosa in us came out – that guy was like eh – he swore at us… we were vulgar to him back. I think I've used – I used very, very vulgar words that I'm proud of – I swore him with ancestors – Like, we were on some – like we are ready to go – I can't fight, but if I must break a bottle – If I must look for a weapon right now, I will find a weapon, I will make one."

Here we see how Black women fall victim to cultural stereotypes that socially construct Xhosa women as stubborn and aggressive, where these stereotypes serve as justifying mechanisms for social disrespect and aggression. Although there is little literature to support this; in analysing these accounts, such narratives arguably place Xhosa women in a defensive affective state when negotiating public spaces, as society is positioned to offer less care or protection for Xhosa women (Wetherell, 2012, 2013). However, we also see how culture serves as a source of power and agency, where the aggressiveness of the Xhosa culture is now viewed in a positive light, providing a point of inner strength – a theme found exclusively in the discourse of Black womanhood, constructing the ideology of the strong Black women (Settles et al., 2008).

Looking at social public encounters, women were perceived to have deeper connections in comparison to men, who are considered to have more shallow connections. However, participants were of the view that interactions with women often involved a strenuous amount of conscious effort to be politically correct. Women were also described by participants as being characteristically catty towards each other, leaving woman-to-woman interactions laden with tones of intentional maliciousness and spitefulness.

> P4: "…I'm gonna take it to like a groove perspective… there's that snaaks thing towards each other as women because it's like, "No, this one wants to take our drinks…"…but also another interaction that I love about women, when you go to the bathroom, you'll always find a group of women that are – "Come join us in this stall" – that thing – there's sense of womanhood, but there's also a sense of we are hating on each other instead of like building each other up."

As a result, some participants reported preferring the company of men, as men are considered to bring "less drama" in their encounters. However, this preference of men was challenging, in that women have to often navigate how they are perceived by men. Participants express that speaking about sex, from a knowledge standpoint or in terms of their own experiences around men, gives the impression that they are sexually active, and that they are easy target for men's sexual advances. Moreover, displays of friendliness and/or kindness from women to men are further reported as a perceived signal of romantic interest from the women's part. As expressed by women:

> P6: "…if you are black female, but you're also – also sexually open like you have no problem with sex and you enjoy it. But there's a certain perception that comes with that, they think you're easy…"

> P4: "…even when you like, talk about sexual health and all that, now it's – you're talking, it's like, "Okay, this one ai, I can ngena, fast fast"…"

> P5: "…when I'm coming to you as a human being, I'm talking to you, I'm being nice, wena you think I'm flirting because you don't see me as a human seeing me as an object. Something to be obtained – So, you don't view my kindness towards you as kindness, you view it as a way for you to – to get me."

Women-to-men encounters are laced with misinterpreted social ques at the expense of the women. As women talk openly about sex, they deviate from the gendered social norm which

mandates that women be passive and modest regarding sexual matters (Schalet, 2011). As a result, expressions of sexual knowledge or experience serve as indicators of promiscuity, stereotypically framing women as morally inferior (Abbey et al., 1987; Cahoon & Edmonds, 1987). Additionally, the misinterpretation of women's friendliness underlines how the actions of women are interpreted through the male lens of entitlement, that structure women as seeking male validation and as ornaments to serve men, removing all autonomy in their actions, and ultimately reinforcing the commodification and objectification of women (Kitzinger & Frith, 1999; Manne, 2018; Reece, 2023).

This stigmatisation of sexual knowledge and expression, along with the entitlement over women's actions emphasise a logic of misogyny where friendliness and talks of sexual matters by women are indicative of regimes truth regarding promiscuity and invitations of male attention, reinforcing patriarchal norms (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000; Arnason, 2012; Briscoe and Khalifa, 2015; Heracleous, 2006; Manne, 2018; Miller, 1989; Schalet, 2011). Furthermore, these 'truths' are attached to women as they enter public environments, creating false impressions that contribute to the affective amplification of the vigilant and fearful disposition women experience in unsafe spaces.

Additionally contributors of this affective amplification is observed in experiences of being queer, as a participant expressed:

> P7: "…as a queer woman…when I do interact with, uhm, like heterosexual women or ciswomen, once they find out I'm queer, the interaction changes – or like this microaggression like towards me now, or it's like, "oh" – or like weird comments are being made, so like even if I don't want to, I sometimes have to have my guard up for that, of how am I gonna be received as this person by a man or just a ciswoman…"

This reflects the heteronormative and cisnormative biases that fashion the complexities of social interactions for queer individuals, where the disclosure of one's sexual orientation and/or gendered identity brings about microaggressions experienced by queer woman (Sue, 2010). With heterosexuality and cisnormativity acting as the dominant social standard of reality, shifting from this through identifying as queer, marks a gender non-conformity patterned with harmful social stereotypes that construct queer individuals as hypersexual and predatorial, incompetent and unprofessional, and villainy – where their social-normative deviation is often pathologized and perpetuated in media and television (Balsam & Mohr, 2007; Conrad, 2007; Gross, 2001; Herek, 2000; Rubin, 1998; Russo, 1981). As a result, public social interactions

are often points of tension, as discriminatory attitudes are fostered against queer individuals calling for the adoption of defensive strategies, such as the participants "having their guard up" employed at the anticipation of prejudice or microaggressions (Crocker & Major, 1989; Sue, 2010).

5.3 Constraints of socio-relational dynamics

The social relational factors that Black women face, based on participants responses, is anchored in who they should be and how they ought to behave. Here the discussion focuses on the intersection between gender, culture, and race, describing how Black women are governed by the social expectations and generational influences, as these cultural and gendered norms – established historically and reinforced generatively – dictate appropriate public behaviour. The findings reflect an awareness of said factors and their consequential constraints, contestations of these constraints, and a call for active change by participants, where their notion of Black womanhood goes against dominant racial, socio-cultural, and gendered discourse.

5.3.1 Perceptions of Social Expectations

Overall, participants express a general expectation of Black women to be kind, caring or nurturing, respectable, and polite. Respondents expressed how these societal expectations of Black women have fostered a sense of entitlement to Black women's time, energy, and personal space. Ahmed's (2004a) affective economies explains the historical investment into these social expectations, as the notion of Black women being nurturing, polite, and respectful has long been established and perpetuated. During the colonial and apartheid era, Black women were employed as domestic labourers and caregivers for white families, which intersects with their gendered cultural expectations at home – where Black women are structured as having to take up roles of domestic servitude as the emotional and moral anchors of families and communities according to ubuntu, reinforcing their responsibility to put others before themselves (Cock, 2001; Collins, 2000).

Moreover, motherhood within the family structure is central to the identity of Black women in African culture, further perpetuating the nurturing stereotype (O'Reilly, 2000). These historical investments create a circulation of emotions that attach themselves to bodies, creating a collective social impression on who or what a Black woman is, fostering a collective sense of entitlement to Black women's time and energy (Ahmed, 2004a; Ahmed, 2004b). Through this, social boundaries are created which defines what is considered appropriate and acceptable behaviour for Black women.

These characteristic schemas call for Black women to dress conservatively, particularly if you are a plus sized or older woman, or both. Moreover, Black women are consequentially expected not to speak out of turn or speak up for themselves – this leaves participants feeling as though they are expected to be "doormats" allowing people to walk all over them. In acting outside of the above expectations, Black women face social scrutiny, as participants describe being labelled as "bitchy" when deviating from their designated social norm, which is compared to a contrary label that society gives to white women for the equivalent behaviour, as they are described as being assertive and standing up for themselves. As participants express:

> P1: "…I mean a white woman can be a bitch…"
>
> P2: "…culture like goes around, like in – in Black society. That like women are expected to respect men, they're expected to be good…So, if you don't do that, then you are bad woman…"
>
> P4: "So, there's everything wrong with Black woman being assertive, uhm, and I think that's when also the disrespect – or rather the – the stereotyping is coming from. The moment Black women started standing up for themselves, it was never seen as assertive, but rather as being aggressive and disrespectful… we are not allowed to be assertive or even stand up for ourselves."

This scrutiny potentially results in an affective biopolitical attachment (Ahmed, 2004; Bazinet and Van Vliet, 2020). Black women attach themselves to these ideals, causing a self-surveillance to remain within these social boundaries, so as to not face exclusion or alienation (Ahmed, 2004; Bazinet and Van Vliet, 2020). In this attachment, these ideals are internalised as coded behaviour, which according to Wetherell (2012, 2013) resurface in social interactions as embodied situated actions, as Black women operate according to what is expected of them, functioning in a state of constantly giving and being boxed in a reality that misaligns with their internal schematic self and/or emotional orientation to the world around them. This limits Black women's power for action, being that their entire being is governed within the context of fear of exclusion, which further lends itself to their sense of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006a).

Yuval-Davis (2006a) defines belonging as a deep emotional connection to a group or a place, centred around social inclusion, identity, and recognition. Black women's belonging is closely tied to their gendered and racial identity, as well as the recognition of said identity by others – fostering a feeling of being seen and valued (Gehmacher, 1999; Gul, 2012; Yuval-Davis, 2006a). In operating within the social boundaries mentioned above, a lack of recognition for

who Black women truly are is generated, as their individual needs and/or aspirations are overlooked (Gehmacher, 1999; Gul, 2012; Yuval-Davis, 2006a). Ultimately, the misalignment with their internal schematic self, produces a profound sense of alienation, compounded on the already established social exclusion based on racism and sexism Black women may face during public social encounters (Gehmacher, 1999; Gul, 2012; Yuval-Davis, 2006a).

Another expectation participants noted was that of the dating world, as women are described as having to be conscious of publicly being around male romantic partners – seeing as it would bring shame to their families, bringing into question their level of self-respect, and how the women were raised. However, the same is not expected of men:

> P2: "…when you bring a guy to a gate, you dating with a guy – And they be like, "why are you standing with that guy on the gate? What are – u bo makhelwane, what are they gonna say now? You should go stand there, date there" – There's that thing ukuthi, even your parents. They expect you to respect everyone, like everyone, even people who are around you…"
>
> P4: "…but the – the – the same expectations is not – are not there for males – he – he – he can come with as many girls as he wants – there's never thing of, "What are the neighbours gonna say?"."
>
> P7: "What were you taught at home?".

Here we see further social boundaries extending the restrictions imposed on Black women's public conduct based on patriarchal norms that expect women to uphold family honour through displays of modesty and restraint. In the participants narratives, there is this idea of a shared understanding of appropriate public behaviour pertaining to women that is made manifest in the socio-relational expectations. Foucault describes a structural governmentality that is re/produced and maintained through the family structure, as the family serves as a primary mechanism in instilling dominant discourses of girl- and womanhood (Briscoe and Khalifa, 2015; Heracleous, 2006; Miller, 1989).

Thus, a lack of adherence to this discourse by women through public associations with male romantic partners, reflects poorly on their families and upbringing (Briscoe and Khalifa, 2015; Heracleous, 2006; Miller, 1989). Intersecting this with Black women's culture, women symbolise the moral standing of the family and her self-worth, which is popularly reflected in the tradition of *Lobola* (pride price) in various Black South African cultures, underscoring the

notion that a women's reputation is linked to her perceived value – where public displays of romantic encounters are interpreted as immoral, decreasing the woman's value, consequently lowering her marital price (Kandiyoti, 1988; Walker, 1990). Thus, an intersectional performance is required by Black women in public social encounters (Butler, 1989, 1990; Lloyd, 2016).

5.3.2 Implications of Generational and Structural Influences

Generational and structural influences on Black women's behaviour have been highlighted throughout the discussion, participants specifically emphasis these factors in the findings, as they stress a generative perpetuation of social norms and expectations, where reportedly, their mothers, teachers, aunts, or other female authoritative figures condone these societal norms, by participating in what is expected of them – as expressed by participants:

> P6: "…there was a PE teacher who was a problem like… the head of our uhm res or – came to talk to us and she was like, "Girls I need you to – to start watching what you wear", but her husband also, people would be like, "The way he stares at some of us ma'am, it doesn't feel nice"."

> P2: "…it wasn't more so the – the male teachers, but it was the boys in which the, uhm, the authorities of the school at that time, they would like – wouldn't really look at the cases that deeply, they would just be like, "oh, boys, will just be boys, blah blah blah blahh"."

> P1: "But akere, we excuse problematic male behaviour in boys when they still young – and then they grow up in places where it's kind of normalized. We have to now cater to them because they can't control themselves or they were raised a certain way, or they were exposed to certain things that they think it's okay to go after a child like you're saying, a child and a male adult teacher."

We see how wrong behaviour in boys and men is accepted as normal and inconsequential, causing girls and women to bear the brunt of such behaviour in public spaces. Moreover, this creates for a spatial imposition of public environments, where schools, acting as microcosms of society, reflect how women have been socialised into navigating male behaviour through self-regulatory mechanisms, such as dressing more modestly (Fenster, 2005). Thus, the participants' narratives illustrate the perpetuation of gender inequalities where hegemonic masculinity is generative in nature and favoured and maintained by ingrained socio-cultural

norms that surface as common-sense habituous public behaviour (Connell, 1995; Bourdieu, 1977).

Participants contest against this generative social norm, calling for solidarity among women, where older women protect younger girls by addressing predatorial men and boys, and by allowing girls and women to feel free and liberated in public spaces:

> P6: "…it didn't help that she's – she's like, I think she's Central African or West African, I'm not sure. And she's set in the old values like she wears loose and baggy dresses that are like, cover her whole body. And we used to feel some type of way because it – it felt like she was protecting her husband – And most of the girls in the – in the res, were black girls, and it really didn't feel nice. That someone who should share your experience, would defend her husband just because it's her husband and choose to protect an idea. Because it's – maybe – okay, for some people, it's how you grow up but I – personally, for me, I feel like there's a certain age when you can choose to stop being ignorant and stop letting past values control you…"

> P6: "…I've seen where a woman finds out her son raped someone, she'll just try and like be like, "No, let's talk to the families – let's try and push it"…I'm not saying don't stop loving your child, but you also – hold your child accountable…"

The call here, reflects the need for older to go against the dominant discourse of hegemonic masculinity, that takes the voices and experiences of women for granted, that restrict the movements of women, and that contribute to the identity of unsafety spaces. According to participants, these social expectations, generative, and structural forces leave women at a disadvantage, as participants describe being at the bottom of the social ladder, referencing themselves as "the mules of society" according to Tony Morrison (Morrison, 1987/2006).

> P1: "…it reminded me of, uhm, in – Tony Morrison, in a book of hers she writes that Black women are the mules of the world… what she was basically saying was that uhm, a white slave master could instruct a black man to maybe pick up that table and then move it somewhere, and then the Black – the Black man will pick it up, but he won't move it, he will instead pass it off to the black woman and tell her to then move it, and that's always like stuck with me. That we literally, if you consider this like totem pole of – I don't know if I should call it a hierarchy of some sort, but Black women are literally at the bottom"

> P4: "…Black women in South Africa, I feel like – actually Black women everywhere. We are the most, uhm, disadvantaged – throughout the whole world…"

This is perfectly echoed as Morrison (1987/2006) metaphorically describes the Black women as the mules of the world, as she dives into the intersection of race, gender, and class, highlighting the weight of social expectations and injustices that Black women have to bear, much like the heavy load carried by mules. Morrison (1987/2006) further emphasises the resilience of Black women, a theme that has been constantly reflected in research and by participants – established as inner strength producing the narrative of the strong Black women.

In the end, there is a strong call for active social change as participants are tired of the state Black women find themselves in, along with the vigorous daily effort that goes into navigating public spaces:

> P2: "…I think we can't think about change without looking at structure like it's a structural thing that must happen. You as an individual cannot change the whole male population… I think that women should be supported far beyond having our stories heard. We talk every day, we need structural things to happen… we need to – we need things to be happening at the ground. We need police to be able to take our things seriously. We need resources allocated towards women so they can uplift themselves and their children…"

> P4: "…this whole narrative that Black woman should be strong – should be like disassociated with Black women, cause why do we have to be strong? This – we should be allowed to have a moment of where we cry or a moment of where we scream at people… we have so many things that are against us as Black women in South Africa…through culture, through societal uhm views, through uhm patriarchy, through everything…"

> P1: "…schools must teach us to tap into our power… help us tap into our power and maximize our potential and stop making it seem like certain things in life are so far out of reach, especially because you're a Black and you're a woman… my aunt was telling me ukuthi, "…if you look like me, and you want to succeed in any business, expert corporate world, you're gonna have to work twice as hard…"

The above underscores institutional theories of change, that advocate for the reform and dismantling of dominant social structures, such as policing, education, and family, which take

Black women for granted (Scott, 2008). Additionally, the trope of the "strong Black women" denies Black women vulnerability, while society expects them to be resilient. This aligns with the concept of controlling images by Collins (2000), as it describes how this trope serves as social narrative that confines Black women to a limiting role. Lastly, in highlighting the importance of empowerment through education, participants emphasize the vital pedagogy of liberation by Freire (1970), who argues that critical consciousness can be achieved through education, enabling challenges against harmful dominant regimes of truth – resulting in a personal and collective liberation.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Summary of findings

The study focusses on how Black South African women navigate public spaces, where themes of safety, public perception, socio-relational expectations, and structural and generative influences are emphasized. Safety emerged as the dominant theme for participants. Safety entailed an impressionable safety, where sense of safety was generated from lighting, group movements, familiarity in people and places, a sense of community, and elicited forms of dress and self-presentation. Ultimately, the nighttime, poor lighting, isolation, the presence of men, unfamiliarity, and wearing revealing clothes, creates an affectively atmospheric unsafe public environment.

Within this atmospheric climate of unsafety, public environments are structured as masculine with major concerns related to sexual violence, harassment, sexual exploitation – which are amplified by the normalised culture of gender-based violence in South Africa. With this, an interplay of affective states such as fear, and hypervigilance were persistent motivators in Black women's movements in public spaces. Moreover, these impressions of safety a governmental surveillance was prominent in the findings as women policed their own behaviour, conduct and presentation in public spaces; while also using the self-surveillance of men to their advantage, in order to decrease their vulnerability to perceived risks and/or dangers. With this, other dominant safety strategies called for performative acts of masculinity in the women's dress, body language, and facial expressions – resulting in situated social activities.

Additionally, public perception included functions of stereo-normative perceptions encompassed by physical appearance and identity, which were heavily rooted in gendered, racial, cultural societal standards – measured hierarchically – dictating how Black women ought to be, behave, or present in public environments. These perceptions include harmful racially gendered stereotypes that structure Black women as hypersexual and masculine, leading to their commodification and objectification – further increasing the risk of unsafety.

The mentioned stereotypes highlight affective economies that have been historically invested in and felt collectively – perpetuating a shared common sense on appropriate public behaviour. With this, racially gendered expectations are placed on Black women to put others before themselves, where a deviation from this norm and/or expectation results in the scrutinization, othering, and invisibility of the Black woman. Thus, social public encounters are mediated by

generative and structural forces such as race, gender, culture that are iterated and solidified through public behaviour.

6.2 Strengths and Limitations

The limitations of this study can be found in its methodology and context. When conducting a focus group some participants might take charge of the discussion influencing the extent of participation from other respondents, which again, was the case for this study, as both focus groups appeared to have several participants who led the discussion more. Additionally, the study lacks generalisability as it contextually specific to the experiences of Black South African women. However, in its lack of generalisability, the study emphasises the taken for granted experiences, while contributing to knowledge to an under researched concept – affective-discursive practice – within the South African context.

6.3 Recommendations for Further Research

For future studies on this topic, I would recommend a more in-depth study on three levels. Firstly, a comparative study would be relevant, across various racial, cultural, gendered, and geographical groups; given that participants brought forward nodes of these comparisons in their experiences. Secondly, a longitudinal study would be relevant in investigating evolutions or stagnations in historically dominant discourse that dictate women's navigation of public spaces. Lastly, policy-oriented research would be suitable, given the strong call for systematic and institutional change made by participants.

6.4 Concluding Comments

To conclude the findings presented with a call for change, where society moves away from dominant narratives that place Black women at a disadvantage through their placement at the bottom of the social hierarchy. This study contributes to an under researched field, through its combination of affect and discourse in the spatial dynamics of Black South African. Iterating my participants call for women empowerment an agency through individual and collective liberation, this study not only sheds light on the experiences of Black women in public spaces, but further amplifies their voices – providing a foundation for action and advocacy toward safer, and more inclusive public spaces.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Research Information Poster

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PSYCHOLOGY

CALL FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

My name is Lebohang Molotsi, and I am currently conducting a study where I will be **exploring the experiences of Black South African women in public spaces in Gauteng**.

I aim to understand how public spaces and the interactions that happen in public spaces impact the movements and behaviours of South African Black women in Gauteng.

I will be conducting **focus groups** consisting of **6-10 people**. Each focus group will last approximately **45-90 minutes**.

Location: Emthonjeni Centre, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Date & Time: 19 September 2023, 14:00

If you are interested, please see the contact details below for more information:

lebomolts@gmail.com OR 079 878 8211

Note: Food and Refreshments will be provided

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PSYCHOLOGY

Greetings,

My name is Lebohang Molotsi, and I am currently doing my Master's in research psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. My supervisor is Dr Nkululeko Nkomo. As part of my degree, I will be conducting a research report titled "Exploring the affective-discursive dynamic of how South African Black women negotiate public spaces in Gauteng". I would like to explore the experiences of Black South African women in public spaces in Gauteng. I aim to understand how public spaces and the interactions that happen in public spaces impact the movements and behaviours of South African Black women in Gauteng. I would like to invite you as a participant in my study.

As a participant, I would like you to take part in a semi-structured focus group in the presence of 6-10 other participants, where you will be questioned on your experience of public spaces, in order to understand how you navigate public settings. I will be conducting the focus groups alone. The focus group discussions will take approximately 45-90 minutes to complete and will be conducted in a face-to face setting. With your permission, I would like to audio record the focus groups. The location of the focus group will be at the University of the Witwatersrand, at one of the Emthonjeni centre rooms on the east campus, on the 18th and 19th of September 2023, at 14:00. However, these dates and times can be changed to suit your schedule. Please note that you will be considered to take part in the study if you meet the following criteria: All participants must identify as Black South African women, who are between the ages of 18 and 28, who live in Gauteng, and have a lived personal experience that took place in a public setting in Gauteng.

The study will only be conducted once ethical clearance has been obtained from the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-medical) of the University of the Witwatersrand. Personal information and data gathered from this study will be kept confidential on password locked computer. All audio recordings will only be seen by me the researcher, and all transcripts will only be seen by the researcher and the researcher's supervisor. All participants will not be able to remain anonymous due to the fact that the discussions will be held in the presence of other participants. However, in the transcripts and write up of the study all identifiable

information will be omitted and pseudonyms (Participant A, Respondent B etc.) will be used, meaning that another name will be used instead of your real name.

There will be no direct benefits to you if you choose to be part of this study. However, your participation in the study can help to understand the experiences of Black South African women in public spaces. Any potential risk to the participant is not anticipated in this study; however, in the case that you may be triggered mentally and/or emotionally through the discussion process, please note that you will have the right to withdraw from the study at any point in time or not answer any questions that feel too uncomfortable, you may also seek free counselling at the Emthonjeni Centre at 011 717 4513 if needed. This centre is located at the Wits University east campus, that provides various services including counselling.

There is a possibility that the results of the study will be published in journal articles or presented at conferences. The final research report will include quotes from the anonymized transcripts of the audio recordings of the focus groups. The final research report will be made available to you upon your request. The final research report will also be made accessible to the public online through the University of the Witwatersrand library or any other online platforms that provides open access to their materials. There is also a possibility that the transcripts may be used as secondary data for another study, which will only be done with your permission.

If you have any questions during or after the study, you are welcome to contact me or my supervisor on the contact details listed below. If you have any questions or complaints about the ethical procedures of the study, please feel free to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-medical) of the University of the Witwatersrand on the below listed contacts.

Yours sincerely,
Lebohang Molotsi

Researcher
Lebohang Molotsi,
Tel: +27 (0)79 878 8211
Email: lebomolts@gmail.com

Researcher Supervisor
Dr Nkululeko Nkomo,
Tel: +27 (011) 717 4542
Email: Nkululeko.Nkomo@wits.ac.za

Human Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) of the University of the Witwatersrand

Shaun Schoeman
Tel: +27 (011) 717 1408
Email: Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za

Charmaine Khumalo
Tel: +27 (011) 717 1788
Email: Charmaine.khumalo@wits.ac.za

Emthonjeni Centre
Ms Paballo Lepota
Tel: +27 (011) 717 4513
Email: Paballo.Lepota@wits.ac.za

Appendix C: Focus Group Permission Letter (Wits Emthonjeni Centre)

EMTHONJENI CENTRE
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4513 • Fax: 011 717 4559 • E-mail: emthonjenicentre.SHCD@wits.ac.za
E-mail: Umthombo.SHCD@wits.ac.za

10/07/2023

Attention: Human Research Ethics Committee

Permission to use Emthonjeni Centre for research purposes

This serves to confirm that Lebohang Molotsi has permission to use a private office at the Emthonjeni Centre for the purposes of conducting interviews and focus groups for her study entitled 'Exploring the affective-discursive dynamic of how South African Black women negotiate public spaces in Gauteng'.

Kind regards

Prof Katherine Bain
Director: Emthonjeni Centre
University of the Witwatersrand
011 717 4558
Katherine.Bain@wits.ac.za

Appendix D: Free Counselling Permission Letter (Wits Emthonjeni Centre)

EMTHONJENI CENTRE
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4513 • Fax: 011 717 4559 • E-mail: emthonjenicentre.SHCD@wits.ac.za
E-mail: Umthombo.SHCD@wits.ac.za

14 July 2023

Attention: Human Research Ethics Committee

Confirmation of psychotherapy/counselling services

This serves to confirm that, should the need arise, participants in Lebohang Molotsi's research study on 'Exploring the affective-discursive dynamic of how South African Black women negotiate public spaces in Gauteng', can access psychotherapy services free of charge at the Emthonjeni Community Psychology Clinic on East Campus.

The name of a specific counsellor cannot be specified at this time, as the counsellor allocated to the case, if the need arises, will depend on which counsellor has availability at that time.

This confirms that the centre is aware of Lebohang Molotsi's study and will prioritise any participants from the study making contact with the clinic. The clinic administrator can be contacted for bookings on 011 717 4513 or paballo.lepota@wits.ac.za.

Kind regards

Prof Katherine Bain
Emthonjeni Centre Director
University of the Witwatersrand
011 717 4513
Katherine.Bain@wits.ac.za

Appendix E: Focus Group Discussion Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PSYCHOLOGY

Focus group discussion consent form

I, _____, consent to being interviewed by Lebohang Molotsi, for their study exploring the experiences of Black South African women in public spaces in Gauteng.

Please tick relevant boxes. I understand that:

- The research study was explained to me. I understand what the study is about. ☐
- I agree that the focus group discussion will be audio recorded. ☐
- Participation in this study is voluntary. ☐
- I may refrain from answering any questions. ☐
- I may withdraw my participation and/or my responses from the study at any time. ☐
- All information provided will remain confidential, although I may be quoted in the research report. ☐
- If I am quoted, a pseudonym (Participant A, Respondent B etc.) will be used. ☐
- None of my identifiable information will be included in the research report. ☐
- I am aware that the results of the study will be communicated in the form of a research report or journal articles. ☐
- The research may also be presented at a local/international conference and published in a journal and/or book chapter. ☐
- I am aware that the data from the study may be used as secondary data in another study. ☐

Name of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Participant Signature: _____

For any queries please contact:

Researcher
Lebohang Molotsi,
Tel: +27 (0)79 878 8211
Email: lebomolts@gmail.com

Researcher Supervisor
Dr Nkululeko Nkomo,
Tel: +27 (011) 717 4542
Email: Nkululeko.Nkomo@wits.ac.za

Appendix F: Focus Group Discussion Guide

SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PSYCHOLOGY

Introduction

Firstly, I will introduce myself, my research and give a brief overview of my aims, and how the participants will contribute to the study. I will then go over concerns of confidentiality and explain my participants rights in order to put the participants at ease. Lastly, I will build some rapport to ensure the participants that this a judgement-free zone and they are welcome to speak freely.

Questions

Conceptualisation of public space:

1. What do you think going out means to women?
2. What's the first thing that comes to mind when women go out into the public?
3. Why do women go out into the public, is it needed, or is it for fun?

Self-awareness in public spaces:

4. How do women feel when they're going out?
5. How do you think people see women when they are out in public?
6. How much control do women have when they're out in public?
7. Do you think women can handle anything that happens to them when they're out?

Social interrelations:

8. How do women socialize with when they're out in public, and is it different from the way men socialize?
9. Who do women avoid when they're out in public?
10. Do women prefer to go out alone or in a group?
11. Does the time-of-day matter when going out in public?
12. What makes women feel comfortable when they're out in public?
13. What makes women feel uncomfortable when they're out in public?

Conclusions

I would open the floor up for anyone who has anything else to share or discuss.

Appendix G: Ethical Clearance Certificate

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: MASPR/23/12**
PROJECT TITLE:	Exploring the affective-discursive dynamic of how South African Black women negotiate public spaces in Gauteng.
INVESTIGATOR	Molotsi Lebohang (1375882)
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR	SHCD/Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	15 August 2023
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
RISK LEVEL	Low Risk
EXPIRY DATE	31 December 2025

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 24 August 2023 **CHAIRPERSON** Aline Ferreira Correia
(Dr Aline Ferreira Correia)

cc: Dr Nkululeko Nkomo (Supervisor)

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I/we fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, I/we undertake to submit an amendment of the protocol to the Committee.

SMolotsi
Signature

24 / 08 / 2023
Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES