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Accounts of whiteness from white university students living in contemporary South Africa

A research report

submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of

Master of Arts in Community-Based Counselling Psychology

at

the University of the Witwatersrand

By: Daniel Sly

Supervisor: Prof Garth Stevens

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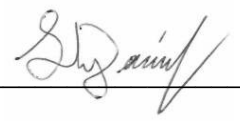
The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the NRF.

Declaration

I, Daniel Sly, declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. The research report is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Arts in Community-Based Counselling Psychology at The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at this or any other University.

All resources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of a complete reference list.

Signed:

On this the 6th day of March, 2019.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. A brief background to the study

In introducing this research, it is important to make the distinction between whiteness and white people as they may be easily conflated. White people form part of the white racial category and are placed within this category during racialisation. This racialisation occurs as a result of perceived differences in race yet refers to a process of instilling social meaning based on one's race. Thus, certain people are identified as being 'white people' both by society and by themselves as such social constructions are reinstated over time and across generations. Whiteness refers to a system of power which constantly works within socio-economic settings in order to benefit white people and maintain a socio-economic hierarchy upon which white people may navigate the world (Hartigan, 1997). Although whiteness remains a system of power, it has had to adapt and evolve over generations in order to retain its power. This power particularly favours white people and those who manage to traverse colonial (economic and political) systems. Whiteness as a construct has been studied within academic literature and has led to an understanding of whiteness as being a social construction associated with power and privilege in relation to an Other (Green & Sonn, 2005). Furthermore, whiteness is often normalised within societies, rendering it somewhat invisible within the context in which its ideologies remain (Fletcher, 2015). Whiteness seems to retain power based on its influence on the systems which govern political, social, economic and academic spheres of life. Although the structure of whiteness seems to adapt over time, it seems to do so in a manner which allows it to retain its power (Vice, 2010). Critical Race Studies (CRS) suggest that although racism is generally thought of in its explicit forms, implicit racism continues within colonised societies. CRS was developed as a means to study this implicit racism and is thus a useful theoretical resource to hold and apply in studies on race in contemporary society (Warren & Twine, 2002). The ideological construction and adaptations of whiteness result in white privilege and white supremacy (Gillborn, 2015; Frankenberg, 1993a).

White people first arrived in South Africa some three hundred and fifty years ago, during the initiation of colonisation in South Africa (Bowman, Duncan & Sonn, 2010). Since the arrival of white people in South Africa, social constructions of race, racialisation, racism and whiteness ensued and have developed over time creating a unique socio-economic climate. Furthermore, these social constructions and their developments resulted in segregation during the apartheid era and unique systems of power which continue to affect contemporary society (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Systems of power which govern the socio-economic climate of South Africa seem to be based on colonial beliefs and ideology,

globalisation and the unique nature of whiteness within the South African context. This seems to have been particularly true in South African society where white people remain the minority group.

The apartheid era legalised the domination of the white racial category which continued for forty three years before its abolishment in 1991, through a transition period. The apartheid era seemed to represent a physical manifestation of whiteness' control as a system of power allowing white people to reap the benefits of this domination at the expense of black people. The transition period led to a shift in political power: as South Africa transitioned into a democratic country, the first free elections in 1994 saw political power moving to the hands of the black majority (Fletcher, 2015; Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007). Although South Africa is now a democratic society, implicit systems and ideologies which existed and were manifested as a result of coloniality and the apartheid era, were neither addressed nor redressed during this transition (Stevens, 2006). As such, these systems of power continue to affect the people living in the country, creating a socio-economic divide amongst the 'rainbow nation' and retaining the power that whiteness affords white people (Stevens, Duncan & Canham, 2017). Following the transition period, South Africa remains one of the most unequal countries in the world with clear racial lines relating to both social and economic power (Sulla & Zikhali, 2018; Statistics South Africa, 2015).

Recently, South Africa has seen the re-emergence of racialised violence across the country as the media captures and portrays certain racist acts as well as movements which point out the socio-economic divide within the country (Andersen, 2017). The #FeesMustFall movement represents a moment in which issues such as the link between poverty, racialisation and inequality were revealed explicitly. Furthermore, inequality and the power of whiteness as an ideology and a system of power seem to have been further exposed (Eagle, 2018). Perhaps this suggests that, although colonial systems which inherently favour white people continue to create inequality within the South African context, these systems may be challenged in instances such as the #FeesMustFall movement. However, it may also be argued that the particular instances of explicit racism which are portrayed by the media, and which often lead to the re-emergence of racialised violence within the country, may allow society to focus on explicit forms of racism while the implicit systems, which maintain inequality based on race, remain unchallenged (Modiri, 2016).

White people remain the minority within the South African context and as such, whiteness has had to adapt in a very unique manner in order to retain the power and privilege which it holds and provides (Vice, 2010). Within this unique context, the power that whiteness affords white people is rendered

easily visible based on racial disparities. Furthermore, the multiple ancestral and cultural roots of white South Africans has resulted in whiteness adapting differently, based on the specific context and culture in which it is located. Thus, although whiteness appears to benefit white people in general, in the South African context, Afrikaans speaking white people and English speaking white people may be understood as holding different forms of whiteness (Distiller & Steyn, 2004).

Following the formal end of apartheid in South Africa, there have been many attempts at creating redress based on the inequalities which continue as a result of the socio-political history of the country. However, these inequalities remain, as racialised norms quickly adapt and evolve within the changing context of the country (Stevens, Swart & Franchi, 2006). Race, racialisation and racism continue to play a major role in society and the systems which govern socio-economic and political power and privilege. Thus, contemporary South Africa has become a context which is ripe for research into concepts of race, racialisation and racism (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). However, there remain relatively few studies into the concept of whiteness in post-apartheid South Africa, rendering it somewhat hidden from academic critique.

1.2. Rationale

South Africa has a history of difference across racial categories which continues to affect everyday life and interpersonal interactions within the country (Bowman et al., 2010). The social construction of these racial categories has been reinforced and adapted throughout generations, maintaining inequality between these categories (Kane, 2007). Whiteness as a system of power continues to privilege white people at the expense of black people, resulting in socio-economic inequalities which are impossible to negate. Despite reconciliatory movements, indicators suggest the importance of racialisation in multiple spheres of life in South Africa, such as wealth disparities, production of knowledge, a sense of national belonging and in general social interactions (Distiller & Steyn, 2004; Statistics South Africa, 2017). In recent times, social media and other social platforms have brought to light considerations of the manner in which racial matters, and whiteness in particular, affect the population (Andersen, 2017). Recently, South African university students have protested and challenged colonial systems of education which have been put in place by the department of education. Furthermore, the #FeesMustFall movement has publically pointed to both the economic and social inequalities which exist in the country and the systemic nature of the extent of these inequalities (Eagle, 2018).

Research into the nature of whiteness in the current South African context is limited. Although there are studies on whiteness within the South African context, whiteness persists and society may benefit from further explorations within contemporary South Africa. Furthermore, it seems as if whiteness is being challenged by society, often creating moments in which racialised violence re-emerges. It has been suggested that in moments such as these, whiteness becomes somewhat fluid as it attempts to adapt and reconstruct in order to retain the power which it holds (Stevens et al., 2017). It is precisely because of the unique moment that the South African context finds itself in, that such research may become of great use to society. The normativity and invisibility of whiteness are being challenged in certain places, spaces and moments. Thus, at this moment of fluidity, this study may further challenge whiteness in an attempt to break its invisibility and normativity. In conjunction with other contemporary studies on race, racialisation and racism within South African society, exploring accounts of whiteness from South African university students may assist in developing anti-racism practice and perhaps add to the decolonial impulse which seems to be gaining support within South African society. Thus, this research may effectively track and uncover the contemporary adaptations of whiteness within the South African context and within the University of the Witwatersrand in particular. Uncovering whiteness' attempts to retain its power and control may bring such a system to the academic and public spotlight and thus the continued socio-economic inequalities within the country may be more effectively addressed.

It is important to acknowledge that by studying whiteness, this research runs the risk of re-centring whiteness within anti-racism research and thus, may add to the privilege that whiteness affords (Stevens, 2007). However, the importance of whiteness as a mode of historical domination which continuously privileges a minority of South Africans and creates substantial socio-economic inequality within contemporary society cannot be overlooked. Therefore, such a risk seems to be worth taking in attempting to break the invisibility and normativity of this ideological system. Furthermore, the re-emergence of racialised violence within the context of contemporary South Africa implies increasing tension regarding the normativity, privilege, and dominance associated with whiteness. Thus, it is useful to understand precisely how whiteness is being configured or reconfigured in order to maintain levels of privilege, or to discover whether something is changing within this construction which may allow individuals and groups to challenge this privilege and the systems which maintain the power and privilege that whiteness affords.

1.3. Aims and objectives

This study is aimed at investigating accounts of whiteness from the perspective of white South African university students. It aims at exploring these accounts of whiteness in relation to the socio-political history of South Africa in order to explore what may be inferred with regards to the current social terrain of contemporary South African society as it pertains to whiteness. Thus, this study is aimed at developing an understanding of both the explicit and implicit nature of whiteness within the context of a South African university. Furthermore, the study hopes to capture and analyse the social functioning of certain white South African tropes as well as to explore their ideological purposes. This research attempts to understand whiteness, its contemporary adaptations and the domination it holds within contemporary South Africa.

1.4. Research questions

1. What are the major themes that emerge in the talk of accounts of being white in a South African university?

2. How do these themes reflect the varying conceptions and experiences of whiteness?

3. What do these conceptions reveal about whiteness, its broader social functioning, its mutation, evolution and contributions to constructions of difference and sameness in contemporary South Africa?

Within the interpretive paradigm which serves as a framework for this study, the data collected and interpretations made are used to drive the research rather than having concrete parameters which one intends on exploring. As such, these research questions may seem somewhat broad and open. However, this is done intentionally in order to allow the data to speak for itself and in order to represent and explore, more effectively, the current climate of the social terrain of whiteness in South Africa and, more particularly, in South African universities.

1.5. Scope of the present study

The present research report begins with the literature review which attempts to frame the current study within the context and climate of South African society in relation to race. In doing so, the literature review begins by attempting to provide a description of the South African context in relation to race as well as that of the University of the Witwatersrand. It goes on to review theoretical and conceptual resources which pertain to the present study. Following this, a review of contemporary studies of whiteness is provided and discussed. The research methods used in the study are then described and discussed. The focus of the current study is centred around the analysis of three focus groups which were made up of three, seven and six participants respectively. Participants were white university students who were enrolled in second or third year psychology courses at the University of the Witwatersrand in 2017, during the time of the focus groups themselves. A thematic analysis was used in order to draw both explicit and implicit themes from the accounts of whiteness within the focus groups. Furthermore, collected data was further analysed using a critical perspective, relative to literature and theoretical resources associated with whiteness. The analysis chapter of this report describes these themes and sub-themes which were drawn from the data and analysed in relation to the literature review. Conclusions are then presented alongside a summary of findings, limitations to the study and directions for future research. A complete reference list is then provided as well as appendices.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. The context of South African society

The socio-political history of South Africa has created a unique environment and social context in which race and racial matters appear to play a significant role. Although the country is currently in a state of democratic freedom, with political power shifting from white to black hands, the oppression of the past seems to play an important and complex role in the way in which political power is understood and conceptualised. Furthermore, the nature of coloniality, apartheid and the transition of the country into post-apartheid South Africa have played an important role in the development of the particular social context of South African society. It seems as if, through South Africa's transition into democratic freedom, whiteness has managed to retain economic power. Furthermore, the social climate of South Africa has evolved into one in which whiteness has managed to hold onto social power which continues to privilege the oppressor at the expense of the oppressed. Although the systemic inequality that continues to privilege white people seems to remain somewhat hidden, certain instances of racialised violence seem to suggest that on particular occasions, whiteness and instances of racism may have been and may continue to be challenged in contemporary South African society.

2.1.1. Apartheid and its legacy in South Africa

In 1948, the apartheid regime legalised the dominance and privilege of the white racial category over other racial categories which had ensued some three hundred years before, following the advent of colonisation (Bowman et al., 2010). The apartheid regime repressed black people and people who were not of the white racial classification. It represented a system of domination and discrimination that reached further than that of political and social oppression. It served to push the black population into poverty by limiting job opportunities, providing inferior education, creating geographical and social segregation as well as the prevention of a means to produce and create wealth (Terre Blanche, 2006). During apartheid, segregation was used as a tool in order to formally create areas of white comfort as well as to physically reinforce a racialised society. People, behaviours, languages and anything that posed a threat to that comfort were removed or displaced (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). This legalised domination continued until a transition period in 1990 which resulted in the abolishment of the apartheid regime in 1991 and the first democratic elections taking place in 1994 (Fletcher, 2015; Green et al., 2007). However, the effects of this oppression continue to affect South African society (Bowman et al., 2010).

During the transition period the then president, F. W. de Klerk, entered negotiations with Nelson Mandela aimed at meeting the expectations of the black population while still protecting the rights and properties of the white population (Steingo, 2005). The events that led up to 1990 seemed to follow that of a revolt. However, before black people were able to liberate themselves, they were 'given' 'equality' by white people who were in political power at the time. Thus, there was no revolutionary rupture from apartheid ideals, rather, an abolishment of its legalisation (Steingo, 2005). The transition period seemed to act as a way for black people to, seemingly, gain liberation and political power while white people retained socio-economic domination. This has resulted in a unique climate of race and racialisation in the context of contemporary South Africa (Steingo, 2005).

Following the first democratic election, the newly elected government produced the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 1996 which provided a space for individuals to confess their violations of human rights, which were conceptually legal at the time of perpetration (SAHO, 2011). Furthermore, the TRC was an assembly which allowed both victims and perpetrators the chance to give testimony, to be heard and request amnesty (Green et al., 2007). The TRC represented a broad intervention which was intended to address the social context of a nation in which there was a societal transition taking place (Stevens, 2006). After the violence and human rights injustices which occurred during the apartheid era, the TRC attempted to provide a means of restoring democracy within this period of transition (Green & Sonn, 2006). This broad-based intervention may have further acted as a means of providing some sort of retribution or closure for black South Africans who were often left with many unanswered questions surrounding family and friends who had been the victims of these inhumanities. However, it may have also created a stage for white people to publically declare culpability without taking responsibility beyond public shame. Many people regard the TRC as a successful intervention in that it attempted to promote societal forgiveness and the re-building of a nation, attempting to advance a transition from years of conflict to a unified nation. Although this may have been an important aspect of the transition, it allowed the economic, social and psychological oppression of the apartheid era to remain unchallenged in post-apartheid South Africa (Stevens, 2006; Stevens, 2017).

The TRC was aimed at a progression towards the concept of the 'rainbow nation'. However, it highlighted specific events and remained oblivious to the ways in which the social injustices of the apartheid regime affected the everyday lives of South Africans. Thus, the implicit oppression which dominated South African society was not publically acknowledged nor explored, allowing this

dominance to continuously affect South African tropes and beliefs of equality (Bowman et al., 2010; Distiller & Steyn, 2004; Stevens, 2017). The TRC gave hope for justice to black people, while for white people it seemed to signify relief in that it allayed fears of retribution for the social injustices and human rights violations which had occurred in the apartheid era (Green et al., 2007). Following the oppression of apartheid, the political focus seemed to be aimed at healing the nation rather than making structural changes aimed at addressing inequality, which was a direct result of the apartheid regime and years of oppression (Green et al., 2007). Although this healing process may have been necessary, it negated the inequality that continued through this transition period.

For the majority of South Africans, the elections in 1994, as well as the termination of the apartheid era, promised a revolution that never seemed to pay out. The 'revolution' seemed to lead to disappointment as socio-economic separation based on racialised difference moved to be more dependent on class difference (Terre Blanche, 2006). The TRC represented somewhat of an ill-conceived understanding of the complex relationship between race, class and inequality. In doing so, the TRC was ineffective in producing the change that was both needed and expected at this point of the transition. Furthermore, it allowed the dominant narratives regarding racialisation and ideological racism to remain somewhat unchallenged (Stevens, 2006). Thus, it may be argued that the TRC was both a necessary step towards acknowledging the atrocities of the past, and an intervention which overlooked what may have been required in working towards socio-economic equality in contemporary South Africa.

Shortly after the African National Congress (ANC) won the first free elections in South Africa in 1994, Archbishop Desmond Tutu put forward the conception of South Africa as the 'rainbow nation' (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). This was intended to aid in the transition of the nation into a country in which all cultures could live together peacefully, a land of diversity and culture which would be both informed by its history and have the ability to rise above its past. This metaphor attempted to promote the forgiveness of centuries of oppression in an attempt to create a sense of equality. Fletcher (2015) suggests that the broad concept of a 'rainbow nation' allows individuals to claim national belonging while remaining ignorant of the privileges which maintain the power of whiteness in South Africa. Illegitimising the historical roads to current inequality within South Africa allows individuals to avoid speaking about the concept of race, as this may lead to the implication of one as being involved in racism or one having gained from socio-economic oppression (Fletcher, 2015).

Terre Blanche (2006) suggests that the concept of the 'rainbow nation' may function either consciously or unconsciously in a manner that attempts to shift the focus of national reconciliation away from the systemic poverty that continues to separate the population. In this way, the concept of a 'rainbow nation' neglects the relationship between class and race that has, to a large extent, avoided redress in post-apartheid South Africa (Terre Blanche, 2006). The concept of a 'rainbow nation' thus seems to represent a naïve understanding of the way in which oppression has affected society and continues to do so in the post-apartheid era (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Although this seems to be unintended or unconscious in its symbolism, the division within the metaphor seems to accurately represent the segregation of the past which has generally continued in post-apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, the concept of the 'rainbow nation' has allowed racialised discourses to be reproduced and reconstructed, in an attempt at creating a society of peaceful divide. Distiller and Steyn (2004) suggest that there is a common belief that on the day that Nelson Mandela was released from Robben Island or on the day of the first democratic election, all South African citizens became equal. The imposed inequality of the apartheid era, which continues in contemporary South Africa, remains, to a large extent, unchallenged. The concept of the 'rainbow nation' functioned to mask this inequality and advertise the country to its citizens, international investors and tourists (Distiller & Steyn, 2004).

Following the first free democratic elections, there seemed to be an urge to ignore and negate the profound effects of the apartheid era on the socio-economic climate in South Africa (Stevens et al., 2017). Although the TRC made strides in uncovering the more overt acts of injustice, the everyday acts of racism remained concealed. Furthermore, it is suggested that the denial of the past seems to have created a contemporary environment in which racism and racialised violence often dominate and re-inscribe apartheid tropes (Stevens et al., 2017). Post-apartheid attempts at forgiveness and reconciliation may have added to the denial of past injustices and as a result, may have made it more acceptable for such injustices to continue in contemporary society. The Apartheid Archive Project (AAP) was initiated as an attempt to respond to this. The AAP attempts to address the injustices of the past so as to create a more accurate account of history, as well as to do justice to those who were the victims of such injustices, both implicit and explicit (Stevens et al., 2017). Furthermore, the archive attempts to record history in a decolonial manner.

The AAP was initiated in 2008 by two researchers working out of Wits. This project attempts to continuously collect narratives from a broad range of South Africans pertaining to apartheid and its effects on one's narrative (Stevens, 2017). This project allows the often unheard voices to become a

part of documented history, rather than having history written purely by academics. The project has grown and continues to grow. The research team consists of thirty researchers from around the world who come from different scholastic backgrounds and who have multiple areas of research interest. Thus, the narratives collected through this project are analysed from multiple perspectives allowing the history of apartheid to be retold as a collective social experience (Stevens, 2017). Furthermore, the analyses and interpretations of such stories may then be related to the current social climate of South African society (Stevens, 2017). By addressing the stories of living through apartheid, the archive may assist in decreasing the likelihood of such acts of injustice being re-enacted. The archive attempts to critically interrogate the relationship between South Africa's past and contemporary society in order to raise societal consciousness in this regard as well as to destabilise the seemingly normative racial inequality which persists in contemporary South Africa as a result (Stevens et al., 2017). The archive makes use of everyday accounts to uncover a more nuanced and accurate history of apartheid. Furthermore, the narratives which arise are then analysed to gain a greater understanding of the manner in which remnants of apartheid remain and are reconstructed within contemporary society, creating and maintaining structural inequality (Stevens et al., 2017).

Stevens et al. (2017) suggest that beyond overt racist acts, such as those addressed by the TRC, lie many 'ordinary' and everyday racist acts which become somewhat expected and are not reported in the media. The normalisation of such racism results in an everyday struggle of hundreds of thousands of black South Africans, who attempt to move away from the economic and social oppression which continues to affect them as they remain in locations which were created as a form of relegation by the apartheid government (Stevens et al., 2017). The AAP and the research that comes from it acts as a decolonialised form of knowledge production, in that it allows a unique means for the production of knowledge which comes about through the content and form of the narratives produced by South African people (Stevens, 2017).

In South Africa, affirmative action is used as a strategy which attempts to address the economic and social inequality which continues as a legacy of apartheid. Affirmative action is aimed at creating social transformation by increasing the representation of both black people and women in corporate, business and other sectors of the economy (Franchi, 2006). During apartheid, black people were disadvantaged and at many points banned from forming part of these spheres of employment. Affirmative action acts as a means to address and redress this inequality (Franchi, 2006). Thus, affirmative action attempts to create a South African economy which reflects the demographics of the

country as a whole. This has been a useful step in attempting to address certain economic inequalities which persist as a direct result of apartheid. However, it also comes with certain limitations. Particularly, it only addresses discrimination which occurs at the level of employment. Furthermore, it attempts to address inequality through a process which re-inscribes racialised difference (Franchi, 2006).

Affirmative action attempts to address employment and economic equity on a large scale and is somewhat effective in this vein. However, it has been criticised for its effects on the individuals who are affected by this. Franchi (2006) suggests that many complaints regarding affirmative action are leveled at the way in which it penalises young white men, who claim to have played no part in the inequality that occurred during the apartheid era. Often, these individuals may or may not be able to view this form of redress for its intention of attempting to address inequality and claim to feel a sense of 'reverse racism' (Franchi, 2006). Thus, the effect of affirmative action on individuals is often displaced onto affirmative action as a whole, creating a general feeling of resistance towards this form of redress. Steele (1990) has criticised affirmative action as being a white response to white guilt; an attempt at gaining redemption. Affirmative action may seem to be a way of shaping policies in order to create what seems to be an even playing field. However, this may neglect promoting the development and upliftment of black people and instead focus on reparation of white guilt. The support for affirmative action seems to be the result of attempts to provide a sense of morality in the face of white guilt (Iyer, Leach & Crosby, 2003). Franchi (2006) suggests that difference and division along racial lines has been reconstructed in that it may seem fair to those whom it affects positively, while conversely, seem unfair to those who are not part of the target group. Furthermore, the concept of affirmative action may lead to a stigmatisation of target group members in terms of their competency and adequacy within the positions they hold. This stigmatisation is then generalised and aimed towards employed black people, regardless of whether the individual gained their position through affirmative action, reinforcing the way in which the apartheid legacy continues to reproduce inequality (Franchi, 2006).

More than 20 years after the first democratic election, South African society remains a space in which the injustices of the past continue to affect society. Following South Africa's transition, unemployment and poverty have increased and the gap in wealth distribution continues to grow (Steingo, 2005). Although there has been an increase in the number of black people who have joined the middle-class, there is a noticeable divide in power and wealth based on racial categories (Wale & Foster, 2007).

Statistics South Africa (2015) notes empirical evidence of this divide in terms of differences in level of education and dominance in skilled occupations. Statistics South Africa (2013) also reported racial difference in favour of white people in formal schooling, percentage of employment, hourly earnings, and access to private health care and medical aid benefits. Nearly 80% of the South African population is made up of black people, making black people the majority racial composition within the country (Sulla & Zikhali, 2018). In 2015, approximately 30.3 million South Africans were living in poverty, an increase of 3.1 million people since 2011 (Statistics South Africa, 2017). The majority of South Africans were classified as being poor, with 55% of South Africans living below the upper-bound poverty line in 2015. Furthermore, 93% of these South Africans living in poverty were black South Africans, which represents an increase in the percentage of poor black people, as compared to other racial categories, since 2006 (Statistics South Africa, 2017).

Sulla and Zikhali (2018) state that South Africa is, by any measure, the most unequal country in the world. The percentage of black people living in poverty in South Africa has remained higher than the poverty headcount for other racial categories in the country from 2006 until 2015 (Statistics South Africa, 2017). Although the proportion of black South Africans living in poverty has decreased from 2006 to 2015, 64.2% of black South Africans remained in poverty in 2015 while the proportion of white South Africans living in poverty also decreased from 1.4% in 2006 to 1% in 2015(Statistics South Africa, 2017). The information and analysis conducted by Statistics South Africa (2017) concludes that the black racial category is the most affected by poverty in South Africa. It is suggested that annual earnings and incomes are highly differentiated within the South African context. Furthermore, wealth inequality and wealth distribution represent massive inequalities within the South African context. Sulla and Zikhali (2018) go on to state that a significant factor which leads to this polarisation is inequality in terms of opportunity. This seems to indicate that following the transition into contemporary South Africa, not much has changed in terms of inequality. Despite reconciliatory interventions such as affirmative action, the link between racial category and class seems to remain. Thus, it seems as if such interventions have been unsuccessful in making a significant impact on the development of the black working-class.

Statistics South Africa (2017) uses the Gini coefficient in order to measure and track levels of inequality within South Africa. A Gini coefficient score of 1.0 would represent a society of total inequality, in which one person would attain all of the wealth in the country while the rest have none. South Africa's score decreased from 0.72 in 2006 to 0.68 in 2015 (Statistics South Africa, 2017). This

score seems to suggest that levels of inequality may be decreasing slowly. However, it further suggests a quantitative account of the extent of inequality within the country. In contrast, Sulla and Zikhali suggest that wealth inequalities are likely to remain, and possibly worsen, in the future as these often transcend generations. Furthermore, this is reflected in the way in which poverty and inequality trends seem to be longitudinal (Statistics South Africa, 2017).Furthermore, poverty is more pronounced within the younger generations as well as in women as compared to men (Sulla & Zikhali, 2018). Although the explicit nature of legalised racism which occurred during apartheid has ended, its legacy lives on. Black elites have joined the middle-class, primarily made up of white people, while the majority of black people continue to live in poverty (Wale & Foster, 2007). Thus, the divide of inequality intersects with race and is implicated by one's class. South Africa's particular socio-political history has resulted in a unique culture of racialisation and racism which needs to be understood in its own right (Green & Sonn, 2006).

The ANC has recently noted 'racial flare ups' within South African society, voicing their concern over these, as well as the way in which they may cause a veer away from the ideals of contemporary South Africa by enhancing a racial divide rather than a sense of harmony (Modiri, 2016). Perhaps the term 'racial flare ups' is an understatement; it seems as if these moments reflect the re-emergence of racialised violence. In 2017, the ANC went on to provide a statement of caution towards those who may create racial regression by increasing this racial divide (Andersen, 2017). However, Modiri (2016) suggests that the multiple re-emergences of racialised violence which occur around the country are often used by the media in order to elicit public outrage which seems to dissipate after a few days. Furthermore, this may serve to create an understanding of racism as only occurring within such overt occurrences, drawing criticality away from the implicit racism and racialised division within everyday South African life. Thus, Modiri (2016) suggests that overt events of racism which are caught on camera or which are reported in the media should rather be viewed as a symptom of the broader South African society. The author agrees with this and suggests that such events may represent a building frustration with regards to the continuous racialised inequality within South Africa.

Generally, instances of racism which are either caught on camera or posted on social media seem to entice social discussion and outrage within South African society, fueling the re-emergence of racialised violence. Society often seems to take on a clear split in interpreting such events. Furthermore, incidents which seem to result in such violence seem to generally reflect racism and racial difference. There have been multiple moments which have resulted in racial tension and

seemingly increased discussion on race, racialisation and racism within contemporary South Africa. Some of the instances in which the re-emergence of racialised violence have occurred are briefly detailed below in order to provide a context which may better explain the manner in which these instances seem to occur. In December 2015, Penny Sparrow, a white KwaZulu-Natal realtor, gained the public spotlight when she posted a racist statement on social media in which she compared black beach-goers to monkeys (Wicks & Areff, 2016). In doing so, she implied that black people are less than human, further suggesting that black people have sub-human intelligence. Following the outrage which occurred in response to this post, the ANC took the matter to court and Sparrow was fined an amount of R150 000 which was to be paid to the Oliver and Adelaide Tambo Association (Wicks & Areff, 2016). In 2016, black school girls who were students at Pretoria Girls High protested against the school's code of conduct which represented a colonialised view of the way that black girls were expected to wear their hair (Tandwa, 2016). The school had maintained rules which prohibited African hairstyles such as afros, dreadlocks, braids and bantu knots. In response to the protests and public attention which followed, the school conducted diversity training, during which an independent agency conducted an anonymous 'cultural survey' with students at the school. From this survey, it emerged that black school girls were often victims of racial abuse within the school. Gauteng education MEC, Panyaza Lesufi, apologised to the students who were victimized. The Congress of South African Students went on to suggest that the school's staff should be required to become more diverse, in that it was made up of primarily white teachers (Tandwa, 2016).

Recently, a video clip of Vicki Momberg, a white real estate agent, was posted online. In the video, Momberg can be seen and heard verbally assaulting black police officers who were attempting to assist her after a supposed smash-and-grab incident in Johannesburg (Pijoos, 2018). Her verbal assault saw her denigrate the "caliber of blacks" in Johannesburg, throwing a number of racially abusive slurs at, and refusing assistance from, black police officers. This incident was taken up by the Magistrates court which, in 2018, sentenced Momberg to an effective two years in prison on four counts of crimen injuria (Pijoos, 2018). In 2017, a group of right-wing white South Africans, led by AfriForum, assembled and protested within the #BlackMonday campaign (Khaas, 2017). This campaign was aimed at creating awareness of the difficulties that white farmers face within South Africa, suggesting that black people were specifically targeting and murdering white South African farmers. Although there was no tangible evidence to back the claim, white farmers suggested that this may be a means of black people exacting revenge, the beginnings of a white genocide. This sparked debate and discussion

amongst South Africans who took on different views of this campaign and its ideological assumptions (Khaas, 2017).

In 2017, two white farmers were each sentenced to over ten years in prison for forcing a black man into a coffin and threatening to set it alight. Both of the men sentenced were found guilty of intimidation, kidnapping, attempted murder and assault with intent to cause grievous bodily harm (Shange, 2017). Willem Oosthuizen and Theo Jackson recorded themselves dehumanising Victor Mlotshwa and went on to post the video on social media. This created tension over social media as well as scrutiny from South African society (Shange, 2017). In 2018, land reform appeared in social media as the ANC attempted to redistribute farm lands to black people. The ANC stated that it will attempt to address this issue without endangering food security within the country, without destabilising the agricultural sector and without undermining job creation and economic growth within the country (Chutel, 2018). South Africa's left wing dominated the movement towards land expropriation without compensation. Thus, the topic of land reform became so racially charged that holding opposing views tended to result in the immediate branding of one as a racist (Majozi, 2018). The call for land expropriation fueled white fantasies of white genocide as they reached to their ancestral, Western lands for assistance. Following which, European and Australian headlines suggested that white farmers were to be forcibly removed from their land, suggesting that South Africa was to suffer the same violence as was witnessed in the history of Zimbabwe. As a result, right and left wing extremists seemed to clash with racially charged ideologies coming face to face (Chutel, 2018). The multiple instances of racialised violence which occur in South African society seem to imply a legacy of racial tension, inequality and divide. As Modiri (2016) suggests, these instances may be some of the more explicit symptoms of the legacy of apartheid. However, such instances also seem to infer a building tension and frustration with regards to a racial divide within the country.

Systemic inequality remains, segregating the oppressed majority through the many privileges which are afforded to the oppressors. Thus, the majority of South Africans are black and the majority of black South Africans form the working-class (Terre Blanche, 2006). Poverty and inequality are quite clearly racialised and seem to resemble the adaptation of socially constructed racial norms which aim at maintaining the social construction of white domination. Distiller and Steyn (2004) suggest that post-apartheid South Africa has been conceptualised as a new nation, a 'rainbow nation' which symbolises an imagined break from the past as well as an imposed sense of community. Furthermore, the concept presents a sense of hope and equality without making tangible attempts at addressing racialised

inequality, which continues as a symptom of the past (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). The socio-economic legacy of apartheid continues to plague South Africa. However, there is now a divide between political and economic power. Terre Blanche (2006) suggests that the post-apartheid government cannot be a site of blame for the poverty and inequality that continues; resolving the divide may only be possible when it is viewed through the longitudinal lens of a transitory nation. Often blame is cast on the post-apartheid government for the continuation of this divide and so it is not unexpected that white privilege and whiteness are acknowledged by the national government.

2.1.2. A brief history of the social dynamics of the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and the #FeesMustFall movement

To this point, the literature review has provided something of an outline of the context of South African society as it pertains to race and inequality. The current study was conducted at Wits with focus groups made up of participants who were enrolled in second or third year psychology courses in 2017. Thus, it is necessary to describe the context within which the study took place as well as the socio-economic climate of Wits at the time of the focus groups. In order to do so, this section of the literature review attempts to provide a brief outline of the history of Wits as well as that of the #FeesMustFall movement in relation to Wits. The history of Wits seems to consist of moments of solidarity and conflict between racial categories. Thus, Wits represents a context in which race and class continuously interact, creating an ambiguous social dynamic in the contemporary Wits society.

South African universities symbolise specific and unique sites in which the nuanced and particular identity of each university is formed through its own socio-historical background and in relation to the country as a whole (Walker, 2005). Recently, university campuses across South Africa have become elite spaces in which the government has little effect (Stevens et al., 2017). Furthermore, students bring their individual self-conceptions, which further inform a student life which is primarily reproduced and adapted within this social setting. Walker (2005) suggests that South African universities are locations at which individuals may explore and develop an identity based on diverse interactions with others. Thus, students are conceptualised as representing a difference from the broader South African society, as they are more formally confronted with societal issues and a diversity of individuals and groups. Although this section will not refer to the complete history of Wits, it is necessary to provide the socio-historical context of Wits in order to gauge the current social climate. Furthermore, information pertaining to the history of Wits and Johannesburg in general is somewhat thin and seems to reflect a

colonial perspective, suggesting that Johannesburg only came to be upon the arrival of white colonists (Lushaba, 2013).

In 1922 Wits was granted university status along with the name the University of the Witwatersrand. The university grew over time, constantly struggling to attain and create appropriate student accommodation as the number of students steadily rose faster than accommodation could keep up (University of the Witwatersrand [Wits], 2017). Since its conception, Wits has attempted to take on a stance of non-discrimination, accepting students of all races and genders (Wits, 2017). In 1959 the apartheid government passed the Extension of the University Education Act which enforced apartheid ideals and systems within South African universities. This led to the first protests at Wits which allowed the university to stand against apartheid systems (Wits, 2017). These protests continued and developed, moving from peaceful protests to those including violence, in opposition of the injustices of apartheid. This led to the detention, banning and even deportation of university staff and students as well as the frequent invasion of riot police who enforced a tangible presence on campus and who would often incite violence (Wits, 2017).

Although Wits attempted to create a community which was non-conforming to the racist ideals of the time, aimed at avoiding racism, it demonstrated limited success in this regard (Lushaba, 2013). Activists and those who held views which stood against the status quo were generally removed or expelled from the university. Furthermore, the university payment for staff differed dependent on gender, with women being paid less than men. Moreover, only the few black students who could afford to attend were accepted. Social segregation at Wits during the apartheid era was not unheard of as the university ultimately reflected the greater socio-political stance (Lushaba, 2013). The university was drawn into the system and processes that surrounded it. Furthermore, the university resembled colonial beliefs in its teaching methods and forms of knowledge production. However, within the university, radical political and cultural bodies formed. Thus, Wits became a site well-known for its students' overt opposition of the apartheid era and their ability to stand against this in protest (Lushaba, 2013).

Tertiary institutions in South Africa have recently been sites for many influential protests, often centring around the difficulties that black students face within colonial institutions, as well as the difficulty of affording fees in a context of inequality and poverty (Eagle, 2018). Thus, protests have called for affordable education as well as decoloniality within systems of education. Furthermore, racial identity and inequality linked to race have been a major feature of these protests. Effectively, these protests represented an attack on whiteness characterised by a tangible hostility towards white

people and the privileges afforded to them at the cost of black people (Eagle, 2018). Although the movement became known as the #FeesMustFall movement at Wits, it is important to note that the movement did not begin at Wits as it was preceded by multiple similar calls for free, decolonial tertiary education. Edwin et al. (2017) suggest that the thought that the #FeesMustFall movement began at Wits may reflect the mainstream media's coverage of the movement and the lack of coverage at previous sites of such protests.

In post-apartheid South Africa, students' calls and protests with the aim of attaining free and fair tertiary education have continued since 1994. These protests are especially known for taking place in historically black universities (Edwin et al., 2017). These have primarily occurred as a result of academic exclusion based on financial inequality and colonialised methods of teaching in universities, particularly technological universities, where the merging of universities has resulted in further exclusion. Although historically black universities such as TUT, UWC, CPUT and Turfloop have been the sites of many protests in post-apartheid South Africa, they have never received the public or media attention which was given to the #FeesMustFall protests. Edwin et al. (2017) suggest that this may be related to the racial makeup of universities such as Wits and UCT, which played vital roles in the #FeesMustFall movement. These universities may represent locations in which the colonial nature of the universities has received little transformational effort and thus, the decolonial impulse of the #FeesMustFall movement as well as the support that it received from society may have represented a step towards decoloniality in such institutions.

It may be argued that the presence of white students which are often associated with universities such as Wits and UCT provided them the privilege of being seen and heard during these protests. The fact that white students were affected by this movement as well as the overt challenging of whiteness may have assisted in attaining the media spotlight as well as societal gaze and opinion. This seems to suggest that the calls for free education which occurred in historically black universities were not deemed important enough to find their way to mainstream media. It seems as if it was only when white people were affected that such movements were deemed eligible to be shown on mainstream media. As such, the success in the far reaching impact of the #FeesMustFall movement may be accredited to the efforts of students in sharing their plight with society and demanding that their voices be heard, as well as the media attention which allowed the movement to capture the interests of the nation. However, it seems as if the media may have been somewhat biased in their representation of the movement, creating the illusion that the only protests in South Africa are those which are violent and require

police action (Edwin et al., 2017). Perhaps such coverage occurs as a means of furthering the fear of white genocide or to further the colonial belief of the black native savages; that when black people protest, the protests become violent.

The #RhodesMustFall movement carried a decolonial impulse which seemed to establish the #FeesMustFall movement. The #RhodesMustFall movement began in March 2015 at the University of Cape Town and quickly gained international support and traction (Hall, 2015). The movement began with the call to remove a statue of Cecil John Rhodes which was located at the university and which was a constant reminder of the colonial history of the country and the continued inequality which occurs as a result (Hall, 2015; Kamanzi, 2015). Following protests and a UCT Council vote, the statue was removed (Kamanzi, 2015). This movement, as well as previous movements from South African universities with regards to decoloniality and affordable tertiary education, led to Wits joining the movement which became labelled #FeesMustFall.

At this point in the literature review it may be useful to provide a definition of decoloniality. Maldonado-Torres (2011) relates decoloniality to a critique of modern Western thought as well as the systems which it has introduced globally, including colonisation, racism, means of knowledge production and the gender system. He suggests that these systems of power inherently emerge through violence in an attempt to expand the reach of European wealth and domination. Thus, it is suggested that decoloniality exists and is practiced through the skepticism and challenging of Western norms, systems and modernity associated with power, knowledge and expected ways of being (Maldonado-Torres, 2011). During colonialisation, the history and knowledge of the oppressed is often destroyed and thus decoloniality should attempt to regain the history and knowledge of the oppressed while similarly releasing expected Western modalities back to the West in this process (Stevens, Duncan & Sonn, 2013). Another goal of colonialism is to create systems which attempt to decimate and control cultural, sexual and spiritual beliefs. Thus, the reclaiming and recovery of such beliefs is a necessary achievement in decoloniality (Stevens et al., 2013). A third imperative is attempting to deconstruct the system of racism which attempts to use Othering in order to maintain a system of normalcy. These systems continue to play a role in the distribution of resources and inequality. Although social constructions shift and adapt, it is necessary to constantly strive to uncover and surface these systems in order to consistently challenge them (Stevens et al., 2013).

On 14 October 2015, Wits announced that tuition fees would increase by 10.5% for the 2016 year (Lenyaro, 2015). The #FeesMustFall movement was brought about by this increase as well as previous

action and protests in universities throughout South Africa. Students and some staff members protested with a sit in and lock down of Wits on 17 October 2015. This resulted in a suspension of the proposed fee increase and Wits calling for a renegotiation of this increase. Furthermore, the university claimed that they would not seek disciplinary action against the protesting students (Rahlaga, 2015). Following this, the movement gained momentum in universities across the country with riot police being called in at particular sites in order to evict and arrest protestors, often through violence (Christian, 2015; Kekana, Isaacs & Corke, 2015). Wits proposed a compromised tuition increase of 6% which was rejected by students who demanded no increase in fees for the 2016 year.

Protests across the country were often met by violence from riot police while at the same time, students seemed to turn to violence in an attempt to have their demands acknowledged and taken seriously. In Johannesburg, students marched to Luthuli House, the headquarters of the ANC, in order to hand over a memorandum (Wakefield, 2015). The movement gained media attention and consequently, support from people around the world (Mkhize, 2015). Student representatives and vice chancellors met with government officials as well as the president in order to discuss a way forward. President Zuma announced that there would be no increase in tuition fees for the 2016 year. This was met with ambivalence from students; although their demands had been met, the president did not address them directly (Allison, 2015).

In 2016, awaiting the expected fee announcement for the 2017 year by the minister of higher education and training, the #FeesMustFall movement was rejuvenated. On19 September 2016, the minister of higher education, Blade Nzimande, announced that university fees would increase by potentially 8%, with the freedom to determine this increase being left in the hands of individual universities. Nzimande went on to suggest that government would continue their efforts to provide financial assistance to those students whose family income was below R600 000 annually (Cronje, 2016). In response to this announcement, students at Wits shut down the main campus by blocking the entrances. Although this started as a peaceful protest, it became violent when students were denied access to the Great Hall at Wits; students broke concrete dustbins and hurled the broken pieces at the Great Hall as well as the security guards stationed outside. Students demanded free, decolonialised education (Ngcobo 2016). Following this, security guards were replaced by police and riot police who used tear gas, stun grenades and rubber bullets to disperse students. In the process, two students were injured while eleven were arrested. Furthermore, students allegedly toppled and burnt a bus and looted certain shops within the Braamfontein area (Ngcobo, Manyathela & Bateman, 2016). In September 2016, Wits conducted a

poll in which they attempted to gain a quantitative indication of whether students hoped to continue with the 2016 academic programme. 21 730 students and staff members took part in the poll with 77% voting for studies to continue and 23% preferring that the university remain closed (Pretorius, 2016).

A group of students planned to stage a silent protest in order to call for the resumption of lectures, in opposition of the #FeesMustFall movement. This movement was labeled 'Take Back Wits' with some branding it as a white movement made up of white students who did not care about black people and their struggles (Raborife, 2016a). However, one black student who was part of the Take Back Wits movement suggested that there may have been many black students who would have liked the academic programme to continue but feared that they may have been victimised or isolated by joining the Take Back Wits movement (Raborife, 2016b). In light of the silent protest which was to come, an anonymous voice note spread over social media in which a woman expressed her frustration towards the vice chancellor and the #FeesMustFall movement's seemingly unsuccessful efforts at gaining free tertiary education. In this voice note, the woman threatened to take the life of a white student in the opposing protest in order to emphasise the urgency of their call for free tertiary education and to gain the full attention of the vice chancellor (Raborife, 2016a).

The Take Back Wits movement marched across campus and sat outside the Great Hall where they were met by the harsh voices of the #FeesMustFall movement, criticising these students for not supporting the call for free tertiary education (Ramphele, 2016; News 24, 2016b). The Take Back Wits movement soon retreated and dispersed (Raborife, 2016a; Times Live, 2016). The leader of the Take Back Wits movement stated that the movement was not intended to undermine the #FeesMustFall movement, rather, it was created with the hope of resuming academic activities at the university (News 24, 2016a; Times Live, 2016). Following discussions with students through mediators, there was an agreement to have police removed from campus and to halt violence and intimidation from students, police and university staff. Furthermore, there was an agreement to complete the academic year by renegotiating a revised exam timetable. A general assembly was to be held in order to further discuss and come to an agreement on access to tertiary education (Raborife, 2016a). Following this, the movement seemed to simmer down.

This clash between the two movements seems to, in some ways, represent a division based on class and race. The #FeesMustFall movement was primarily made up of black, working-class students who were struggling to afford and gain tertiary education as they were required to conform to Western notions and ideas of knowledge. The Take Back Wits movement was primarily comprised of white,

middle-class students who benefit from the current education system and who seemed irritated that the struggles of their black colleagues were interfering with their own studies. The #FeesMustFall movement seemed to be made up of students who were feeling angry and let down by Wits and the systems by which it abides, to the point that they were willing to destroy the university and its systems. The Take Back Wits movement seemed to be made up of students with race and class privilege who were suggesting that this was immoral and hoped to reclaim the university through peaceful protest. Thus, there seemed to be a clash between radical and conservative students within which race and class intersected and collided. Although the Take Back Wits movement ended up retreating, their voices seemed to be heard as the #FeesMustFall movement seemed to dissipate following this clash. Thus, it may be suggested that race and class privilege played a role in restoring 'order'. However, this was only done with the government and university's assurance that the funding difficulties and decoloniality would be addressed. Thus, it seems as if this instance represents a moment in which whiteness became unsettled. The systems in place had to adapt, to some extent, to the demands of the #FeesMustFall movement in order to retain a sense of power and control.

The South African government has since increased the budget which is given to universities. Furthermore, the university has attempted to make tertiary education more accessible by reducing fees for the so called 'missing middle'; students whose annual household income is less than R600 000. Wits has also held discussions and is attempting to strive for decoloniality within tertiary education (van Niekerk, 2016). The manner in which these protests occurred may have represented a break from what was an accepted form of protest. This seemed to explicitly challenge whiteness and what the colonised world accepts to be normal and abnormal (Eagle, 2018).

> *The truth is, however, that the oppressed are not "marginals," are not people living "outside" society. They have always been "inside"- inside the structure which made them "beings for others." The solution is not to "integrate" them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become "beings for themselves".* (Freire, 1972, p. 74).

The system in which oppressed groups find themselves generally portrays these marginalised groups as the Other, making them outsiders within society. However, Freire (1972) suggests that this system, which is forced upon the oppressed, inherently disadvantages them. Thus, rather than adapting to a flawed system, in empowering oneself and one's group, it is the task of the oppressed to challenge and change this flawed system in order to create a system which no longer works against the oppressed (Freire, 1972). In this vein, the #FeesMustFall movement may represent the efforts of the oppressed in

attempting to empower themselves by challenging and adapting this system: the #FeesMustFall movement made strides in decolonialising university spaces.

During appeals for the decolonialisation of tertiary education, whiteness, and more particularly white privilege, received overt verbal attacks. This often meant that white people were excluded from participation within conversations and the protests themselves (Eagle, 2018). In one instance, a black art student created a shirt with the words “Fuck white people” on the back and “Being black sucks” on the front. Eagle (2018) attempts to explore the way in which these protests seemed to result in white students and white people in general being confronted with the hate of the Other. Furthermore, Eagle (2018) points out the complexity of engaging with and acknowledging this hatred, knowing that it stems from a history of oppression, which seems to justify the hatred.

Acknowledging the hatred that arose during the #FeesMustFall movement represents another moment in which whiteness became unsettled (Eagle, 2018). Although there were a multitude of affective responses to this hatred, it seemed as if in these moments, it was intended by black people that white people were to know what it was like to be hated. Furthermore, this presented nuances with regards to the ways in which white people could respond. Eagle (2018) suggests that white people responded either by retaliating, interpreting or, more commonly, retreating. Ironically, by virtue of an individual’s white identity, white people could not escape the feelings of powerlessness, inferiority, fear, exclusion and illegitimacy (Eagle, 2018). In response to Eagle’s (2018) position, Stevens (2018) acknowledges the legitimacy of anti-white sentiments in reply to years of oppression and the connected privilege which continues. The decolonial impulse which was felt at universities such as Wits may symbolise an Afrocentric environment in which anger and hatred towards the oppressor may serve multiple purposes. Stevens (2018) suggests that there may be something pleasurable for the oppressed in witnessing the paralysis of the oppressor in these moments. The sense of shame that seems to surface in white people in these moments is suggested to be linked to the acknowledgement of this justified hatred. Furthermore, Stevens (2018) suggests that the mechanisms used by white people in response, namely retaliation, interpretation or retreat, may discontinue this pleasure and in so doing, invite further attacks in order to evoke this paralysis. The unsettled nature of whiteness in these moments seems to represent opportunities during which social change may occur in some manner and may therefore be necessary in contemporary South Africa. In 2017, during the time that this study was conducted, participants awaited the expected revival of the #FeesMustFall movement, with the fees announcement for the 2018 year soon to come.

Dunlap, Scoggin, Green and Davi (2007) suggest that in order to challenge and change the meanings and implications of white identity, students need to create first a social environment in which this is possible. Accepting whiteness and the socio-economic implications that come with being white may be the first step in creating an environment in which the domination of whiteness may be challenged. Thus, it may be necessary for one to identify oneself as a racial being who is affected by and affects social situations. Reconstructing whiteness may occur through the acknowledgement of the effects of whiteness and challenging these in everyday life (Dunlap et al., 2007). However, merely accepting one's whiteness is only a first step; tangible efforts towards equality may be necessary in attempting to treat the symptoms of the socio-political history of South Africa. Eagle (2018), suggests that white people should remain open to expected hatred and allow for whiteness to become unsettled in situations such as these.

2.2. Conceptual and theoretical resources

Concepts such as race, racialisation, racism and whiteness are topics which have been conceptualised, re-conceptualised and criticised within academic literature. Such conceptualisations allow one to unpack the manner in which the social constructions of race and whiteness continue to play a role in contemporary society. Within the context of this study, such resources are vital in laying a conceptual and theoretical foundation for the research, in order to retain a critical perspective of the manner in which these concepts develop and continue to affect society. Social constructions such as these inform one's identity as well as one's group identity, creating semantic knowledge of individuals based on one's societal experience. The following chapter explores some of the theoretical and conceptual resources which may be useful in developing one's understanding of race, racialisation, racism and whiteness.

2.2.1. Race, racialisation and racism

Race, racialisation and racism are three separate constructs which work in conjunction within society. It is important that these concepts are defined in order to have the opportunity to observe and possibly deconstruct their implications. Race represents a social construction which has been produced in order to separate and categorise groups of people based on skin colour (Steyn, 2004). Individuals often seem to understand race as a biological construct. This understanding assumes and creates a perception of physical differences between people and is often used as a political and societal tool in order to maintain this separation. However, race cannot be separated from gender, class, sexuality and ethnicity

in the way in which it functions (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Biologically, a difference in skin colour is a result of genetic adaptations which have led to differentiations in skin pigmentation dependent on geographical location (Miles & Brown, 2003). Terre Blanche (2006) suggests that in contemporary South Africa, the term 'race' is used as a means to define a set of characteristics that have been developed over years of colonialisation. These racialised patterns remain relevant in the contemporary context of South Africa in terms of the socio-economic and class divide. Thus, although race seems to reflect a genetic disposition of the colour of one's skin, it is understood as a social construction rather than a biological one. The assumptions that come with race allow individuals to navigate society through differentiating and forming an internal social hierarchy (Miles & Brown, 2003). Distiller and Steyn (2004) suggest that much of society views the concept of race as a given, natural category in which difference and divide is essential. Thus the problems that come with the concept of race are generally overlooked.

The social construction of race has occurred through the repeated patterns and themes that occur in everyday life, which become internalised. Thus, the effects of this social construction result in very real experiences which may be experienced based on intersections between multiple social constructions such as race, culture and gender. As society develops and adapts so does the construction of race, which means that it is expressed and experienced in different, particular ways depending on the period in which it is observed, as well as one's individual intersectionalities (Fletcher, 2015). In the South African context, the concept of race has been constructed and re-constructed based on racial categories which were initially produced upon the arrival of the first colonists in South Africa. These racial categories were imposed over hundreds of years of colonialisation. They developed to serve the interests of the colonisers in terms of political, geographical, economic and social domination (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). In contemporary South Africa, the construction of racial categories and reconstruction of race continue to emphasise ideological differences in order to maintain economic and social power (Distiller & Steyn, 2004).

Race is registered in a visual manner in order to produce a visual and seemingly physical difference which reflects the socially constructed divide (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Furthermore, race is typically understood as something belonging to the Other. Distiller and Steyn (2004) suggest that race is something that people do: the everyday, accepted norms of society by which we abide, allowing the socially constructed difference of racial categories to appear as being both stable and natural. Distiller and Steyn (2004) go on to suggest that race and class are co-determined based on the specific context

in which one is located. In this way, race and identity are social performances which are taught to individuals by society. Race may also be held as an investment, serving to reproduce its continuity; often this is reflected in the way in which individuals choose their partners. The idea of race may be viewed in the global context in which it has evolved and adapted, often in a manner that entails the continuation of socially constructed racial superiority and power. In order to maintain its continuity it has been susceptible to both change and resistance. It is often in contexts of perceived threat that these constructs evolve and adapt in an attempt to maintain and protect the interests of various groups. Stevens et al. (2006) suggest that these are the points at which the construction itself may become most visible; the points at which constructs evolve and adapt.

In understanding the concept of race as a social construct, and thus an attribute which is given meaning by the way in which individuals and society re-construct an imposed divide, it is proposed that race may be de-constructed. The artificial boundaries which impose division may be challenged. What we identify as race in ourselves and others may be understood as a naturalised effect of the socio-historical context in which one lives and, as such, certain attempts to redress and challenge these effects may be useful in reconstructing difference (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Distiller and Steyn (2004) suggest that individual performances may both repeat and reinforce racial norms or they may challenge and deconstruct certain societal norms. The meaning which society places on race, in terms of power, wealth and division, reinforces individual understandings of the importance of race in constituting one's own self-identity (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). The fact that racial categorisation holds material power and amounts to a reality of divide means that one may not simply ignore it. One may, however, study it and attempt to affect its implications (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Furthermore, understanding these individual performances, which may be viewed within multiple complex combinations, is essential in gaining an understanding of the emerging social climate within contemporary societies.

Racialisation refers to the categorisation and placement of individuals into specific groups based on a perceived shared race (Stevens et al., 2006). Racialisation separates people by way of race and infers structural meanings on individuals based on their supposed race (Miles & Brown, 2003). Therefore, racialisation imparts discourses on an individual or group based on phenotypical difference. These discourses are specific: they are both politically and historically informed, suggesting that racialisation is the point at which race is given societal meaning (Miles & Brown, 2003). Therefore, racialisation represents a process whereby societal significance is related to skin colour in order to provide the basis for categorisation and, often, discrimination (Hook, 2006b). Racialisation is understood by Distiller

and Steyn (2004) as a cultural process in which people become 'raced' by society as well as by themselves. This suggests that a racial identity develops as an aspect of an individual's identity. Informed by the history of an area, racialisation occurs and changes through the ongoing discourses of everyday life (Hook, 2006a). Franchi (2006) provides a similar understanding of racialisation in suggesting that racialisation is a function of an ideological racism which serves to provide a system which may be used to navigate society.

Although racial categories used are often based on socially constructed ideas, it is suggested that these reinforce an ideological racism which was used in their initial construction. This ideology is incorporated into an internal understanding of the Self and Other (Franchi, 2006). Racialisation first occurred in South Africa during colonialisation, after which these patterns were legalised and formalised by the apartheid government (Terre Blanche, 2006). In South Africa, during the apartheid era, the terms black, white, coloured, Asian and Indian were constructed and imposed in order to categorise groups of people. Racialised constructs continue to develop and tend to shape both social relations and one's self-understanding. Race and racialisation are biologically invalid, however, these constructs invoke meaning and consequences dependent on the context in which they are constructed. The social construction and evolution of these racialisations portray meaning in that they represent the asymmetries of the past and present (Stevens et al., 2006). Although the author opposes the re-inscription of these categories, there is undeniable social meaning which continues to develop and evolve based on these imposed categories. Thus, the author will use these terms throughout in order to convey socio-historical meaning.

Racism refers to the stereotypes and discriminations which occur based on racialised categories (Stevens et al., 2006). Racism is the point at which ideology is placed on a specific racial category; there is a belief that one race is more ideal than another. This often results in individuals or groups being excluded or degraded based on a set of assumptions of the worthiness of the racial category in which they are placed (Miles & Brown, 2003). Racism is described as a phenomenon which has specific impacts aimed at both the oppressed and the oppressor, occurring in a manner that may be both political and physical in nature (Hook, 2006a). Based on a broad range of affective projections, racism is grounded in preconceived ideologies which are generally subjective in nature and aimed at reinforcing one's sense of worth in comparison to an Other (Hook, 2006a). Racism may be expressed explicitly or implicitly and continues to affect social segregation created on the social construction of

race. Hook (2006a) speaks about 'racism of reflex' which refers to an avoidance of the Other which is often unintentional and based on a recurrent sense of dislike or discomfort.

Hook (2006a) attempts to describe racism from a psychodynamic perspective in that he believes that racism comprises a set a negatively evaluative features of both the Self and the Other. These socially constructed negative features are understood to be a semantic feature of the Other. Furthermore, these features are understood as being a difference, a way to divide the Self and the Other. Thus, racism has become a tool which is used to divide negative aspects (real or imagined) of the Self, which are then projected onto an identified Other in order to create a divide based on (seemingly) semantic difference (Hook, 2006a). Hook (2006a) suggests that one may distance oneself from an Other in order to define oneself as unique and as an individual. The distance that is created allows one to externalise and project qualities of oneself which one may both fear and hate. Abjection refers to a feeling similar to fear and hatred which is evoked in reaction to certain aspects of oneself or an Other (Hook, 2006a). More specifically:

> *The theory of abjection describes just such an operating system, one in which racist discourses come to be integrated in a pre-discursive manner; abjection is a pre-ideological means of investing discursive objects with a set of intense psychical reactions and repulsions, with very real and indeed lived qualities of fear and loathing.* (Hook, 2006a, p192).

Thus, Hook (2006a) writes about racism as being a mechanism whereby the oppressor 'scapegoats' negative, undesirable aspects of the Self onto the Other. Thus, the oppressed is ultimately understood by the oppressor as the negative and unacceptable parts of the oppressors' being (Hook, 2006a; Franchi, 2006). Furthermore, racism uses a system of historically and socially produced semantics in order to function as a means to negate responsibility for unwanted aspects of the Self (Franchi, 2006). Projective identification is an effective defense mechanism which is often used to infer racist ideologies. Projective identification allows individuals to project these unwanted aspects of the Self onto the Other and then identify with these aspects in the Other in order to reinforce the ideological racism that lies at its root (Franchi, 2006).

Hook (2006b) refers to Freud's explanation of fetishism and relates this to racial stereotyping which is a common feature of racism. Fetishism refers to the point at which a young boy first sees or notices the naked body of a female, one without a penis. At this point the fear of castration becomes a fear which may in fact become reality. This fuels a sense of narcissism as well as identity and self-investment (Hook, 2006b). The Other offers a site in which one may gain a sense of self-worth and in essence,

where one may hold oneself above others'. Racial stereotyping is understood as an attempt to manage anxiety and protect the concept of an untainted identity through fantasy. Thus, the Other comes to represent a shared sense of anxieties of the self, creating a point of identification for both the oppressor and oppressed (Hook, 2006b).

Often, racism is understood only in its overt forms, such as the various hate crimes which are reported in the news and which currently attract much attention through social media. However, this limited understanding tends to negate the psychic continuity and depth of racism which delves between conscious, preconscious and unconscious thought (Hook, 2006a). Racism is not merely restricted to specific acts that create and reinforce difference and power between oppressors and oppressed, it is an ideological phenomenon that manifests both socially, politically and psychologically.

> *Racism is related to material conditions as an ideology, but is also highly discursive, not only at the level of talk and rhetorical strategies, but also at the level of everyday social practices that construct and reflect hierarchical notions and representations of the Self and the Other.* (Stevens et al., 2006, pg. 11).

According to Hook (2006a), viewing racism as a form of abjection may allow us to better understand the way in which certain patterns of behaviour become psychologically engrained. Furthermore, abjection itself seems to function as a way for an individual to maintain a balance between the id, ego and superego in that it allows certain unfavourable thoughts to be viewed as something that does not form part of the Self (Hook, 2006a). Perhaps it is the repeated historical abjection of the Other which has led to a semantic divide between racial categories.

Whiteness in South Africa claims a sense of power and domination based on the segregation of groups of people, which occurred initially through colonialisation, in order to obtain power over the majority. This power has grown and adapted in order to maintain this domination (Stevens et al., 2006; Green & Sonn, 2005). The difference, divide and anxieties displaced onto the Other during colonialisation functioned as a means of creating a belief that the oppressed were savages. Thus, allowing colonialists the ability to develop a sense of justification for slavery and the violation of human rights (Hook, 2006b; Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Fanon (1986) suggests that the function of differentiation leads to the oppressed wishing to take the place of the oppressor one day. Hook (2006b) adds to this in suggesting that as frequently as this wish takes place, the oppressor fears the constant threat of violent retribution by the oppressed. Thus, the difference and separation of the oppressor and oppressed becomes normalised and seemingly necessary with the requirement of the oppressed learning to buy into and

navigate colonial systems in order to be socially recognised as a success. In so doing, the oppressed may maintain systems of power which retain inequality based on racial categorisation.

2.2.2. Critical Race Studies

Critical Race Studies (CRS) developed in Latin America in response to the contextually specific implicit racism which continued within society (Warren & Twine, 2002). CRS was developed as a means to study the implicit and covert racism that persists in post-colonised societies (Warren & Twine, 2002). CRS draws on the core principles, and is thus known as a subset, of Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Abrams & Moio, 2009). CRT suggests that racism is deeply engrained within society following its construction during colonialisation. As such, racism within society is not considered to be abnormal in the way in which it is accepted by society and given semantic meaning (Lynn & Parker, 2006). Although legally all racial categories are now considered equal, this only serves to diminish the instances of explicit racism while implicit acts are more generally ingrained and are therefore experienced as the norm within society (Lynn & Parker, 2006). A lack of movement towards the deconstruction of this covert racism is believed to demonstrate evidence of the normalisation of white supremacy in specific contexts such as South Africa (Warren & Twine, 2002). White supremacy refers to the way that the interests of white people are placed at the top of a hierarchy within society, politics and everyday interactions (Gillborn, 2015; Gillborn, 2005).

CRT states that race is a social construction in which racialised categories are separated and differentiated by societal norms and values in the interests of whiteness. Most people within society do not notice the implicit racism which occurs within society, reinforcing it and allowing whiteness to retain its function (Gillborn, 2015). Therefore, the normalcy of implicit racism is held by both oppressor and oppressed as well as within political, economic and legal structures within society which ultimately serve to ensure the superiority and dominance of the white racial category (Lynn & Parker, 2006). CRS on whiteness are aimed at understanding these forms of racism in order to deconstruct the social construction of whiteness and the power that it holds within society (Gillborn, 2005). CRT states that whiteness is embedded within the culture of society and is based on historical origins. In this sense, specific contextual factors are pertinent to the way in which whiteness presents and adapts within society (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Nayak, 2007).The fact that whiteness is a social construction implies that it may be deconstructed for the betterment of society as a whole (Nayak, 2007).

Decolonial theorists such as Frantz Fanon have explored and investigated the ways in which colonialisation affected and continues to affect society (Kane, 2007). In Fanon's (1986) theory of race and racism, three concepts are put forward. These concepts state that race is produced from specific historical contexts, it is maintained throughout generations by certain cultural artifacts and that racial categories are constructed within human ontology (Kane, 2007). Theories such as these implicate the necessity of understanding a society's past in producing knowledge which supports current anti-racism praxis and CRS. CRS have been developed to examine, understand and produce interventions and anti-racism practice (Stevens, 2007). This field of studies developed from a critique of socio-cultural histories and their effects on racism and the dominance of whiteness (Steyn, 2007). Blackness and 'Otherness' are central tenets in developing effective CRS. However, it is important to note the significance of whiteness studies within CRS, especially when considering the way in which dominance and privilege are reproduced (Stevens, 2007).

When conducting research based on the social construction of race, it is of value to bear in mind the effects of whiteness and the privilege that the research may entail. Thus, researchers must recognise the power and domination that whiteness holds in society and how this affects subtle and invisible forms of racism in everyday life in order to effectively analyse the construction of whiteness in present society (Green et al., 2007). Thus, CRS philosophically opposes the idea of liberalism which claims that society and the world as a whole are both unbiased and equal based on the belief of law being both fair and just (Lynn & Parker, 2006). Steyn (2007) argues for the importance of whiteness studies in anti-racism practice, through exposing this phenomenon and "decolonising the imagination of both the oppressed and the oppressors." Knowledge production and research into the concept of whiteness may be useful in derailing the domination and power that it holds in the socio-political context of South Africa (Green et al., 2007). CRS attempts to challenge the normativity of whiteness, racial superiority and implicit racism through research and scholarship aimed at contesting the construction and reconstruction of race (Lynn & Parker, 2006).

2.2.3. Whiteness as a construct

Whiteness refers to a system of power which constantly works in socio-economic settings in order to benefit white people, often obscured by seemingly neutral actions and words which mask the continuity of such systems (Hartigan, 1997). There is much research abroad into the concept of whiteness which all leads to an understanding of whiteness being connected to power, difference and not being the Other (Warren, 1999). However, the concept of whiteness remains a topic of high

contestation and debate (Green & Sonn, 2005). Although being white has specific racialised identifiers, the underlying conceptualisations of whiteness are not all agreed upon. Therefore, Green and Sonn (2005) believe that whiteness is something of an empty category that exists only in relation to the Other, based on what it is not. As has been discussed under previous sub-headings, Othering allows one to remove the negative parts of the Self and project these onto an Other. Thus, race is believed to belong to the Other, leaving the white racial category empty. This empty white category is further reinforced through the denial of its existence and the assumption that whiteness is the universal norm. Whiteness is believed to be a social construct which was purposefully developed through colonialisation in order to achieve dominance by a minority group of colonisers over the majority group of local people. This occurred concurrently through the construction of race, racialisation and racism (Stevens et al., 2006). Scholars and academics who study whiteness often attempt to do so in order to identify how whiteness retains and reconstructs itself as a position of power and dominance. Furthermore, such scholars interrogate the normativity and invisibility of whiteness in an attempt to break such qualities (Hartigan, 1997).

Globalisation is a system of power which serves Western elites by producing a global economic culture that privileges white English speakers through normative economic practices. Globalisation operates through large corporations, international banks, educational institutions and mass media which stretch across the globe, naturalising a system of socio-economic and political power (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Based on the vast reach and success of its aims, "globalisation may in fact be the ultimate triumph of European colonialism"(Distiller & Steyn, 2004, pg 104). The systemic way in which white domination is enacted means that many black people have had to learn the best means of survival within a skewed system which favours white, English speakers. This may often remain an intellectual exercise for white people who may grow to understand, act upon and forget racialised systems of power without it having a significant impact on the lives that they live (Kendall, 2002). Distiller and Steyn (2004) suggest that the term 'white supremacy' refers to the secure self-image and virtues which colonialised areas afford white people. Colonialists would generally attempt to produce boundaries as a strategy used to maintain white supremacy. These boundaries produce and maintain a social and economic hierarchy in which space is used to separate 'civilised' from 'savage' (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). In essence, white people are born into a system which works to their advantage and thus, they are born into privilege. Many white people believe that by virtue of their race, racism does not affect them (McIntosh, 2003). Thus, racism is identified as something which affects the Other, negating the privilege that whiteness affords.

Whiteness is often concealed through colour-blind beliefs which use the understanding of racial categories as social constructions in order to claim that this construction must not be followed, negating the meaning and material value which has been historically produced and placed on racial categories (Fletcher, 2015). Thus, whiteness is not only believed to represent what is normal, it also remains somewhat hidden (Green & Sonn, 2005; de Kock, 2006; Vice, 2010). The invisibility of whiteness results in Other racial categories being critiqued and defined by their difference while whiteness remains concealed. The invisible nature of whiteness results in the construction of a belief that race is something that belongs to the Other, further normalising the white racial category (Fletcher, 2015). Frankenberg (1993b) suggests that the geographical social landscape is also racially structured, reflecting a system of racism which inherently creates white spaces of safety and 'normality'. She argues that, although white people often believe that they may stand outside of racism, one's identity is socially constructed within systems of racism. Therefore, race, racialisation and racism affect everyone while one lives within such systems of racism and inequality (Frankenberg, 193b). Geographical segregation based on racialisation allows white people to construct what is believed to be the normal and natural world, outside of which constitutes what is believed to be abnormal. This segregation allows whiteness to remain somewhat unnoticed and generally unchallenged while simultaneously attempting to reflect whiteness as holding positive and liberal values (Frankenberg, 1993a).

The normativity of whiteness and Othering of racism allow white people to retain power and privilege while Other racial categoriess are marked by inequities which are not necessarily thought of as a being a product of this system (Vice, 2010; Green & Sonn, 2005). Frankenberg (1993a) suggests that the Othering of the oppressed from the standpoint of the white self allows one to view race as something which belongs to the Other. This allows race to be viewed as something biological and natural which belongs to black people. Furthermore, white people are often rather evasive of colour and colour differences in relation to the self and Other in an attempt to appear void of prejudice. However, the author suggests that this evasiveness may be a further attempt at reinstating the continuity of whiteness by allowing racialisation to remain normalised rather than allowing it the opportunity to be challenged. Frankenberg (1993a) defines race cognizance as the ability to view race and racism as forming a part of one's identity, the ability to turn a critical lens back on oneself. She suggests that race cognizance is an essential aspect in attempting to break the normality of whiteness.

Green and Sonn (2006) suggest that the domination of whiteness is maintained through its invisible nature. Often, when the idea of whiteness is brought up in social contexts, it is dismissed by white

people, which allows it to retain its power and remain concealed. Whiteness is fluid in that it adapts, depending on the socio-historical context in which it exists. However, its effects in these contexts are visible, real and material. Whiteness claims a sense of psychological entitlement which is observed in everyday experiences of being white (Green et al., 2007). Furthermore, whiteness affords white people the privilege of knowing that a scholarship or job position is attained by merit, assuming that the modern, developed world was built by the contributions of the white race and not having to educate future generations about how racism may affect them (Green et al., 2007). Frankenberg (1993a) suggests that whiteness cannot be viewed in a vacuum, as other social constructs which make up one's identity, such as gender, sexuality etc., intersect to form one's social position.

Privilege, normativity and dominance are reproduced based on social influence in order to continue the legacy of whiteness (Green & Sonn, 2006; Fletcher, 2015; Green et al., 2007). White skin entitles individuals to certain social, psychological, political and economic advantages (Green & Sonn, 2006). Although experiences of whiteness differ dependent on specific social, cultural and economic factors, the structure of whiteness is reproduced and adapts throughout generations in order to maintain power and privilege within society (Green & Sonn 2006). Frankenberg (1993a) agrees with other whiteness theorists as she suggests that whiteness continuously adapts and reconstructs itself in order to benefit white people. Whiteness may be reproduced in multiple manners including anti-racism practice itself. Green and Sonn (2006) argue that, by not addressing the concept of whiteness within anti-racism practice, whiteness is inadvertently allowed to retain its power. Whiteness is also reproduced through knowledge production (which is often highly influenced by colonial teachings), research, social interactions and a sense of national identity. The English language dominates academics, economics and multiple spheres of society which reinforces the dominance of Westernisation and the power of whiteness, specifically in countries such as South Africa where, for the majority, English is a second language. Thus, South African universities may add to the reproduction of the dominance of whiteness through colonial-based teachings.

The term 'privilege' is used to describe an asset of some kind that is afforded to some without being personally earned (McIntosh, 2003). For example, clean water should be a privilege that all are afforded without the need to be earned. However, because water is not easily accessible to everyone, it may be seen as a privilege. White people are afforded many privileges which are gained based on one's race in relation to the socio-political history of the context in which one resides (McIntosh, 2003). White privilege is a term used to describe the privileges that white people are born into based

on their race (Kendall, 2002). An example of white privilege may be something as simple as running down the street. A white person running down the street may be viewed by outsiders as someone who is healthy. Conversely, a black person running down the street may be judged as being a criminal who is running to evade the law. Kendall (2002) provides a simple example of white privilege as buying 'flesh-coloured' plasters with the knowledge that these plasters will resemble white skin.

Although some white people may not approve and may explicitly acknowledge the privilege that is afforded to them, individual acts may not prove effective in creating systemic change (McIntosh, 2003). Acknowledging white privilege at an individual level will not cause these privileges to discontinue, nor will it allow black people to gain access to these privileges. McIntosh (2003) suggests that the invisibility of whiteness is used as a political tool which allows communities to gain a false sense of equality. In order to create systemic change, the nature of whiteness and the privilege it affords may need to be rendered visible to the community itself (McIntosh, 2003). Furthermore, explicit forms of redress may be necessary in promoting equality. This systemic change may take centuries to accomplish and will most likely be met with mechanisms intended to maintain the dominance and power that is currently afforded to white people.

Frankenberg (1993a) explored the multiple dimensions of whiteness in white American women from differing backgrounds. She further builds on the argument that whiteness relates to a white-centredness within the social climate of these women. Thus suggesting the hierarchical nature of whiteness in society. This further remained somewhat invisible to the white women interviewed as they were unable to draw the links between racial categorisation and inequality (Frankenberg, 1993a). Frankenberg (1993a) suggests that people of all races exist within a racially structured system and as such live lives which are racially structured; socially, economically and geographically. However, because whiteness relates to what is considered normal, white people often believe that they live non-racial lives and that racism and, concurrently, anti-racism practice is a black issue. Thus, white people may or may not see or view racism, as it is often viewed as a construct which exists beyond the contours of white lives.

Whiteness is often experienced as being somewhat cultureless and formless. However, Frankenberg (1993a) suggests that rather than being formless, it is conceptualised as the expected and the norm and thus only exists in relation to the Other. She goes on to suggest that although this may be the case, whiteness does not remain cultureless, rather it relates to a culture which attempts to re-inscribe its normality through manners of interpreting history as well as manners of understanding the self and the Other. Furthermore, she suggests that the culture of whiteness remains unnamed in order to retain its

centrality (Frankenberg, 1993a). Much of Frankenberg's work in attempting to better understand social constructions of identity in relation to power are premised upon the urge to create social change. Frankenberg attempts to explore the relationship between class and race in order to inform antiracism practice (Warren, 1999). Frankenberg (1993a) suggests that transformative work in terms of whiteness requires one to attack the normativity of the dominance of whiteness by challenging this concept. Furthermore, such work may call out whiteness and in so doing render what was once overlooked, visible and thus attempt to unsettle the reproduction of whiteness and the inequality it creates. However, although research into whiteness exists and attempts to oust whiteness, it remains a site of domination and control. Thus, it may be argued that such a transition or abolishment may take time and so the process of such a transition may be considered more important at this moment in time. It may be necessary for such research to somehow reach the public or risk the chance of becoming invisible and unseen.

White shame refers to an emotional reaction which members of the white racial category may experience when faced with racialised inequality and the moral wrongdoings committed by the white racial group in creating this inequality (Iyer et al., 2003). Steele (1990) writes about the phenomenon of white guilt in America during the 1980's. It is suggested that white shame surfaces as an emotion during the acknowledgment of the wrongdoings of one's identified racial category and the knowledge that one benefitted from, and continues to benefit from, being identified as the oppressor. Although white shame and white guilt are often muddled, the author suggests that 'shame' refers more accurately to this emotional reaction. 'Guilt' refers to a feeling of remorse which occurs in response to an act which one has committed, whether it is real or imagined. 'Shame' refers to the painful feeling which arises in response to a consciousness of something dishonorable or inhumane, committed by oneself or another. In this sense one's shame occurs in response to an understanding of the dishonorable acts committed by one's own racial category, a category which forms part of one's identity.

White shame and the strength of white shame is dependent on the strength of one's belief in white privilege and the strength of the belief in the continual discrimination against black people (Swim & Miller, 1999). Those who identify with white shame inadvertently accept a sense of responsibility for the violation of moral standards which has led to their advantage. However, Iyer et al. (2003) suggest that this may be a group-based shame and thus, this emotion is felt in response to the moral injustices committed by this group rather than any personal wrongdoings. Steele (1990) goes on to explore this more critically, suggesting that white people may feel ashamed that they are in fact appreciative of the

advantages bestowed upon them, gained from the pain, oppression and inhumanities of colonial history and a system which invariably favours the white racial category. Thus, white shame may stem from a position of being thankful for having been born into this privilege. White shame results in a focus on the self, attempting to create a better sense of self and, inadvertently, negating the effects on the Other. Thus, white shame may implicitly re-centre white people as the location for development rather than addressing the original cause of one's shame. Although shame may mobilise one to act, it often results in a self-preoccupation which may not be useful (Steele, 1990). Furthermore, white shame has been associated with the desire to accept punishment, apologise or compensate (Iyer et al., 2003). Shame's focus on the self and one's identity results, primarily, in the need for restitution through compensation and thus limits the degree to which one may affect change (Iyer et al., 2003).

Although shame is an emotion which is generally directed towards the self, it may also motivate efforts to address inequality. Efforts to apologise or to create material compensation are generally the expected outcomes of white shame. This may initially seem to assist the oppressed, however, it ultimately serves to escape this sense of shame without effectively making moves to address the disadvantage of the oppressed (Iyer et al., 2003). Iyer et al. (2003) suggest that emotions focused on the Other, such as sympathy or moral outrage, are more effective, as compared to shame, in leading to both compensation as well as opportunity-oriented interventions. Although white shame may lay somewhat dormant within white people, Steele (1990) suggests that it may be activated by viewing the negative impacts of the unearned advantages afforded to white people through viewing the struggle of the oppressed. Furthermore, it is suggested that in producing a moment in which this shame may be activated, the black Other may too feel a sense of shame in the acknowledgment of one's lack of power and disadvantage.

Eng and Han (2000) were the first to write about racial melancholia as a form of nuanced mourning in relation to race. In terms of whiteness, racial melancholia refers to the loss of the ideal of whiteness in relation to power, the idea of whiteness as being pure and good. The malingering essence of a previous understanding of whiteness is believed to haunt white people as they are reminded by society of the manner in which whiteness has been constructed (Eng & Han, 2000). Furthermore, the privilege afforded to white people does not amount to the political power which it once attained and therefore may be a constant reminder of this loss. Straker (2004) suggests that the way in which whiteness does not live up to its claims of being both liberal, fair and just further accentuates the sense of loss which white people may feel. Furthermore, this may be felt as betrayal, that one may have been betrayed by

their own racial category. Thus, one may come to the ambiguous understanding of one being an involuntary beneficiary of this betrayal (Straker, 2004). Straker (2004) thus suggests that racial melancholia may be a result of the powerlessness of oneself over one's own group identity. However, because of the painful and shameful affects that may arise as a result of this melancholia, knowledge of this loss is often avoided.

Although whiteness may be viewed as a globalised system of power, it is important to note that its adaptations and development are dependent and specific on the unique socio-political histories in which such systems have developed (Hartigan, 1997). Thus, although this section of the literature review offers much in terms of conceptual and theoretical resources which pertain to whiteness, one cannot view such concepts as being globally inherent. In many of the locations at which whiteness has been theorised, the white racial category represents the majority whereas in South Africa, it represents a minority. Furthermore, the unique socio-political history of South Africa has resulted in distinct adaptations of whiteness. Thus, theoretical resources such as those offered by Frankenberg are utilised in conjunction with and in relation to the unique climate and history of both South Africa and Wits in the analysis chapter. Furthermore, the literature review will go on to explore whiteness studies as well as studies conducted within the South African context in order to further inform the current study. Refraining from selecting one theorist on which to ground the study may be considered a weakness to the study itself. However, the author attempts to merge conceptual and theoretical resources which are aligned with CRS in order to provide a means to effectively study the adapting concept of whiteness within contemporary South Africa. Thus, the author attempts to use the core concepts of CRS in order to ground the study on which other theoretical and conceptual resources may be effectively utilised.

2.3. Contemporary studies of whiteness

The socio-political history of South Africa has resulted in the development of a unique context in which whiteness has developed. Although it seems as though the globalised nature of the power and dominance of whiteness has made an impact across the world, whiteness also seems to have adapted within the unique context in which it finds itself. Furthermore, as compared to the West, white people make up the minority racial group in South Africa and as such, whiteness has had to develop through colonialism, apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa, all while attempting to hold onto the power and privilege that it affords. As such, it is useful and necessary to examine and study whiteness in South Africa in its own right. Contemporary studies on whiteness in South Africa offer a unique perspective for developing a critical understanding of the manner in which whiteness develops under

such circumstances while attempting to retain its power and link to the West. Furthermore, it may be necessary to review studies on whiteness abroad. These studies may allow one to gain a sense of the nature of whiteness and the way in which it seems to adapt and evolve over time and within multiple settings.

2.3.1. Whiteness in contemporary South Africa

In post-apartheid South Africa there seems to be a need for white people to continuously reconstruct their culture and ethnicity in order to feel as if they are in a country where they belong (Matthews, 2011). Although this seems necessary, the historical roots of whiteness have made this a difficult process and may lead to an ignorance of the ways in which whiteness has been constructed. Whiteness attempts to maintain its position as being the central, social location of power and privilege based on racialisation (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). The privilege and advantage that whiteness affords white South Africans as the minority within its racialised context is one that cannot be easily overlooked and as such, white South Africans have had to find ways in which they can live with this constant reminder of a legacy of oppression (Vice, 2010). Vice (2010) suggests that white South Africans turn to developing a sense of self as an individual in an attempt to separate oneself from the legacy of apartheid. However, this may require a silence and acknowledgment of the legacy and inequality that continues. Following the turn of political power, whiteness has managed to maintain socio-economic power within the South African context, centring itself by preserving privilege and desirability (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010). Ratele and Laubscher (2010) suggest that whiteness is associated with better economic prospects; occupations with higher status, better prospects of employment and a better grasp on wealth than do other racial categories. However, whiteness in South Africa holds a sense of ambiguity and complexity which is often missed and which may be difficult to describe fully considering the ambivalence whiteness holds towards both the Other and the Self (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010).

Although globalisation and colonialisation have affected South Africa for centuries, overtly identifying oneself as European may directly isolate an individual in a country where nation building and unity has been a key aim of the post-apartheid era (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Thus, white, English speaking South Africans may identify as being both South African and European and attempt to create buy-in with regards to a system that inevitably favours white people (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). As such, the dominance of English as the primary language in the majority of educational and corporate institutions has been viewed as normal, although this has recently been challenged. Vice (2010) suggests that following the transition period, South Africans have been indoctrinated with a forced sense of pride in

their country in an attempt to provide a feeling of belonging. However, inequality as a result of the country's socio-political history is overtly visible within everyday life, which constantly reminds South Africans of the legacy of whiteness. The term 'African' has been used by white people in an attempt to redefine their place within society (Matthews, 2011). However, this has been met with ambivalence from black South Africans which further suggests the complex nature of redefining whiteness in a context in which ramifications of the past continue to affect the present. Although there seems to be a need for a contemporary redefinition of whiteness within the South African context, this may remain impossible until such time as the inequalities which are maintained as a symptom of the past are addressed effectively. White South Africans seem to have a complex sense of belonging within the country, knowing and perhaps identifying with ancestors and/or relatives from the West and having a sense that perhaps this is their country of birth and represents a land in which their individual historical roots are placed. Vice (2010) suggests that using the term 'African' to describe this sense of belonging points to the nuanced ambivalence between both belonging and not belonging in, often, one's country of birth.

During the apartheid era, white South Africans had the advantage of limited competition in that they would only compete for socio-economic resources with other whites. Whereas, in contemporary South Africa, the privilege of white South Africans is no longer assured in an overt manner: Straker (2011) suggests that whiteness has become 'unsettled'. This unsettling occurs concurrently with a racial melancholia which may suggest that something within the racialised system of power is shifting. As has been previously discussed, racial melancholia refers to a sense of both loss and longing, in that white people may feel as if they have lost a group identity with which they could proudly associate themselves (Straker, 2011). In post-apartheid South Africa there have been an increasing number of black people entering the middle-class while some white people have entered poverty. This may have been in conjunction with a redefinition of whiteness within an adapting political and social environment (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). For years, there has been a normalised association between white people and the middle-class, whereas a similar association has been developed between black people and the working-class (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). This discrepancy has been socially constructed as natural and expected as South Africans are generally desensitised to the large proportion of black people living in poverty. In some ways, the concept of perceived identity within the South African context is moving from race to class. Although this is a seemingly positive shift, the association between race and class remains. Thus, the black middle-class are often understood as taking on white ideology; adding to the power of whiteness (Distiller & Steyn, 2004).

Initially, the black middle-class was produced through the education of certain black people in order to create a group of 'civilised natives'. During the transition period, this black middle-class functioned as a way to create continuity in a system that privileged white people by creating buy-in from black people (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). In order to join the middle-class, this group needed to conform to the systems produced through colonialism which primarily functioned to privilege white people. Thus, continuing the black middle-class through the transition period became an effective means of ensuring the continuation of this system in post-apartheid South Africa. Although legalised explicit racism ended with apartheid, the systems that held power during the apartheid era remain and maintain the white socio-economic agenda (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). The supposed integration which occurred in the 'new South Africa' further added to a belief that South African society was progressing and that inequality was being addressed. However, the inequality that persists is overtly visible; informal settlements in particular may challenge this belief (Distiller & Steyn, 2004).

White South Africans in and of themselves are made up of different ancestral and cultural roots, they are not a homogenous group as they are divided by geographical location, political stance, religious views, language, culture and economic status (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). There is a particular division between English and Afrikaans speaking white South Africans. Although in times of social and political tension, the white racial category was a site to hold onto and so these lines became somewhat blurred, in contemporary South Africa there is a socially constructed, categorical divide between English and Afrikaans speaking white South Africans (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Similar strategies are used by both English speaking and Afrikaans speaking white people in attempting to maintain power, however, a historical difference has allowed English speaking white people (who retain a stronger link to the West) to separate themselves from Afrikaans speaking white South Africans. This has allowed English speaking white South Africans the opportunity to claim a sense of innocence with regards to the socio-economic and human rights violations associated with the Afrikaner government which was in power during apartheid. Thus, English speaking white South Africans were able to gain the benefits of being white during apartheid yet avoid many of the social repercussions post-apartheid (Distiller & Steyn, 2004).

Although there are cultural and socio-historical differences between Afrikaans and English speaking white people, the construction of Afrikaner whiteness occurred within the global context of a more normative and powerful Western, English speaking whiteness (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Whiteness in both of these contexts attempts to be centred and conceived as what it means to be human, relating to a

desire to maintain some sort of white purity (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Historically based anger is often triggered in white Afrikaans people who attempt to maintain a culture and history of overt racism while living under the rule of a government which is made up, primarily, of black people (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Often, emigration to ancestral lands may be considered as a tragedy which is more acceptable than continuing to live under the current, black South African government. Some Afrikaners believe that there should be unity amongst white Afrikaans speakers with the aim of maintaining the privilege and 'purity' of their intersectionalities (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). In framing Afrikaans culture as a sense of human purity, there is an attempt at selling this ideology to themselves as well as to the rest of the country (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). This seems to be evident in acts such as the #BlackMonday protests in which white Afrikaners protested the killing of Afrikaner farmers.

A major differentiation between Afrikaans and English speaking whiteness is the manner in which the sense of self within Afrikaans people has had to evolve in contemporary South Africa whereas English speaking whiteness has been able to remain somewhat invisible. Afrikaners attempted to claim a sense of victimhood at the hands of the British colonisers, demonstrating the tenacity of whiteness and its resolve to maintain and reconstruct itself at the centre of power (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). In the South African context, the invisibility of whiteness was challenged through legalised white domination: apartheid (Fletcher, 2015). However, the privilege that whiteness holds has adapted to post-apartheid life. In this way, its invisibility may have been somewhat reinstated in order for whiteness to retain its domination in a context that, on the surface, seems to strive for equality (Fletcher, 2015). Steyn (2004) suggests that within the post-apartheid context, white South Africans take on narratives which generally attempt to continue the legacy of whiteness. There seems to have been a political invitation to a sense of belonging for whites during the transition period. However, in everyday life, whites are exposed to a sense of being unwelcomed by the visibility of the fact that nothing much has changed, materially, since the transition from the apartheid era (Vice, 2010). Vice (2010), suggests that a sense of white guilt and shame may be a reaction to feeling that whites have personally failed to gain a sense of belonging by actively working to create equality.

Unless one holds an impressive ability to avoid and negate, whiteness and one's own whiteness cannot easily fall into invisibility within the South African context where there are such stark differences based on racial lines (Vice, 2010). Vice (2010) goes on to suggest that the visibility of inequality within the South African context leads to white people having to grapple with a sense that whiteness and, therefore one's group identity, is a location for much of the socio-economic inequality within

South Africa. This moral dilemma seems to be complex and one which leaves white individuals with the difficult task of feeling pressured to claim certain emotions regarding this inequality as well as dealing with the sense that they are not effectively working towards producing a shift in this inequality. This conflict seems to be one which is suggested to form part of the well-intentioned whites (Vice, 2010). Alternatively, Distiller and Steyn (2004) suggest that white people may attempt to avoid feeling as if they have a lack of control. Thus, emigration to countries such as Australia (where white people are the majority) acts as a way in which white people may preserve whiteness when they feel that its stability is under threat. Furthermore, white South Africans may relocate to areas within South Africa where whiteness holds a greater sense of power. White people may also pull away as citizens, based on mistrust in the government and the country's future, as whiteness has lost political power (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Alternatively, it may be argued that white people are able to negate the difficult emotions regarding their complicity with racialised inequality by maintaining a belief that this reflects the natural order. Perhaps some white people do not feel shame as they continue to hold the colonial idea of the native savage. It may also be argued that such feelings may further be avoided by claiming a sense of liberalism; believing that society is just and fair and that privilege is earned.

Shame represents one's understanding that one has fallen below the moral standards which one sets oneself. That one should not be the way one is, if one was to legitimately live up to one's moral values (Vice, 2010). Thus, in an instance of moral wrongdoing, one will undoubtedly feel both guilt and shame. Furthermore, Vice (2010) suggests that one may not take solace in feeling shameful as it suggests that we are not as we should be. Shame exposes individuals to the agonising distance between oneself and one's moral standards. Vice (2010), cautiously suggests that carrying a sense of shame and guilt may be a difficult burden for white South Africans to carry, one which may hinder one's ability to fully flourish. However, the author suggests that it may be easier to carry this burden than to make tangible efforts towards deconstructing the reasons for this sense of shame and acting on this in an attempt to work towards equality. Furthermore, it may be suggested that white people do not carry any such emotions, as a result of desensitisation and normalisation of racial inequality. To avoid emotions such as shame, anger or sympathy is to claim a sense of morality in the face of clear racialised inequality and to assert that perhaps black people deserve to remain in poverty if it allows for the retention of one's privileged lifestyle. Regardless, it seems as if such emotions lay little ground for activism or efforts to create effective forms of redress.

It is important to note that the experience of shame may be one undertaken in an effort to feel better about one's wrongdoings and in so doing could be an acknowledgment of the needs of individual's rather than an acknowledgment of the current climate (Vice, 2011). Straker (2011) suggests that perhaps white people avoid a legitimate experience of shame by holding a globalised and expected sense of shame. Perhaps this globalised sense of shame marks over what would be a genuine sense of guilt and shame in order to seek forgiveness without fully exploring and critically engaging with our involvement in racism and the continued system of inequality (Straker, 2011). Furthermore, this may allow for white people to claim a sense of shame, redirecting focus from redress to attempting to rid oneself of this shame. Alternatively, Straker (2011) suggests that the acknowledgement of shame may allow white people to attempt to be understood as, or perhaps understand oneself as, an individual who has grappled with and come to terms with ones involvement in, and advantages gained from, the economic system of power and the apartheid era. More accurately, Straker (2011) suggests that claiming a sense of shame prematurely may be used as a mechanism which effectively allows individuals to defend against further exploration of one's identity within society.

Vice (2010) speaks of the moral difficulties of well-intentioned whites and attempts to offer an inconclusive way of beginning to work through these nuances of shame and guilt. It is suggested that in contemporary South Africa, well-intentioned whites may serve best by taking a political step back, providing the space, through white silence, for black South Africans to remake and reconstruct contemporary South Africa without the diagnoses and analyses which are often formed by white South Africans. Vice (2010) goes on to suggest that this silence should not represent a failure to listen, engage or to speak out in certain situations, but rather a silence that allows for the systems in place to be challenged and reconstructed under black terms. Mckaiser (2011) challenges the need for white South Africans to take on political silence, arguing that this silence may in fact become a disadvantage to both black people and South Africa. It is argued that white political voices may be necessary in order to create dialogue and for black South Africans to face their own moral dilemmas. Furthermore, Mckaiser (2011) suggests that this silence may avoid the opportunity for South Africans to construct terms of equality and in a sense provide a more shared sense of belonging. Rather than silence, it is suggested that white South Africans develop a sense of self-awareness and self-reflection which may contribute to an acknowledgement of the privileges afforded to them and allow them to challenge these. Furthermore, this self-awareness should be present in their political involvement rather than negating white voices through silencing (Mckaiser, 2011).

2.3.2. Studies on whiteness

The formal end of the apartheid regime was represented by the first free and fair elections that saw the ANC take up political power in 1994 (Stevens et al., 2006). Following this, many efforts have been made in an attempt to create redress following the economic and social inequalities which were enforced and perpetuated during apartheid. Although these efforts attempted to lift the status of the marginalised black population, they were generally unsuccessful in ending South Africa's pattern of racialised socio-economic inequalities (Stevens et al., 2006). Attempts at deracialising South African society have been unable to adequately address the racialised norms which quickly adapted and evolved with the changing context. The South African context represents a location in which race has played and continues to play a major role in society and the systems which govern power and privilege. Thus, it offers a unique site for research into concepts of race, racialisation and racism (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). However, this has been relatively under-utilised as there is seemingly little research into these concepts. Stevens et al. (2006) suggest that as a result of the attempts at deracialising South African society, research was led away from race in an effort to reconstruct race as being invalid. However, Distiller and Steyn (2004) suggest that this may be related to the social investment in the power which race maintains as well as the ability of whiteness to evade criticism. Furthermore, this push may further suggest the way in which the constructs of race, racialisation and whiteness evolve and attempt to adapt based on the ever changing contexts in which such concepts are re-constructed. This may have provided an invisibility which allowed whiteness to adapt and evolve without critical engagement. In this sense, contemporary South Africa is viewed as a nation which is informed by its history while, at the same time, it repeatedly avoids and ignores this (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). This being said, there has been research into race and more particularly, whiteness, globally and within post-apartheid South Africa, some of which will be explored below.

As whiteness defines itself in relation to the Other, in relation to what it's not, English speaking white South Africans tend to have an ambiguous sense of belonging; neither European nor African (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Defining a group in relation to an Other may have left the white racial category without much sense of what actually belongs to white cultural identity. Thus, Distiller and Steyn (2004) point to the difficulty in studying whiteness as it is a rather elusive and ever changing concept. The majority of literature pertaining to whiteness has been produced in the Western world by white people who form part of the majority of the population in their geographical location. Thus, the normative and invisible nature of whiteness in these contexts exists in a more covert fashion as

compared to the South African context (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Ratele (2007) challenges the basis for research into whiteness among scholars in South Africa. It is suggested that this research is generally never seen nor read critically by those who hold racist ideology. Furthermore, perhaps research into whiteness may in fact close the door for research guided by and towards black South Africans. Stevens (2007) suggests that research into whiteness runs the risk of re-centring whiteness within race studies and in so doing, add to the privilege afforded to the white racial category.

In the South African context, the white racial category exists as a minority. As a result, white dominance in the South African context is more overt, accepted and aware of itself (Steyn, 2007). South Africa presents a location in which race, racialisation and racism continue to play both an overt and covert role in the social terrain of society. However, with an emphasis on rainbowism and an investment in power and privilege, race has remained relatively under-researched (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Distiller and Steyn (2004) suggest that white South Africans view their culture as somewhat transparent and as a standard to which Others may be compared or understood as abnormal. Thus, cultural evasion leads to the marginalisation of Other racialised groups. Perhaps placing the emphasis and seemingly continual need for the oppressed to challenge the oppressors can become both a tiresome, frustrating and seemingly never-ending act which is expected of black South Africans (Ratele, 2007). Ratele (2007) seems to suggest that perhaps there is a constant need for black South Africans to remind and educate white South Africans of the past and how this continues to create inequality. Furthermore, this seems a frustrating task in that ultimately, in contemporary South Africa, whiteness research does not seem to add any value to black South Africans other than, perhaps, to demonstrate the everyday frustration of feeling that white South Africans in general may not be critical of the way that whiteness affords certain privileges (Ratele, 2007). The author suggests that such a task may require individual black people to speak on behalf of all black South Africans and may continue to remind and reinscribe a traumatic history which continues to affect one's current state. Moreover, Ratele (2007) speaks of the task of contemporary, black South Africans, revolving around separating their thoughts from whiteness and in a sense avoiding the systemic trap of basing normalcy on whiteness and the systems which colonialists introduced years ago.

Sonn and Quayle (2013) conducted research in Australia into the ways in which local, white government officials approach partnering and the subsequent barriers to partnerships with indigenous people. Through a critical discourse analysis of the barriers to partnership, Sonn and Quayle (2013) identified three interrelated discourses which presented themselves. The first of these was 'abstract

liberalism'. Colour-blind racial attitudes result in ignorance of the oppression of the indigenous people and how the nation's socio-cultural history continues to affect indigenous people. Abstract liberalism relies on this concept of colour-blindness in order to shift the blame for current inequality away from white people (Sonn & Quayle, 2013). Thus, using constructs which underpin the individualism of a liberal nation, white people may defend current inequalities (Sonn & Quayle, 2013; Gushue & Constantine, 2007). The discourses of 'culture blame' and 'silencing and not acknowledging the past' directly affect the way that abstract liberalism works (Sonn & Quayle, 2013). By denying or refusing to recognise the importance of the effects of Australia's colonial history, white people are able to insist that indigenous people should rather forgive and forget within a society that is both just and fair. Thus white people could effectively silence the past (Sonn & Quayle, 2013). Cultural blame involved white people believing that a difference in culture, or rather a deficit in the culture needed for partnership, stood in the way of producing healthy partnerships between colonial and indigenous people. Thus difficulties in partnership formations are blamed on the indigenous population (Sonn & Quayle, 2013). These interconnected discourses allow white politicians the ability to distance themselves from racial disparities in partnerships. By normalising and ignoring the privilege afforded to white people from a colonial background, whiteness continues to exclude black people from positions of power and furthers oppression (Sonn & Quayle, 2013).

In another study based in Australia, Green and Sonn (2005) address and examine certain discourses on whiteness which appear in white Australians who are involved in reconciliation in their country. This research concludes by advocating the importance of whiteness studies in that they result in a move away from conceptualising the 'Other' as the problem. Green and Sonn (2005) suggest that in order to affect the invisible power and dominance of whiteness, research needs to delve into what constitutes whiteness, how whiteness acts in specific social settings and how it is reproduced. Green and Sonn (2006) argue that creating social and political change following racial oppression is largely thought to be a process which is undertaken by the oppressed, those who were directly affected by oppression (Green & Sonn, 2006). Thus, it is important that research into blackness and into perspectives of black individuals continues in order to re-evaluate and redistribute power. However, in order to do this effectively, research cannot only focus on the oppressed, it is necessary to attempt to understand and reveal white domination. Although it is imperative to act towards creating inclusive spaces and empowering the voice of black people, the power of whiteness needs to be addressed and challenged in conjunction with these practices (Green & Sonn, 2006).

Steyn (2004) conducted research into 'white talk' in South Africa. White talk refers to the ways in which whiteness manages to maintain implicit oppression after the first democratic election in South Africa. White people, who form part of the minority group within the South African context, have managed to maintain the domination of whiteness through carefully constructed ideologies which play out through white talk. Thus, the power and dominance of whiteness is normalised and continued in South African society (Steyn, 2004). Steyn (2004) suggests that this occurs through global diasporic beliefs in the dominance of whiteness which occurs in everyday conversation. Thus, an understanding of global conceptualisations of whiteness is necessary in understanding whiteness in the South African context.

Following this, Steyn and Foster (2008) analysed white talk within two weekly Sunday newspaper columns, particularly addressing the ways in which whiteness attempts to re-inscribe power and domination within the post-apartheid climate of a loss of political power. Two themes of 'New South Africa Speak' (NSAS) and 'White Ululation' (WU) were seen to be used in conjunction in attempts to normalise and reproduce white domination, while at the same time providing a sense of white pride. NSAS was analysed and described as being white talk which functions to present oneself in a positive light, reflecting many of the values of contemporary South Africa as were put forward by the ruling political party. NSAS functions to acknowledge the importance of the transition while averting suspicion of one's criticism of the post-apartheid government as well as to re-align South African whiteness with a broader globalised whiteness, which does not support overt racism. Colour-blindness seemed to be used during white talk in a manner which has been previously discussed. NSAS seems to hold a sense of victimhood in an attempt to argue for an equal playing field, negating the clear inequality drawn along racialised terms (Steyn & Foster, 2008). The option of emigration to ancestral lands was held as an option which may suggest a sense of victimhood without critically engaging with the privilege that this in itself represents.

White talk seemed to convey an understanding of racism as acts which are overt and explicit in what seemed to be an attempt to normalise and minimise the implicit racism that continues. Steyn and Foster (2008) understood a concern for poverty as a means for white people to both criticise those in political power as well as to avoid any criticism surrounding one's own beliefs. Furthermore, the manner in which white talk was expressed allowed white people to implicitly suggest a sense of normalcy with regards to the apartheid era in contrast to the less hopeful, black-run government. White talk further criticises instances of corruption within government as a means to avert attention from economic

inequality, from the comfort of their own middle-class homes and the poverty of the nation towards instances of crime. Thus, suggesting that South Africa's greatest problem is that of crime rather than inequality. Steyn and Foster (2008) suggest that white talk attempts to further the promotion of whiteness by pitting 'good blacks' against 'bad blacks'. An ideology which serves to deem those blacks who in some way support the endeavors of whiteness as being good and those who oppose it as bad.

WU is the attempt of white people at recruiting other white people to band together in promotion of a greater, shared interest, maintaining the privilege that whiteness affords. This is constructed through NSAS in order to implicitly call for a response to those who challenge the supremacy of whiteness (Steyn & Foster, 2008). This occurs through a shared belief that contemporary South Africa is the problem rather than acknowledging that South Africa has a problem, thereby implying that the problems within South Africa have developed due to bad blacks. WU further works to promote the belief that a South Africa run by a black government is the cause of problems and that white people are the ones creating tangible change, or if they are not, they should be the ones in the positions to create change.

With regards to affirmative action, white talk seemed to show a sense of understanding and altruism, followed generally by a subtle implication that although it is necessary, there may be no future for white people in South Africa who should therefore look at emigrating abroad (Steyn & Foster, 2008). The theme of 'black elites' seemed to arise during white talk, in which the emerging black middle-class was often criticised or seen as a site of resentment, understood as the result of black corruption or as a token of equality. Once again, the focus on black elites was understood as a way for white people to avoid looking at poverty and inequality, more specifically, drawing the gaze away from themselves. Although there are instances of corruption within the contemporary South African government, it is suggested that these are used as a means to suggest a lack of trust in the political and possible economic power which the black population may have. This further suggests that political power would be better returned to white hands (Steyn & Foster, 2008).

Keizan and Duncan (2010) conducted focus groups with post-apartheid adolescents in order to gain a better understanding of the direction of racial transformation within South Africa. The difficulties about speaking about race and racialised difference were noted and marked as being a site of anxiety for young South Africans. Furthermore, it seemed difficult to distinguish between a desire to obtain social change as compared to those who seemed to attempt to please and fake good in order to meet the

expectations of the researchers. However, participants seemed to use certain defenses such as avoidance, denial and distancing in order to ease the anxiety which arose with regards to speaking about issues of race or perhaps to avoid being viewed as holding racist views (Keizan & Duncan, 2010). Participants seemed to fear criticism and the difficult emotions that arose when speaking of race. When faced with the very real inequalities drawn across racial lines, participants seemed to struggle with the dilemmas of speaking about race (Keizan & Duncan, 2010).

Wale and Foster (2007) suggest that white South Africans use multiple strategies in order to continue to benefit from the advantages that whiteness affords. Participants within this study held onto privilege by attempting to minimise the acknowledgment of its effects. This was done through an understanding of South Africa as being fair and just post-apartheid as well as through denial; separating current inequalities from the injustices of the past (Wale & Foster, 2007). Furthermore, economic redress was used in attempts to de-legitimise the abilities of black political leaders in an attempt to hold onto economic power. When speaking about and linking blackness to poverty and whiteness to wealth, the world was portrayed as being just and fair whereas it was understood as being unjust when the ruling, black, political party and their hold on political power was discussed. Economic power was emphasised as being more worthy of governing as compared to political power, by suggesting that wealthy people should hold more weight when voting. This was understood by Wale and Foster (2007) as being a reflection of an assumption that the majority of black South Africans are unable to make thought out decisions, furthering the colonial narrative of the local savages. Participants constructed a narrative of what Wale and Foster (2007) termed the 'good white Samaritan'. This narrative was understood as an implicit construction of wealthy, white people assisting poor, helpless black people. This seems to further implicate the colonial narrative of teaching and helping the local savages. Economic redress was viewed by these participants as being a form of reverse-racism, neglecting the socio-political history of South Africa and promoting colour-blindness (Wale & Foster, 2007). Wale and Foster (2007) interpreted the themes that emerged as a means to promote the continuation of white privilege.

Steyn (2012) conducted research on narratives collected from the AAP. During this research, Steyn (2012) analysed the relationship between whiteness and ignorance, suggesting that ignorance may be epistemological. The research goes on to suggest that ignorance is both a function of, and functional within, racialised societies such as South Africa (Steyn, 2012). The study demonstrates that, within society, there are a number of interwoven ignorance's which aim at non-relationality between races. It

is suggested that different racial categories use ignorance within post-apartheid South Africa for differing reasons (Steyn, 2012). However, the white racial category may require such ignorance in order to remain protected from the knowledge of the injustices performed during the apartheid era, which continue in post-apartheid society, and which continue to provide one's privilege in contemporary society (Steyn, 2012). Furthermore, Steyn (2012) suggests that ignorance is taught and learned from one generation to another in order to reconstruct an ability to utilise and accept one's privilege as being just and earned. Thus, the 'ignorance contract' which may have been first signed during the apartheid era seems to continue within contemporary society (Steyn, 2012).

Ratele and Laubscher (2010) also conducted qualitative research on two sets of archival sources; the AAP and the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR). Within this research, the authors explored certain neglected meanings of whiteness both during and after the apartheid era (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010). This research suggests that there were, and are, certain structures and processes which produce and reproduce white privilege. Furthermore, it suggests that, during the apartheid era, whiteness implied a certain way of being for the white racial category (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010). This implied set of norms seemed to result in ambiguity, paradoxes and contradictions as white people may have felt an urge to ascertain these specifiers or risk some sort of banishment from the white race (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010). In searching for neglected meanings, Ratele and Laubscher (2010) suggest that there may have been some white families who struggled to negotiate between what was expected and one's individual morals and beliefs. The authors suggest that white people often had to perform whiteness in order to remain within its boundaries (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010). This performance often involved violence of some kind and may have, for some, resulted in an ambiguity between one's understanding of oneself and what is expected as a performance of whiteness (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010).

The studies on whiteness which have been discussed above may add value to the current study by allowing one to gain a greater understanding of the manner in which whiteness functions and is presented in society. However, it is important to recognise that whiteness develops and adapts within the context in which it finds itself. Thus, it remains unique to the particular context in which it is located. Previous studies on whiteness in South Africa and abroad may provide something of a snapshot of whiteness within that specific context at that moment in time. Therefore, it may be expected that contemporary studies on whiteness may hold both similar and different narratives, beliefs and expressions. Furthermore, these narratives, beliefs and expressions may function in a similar

manner. Such studies may allow one to gain a greater understanding of the manner in which whiteness functions, however, this functioning should be viewed and understood in relation to the specific context and time in which it is located.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapters of this report have provided an overview of whiteness within the South African context as well as the unique context of contemporary South Africa in relation to whiteness. A rationale for the current study has been presented along with previous literature and studies on whiteness in order to inform the current research. Based on the nature of whiteness, race, racialisation and racism as social constructions, the following research methodology was selected and used in an attempt to analyse whiteness within the context of Wits and South Africa in a manner which seemed most fitting and most effective. The following chapter attempts to provide a description of the particular research methods used in this study. Furthermore, it attempts to provide a brief description of the methodology selected in order to deliver a rationale for these methods within the current study. This chapter discusses the paradigm in which the research falls: the interpretive paradigm makes up the philosophical framework of the study. It goes on to discuss the design of the research, research questions, participants, the particular procedure used and means of data analysis. The chapter goes on to provide a section on the researcher's reflexivity with regards to the study as well as a brief discussion of ethical considerations.

3.2. Paradigm

A paradigm may be understood as a set of beliefs which constitute, for its holder, a certain world-view or underlying framework (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Thus, paradigms allow for one to create and hold a particular understanding of the way of the world, an individual's place and space in the world as well as the relationships and certain nuances which may occur in the development of the self in relation to the broader context in which one is located. However, the fact that different paradigms are held by multiple researchers suggests that one takes on the beliefs of these paradigms based on a subjective view of the world. Furthermore, this suggests that there is no conclusive proof of one paradigm being established as the ultimate, concrete truth (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

This research falls within the interpretive paradigm in which the researcher critically analysed whiteness as a social construction. The interpretive paradigm and research that comes from it suggests that individuals can only create meaning and understanding through the interpretation of experiential accounts and knowledge gained from the social world (Angen, 2000). Furthermore, the interpretive paradigm suggests that individual experiences of reality are subjective and related to a collective of

personal understandings and social experiences which cannot be separated from each other (Scotland, 2012). Thus, each individual's reality differs from the rest, but is also based on certain shared social constructions. The interpretive paradigm goes on to suggest that knowledge is, in essence, a co-construction of multiple individual, subjective experiences; the consensus of individual constructions of the world. Therefore, knowledge is determined based on cultural, historical and social contexts (Scotland, 2012). Thus, human understanding may be understood as being embedded within a particular socio-historical context. The understanding of interpretive research as interpretations which are based on the specific time and context in which they are located, allows for further and continual interpretations to be made and negotiated through conversation and dialogue (Angen, 2000).

In interpretive approaches to research, the researcher becomes an instrument within the analysis whose aim is to bring hidden, shared constructions into consciousness (Scotland, 2012). In doing so, it is important to acknowledge that interpretations of themes and phenomena are subjective and these interpretations are formed during a co-production of knowledge from both the participants' accounts and the researcher's interpretation of these accounts. Within interpretive research, it may be useful for the researcher to acknowledge such assumptions regarding the link between findings and the researcher's own values and subjective perspective. Although the researcher attempted to remain objective throughout, he attempted to gain an understanding of human phenomena and the social world through both the data gained from participants and the researcher's understandings of this data, making it inherently subjective (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The interpretive approach attempts to gain understanding of what it means to be human. Although this may risk a sense of certainty, it allows research to gain a broader view of humanity and social constructions, leading to a gain in practical relevance (Angen, 2000).

Based on the reasoning behind this paradigm, the researcher used intuitive experience and contextual relevance to assign and draw meaning from the accounts of whiteness produced and given. The interpretive paradigm represents research in which phenomenology and recurring themes are observed, recorded and analysed. Interpretations are then inferred from a shared understanding of lived meanings (Angen, 2000). As a result of the co-production of knowledge and themes, research questions within the interpretive paradigm are generally broad; the data drives the interpretations rather than pre-conceived ideas of what this data means (Scotland, 2012).

Within the interpretive paradigm, reflexivity becomes an essential characteristic of the study itself as the researcher's subjectivity cannot be completely distanced from interpretations made with regards to

the data (Angen, 2000). One's interpretations assist in the development of the self. Thus, being unable to separate oneself from what one knows, the researcher's values and moral judgement remain pertinent throughout the research process of interpretive work (Angen, 2000). However, Angen (2000) suggests that reflexivity allows the data and analysis to become somewhat distanced from the researcher's sense of self, allowing the analysis to provide a more accurate account and interpretations of the data acquired as it is done so in relation to or with the acknowledgment of the researcher's subjectivity. Furthermore, the reflexivity section provides value to the researcher's own contribution to the research and allows the researcher and readers to track the changes in the research in relation to both the process of the research as well as the views, thoughts and feelings of the researcher (Angen, 2000).

3.3. Design

Whiteness is understood as a social construction; as such it seemed fitting to use qualitative research methods in which experiences and accounts of whiteness were gained through focus groups. The accounts of whiteness as well as the experiences of whiteness which occurred in these focus groups were then analysed in order to explore the research questions posed. Qualitative research represents a naturalistic approach to obtaining and analysing data concerned with broadening understandings and meanings which are attached to certain phenomena in relation to the society in which they occur (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Qualitative research methods are used in analysing and understanding experiences of individuals who are located within specific contexts and socio-political histories (Sofaer, 2002; Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013). Validity and reliability are often brought into question when qualitative research methods are used. Thus it is important to acknowledge that the accounts and experiences collected in this research have been analysed and interpreted by the researcher and are therefore affected to some extent by the researcher's subjectivity (Soafer, 2002). The researcher attempted to guide focus group discussions somewhat in order to perform a qualitative explorative study on the sample.

3.4. Research questions

1. What are the major themes that emerge in the talk of accounts of being white in a South African university?

2. How do these themes reflect the varying conceptions and experiences of whiteness?

3. What do these conceptions reveal about whiteness, its broader social functioning, its mutation, evolution and contributions to constructions of difference and sameness in contemporary South Africa?

3.5. Participants

The participants for this study were selected via purposive convenience sampling of students who were enrolled in second or third year psychology courses at Wits in 2017. Willing participants supplied the researcher with personal and contact information. From this sample the researcher selected three focus groups of between five and ten participants per group. The formation of each group was dependent on the availability of each participant. As a result of attrition, focus group attendance fell to three participants in the first group, seven in the second and six in the third. Thus, there were sixteen participants in total, of which, nine were women and seven were men. Although all participants identified as white students, one participant claimed to have a coloured mother and a white father. One participant came from an Afrikaans background while the other fifteen were white, English speaking students. The first focus group was made up of three participants: one man and two women. The second focus group was made up of seven participants: four women and three men. The third focus group consisted of six participants: three men and three women. The participants were white South Africans who were enrolled at Wits in both 2016 and 2017; they were enrolled in second or third year psychology courses in 2017. Furthermore, these participants were available and consented to meet for the focus group discussion. The participants were selected from a non-vulnerable population in that they were all older than eighteen years of age. By selecting this purposive group of participants, the research hoped to gain accounts of whiteness from white South African university students who were enrolled at Wits for at least a year.

3.6. Procedure

The researcher first obtained ethical clearance (see Appendix A) for the study from the University of the Witwatersrand via the internal university ethics committee*; Committee for Research on Human Subjects (Non-Medical)* for the use of university students as participants in the study (Protocol Number: MACC/17/008 IH). The researcher then gained permission to approach students by sending a letter of request (see Appendix B) as well as a copy of the appropriate ethics forms and research proposal to the head of department. Following the approval of the head of department, permission was

requested from course coordinators and specific lecturers by forwarding these documents and an adapted letter of request to relevant parties.

Following the approval from course coordinators and lecturers, the researcher arranged suitable times with the lecturers in order to approach second and third year psychology students at either the beginning or end of their respective lectures. The researcher then approached second and third year psychology students and presented the proposed research in order to acquire a sample of participants. Potential participants were given a brief outline of the research, its aims and objectives as well as what participation would entail. Participant demographic requirements were explained and each class was given five to ten minutes to ask the researcher questions pertaining to the research and the requirements for participation. Willing students were then requested to participate in focus groups which were explained as a facilitated space which would be used to discuss whiteness and its role in contemporary South Africa. The students were informed of the inadvertent research experience that may be gained through participation in an attempt to increase likelihood of participation. However, it was stated that there would be no incentives for participation in this study. Potential participants were informed that the groups would meet for roughly an hour and a half each. They were also informed that the groups would meet on campus at a time which was suitable for the members of each group. A participation registration form (see Appendix C) was handed around each class on which willing participants wrote their names and contact details. The researcher provided his contact details to each class via contact detail cards (see Appendix D), should any willing participants want to sign the registration at another time.

Focus groups provide a social context for research and data collection and in doing so allow participants to explore a topic within a group setting (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). This allows the researcher to gain an understanding of the manner in which certain ideas may be shaped by a particular social setting and moderated through conversation. The conversation which is produced within focus groups often allows participants to gain a deeper understanding of certain topics and to reflect and refine insights into such topics. Moreover, focus groups allow differences to be discussed and viewed explicitly (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Focus groups located within qualitative research are a flexible and cost-effective technique of exploring experiences, understandings and responses of particular groups of participants (Sofaer, 2002). Furthermore, focus groups facilitate group interaction as part of their methodology and are useful in allowing participants the opportunity to engage in topics in an open

ended manner (Kitzinger, 1995). Thus, the researcher was able to study particular values and beliefs which were relevant to the specific groups, pertaining to whiteness.

Focus groups are an effective strategy for gaining data wherein the group process may illuminate the topic of discussion (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Although focus groups may not gain the depth of data which may be collected through individual interviews, they allow the group process to add to the research. Focus groups provide an environment in which participants may be able to express themselves more honestly based on the number of participants in the group; in certain instances an individual interview may seem somewhat intimidating. Alternatively, focus groups may seem more intimidating for some and may result in difficulty in expressing oneself accurately (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). However, taboo concepts such as whiteness are often difficult to speak about in a one-on-one interview, whereas focus groups are useful in that participation may be encouraged by the ice-breaking of certain participants within the group (Kitzinger, 1995).

Ritchie and Lewis (2003) suggest that focus groups may be made up of between four and ten participants who are brought together by the researcher in order to discuss a particular topic. However, they are typically made up of six to eight participants. In preparation for attrition, it is suggested that the researcher prepare for certain missing voices and thus be prepared to stimulate discussion by putting across alternative points of view. In groups smaller than four, participants may attempt to discuss commonalities in order to create the sense of a group as opposed to multiple individual interviews. Smaller groups may offer more in-depth group discussions (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). One of the focus groups in this research was comprised of only three participants. During this focus group, the discussion of commonalities rather than differences was witnessed. Although this most likely affected the findings, there were two other, larger, focus groups. The formation of three groups as opposed to two was decided in order to prepare for the possibility of such a situation.

Focus groups were utilised in order to effectively analyse whiteness as a social construction within a social setting. By conducting three focus groups as opposed to two, the researcher hoped to avoid impoverished data which may have occurred based on attrition or on the particular accounts of whiteness which were to be spoken about by each group. Furthermore, three focus groups were developed with the aim of gaining a better sense of the themes that were produced throughout as two groups may have given varied responses (Krueger & Casey, 2002).

A venue for the focus groups was selected at the Wits Emthonjeni Centre. The room was booked at reception for the three days and times of the focus groups. The days and times of the focus groups were emailed to potential participants who were requested to confirm for one of the three focus groups, dependent on the days and times that best suited their schedules. These focus groups were requested to meet for a discussion of roughly an hour and a half. Although participants were given the option of joining one of three groups in order to allow for participants to select a time and date which would be most suitable, as certain groups started filling, the researcher encouraged participants to attend the groups which had little attendance in order to create focus groups consisting of a similar number of participants. Three focus groups were formed and consisted of five, nine and ten participants prior to the commencement of the focus groups. However, attrition within the groups resulted in the groups consisting of three, seven and six participants respectively.

Upon arrival at each focus group, the researcher set up the room so as to create an environment in which group participation could be encouraged. Drinks and snacks were provided for each focus group. Each participant was given a participant information sheet (see Appendix E) which was read through and further elaborated on as the group commenced. Participants were provided with and requested to sign both an informed consent form (see Appendix F) and a consent for recording form (see Appendix G). Both of these were discussed and participants were given the opportunity to ask questions. Following the attainment of informed consent, an audio recording device was used to record discussions. Participants were requested to turn off their cell phones as this was known to affect the quality of the recordings taken. The focus groups were facilitated by the researcher who used a semi-structured, open-ended interview guide (see Appendix H) in order to allow discussions to continue in a natural manner while attempting to retain the focus on whiteness. The semi-structured, open-ended interview guide was used in order to maintain the relevance of discussions, gain insight from all participants and to keep conversation flowing. At the same time, the semi-structured, open-ended interview guide was utilised in order to make the research reproducible and thus improve reliability. The focus group discussions were recorded using an audio recording device. All audio recordings of focus group discussions were recorded after consent was given by the participants. The recordings were then transcribed verbatim by the researcher. This allowed the researcher to become familiarised with the data and begin the process of data analysis.

3.7. Data analysis

A thematic analysis was used in order to identify, analyse and report themes which were recorded in the focus groups (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A thematic analysis was used in order to bring to light the research questions posed; however, it is important to note that within the interpretive paradigm, the data often speaks for itself. Thematic analyses represent an easily accessible and theoretically flexible method for analysing qualitative research, making it a useful tool in exploratory research (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Furthermore, thematic analyses are aimed at analysing experiential and everyday stories of individuals. They are descriptive and interpretive as well as inductive and deductive, making them a theoretically flexible form of analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Thematic analyses draw on both the manifest and latent content of data in order to constructively interpret and draw meaning, relating this meaning to the unique socio-political history and climate of a certain context (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). In practice, thematic analyses convert this manifest and latent content into smaller units of content (patterns and themes) in order to descriptively analyse and draw meaning. This meaning is rich and detailed, representing overt themes which are observed within the data. Through interpretation, the researcher attempts to apply these themes to broader social meanings and implications (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus, overt themes are often further analysed in order to gain an understanding of the more covert themes which arise within the data.

The current study utilised a thematic analysis in order to gain an understanding of semantic themes which arose in the focus groups. However, these were followed by a progression into interpretations in an attempt to reflect on the significance of the patterns which arose in relation to the literature review. The researcher used Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of a thematic analysis in order to guide and facilitate the process of analysis. These phases consist of; 'familiarising yourself with the data', 'generating initial codes', 'searching for themes', 'reviewing themes', 'defining and naming themes' and 'producing the report' (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In attempting to become familiarised with the data, the researcher transcribed the focus group recordings verbatim. This allowed the researcher to begin to pick up on certain links and ideas that were present in the focus groups. Furthermore, the researcher attempted to read through the entire set of data in order to gain an understanding of the breadth of the data which was captured by the focus groups. During this process, the researcher took notes and attempted to make meanings, prior to the formation of codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Initial codes were developed by hand as the researcher read through the data set again, making notes on what seemed significant and relevant. Although this started out with many broad codes, this

allowed the codes to remain somewhat contextually specific. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that codes refer to a basic element within the data which may be analysed in a meaningful way. 'Searching for themes' involves the analysis of codes. Codes produced in the previous phase were reviewed, sorted and paired in order to create meaning and relation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, extracts from the data were stored along with these codes in order to refer back to and later add to the analysis write up. Candidate themes were then reviewed in a process which contracted and expanded codes and themes in order for them to become most meaningful. During this phase, some themes collapsed and became one theme while others were broken apart, becoming more than one theme. At the end of this phase, the researcher had an understanding of what the themes were as well as the manner in which they might fit together (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The phase of 'defining and naming themes' involved the researcher attempting to refine each theme. In doing so, the researcher was able to produce labels for themes which attempt to capture the essence of each theme adequately (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The last phase of the thematic analysis was 'producing the report'. This involved writing up the analysis, attempting to convey the analysis in a manner which delivers more than a description of the data; it is an attempt at providing an argument in relation to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Accounts of whiteness from the focus groups were produced in order to gain an understanding of whiteness in the current socio-political climate of South Africa. The reported themes were analysed based on the context of the socio-political history of South Africa in order to provide a descriptive analysis as well as a more critical analysis of the themes which arose. The researcher used key theoretical resources obtained from the literature review in order to critically examine and interpret these themes as well as their broader social implications and functions.

3.8. Reflexivity

The scope and topic of this research was selected based on my personal interest in exploring this concept. As a young, white, middle class man in my mid-twenties, I am frustrated with my current position within society. By studying whiteness, I hoped to gain a greater understanding of this position. Furthermore, I am invested in attempting to recraft my position within society. As a student at Wits involved and affected by this social construction, and in light of the #FeesMustFall movement, I was interested in critically exploring where and how whiteness and white people are placed within society. I hoped to produce a greater perspective and understanding of whiteness in South Africa as a system of domination in order to draw power from this construct. I hoped to gain a greater understanding of the current manner in which whiteness functions within the South African context in order to better

understand my own position. Furthermore, I hoped to gain a personal understanding of my racial category as I struggled to draw meaning and grapple with the feelings that arose as a result of my racial category within contexts such as Wits.

During the focus groups, I often felt somewhat ambivalent towards participants as I was frequently surprised and excited by certain accounts and frustrated and angered by others. I regularly felt the need to put forward my own views, either collude with or become cynical of what was offered. I found that I had to remain self-aware in order to refrain from this in both the focus groups and the analysis in order to avoid the withdrawal of participants or gaining biased data. My position in relation to the participants seemed to be useful as we shared a sort of short-hand which I felt I understood. It seems as if my particular positionality along with my subjective beliefs have affected both the accounts of whiteness from the participants as well as the interpretations and production of themes from these accounts. I further acknowledge that as a young white man, the accounts of whiteness produced by the participants may differ from those that may have been produced if I was of a different racial category, age and/or gender. However, given the scope of the research, the construction of my identity may have assisted in collecting data which was less affected by social politeness and a fear of offending. It is also acknowledged that in analysing the accounts of whiteness, my subjectivity becomes an integral part of the analysis. Thus the themes produced and interpretations of these themes have been affected by my own subjective beliefs.

My positionality in relation to the participants' was often that of a role model of some kind. Participants in second or third year psychology classes may hold particular beliefs with regards to Master's students. As such, I was frequently asked for advice on how to get into Honours and Masters. Although this did not appear to create a major rift in participants' accounts, it may have shifted responses in an attempt for participants to feel as if I was impressed by their accounts in some way. As a Masters student, I am often asked about my research. Attempting to explain the study and the responses I get are often interesting. The ideology of whiteness and how it may be studied is often a complex and difficult concept to explain in a social setting and I've often found that white people with whom I've shared this have been somewhat confused by this or have misinterpreted the research. I have often found that people will attempt to defend whiteness after asking for a definition of this concept, using stereotypical and generalised answers to defend whiteness or in an attempt to reclaim its invisibility. Furthermore, some people have assumed that studying accounts of whiteness suggests that

this research is providing a stage for white people's views and voices to be heard. Although this is true in some regards, it often seems misconstrued which leaves me feeling frustrated.

There were often times where I could identify with the themes that were arising and being produced in the analysis chapter. This again left me feeling ambivalent about the research and made me question my intentions in selecting such a topic. I wondered whether selecting such a topic was a way for me to understand whiteness and in doing so, attempt to remove myself from this ideology. After completing the first draft of my analysis chapter, I felt quite unsure of what was being conveyed and whether it was an accurate portrayal of the focus groups. After consulting with my supervisor and exploring this, I realised that, although my critical stance was correct, I often struggled to portray the real difficulties which participants felt with regards to being white. In this sense, my first draft was somewhat unbalanced. As I explored my feelings with regards to this with my supervisor, it was suggested that I may have felt like somewhat of a 'race traitor'. This seemed accurate as I felt as if I was betraying the participants in some way, and perhaps betraying whiteness by attempting to dissect it.

3.9. Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance for this research was obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand via the internal university ethics committee; *Committee for Research on Human Subjects (Non-Medical)* for the use of university students as participants in the study (see Appendix A). Furthermore, permission to approach potential participants, students in second and third year psychology courses at Wits, was obtained from the Head of Department, Course coordinators and lecturers prior to the researcher addressing potential participants. Permission was acquired via email as letters of request (see Appendix B), the proposal of the study, participant information sheet (see Appendix E) and ethics clearance letter (see Appendix A) were sent to the relevant parties. When potential participants were approached and addressed, information pertaining to the study was shared. This included a brief description of the study and what participation within the focus groups would involve. Thus, potential participants were informed that the focus groups would last roughly one and a half hours, and would involve discussions within a group of white students in relation to whiteness as well as discussions around particular accounts of whiteness.

When participants met for focus group discussions, the scope as well as information regarding the study was presented to the participants via a participant information sheet (see Appendix E) and consent forms (see Appendix F and Appendix G), which participants were required to sign in order to

participate within the group. Informed consent was granted by all participants. Furthermore, in providing consent, participants were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could choose to withdraw from the group at any point in time, without consequence. Consent for audio recording was also granted.

The main ethical consideration in this research was that of confidentiality. Although confidentiality could not be guaranteed, the researcher and participants provided a verbal agreement of confidentiality before discussions began (see Appendix H). This agreement stated that no participants were to disclose information regarding the discussions and participants following the focus group, unless it was directly with the researcher. The agreement went on to state that audio recordings of the discussions were to be transcribed verbatim. Furthermore, it was stated that information and direct quotations were to be used in the research report, however, names were to be changed and thus confidentiality could be assured within the write up of the research report itself.

The researcher attempted to gain insight and accounts of whiteness from all participants by attempting to pose questions to participants who were less vocal. Furthermore, upon commencement of each group, the researcher encouraged participation while speaking of the guidelines of the group, as can be seen in the semi-structured, open-ended interview guide (see Appendix H). Although the researcher promoted focus groups in which all of the voices of participants could be heard, it is somewhat inevitable that certain voices occupied more space than others within the group processes. Furthermore, it may be important to note that, within the analysis section, the researcher attempted to convey the difference and ambiguity that arose in the data in order to gain information and data from each participant. However, within interpretive research, it must be acknowledged that although these attempts were made, they may only be successful to a certain extent (Angen, 2000).

Chapter 4: Analysis

4.1. Introduction

The preceding chapters of this report have provided a foundation for this research and in particular, the analysis chapter. They have provided a detailed outline of previous research and understandings of whiteness, the social climate of Wits and an outline of the socio-political history of South Africa. Moreover the research methods used in sampling, data collection and analysis have been discussed. Thus, the analysis has been constructed in the context of the social landscape of whiteness in South Africa. Furthermore, it is informed by previous literature and events within the South African context as well as the unique accounts of whiteness from participants. This chapter attempts to convey both the explicit and implicit themes which emerged in accounts of whiteness from the sample in relation to the specific context of South Africa.

Students who were enrolled in second and third year psychology courses at Wits in 2017 were approached in order to collect a sample of participants. These participants were white students who had been enrolled at Wits in 2016 and who were currently enrolled in the 2017 academic year. The sample was split into three focus groups, in which the researcher used a semi-structured, open-ended interview guide in order to gain data and accounts of whiteness from these focus groups. Audio recordings of these focus groups were then transcribed verbatim in order to obtain qualitative data pertaining to whiteness. The researcher used Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of analysis in order to conduct a thematic analysis on the data collected. The analysis revealed multiple themes and sub-themes. It is important to note that those which are discussed below may not necessarily encompass the full range of rich data which was acquired from the focus groups. The analysis resulted in the production of seven themes, namely: *'the anxiety of race talk amongst white people', 'universities as unique sites for critical thinking in South Africa', 'the myth of the rainbow nation', 'the ambivalence of relating to the black Other', 'attempts at relieving the burden of being the oppressor', 'the recrafting of contemporary whiteness' and 'navigating a hostile social terrain within a history of oppression'.*

The anxiety of race talk amongst white people is the first theme, which explores the way that whiteness and race is spoken about, or not spoken about, in certain contexts. This theme attempts to analyse accounts of talk of race as well as the way that participants make meaning of this in relation to whiteness and being white. *Universities as unique sites for critical thinking in South Africa* attempts to portray the specific context and racial climate of Wits in relation to race. It attempts to provide an

analysis of participants' understanding of Wits as being a unique context within South Africa. It goes on to describe and analyse participants' ambivalence in relation to transformation and redress. *The myth of the rainbow nation* describes accounts of South Africa as being a society which remains divided by racialisation. It goes on to describe and analyse the manner in which privileged white talk is reproduced and the reactions of participants in relation to this talk. The next theme is *the ambivalence of relating to the black Other*. This theme describes and analyses the way that white participants related to both black people and other white people. It goes on to describe and analyse the manner in which participants attempted to separate themselves from the ideological construction of whiteness as well as the desire to be viewed as individuals who are separate from this construction.

Attempts at relieving the burden of being the oppressor relates to the particular philosophical as well as existential difficulties which white people face as a result of their racial identity. This theme goes on to discuss and analyse the way that participants seemed to attempt to deal with these difficulties, the behaviour which seems to develop in response to these difficulties. *The recrafting of contemporary whiteness* refers to the way that participants spoke of whiteness as something which seems to develop and adapt over generations. It goes on to analyse the functions of these evolutions in relation to the broader ideologies of whiteness. This theme then describes and analyses participants' sense of belonging or not belonging within the South African context. *Navigating a hostile social terrain within a history of oppression* discusses the ramifications of the socio-political history of South Africa in relation to being a white person. This theme describes and analyses participants' accounts of the social hostility which is felt by white people as well as the behaviours and thoughts which were produced in response to this. The analysis attempts to produce an understanding of the functions of such reactions and accounts.

Within this chapter, each sub-theme includes the analysis of overt themes as well as a more critical analysis of the covert themes in relation to the literature review. Excerpts of quotations from within the focus groups have been used to provide an example of the way in which these themes emerged and were portrayed within the focus groups themselves. This chapter attempts to analyse the functions of the data which emerged in the focus groups in relation to the broader implications of whiteness. The data seems to suggest a deep sense of ambiguity and uncertainty which participants held in relation to their identity as white people. This ambiguity and uncertainty seemed to occur to differing extents based on the particular spaces, places and contexts which were accounted for by participants.

Participants seemed to portray a precarious notion of identity in relation to race, racialisation and whiteness.

4.2. The anxiety of race talk amongst white people

The anxiety of race talk amongst white people constitutes the first core theme which seemed to emerge in all three focus groups. Although speaking about race was a requirement of participating in the groups, *the anxiety of race talk amongst white people* refers more closely to the accounts given by participants with regards to the ways in which race is discussed, or not discussed in the South African context. The sub-themes within this theme emerged throughout, suggesting the ambivalence and importance of the way in which race and issues of race can or can't be spoken of and discussed in changing environments and amongst different groups of people with differing racial compositions. Furthermore, many participants spoke of the ways in which they believe that whiteness is constructed and conveyed by the black Other as well as the feelings which arise in relation to this. Participants discussed and reiterated the fact that race remains a difficult topic to speak about. Conversations regarding race, and even the decision to join the focus groups, seemed to represent thought provoking and challenging situations.

Participants appeared to attempt to promote a sense of individuality in relation to the white racial category. In so doing, participants appeared to suggest that one should not be confused with one's racial or social category. This rhetorical distancing between a white individual and the white racial category seemed to be a way for individuals to promote a sense of self which is not linked to the atrocities of the past and the advantages which the white racial category continues to afford them. However, it seems to further function as a means to infer that there should be a collapsing of racial categories. This may in turn allow white people to be viewed as being separate from whiteness, a subconscious attempt at promoting the power and privilege that whiteness provides by increasing its elusiveness (Steyn, 2004). Race remains a topic which contains precursors, these in turn produce a real sense of difficulty with regards to speaking of race. Green and Sonn (2006) suggest that when whiteness is brought into conversation, it is often dismissed in order for it to remain concealed. It seems as if the difficulties which arise in discussing race may represent a means of increasing the elusiveness of whiteness. However, this difficulty may concurrently represent a concealing of the self, a protection of the self, against what may be inferred about the self based on one's racial identity. Furthermore, the difficulties of speaking of race seem to represent a legitimate difficulty rather than merely an attempt at concealing the power and domination of whiteness. This seems to mirror the

results of Keizan and Duncan (2010) who point towards the anxiety which occurs in individuals with regards to speaking of race.

4.2.1. Whiteness as a scapegoat for the struggles of South Africa

A number of participants spoke of whiteness as being a scapegoat in multiple socio-economic contexts within South Africa. At Wits, many of the participants suggested that they felt as if they are at the bottom of the social hierarchy. It was suggested that generally, when something goes wrong, whether it be with regards to fees, decoloniality, poverty, inequality or matters of land, whiteness is held responsible. Furthermore, although blame seems to be placed on whiteness as a construct and the way in which it has maintained certain levels of inequality, it seems as if participants felt that they often took on this blame personally. As a result of this personalisation of blame, some of the participants expressed that they feel as if they are trying to make up for something which they are not in fact responsible for. Some participants felt as if the responsibility and blame, which they view as being placed on themselves personally, should not be something for which they are liable. Many participants went on to speak about how, recently, the post-apartheid government has overtly pointed to whiteness as being the cause of many of the socio-economic difficulties that the country continues to face rather than taking on the responsibility themselves.

Many participants seemed to feel that society often devalues whiteness and consequently, white people in general. Although this seemed to make many of the participants feel somewhat shameful, these sentiments were often conveyed with a sense of understanding. Thus, participants seemed to have felt relatively ambivalent surrounding the way in which whiteness is used as a means of rationalisation for the many inequalities which exist in contemporary South Africa. Several participants implied that although many of the claims of wrong-doings and the resultant effects of whiteness in the past may be justified, they are not all justified and in this sense, whiteness is often used as a scapegoat. Therefore, whiteness is believed to become a site upon which all the difficulties and inequalities of contemporary South Africa may be easily placed. However, the majority of these sentiments were followed or preceded by an understanding that during the discussions and conversations that lead to this sense of scapegoating, although there is some sense of personal attack, there is also a general understanding of and justification for this. There was an ambivalence surrounding the idea that although whiteness is to blame for a lot of the inequalities that continue, white individuals may not have contributed to this inequality. This resulted in a feeling of shame and anger which seemed to be conveyed through silence.

Thus, white individuals do not seem to challenge this scapegoating verbally and rather hold that although they are not personally responsible, this scapegoating may be somewhat validated.

Rebecca: Disadvantage. Not really disadvantage but, um, maybe being the scapegoat for everything takes a toll on your, like, the ability to feel proud of being white. I think that's kind of a disadvantage. Um, to try and make up for things that we're actually not supposed to be trying to make up for.

Julie: I want to say that a lot of things are scapegoated onto us but at the same time, I have learnt so much in the, like, especially in law classes.

Helen: Everyone just keeps wanting to go back to the dividing distinction between race. And, it's horrible because currently with the current ANC and the Gupta's and the scandals, I know that being white is the scapegoat for everything that goes wrong in the country. When the economy fails, it's white monopoly that did it.

It seems rather ironic that participants spoke of feeling as if they were at the bottom of a social hierarchy in the Wits context where inequality seems so overt. However, it appears as if participants spoke of somewhat of a social divide in which black students seem to hold some sort of power over white students in that they can easily place blame for current difficulties on whiteness; shame may be easily activated in this context. Although it seems as if whiteness is often criticised for its role in many of the inequalities which are visible on campus, rather than white students themselves, white students seem to perceive this blame as being directed at a personal level. It seems as if, through identifying as and being placed within the white racial category, white students feel that critiques of whiteness are directed towards themselves as individuals. In response to this, some participants seemed to attempt to shift the blame from themselves personally towards the post-apartheid government. This seems to suggest that perhaps the blame for current inequalities is believed to lie within black politicians and by association, black people in general (Steyn & Foster, 2008).

It seems as if white students may struggle to find an outlet for the frustration that comes with this perception of a personal attack. In instances such as these, white students may find that black politicians are an easy scapegoat for them to redirect this frustration. Thus, in response to whiteness being called out for the effects that it continues to have within the context of Wits, white students may attempt to turn this blame back on to black people while still holding a certain level of understanding and acknowledgment. Perhaps some participants are struggling to accept the notion that the legacy of one's identified racial category may be responsible for the problems of others. It seems as if the scapegoating of blame from whiteness onto the black government and blackness in general may be an

attempt at regaining a sense of invisibility. This blame functions as an attempt to avert attention from the system of whiteness which creates and retains inequality to the current post-apartheid government (Steyn & Foster, 2008).

Vice (2010) suggests that within contemporary South Africa white individuals may attempt to develop a sense of self which is separate from the legacy of apartheid. In participants' accounts of whiteness and in speaking about whiteness as a scapegoat, there seems to be a desire or an attempt at distancing oneself as an individual from the white social and racial category. In doing so, it appears as if participants attempted to reject their complicity with a system which inherently favours white people. Thus, the claim to victimhood in this sense seems to function as a way to both negate historical complicity as well as to provide a defense of one's privilege. The claim to victimhood seems to represent an attempt at portraying an equal playing field, negating inequalities based on systems of oppression (Steyn & Foster, 2008). Thus, by attempting to redefine oneself as being separate from the white racial category, participants seem to attempt to create a minimisation of the perception of one's privilege. This allows white people to retain their privilege while holding that they are not personally responsible for the means by which this privilege was attained. However, participants also demonstrated an ambivalence towards their own identification as a white person and whiteness in general. Thus, there appears to be a real grappling with what the position of white people is or should be within the South African context. This grappling seems to represent an attempt at discovering a viable manner in which one may operate within the current climate of contemporary South Africa. Furthermore, this may represent something of a recalibration of one's own identity. Although this recalibration seems to be aimed at discovering a way for one to function within contemporary South Africa, this recalibration is unclear and represented an observable struggle for participants.

4.2.2. The silencing of white voices: unwanted whiteness

A number of participants spoke of the way in which they often feel that they have no room to speak or as if they can't use their voice in many situations. In particular, many participants suggested that at Wits, in lectures or during the #FeesMustFall movement, their voices became silenced and were only given space to be heard when they were outside of those contexts. A number of participants spoke of the way in which they had witnessed or viewed the silencing of white individuals and as a result have themselves felt silenced in the process. In a sense, it seems as if there is a fear that white voices cannot take up this space or that they will be punished if they attempt to do so. As a result, white voices have quickly become hushed. A number of participants suggested that there is a need to avoid offending

black people and a fear that one may easily say something which, upon critical reflection, could leave one vulnerable to some sort of attack from black people. Furthermore, it was expressed that this silencing tends to occur particularly amongst certain topics of conversation within particular contexts. In lectures or spaces filled with a number of black people, many participants suggested that they have no room to speak in relation to issues of land, politics, #FeesMustFall or with regards to racial matters.

Some participants spoke of how they believe that many black people are not open to listening to what white people have to say. There seemed to be a belief that a white voice taking up space in these contexts was prone to attack or scrutiny which could result in one being publically shamed. Furthermore, many participants spoke of how easily one might say something which could invite a verbal attack or which could easily be interpreted in a way that could make one appear to be racist. A number of participants spoke of how they have to remain aware of what they say and how they say it. As a result, most have found it easier to remain silent rather than to risk speaking and having one's voice belittled. It was further suggested that on occasion, even if what a white person has said does not necessarily reflect racist ideology, it may be silenced by black people based on the topic of conversation. Some participants seemed to become irritated and spoke of how it was perhaps unfair that black people could be angry at and speak negatively of white people whereas white people have to be careful about what they say and accept this black anger. Many participants seemed to suggest a desire to be able to speak about these issues and for their voices to be valued in this way. However, some participants suggested that the tension and difficulties in speaking about these issues may be justified and that perhaps these were topics on which they shouldn't necessarily have a voice.

Participants suggested that along with feeling voiceless, they often felt unwelcome in certain locations and in certain instances as well as when discussing certain topics. It was suggested that in certain locations such as Soweto and Alexandra, participants felt uncomfortable, as if they were not allowed to be in these areas. Furthermore, some participants suggested that they often felt devalued, marginalised or bullied at Wits based on their identification with the white racial category. Some participants spoke of how they often feel as if they stand out at Wits because they are white. It emerged from the focus groups that there was some controversy about white people protesting and joining the #FeesMustFall movement. Participants provided accounts of trying to join the movement and being informed by black protestors that white people, their whiteness and privilege, were unwanted in the movement. However, it was stated that when white people didn't join the movement, black people who were part of the movement publically raised questions as to the whereabouts of white students and why they were not

supporting the movement. Thus, participants suggested that they felt criticised for not joining the movement after being given a sense that they were unwelcome. Some participants spoke of how they had initially joined the movement but began to find it an uncomfortable place to be in as a white person. Many participants suggested that they would have liked to be more involved in the movement but felt as if they had been excluded. However, many participants also spoke of avoiding #FeesMustFall based on their own beliefs that it might be dangerous to join or that it might have been impractical to expect free tertiary education. A few participants suggested that although they felt excluded from the movement, they understood that it was not their fight and suggested that it was not their place to be involved.

> *Julie: Generally when we talk about, like, a lot of debates that are random, you'll find that people participate across all races. But as soon as it comes to something like land or racism or discrimination, you'll notice that immediately white people just keep quiet. They say nothing.*

> *Darren: As soon as you're white, you have to be careful with what you say. And, um, for example, in class, especially in a politics lecture, you'll notice that only black people were speaking because everybody that's white is too scared to speak because as soon as you say something that's wrong, which is easy, everyone looks at you rather than…*

> *Frank: I felt that, you know, I couldn't really add anything[to the #FeesMustFall movement] even though I wanted to. Um, and there were points where, you know, I tried speaking amongst some friends and it wasn't overt but it was certainly implied that, you know, I shouldn't really be, be saying much.*

The need to avoid stepping on black toes or the fear of being publically shamed suggests that white people may believe or fear that they hold racist beliefs which may emerge if they were to speak on matters such as land, politics or #FeesMustFall. Thus, it seems as if there may be a need for white students to silence themselves in these contexts as it might result in one's seemingly inherent or subconscious racism being called out and criticised. In some ways, this outing might represent a level of cognizance which white students are not ready for. Furthermore, remaining silent during these discussions might also allow for whiteness to remain somewhat hidden, in that a dialogue is avoided. This may represent an attempt at holding onto the privileges that whiteness affords without having them personally scrutinised. The topics of discussion in which white students feel silenced seem to reflect those in which whiteness has played a large role, in terms of the previous and continued oppression or exclusion of black people. As such, speaking of these topics with the inclusion of white voices may provide a space to critique whiteness and the manner in which it has oppressed black

people. Thus, to speak out as a white person in these contexts may result in feelings of anger and hatred being directed towards whiteness which seems to reportedly feel like an attack on the Self. This may in turn create a sense of discomfort which may be easier to avoid.

Locations such as Soweto and Alexandra represent areas often associated with poverty as well as the geographical segregation which occurred during the apartheid era. Furthermore, these areas, as well as Wits, represent locations in which there is a black majority. Perhaps, in these instances, white people feel that they become a sort of symbol of whiteness and thus may feel the anger of black people on a personal level. At the same time, contexts such as the #FeesMustFall movement may represent moments in which black people may meet in solidarity, in an attempt to create redress for the legacy of apartheid. Although some participants suggested that they were frustrated with being excluded, it seems as if participants had a level of understanding in relation to this and were able to consider that this might not be a space in which white voices would add value. Contexts such as Alexandra, Soweto and the #FeesMustFall movement represent spaces in which the legacy of whiteness and the inequalities which whiteness has produced are clearly visible. Perhaps the discomfort which ensues as a result of viewing this legacy refers to a deep sense of shame, one which is easier to avoid (Iyer et al., 2003). Thus, by avoiding such spaces, white people may be attempting to avoid the shame associated with witnessing the legacy of their social identity (Iyer et al., 2003). Perhaps, within certain contexts, white people may feel as if they represent whiteness, the ideology which caused this oppression.

It seems as if participants lose their voices within very particular discussions and conversations; socio-historical issues in which whiteness has been implicated historically and within contemporary society. In these instances, it seems as if there is a conflation between whiteness and being a white person. Thus, attacks on whiteness are understood as being attacks on the Self. Furthermore, this suggests that white people may assume that if they were to speak, their voices would in some way be related to whiteness or might appear to support whiteness. By assuming conflation between the white racial category and whiteness as an ideology, white people may struggle to separate themselves from whiteness and thus fear that in speaking, one's voice might support whiteness. Therefore, attacks on whiteness might be redirected to the Self. However, silence could be a disadvantage to both black South Africans and South African society in general as it might negate dialogue which is needed in order to explore these challenging issues (Mckaiser, 2011). It may be argued that, rather than silence, a sense of self-awareness and self-reflexivity may be more useful in these instances and may provide one with the ability to let one's voice be heard (Mckaiser, 2011; Vice, 2011). However, it is also important

to note the ambivalence of participants who seemed to have the desire to voice their opinions while similarly feeling as if there was no space for their voices within such contexts. Thus, it seems to be a struggle for white people to know when, how or if one should voice one's thoughts or whether one should remain silent. This ambivalence further represents a sense of discomfort in relation to these seemingly unanswered questions. Although this discomfort may represent one's vulnerabilities, Vice (2011) suggests that times of vulnerability may represent moments in which one may gain a greater self-awareness.

4.2.3. The social dilemmas of speaking about race

The majority of participants suggested that the way in which race is spoken about and discussed changes dependent on context and the particular social setting in which one finds oneself. Furthermore, some participants proposed that the particular and changing social climate within South Africa plays a vital role in the frequency of conversations which are based on race. For example, one participant suggested that in times of tension such as #FeesMustFall, race becomes a topic of conversation which is revisited regularly and within many group settings. However, it is suggested that at Wits, most white students prefer to avoid speaking about race within groups of people where the groups are comprised of multiple racial categories. More particularly, lectures seem to be a context in which many participants felt as if they could not speak about race and racial matters. As was suggested under the previous sub-theme, white voices are often silenced in such contexts. However, a number of participants suggested that within their friendship groups they could speak about race and racial matters more easily. Although there were differences between the racial make-up of participants' reported friendship groups, it seems as if racial matters were more easily spoken about by white participants amongst other white people.

Most participants stated that they would not bring up race as a topic of conversation or discussion no matter the context. However, as stated above, in times of racial tension, race and racial matters tend to become a topic of conversation. Many participants suggested that speaking about race often left them feeling uncomfortable and so it is easier to avoid this discomfort. Furthermore, a number of participants spoke of how they find it easier to speak to black people about race and racial matters, particularly when this was done with an individual black person rather than in groups. Some participants suggested that they would only speak about race with people whom they believe to be open-minded or who were open to changing their ways of thinking. Moreover, speaking about race and racial matters was reported by many participants as being easier to do outside of the context of Wits.

Some participants suggested that they had to feel safe with the group or person before they could speak about race and racial matters in order to avoid misinterpretations.

Some participants suggested that although speaking about race left them feeling uncomfortable, they often felt as if this discomfort allowed for growth and development as one stood to gain multiple perspectives. Furthermore, certain participants proposed that they would like to be exposed to more opportunities to speak about race. A few participants spoke about the focus groups themselves and the difficulty of being put in a space in which the conversation was centered around whiteness. However, these participants often suggested that they felt as if this was a necessary space which they do not ordinarily have access to, one in which they could speak openly about race and racial matters.

Angela: When I have any conversation with, with a person who's not white I, I find it very uncomfortable to bring race up. Um, to the point where I'd rather, not that it's about putting a race down or bringing a race up, but I'd rather put being white down than to mention you know, well African people or black people or something like that.

Frank: I find the dynamic changes with me. Like, if I'm among, like, let's say two or three or four, like, black people and race isn't necessarily on the agenda, like, I won't [bring it up] you know. And if it pops up you know, um, I find myself shrinking back quite a lot.

Rowan: I find also, um, often in my sort of relationships with whites or blacks, whatever it may be, I don't really engage in the topic of race, but not in a bad way. It's just um, it's, it's, it's not needed uh, in a sense. Um, so it's like you speak about football and girls and whatever else it may be. But, I mean, you don't really, ja. I think ja, it's only superficial relationships and there's, in a sense there's no real need to, to engage on a deeper level.

Race, racialisation and racism seem to have become a topic of discussion and controversy on social media. However, it seems as if there remains a sense of difficulty or perhaps avoidance with regards to speaking about race. It may be considered natural that conversations based on race may fluctuate depending on certain circumstances and events within society. However, the way that these topics seem to be spoken of or not spoken of may convey a social dilemma: that one may desire the opportunity to speak of race yet feel that one might place oneself at risk by doing so. Participants attested to speaking of race within groups or with friends whom they consider as being close friends, whom they could trust not to misinterpret what was being said. However, the author suggests that this dilemma and the avoidance of speaking about race in groups, and particularly with groups of black

people, may be a strategy for avoiding a sense of personal attack. It seems as though white students may be attempting to avoid any sort of interpretations by avoiding such subjects.

Participants seemed to avoid speaking about race as there is a possibility that one might be misinterpreted or misunderstood as being a racist. This may be a relevant point, in which white people feel as though they may become vulnerable to attack upon speaking about race. However, as has been conveyed in the previous sub-theme, it seems as if white people may hold subconscious racist ideologies or beliefs. Thus, by speaking about race, there may be a fear that these beliefs might be interpreted and made conscious which would undoubtedly be felt as an attack on the Self and thus cause a sense of discomfort. Furthermore, within such interpretations, one might be represented on a public platform as being a racist. Thus, one may quickly become the next topic on social media, the next Penny Sparrow, particularly when speaking about topics which are tainted by race. Participants seemed to imply that they were not racist and perhaps, through discussions about race, one may be faced with coming to the difficult realisation that one may hold racist ideology. This realisation could be a very painful experience, one which may be easier to avoid rather than to confront.

It has been suggested that there is a conflation between whiteness and white people which makes it difficult to speak about such topics without feeling that one's voice may represent this ideology. Simultaneously, avoiding the opportunity to challenge whiteness within group settings may function as a way to retain rather than challenge the current power of whiteness as well as its legacy (Lynn & Parker, 2006). Thus, avoiding the topic of race may implicitly add to the longevity of the power and privilege which whiteness affords (Warren & Twine, 2002). The preference for speaking to an individual black person rather than a group may represent a lower risk of one being scrutinised as there may be a need to remain polite within such a social setting. Furthermore, within a personal relationship, there may be a view from both parties that one may persuade the other through rational debate rather than having to turn to interpreting subconscious ideologies. Thus, in a one on one setting, white people may feel as if they can more readily avoid interpretations. Furthermore, in settings in which a white person is within a group and specifically a group of more than one black person, one's social category may be activated more powerfully; one may feel that one is the racial minority. Thus, the potential to be judged badly is amplified. The fact that some participants felt that it was easier to speak about race off campus hints at the unique context and racial make-up of Wits. Furthermore, it may suggest a certain criticality which is present at Wits and which may be held by certain white and black students alike (Wits, 2017). This was reflected within the focus groups as some participants

spoke of how they preferred to confront the discomfort of speaking about race, claiming that it often allowed for growth. Furthermore, the focus group itself may have represented, for some participants, the opportunity to learn and challenge whiteness (Vice, 2010).

4.3. Universities as unique sites for critical thinking in South Africa

The previous theme discussed and analysed participants' accounts of the way in which topics of race are spoken about or not spoken about in certain context. The data suggests that there seems to be a sense of ambivalence surrounding one's identity and racial category. In attempting to grapple with one's identity and racial category, participants attempted to distance themselves as individuals from the white category. However, there appeared to be a conflation between whiteness and being white which was difficult to look beyond. Thus, there seems to be a precarious notion of one's identity. Within certain groups, race becomes a difficult topic of conversation, particularly in instances in which one's racial category is activated strongly. The ambivalence and difficulties which arose in speaking of race were often linked to Wits and the particular contexts within Wits. Wits seems to represent a unique space in which a certain criticality may be held by staff and students which challenges one's construction of one's identity.

The next core theme reflects on the complex nature of being a white student at Wits. In each of the focus groups, whiteness was spoken about in relation to being a student at Wits. Particularly, it was suggested that Wits provides a diverse space in which multiple perspectives may be thought about and internalised. Participants spoke of the way in which Wits has allowed them to develop a more nuanced understanding of whiteness, race and what it means to be white in South Africa. A number of participants reflected on how they had grown and developed in relation to their friends and family who do not study at Wits. It seems as if participants implicitly spoke of Wits as providing a space in which the true struggles of the nation are perhaps more overtly expressed. The development which participants spoke of as being a result of the unique context of Wits, seems to have created an internal tension amongst participants. Wits may therefore be understood as an environment which holds a criticality that may allow one to confront one's own understandings of one's identity and one's racial category. Such confrontation may be challenging and painful to grapple with. The critical context of Wits may cause white students to rethink the society in which they live as well as their position within society. It appears that there is an attempt to recraft one's identity based on one's growth and one's understandings of one's identity. Participants were somewhat unsure as to how they might recraft their identities within the context of Wits and South Africa. The following sub-themes will attempt, in part,

to portray the way in which Wits itself has affected white meaning-making for its white students. It will then go on to address the way white participants spoke of the redress which occurs within the university setting as well as within the South African context.

4.3.1. Wits tears off the cloak of white invisibility

Participants suggested that within the private schools that they had attended, the majority of the students were white. Although there was some sort of racial diversity at these schools, it did not reflect the racial make-up of the country. Presumably, black people who attend such schools form part of the middle-class. It was suggested that the majority of students at Wits are black and, to a large extent, form part of the working-class, therefore providing a more accurate depiction of the racial make-up of South African society. Some participants felt that these schools did not engage in or discuss issues of race. It was also suggested that being white was never considered valid within one's understanding of one's own identity prior to coming to Wits. It was further suggested that prior to enrolling at Wits, white students hadn't really had the chance to grapple with issues of race or to really think about their race critically. Some participants felt that perhaps there was a naivety which they held as high school students, which may have been due to the racial make-up of these schools and lack of discussions about race at home. A couple of participants spoke of how they felt as if they were in a 'bubble' before coming to Wits, one in which it was easy to be colour-blind and to ignore the inequalities which occur based on racial categorisation. It was suggested that this 'bubble' tended to encapsulate white people who enrolled at different universities whereas this 'bubble' was burst at Wits. The lack of meaning in relation to one's race was challenged when these students entered Wits. Many participants spoke of universities such as Stellenbosch, TUKS or UCT as typical universities at which white people from private schools would enrol. It was suggested that those universities enable white students to retain their 'bubble' of protection, as they are not challenged to think critically about their race in the same way that white students at Wits are.

Some participants spoke of the diversity at Wits as being a factor which drew them to enrol, as if the environment for meaning-making and self-reflection attracted some white students to study at Wits. Many participants spoke of the critical nature of being a student at Wits, suggesting that upon entering, they were forced to think more critically about their race. Some suggested that whiteness and one's white identity is revealed to oneself upon enrolling at Wits. This revealing occurred in somewhat of an overt and threatening manner. Most participants seemed to demonstrate a sense of gratitude towards Wits for the opportunity to be a part of the diverse social environment, for engaging in discussions

around the topic race, and for providing a sense of awareness regarding one's race and identity. However, a few participants spoke of how this constant awareness could be quite frustrating, uncomfortable and ostracising. It was suggested that this awareness and criticality is often only felt at Wits and that in one's social life outside of Wits, some participants felt that they did not feel as uncomfortable, as if there was no need to remain as self-aware. However, some participants reflected on how the awareness gained at Wits remained with them outside of Wits and affected their everyday lives.

Rowan: I think the biggest, the biggest sort of change for me was that my whiteness wasn't just the colour of my skin, it became like a social construct. So, it wasn't just what I look like, it was everything surrounded by that. And, I think that's something that I wasn't really exposed to um, sort of outside university in a sense.

Frank: I wasn't really like moved to think critically about my race. It was almost like; I'm colour-blind, I don't see race you know. But when you get to Wits it's like; to say that you don't see race is almost a bit of an insult for some people you know, it's such a stark thing for them.

Megan: I look at friends who go to different universities that are a lot less diverse like UCT and um, Grahamstown are a lot smaller. And um, their views are completely different and you know, they're still very much still set in the ways as before.

Participants conveyed frustration with regards to the limited education about and exploration of racial matters prior to enrolling at Wits. Following an indefinite amount of time at Wits, some participants seemed to gain a certain level of awareness and criticality in relation to the effects of race and the inequality which continues based on racialisation. It seems as if the political nature of Wits as well as its specific racial make-up allow for pre-existing colour-blind beliefs to be challenged. It may be suggested that the private schools in which participants had completed their primary and secondary education, as well as other institutions within society, attempt to retain a sense of invisibility with regards to whiteness based on colonial teachings and beliefs (Green & Sonn, 2005). Participants seemed to link a lack of awareness prior to Wits to the racial make-up of these schools, which perhaps did not provide the space for issues of race to be discussed and challenged. The white racial category seems to dominate these schools, creating areas of middle-class comfort (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Participants seemed to implicate Wits as being unique in its ability to openly discuss issues of race in a productive and proactive way, as compared to the universities in which most other white people are believed to enrol. This implies that most white people and white students within the South African context remain naïve to matters of race.

It seems as if the naivety and colour-blind beliefs which were held by participants prior to enrolling at Wits were, and continue to be challenged in a manner which was conveyed as being violent and often personal. The author suggests that self-awareness with regards to one's race and racial identity may only occur when one's beliefs are challenged in a manner which is both violent and personal. Furthermore, the conflation between whiteness and being white may make such experiences feel personal. Perhaps, prior to entering Wits, white people feel a sense of belonging and pride in relation to their racial category. This seems to be associated with the invisibility which protects such beliefs. During the process of learning about the effects of race, whiteness and one's racial category within the South African context, white people may, to some extent, be stripped of these beliefs, at times, in a violent manner. Whiteness may demonstrate its resoluteness in relation to this challenging and as a result, more violent approaches at challenging these beliefs could become necessary in order to break down some of the defenses of one's beliefs. The invisibility and normativity which is held prior to entering Wits becomes attacked by the criticality that is part of the Wits culture (Wits, 2017).

The pain which participants portrayed with regards to becoming more aware of one's racial category, may relate directly to what Eng and Han (2000) refer to as racial melancholia. The pain which participants conveyed seemed to represent mourning and ambivalence in relation to one's racial category. Perhaps, by gaining a greater awareness of the effects of a history of, and continued socio-political, oppression, white people lose the ability to feel proud of their racial category (Eng & Han, 2000). The essence of a previous understanding of one's whiteness may haunt white people as they are constantly reminded of the atrocities committed by their own racial category and perhaps their own complicity within the system of whiteness. Thus, one may begin to realise that the whiteness which one is inculcated by society is perhaps shrouded by propaganda; inferring a liberalism that does not exist within this system of power (Eng & Han, 2000). This pain may further be a result of a sense of betrayal; that one has in fact been betrayed by one's own racial category, a racial category which one belongs to and which one is powerless over (Straker, 2004). Straker (2004) suggests that racial melancholia often occurs concurrently with an unsettling of whiteness. This unsettling may suggest a shift in the racialised system of power. Although many participants expressed the pain and violence associated with gaining a greater understanding of systems of power within the South African context, some participants suggested otherwise. Straker (2004) points out the painful nature of one gaining such understandings and thus suggests that one may avoid this knowledge in order to avoid the melancholia which it creates. Some participants seemed to avoid gaining this understanding, while most participants inferred that the possibility of gaining a greater self-awareness is what drove them to enrol

at Wits. Thus, many participants seemed to have a desire for an understanding which, upon attainment, resulted in a sense of melancholia. The difficulties and nuances of such an experience seem to further convey a deep ambiguity towards one's identity and how one may recraft one's identity (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010). Perhaps this one of the factors that added to the author's desire to conduct this research.

4.3.2. White ambivalence with regards to transformation and redress

One of the questions that was directed to the focus groups was with regards to the benefits and/or disadvantages of being a white student at Wits. Although most participants seemed to struggle to think of tangible disadvantages, affirmative action seemed to be a disadvantage that arose and was surrounded by a sense of conflict. Some of the participants within the focus groups were currently involved in the Honours selection process. It was reflected that amongst some of the biographical questions that were asked, marking one's racial category was required. There seemed to be mixed feelings towards this, both between and within participants. Many participants spoke of the need for redress and affirmative action. However, most participants also spoke of a sense of personal loss in relation to this. Thus, many participants felt as if this process was both necessary and disadvantageous (Franchi, 2006). Furthermore, some participants suggested that this process may be unfair as it requires them to compensate for a crime they were not directly complicit in (Franchi, 2006). It seems as if most participants could understand the need for redress on an intellectual level, whereas on a personal level it felt unfair (Franchi, 2006). Some participants spoke of how they completely agreed with redress and affirmative action as a way of addressing the inequality within the country while some seemed to lack an understanding of the process itself, as if the process was very secretive.

Some participants spoke of another disadvantage being that white people may struggle to join a political party or to gain a leadership role, particularly at Wits. It was suggested that black students are hypercritical of white students acquiring leadership positions and that in order to do so, white students would have to work much harder than black students. Speaking of redress and the disadvantages of being a white student at Wits led some participants to propose interventions which they believed may provide a more effective means of addressing inequality. These were generally aimed at providing better primary and secondary education for black people. A few participants spoke about affirmative action as being a factor which may lead white South Africans to emigrate.

Julie: I found that people who didn't necessarily get higher marks or who didn't really put a lot of effort into the motivation uh, they got in. And the one girl, I even found out later, the same post that I tried out for, she failed the course in it. I got ninety seven and they chose her over me to teach other people. And for that, I couldn't help but think; is that because of the colour of my race, that I was rejected from that.

Helen: I've realised I wasn't sure if the [Honours] application process would favour me because I'm white or would not […]. Me and my friend who's black, we sat and we spoke about it and she said that if I got in, she would think it's because I'm white, if she got in, she'd think it's because she's black.

Chris: Now that we've applied for Honours I'm aware of the equity requirements also. And like, the intellectual side of me, I see that as redress and I'm okay with that and I think; okay, I just have to work a bit harder. And I think that's fine, to balance everything out. Um, but then I do feel; okay, I didn't play an active role in that in itself.

The general talk with regards to redress seemed to reflect what has been previously written with regards to affirmative action, in that most participants seemed to understand its importance while feeling personal loss in relation to this (Franchi, 2006). Participants seemed to express that it was unfair that they were to be disadvantaged, while simultaneously understanding the importance of redress (Franchi, 2006). Furthermore, redress seems to have affected beliefs in relation to those who are accepted into Honours programmes and perhaps within a broader context in which affirmative action plays a role. Some participants implied that black people who are accepted into courses such as Honours courses are possibly understood as gaining entrance as a result of redress, whether or not this is true, and as such, may be believed to be incompetent in these positions (Wale & Foster, 2007). It was further suggested that if a white person was to be accepted into a course such as this, the privilege which has assisted them throughout life may be believed to have played a major role. It is also implied that if one is not accepted into a course such as this, it may be a result of redress. Thus, there is a general ambivalence towards redress in that its value seems to be acknowledged, yet it comes with its own set of limitations (Franchi, 2006).

Discussion on redress within the university context may suggest the more general views on affirmative action and the way that white people may understand this. In response to the methods of redress used in the university, participants seemed to offer a multitude of possible solutions which they believed may be more effective in creating redress. It seems as if these were offered as a way for white students and individuals to avoid the need to feel disadvantaged while still providing reparation for white shame. Therefore, these were offered as a means of creating academic equality prior to the need for the

current methods of redress, without the acknowledgement of the complexities of attempting to create such interventions. Although these proposed interventions may suggest a need for more effective means of creating redress, they seemed to imply that the methods currently used are ineffective, shifting the blame and responsibility to the government. Inadvertently, suggesting that the black government has been unsuccessful in its attempts to create redress and that perhaps a white voice could offer some superior interventions (Wale & Foster, 2007). This allows white people to effectively shift the spotlight from the inequality which redress attempts to address, to the government and the interventions which they have produced (Steyn & Foster, 2008). Such a shift seems to suggest that white people agree with affirmative action as long as it does not impact them directly. Participants spoke of the struggles of taking up leadership positions within the university context. Considering the political history of the context as well as the way in which whiteness has historically used political power to create inequality, it is understandable that one's racial category would affect whether one would be able to take up such a position.

Participants seemed to demonstrate recognition of the privilege accrued and the importance of redress in post-apartheid South Africa. However, there seems to be a reluctance to hand over that privilege or have this privilege cannabilise itself (Wale & Foster, 2007). This seems to result in an internal conflict in which participants attempt to come to terms with their social category. Participants expressed that they have not earned all that they have based on privilege, they too have worked hard. This may make it difficult to accept that their privilege has assisted in their successes. As a result of the effort that white people must make in order to gain their successes, it may become difficult to give up the privilege which has played a role in assisting them up to this point. Some participants also seemed to be unaware of how their thoughts on redress infer certain implicit racist beliefs. It may be suggested that these occur as a response to the difficulty of giving up one's privilege. There seems to be a real desire for the racial tension and inequality within South Africa to come to some sort of a resolution; an end point or harmony. However, there seems to be an uncertainty or reluctance with regards to how white people may cannibalise their own privilege and whether one would be able to make such a change. Perhaps the conflict within responses suggests that one may desire harmony yet struggle to accept the means by which such harmony may come about, that this will most likely involve personal loss. It may be suggested that, although there is a desire for an end point, there may be no end point, particularly within this generation. Perhaps its resolution is not as important as working through the process of getting to such a point. Vice (2010) suggests that, although there is a need for a

contemporary redefinition of whiteness, this may only be achieved once inequality within the country has been effectively addressed.

4.4. The myth of the rainbow nation

Wits has been portrayed by participants and the analysis as a unique space which provides a context of criticality, seemingly ripe for the development of self-awareness. This self-awareness may or may not be internalised by white people, as it seems to be an unnecessary task in navigating one's environment; one may remain silent and continue to gain from the privileges which whiteness affords. This context seems to have awoken a tension within participants with regards to one's identity, social category and the development of or recrafting of one's identity in light of this context. Furthermore, while grappling with one's identity, white students seem to be faced with certain truths about society, their racial category and their own identities, resulting in an internal tension and ambiguity. The racial make-up of Wits seems to play a role in creating a context for self-exploration. Although participants suggested that there is diversity at Wits, there also appear to be racialised divisions which may in some ways reflect the forced segregation which occurred in the apartheid era. Data collected from the focus groups suggests that Wits, and perhaps South Africa more broadly, are divided based on the socio-political history of the country. However, the focus groups seemed to speak of the division at Wits and in South Africa as occurring both within and between racial categories.

The next core theme attempts to describe the intricate forms of both identification and disunion portrayed by participants within the focus groups. Participants spoke of the way in which, at Wits, there seems to be a clear division and separation based on racial identification. Furthermore, participants implied a sense of ambivalence with regards to the particular groups in which they find themselves and in which they notice this racial divide. When asked about group identity at Wits, participants spoke of the ambivalence of the groups in which they are located as well as the way in which they maintain a sense of individualism within these groups. Within the focus groups, the researcher witnessed this ambivalence through disunion and identification which seemed to occur. It seems as if a certain divide continues within the 'rainbow nation' in which separation based on racial categories continues as a symptom of the country's past. However, contemporary social disunions may have been created within the white racial category. There is a sense of division within the white racial category dependent on one's beliefs. These were spoken of and at times, acted upon within the focus groups. Participants spoke of a desire to create harmony within society. However, the reality of both

Wits and South Africa is that South Africa is not a unified country. The following sub-themes attempt to explore these nuances in more detail.

4.4.1. The continuity of racialised relating

Participants within the focus groups often reflected on the racialised divide which occurs both within Wits and South Africa more generally. Most participants spoke of how this division is not one which is often thought about in a critical manner. However, during the focus groups, many participants were able to explore this divide and some suggested that the white and black racial categories may be conceptualised as being diametrically opposed to one another. Most participants suggested they do not consciously remain within white groups yet it emerged that this seems to occur in a naturalised manner. Some participants overtly spoke of the racial diversity within the groups in which they find themselves, particularly amongst social spaces at Wits, as well as the desire to locate themselves within racially diverse groups at Wits. Often, the racial divide was reported as being viewed in terms of informal white social groups and was spoken of in relation to other white people. However, when reflected on more critically, many participants spoke of being part of these white groups outside of Wits.

Within Wits, it seems as if this division may be viewed in terms of a geographical separation between social categories and settings. Particularly, some participants spoke of the way in which white and black students generally eat at different locations, based on what one can afford to pay for lunch. It was suggested that participants notice the racial make-up of the spaces wherein they find themselves. Furthermore, some participants spoke of their experience of being in a space which is made up exclusively of white people as being a noticeably strange space, one that does not feel South African. Some participants spoke of black spaces, such as Alexandra and Soweto, and how they have felt personally unwelcome and uncomfortable when visiting these spaces. During lectures or within academic spaces at Wits, although some participants spoke of how they consciously attempt to remain within racially diverse groups, most participants spoke of how one may often observe a row of white students surrounded by black students in their lectures. Some participants spoke of how, although they do form part of groups which are made up exclusively of white people, this has not been a conscious decision. This was stated in contrast to others who make a conscious decision to retain white only groups. One participant spoke of how he hasn't really ventured out of his group of white friends. This participant suggested that, just as much as he may not have attempted to form relationships with black students, black students have not attempted to form relationships with him.

One participant reflected on how the legacy of apartheid, and its effects on one's self-conception as a white person, may make it difficult to form relationships with black people. This participant felt that this legacy may loom in some way and refute a connection between the oppressor and oppressed. When speaking of the racial groupings in which participants find themselves outside of the Wits context, most participants suggested that these groups are made up primarily of white people. Upon the recognition of this racial grouping, some participants suggested that perhaps being white is a group identifier for white people, while others suggested that they had not noticed this divide and that perhaps it just happened without their acknowledgment. Some participants spoke of the 'Take Back Wits' campaign and how this group was primarily made up of white people opposing a black agenda; #FeesMustFall. Most participants spoke of this campaign as being a form of white retaliation. This campaign was understood as a point at which white people came together and were unsuccessful in their attempts to reopen the university. A few participants reflected on the perceived danger that was associated with identifying with a group of white people. Participants within the focus groups often separated themselves from others by speaking of themselves as being individuals with no set group.

Julie: It was last year, where it was kind of like, all of the white people wanted to go back to class and there was that let's go, what was it? Reopen Wits, like, movement or something like that and then it was going up against the Fees Must Fall so it was really like a, a clash between like two different, I want to say, uh well ok, obviously I can't generalise but it was uh, a lot of the white, the white students that were saying it. Even amongst my friends, when #FeesMustFall happens, it's often my white friends who are saying; no we want to stay in class, we want to continue. And then obviously vice, students of other races will say like no, we need to fight for this.

Michael: I'm guilty of not engaging actively with other black students, more so than I do with white students. Uh, that's, I don't actively engage with other students all the time but those who I have are mainly white. Um, but then again, I have not been engaged with by black students nearly as much as I have engaged with black students.

Rebecca: Um, in archeology, ok we're not a big class, we're maybe like twenty six. But, the front row has been occupied by seven white students for the past two years now. […]And um, I, it's just because they're all the same colour. Because later, when I actually talked to one of the people she's like I'm not even friends with them.

It seems as if, within South Africa, there is a particular social divide between racial categories (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). However, spaces such as Wits may offer an opportunity for social mixing between racial categories. Perhaps this reflects the way that, within the South African context, racial

categories remain somewhat divided socially whereas in the work environment, racial categories may interact more often. The desire to be within a racially diverse group seems to have been a quality which may have drawn some participants to enrol at Wits. However, it was reported by participants that there are often groups at Wits which are made up of one racial category and which are seemingly exclusive in this way. At the same time, some locations seem to remain somewhat exclusive, dependent on racial categorisation. This seems to reflect a divide based on economic difference and class. Terre Blanche (2006) suggests that, in post-apartheid South Africa, the socio-economic divide has moved to be more related to class rather than race, with the more middle-class areas remaining somewhat reserved for white students. Thus the division which occurs in South Africa may be dependent on class, which in turn intersects with one's race (Green & Sonn, 2006). It may be further suggested that the black middle class may in some cases function to retain whiteness and create an opportunity for mixing between racial categories (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). This reflects the way that whiteness has managed to retain economic power within South Africa. However, it was implied that the division between racial categories may not be one which is primarily maintained by white people, rather, it was suggested that this divide may come from each racial category. Thus, it seems as if this racial divide occurs in a normalised and naturalised manner.

In lectures and other social spaces, whiteness may be a common factor which more easily draws white people together. As such, the white racial category may hold its exclusivity within particular contexts as a way to provide a sense of protection, an area of white comfort (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Thus, in contexts such as Soweto and Alexandra, where the majority of people are black, white people may feel somewhat isolated and further threatened. This may be further linked to white shame, which may be particularly active when witnessing the poverty which is brought by one's racial category and a system which inherently favours white people (Steele, 1990). It may be further argued that a continued manner of racialised relating functions to avoid the internal tension and shame which may arise when witnessing the legacy of apartheid and the effects of one's racial category on an Other who is relatable. Participants spoke of the timidity of white groups, referring to the 'Take back Wits' campaign and how it was verbally attacked by black students. Although it seems as if this group was formed as a retaliation to the #FeesMustFall movement, it is interesting that following this campaign, the #FeesMustFall movement seemed to slow down and stop. Furthermore, although white students may have felt threatened, there was no physical attack, but rather what seemed to be a breakdown of the #FeesMustFall movement. Although this may not be a causal relationship, it is suggested that the 'Take back Wits' campaign played a role in re-opening Wits. However, participants seemed to suggest

that the ‘Take back Wits’ movement was unsuccessful. It seems as if whiteness may hold some sort of power when white groups form and the effectiveness of this power may be in that it seems to remain somewhat hidden. As if the efficacy of these groups is spoken about as being negligible, whereas the actual efficacy seems to be significant. Wale and Foster (2007) suggest that white people may hold onto their privilege by attempting to minimise the acknowledgement of its effects. Perhaps, in minimising the acknowledgment of this power, whiteness may attempt to retain the power which it holds.

4.4.2. White Othering: comparing whiteness

This sub-theme attempts to describe the way in which participants seemed to define themselves in relation to an Other. However, this Other referred to what seemed to be conceptualised as ‘bad whites’, conversely, representing oneself as a ‘good white’. Participants suggested that they knew of other white people, both within Wits, from other universities and those in their social lives who were described as being ignorant to racialised inequality and the way in which the history of the country continues to shape its current climate. Some participants spoke of how these Other whites are generally those who have significantly more than others, yet remain ignorant of their own privilege and often deny the way in which they have benefitted from whiteness. These Others are thought of as being overtly racist, a trait which seemed to evoke anger within many participants. Some participants spoke of these Others and the way in which they often use racial slurs or discriminate against black people. Often, participants spoke of how these white Others hinder the progress of the country by further drawing difference across racial lines. Participants spoke of their own personal role in certain instances: when racial slurs are passed amongst white peers, friends and family, as well as the complexity of this. Some participants spoke of how they, as white people, hold some responsibility in calling out Other white people for such discrimination.

Participants spoke of the white Other and how they all knew some white people who held racist ideology and acted on it overtly, specifically within groups of other white people. Other universities within South Africa were conceptualised as sites in which one may find these ‘bad whites’. Older generations of white people who hold racist ideology were also presented as a form of an Other. Furthermore, it was suggested that social media platforms are often stages upon which these overt racists may be viewed and called out. In relation to this, participants described themselves as being, seemingly, the minority of white people who accept their privilege and are educated on the subject of race and the ways in which the socio-political history of South Africa continues to shape its current

climate. Some participants voiced their frustration with regards to these Other white people in that they felt as if these Others were conceptualised by black people as stereotypical white people. Thus, these stereotypes were then believed to be projected onto all white people, in essence making all white people seem to be racist, bad whites. Participants often spoke of themselves as individuals or attempted to convey the sense that not all people are the same and that they are in fact different to these stereotypical, racist white people. Furthermore, a few participants spoke of how these Other white people consciously maintained only white friends. All participants spoke of Other whites, regardless of whether they held and expressed racist ideology within the focus group. Many participants accounted for the need to show that they are different to these Other whites, whether it be through participation in the #FeesMustFall movement or other forms of social expression.

Michael: Being a white student manifests itself in either being hypersensitive and walking on egg shells and feeling that kind of um, insidious oppression if you will? But then the, there are the people who are ignorant and won't acknowledge the fact that they are basically privileged. They've got the, got way more than everyone else, they won't take the time to acknowledge that.

Rebecca: I think sometimes we forget that white people aren't all the same. It's not uh, we don't all have, like, the same culture. Like you said now um, you get those people who are just oblivious or just, would tolerate racism or things like that. And that I, that makes me so mad because that's the thing people see.

Megan: Ugh, I almost want to unfriend [racist family members on Facebook] and unfollow and you know, go; you're the reason that we're not moving forward you know. But, there is still this perception that you know, white people are bad, 'cos there is an exception.

Although white people may hold different beliefs and perhaps different views on race, all participants believed that there were Others who were worse than themselves. Perhaps there was a thought that one could be more racist than another. Participants eluded to the white Other as referring to white people who are overtly racist and those who are ignorant of the systems which inevitably privilege white people at the expense of black people. Furthermore, it seems as if participants believed that they have a responsibility to create a sense of awareness in these Others or to challenge racist beliefs. Within the focus groups, there seemed to be opportunity for this challenging which was taken up on some occasions and on other occasions it was colluded with or ignored. However, it seemed as though the gentle manner in which this challenging was undertaken was unsuccessful. Although these claims regarding the white Other may be true in that these overt racists may still exist, the claims seem to reflect a manner of thinking and self-conceptualisation which allows one's self-image to be produced

in relation to an Other. As a result, the white Other seems to function in a manner which allows participants to create an understanding of the Self as being different to the seemingly stereotypical white, privileged racist. However, the conception of the Other may have allowed participants to negate their own privilege or perhaps their own racism. Perhaps the white Other allowed white participants to alleviate an aspect of white shame in response to the privilege which they are afforded.

The white Other seems to function as a means to further distance oneself from the white racial category and create the conception of oneself as a unique individual. Thus, the white Other seems to further suggest one's ambivalence towards one's identity. Perhaps whiteness may also be attempting to redefine itself in relation to the white Other in order to regain a sense of invisibility and to shift the blame for current racial inequalities onto this conceptualised white Other. This invisibility seems to be aimed at the subconscious racism which may exist within individuals, and the implicit racism which may more importantly continue to exist within institutions and systemic forms of economic power. Thus, the description of the white Other may represent whiteness' attempt at renegotiating the acceptance of certain privileges and/or covert racism by comparing it to an Other which may be understood as being a lot worse. Therefore, the white Other seems to represent an object which one may compare oneself against in an attempt to bolster one's self-worth and to provide oneself with a positive self-conception.

White Othering seems to be a way for participants to suggest that although we are all equal, some may be more equal than others; some may be whiter than others. This Othering may be true in some cases, as the unique environment of Wits may allow for a greater self-awareness as compared to other white people who do not experience the opportunity to gain such self-awareness. However, it seems as if this Othering may represent a mechanism whereby participants were able to scapegoat negative and undesirable aspects of the Self onto the Other (Hook, 2006a). Thus, there seems to be an internal splitting which occurs in white people in which the good and bad parts of the Self are split, with the bad parts of the Self being projected onto Other whites. Therefore, the white Other may be better understood as the negative and unacceptable parts of the Self (Hook, 2006a; Franchi, 2006). Projective identification may also be used as a way to reinforce the conception of a white Other. It has previously been suggested that white people may hold a subconscious racism which they fear may be exposed at certain points and perhaps it is these aspects of the self which are projected onto the Other. Perhaps moving into a position in which one may hold both good and bad parts of the self may be a difficult process, yet one which is necessary in the recrafting of one's identity in contemporary South Africa. It

may be argued that, by conducting this research, the author may have been attempting to gain an understanding of the self as being different to Others. In essence, this research may too be a form of white Othering by the author.

4.4.3. The reproduction and challenging of privileged white talk

During the focus groups, many participants spoke of the responsibility that white people may have in terms of challenging Other white people who are overtly racist. Furthermore, it was suggested that in previous instances, some participants had confronted Other white people for this, sharing their accounts. Although the majority of participants did not show signs of overt racism, there were instances within the focus groups in which certain participants were covertly racist, expressing stereotypical beliefs. In certain instances, participants would question whether white privilege still exists as well as the extent of this privilege. Some suggested that white students had no academic privilege at Wits, suggesting that it was merely a scapegoat. Some students went on to suggest that the process of redress which occurs during Honours selection is a process which unfairly favours black people and that in this and other settings, black privilege may exist.

Some participants spoke of how they had nothing to do with the apartheid era, stating that it was unfair that they were expected to atone for a sin which they had never committed. These participants went on to suggest that because apartheid is over, whiteness could not be blamed for the difficulties within society, rather suggesting that the black government be held accountable for the lack of progress in post-apartheid South Africa. During these instances, participants seemed to react in one of three ways: remain silent, collude with these participants or challenge these beliefs. It is important to note that during the instances wherein racist beliefs were challenged, this challenging occurred in a gentle manner. Perhaps participants hoped to retain a sense of continuity within the group rather than having a blatant disagreement. The challenging seemed to be an attempt at educating these participants of the possible effects of whiteness and how their beliefs may be incorrect. Furthermore, in these instances wherein racist beliefs were challenged, this manner of challenging seemed to be generally unsuccessful in changing the beliefs of individuals who held onto their racist beliefs and challenged back.

> *Julie: In terms of like a white person being discriminately offensive to a black person, um, I think a lot of power rests in the, in the, in the white friends surrounding that white person who's inflicting the discrimination to actually stand up and say 'uh, uh'. You know, we've got a lot of power in terms of to stop you know, the discrimination that is happening.*

Nicole: I feel that everything is dependent, [black people] put all the blame on what has happened and they're not taking any action or any of the responsibility of current actions. Because, yes I agree that things cannot be rectified in twenty years but they can be improved if it's done properly. And if it's not done properly, we cannot be to blame within these twenty years because white people did not have any say or practically none in the government or the financials.

Rowan: I don't know. I'm just uneasy with this last couple, these last couple of comments. Um and I don't think it's as black as white, as black and white as you guys put it, to be honest. Um, I do obviously have a, have an issue with the current government. But I, but at the same time, the, the economic, the economic disparity is one hundred percent a result of apartheid and our colonial history.

Participants expressed the desire to take on the social responsibility of challenging racism and challenging white people who hold and express racist ideologies. Some participants gave accounts of times within which they had challenged such beliefs. Furthermore, it was suggested that often the expression of racist beliefs seem to go unchallenged within South African society. Within the focus groups, racism was expressed in a more implicit manner, which seemed to make individuals unsure of how this challenging should occur, or whether it should occur at all. Interestingly, within the focus groups, when the chance arose to challenge such beliefs, one group did not challenge these beliefs while in another group, such beliefs were colluded with and then challenged in a very gentle manner. Perhaps this reflects a desire to help Other white people to become more aware of themselves and of the effects of whiteness. However, there also seems to be a need to be gentle in this as to retain relationships and so as to protect one from feeling attacked or offended. It would appear that this approach was generally unsuccessful. Thus the attempt to help, rather than overtly challenge, seemed to have very little effect. During the #FeesMustFall movement, it seemed as if whiteness was challenged in an overt and threatening manner, participants seemed to suggest that this movement may have been something of a turning point in developing self-awareness. Perhaps this contrast suggests that whiteness may be effectively challenged when it is done so in an overt manner, with the feelings of anger and mourning entangled. Thus, this self-awareness may occur more readily in instances in which one feels as if one has an experience rather than a discussion.

Perhaps whiteness is evolving in that it can be challenged or in that its challenging may have forced it to evolve in some way. Most participants expressed a desire and a responsibility to confront racist ideology. This may reflect the desire of participants to create awareness and understanding in order to facilitate social change. However, this desire may in some ways reflect the need for one's own subconscious racist ideologies to remain hidden. The challenging of white talk and accounts of

challenging white, privileged talk may provide an instance in which one may attempt to create distance between oneself and the white Other. Perhaps the challenging of such talk allows individuals to bolster their self-worth and confirm their individuality with regards to the white racial category. Thus, it may be difficult to differentiate as to whether the challenging of whiteness is an attempt at actually challenging whiteness or an attempt at preserving one's social identity.

The reproduction of privileged white talk seems to reflect racist beliefs of equality, implicitly attempting to create a continuity of oppression (Distiller & Steyn, 2004; Steyn 2004). Such talk further attempts to urge other white people to collude in these beliefs in hopes of maintaining the privilege that whiteness affords (Steyn & Foster, 2008). In some instances within the focus groups, white talk did result in collusion. However, in others it seemed to be either ignored, seemingly in hopes of moving on with the focus group, or it was challenged. White talk seems to function in a manner which neglects the past in an attempt to shift criticality from one's own beliefs to the current black government (Steyn & Foster, 2008). Furthermore, white talk seemed to suggest a sense of normalcy with regards to the apartheid era as if it should be accepted and perhaps ignored. Instances of corruption within the current South African government were critiqued, allowing certain participants to avoid speaking about the economic inequalities which continue in contemporary South Africa. Similarly to the study conducted by Steyn and Foster (2008), white talk seemed to imply that South Africa is a problem, rather than acknowledging that South Africa has a problem. However, in contrast to Steyn's (2004) study on white talk, the normalisation of the dominance of whiteness was challenged on occasion in the focus groups.

4.5. The ambivalence of relating to the black Other

The South African community seems to be divided based on racial categorisation both in terms of economic and social divisions. Participants spoke of the groupings which occur at Wits and how, although these are sometimes racially diverse groups, they often seem to be somewhat exclusive, based on racial categories. In many instances racial divisions continue, particularly within the #FeesMustFall movement as well as in contexts outside of Wits. Participants reflected that there seems to be a continuance of racialised relating. The previous theme discussed the forms of both identification and disunion portrayed by participants, as well as the ambivalence which seems to arise in response to this. Furthermore, previous themes have discussed a rhetorical distancing in which participants attempt to develop an identity as an individual separate from their white racial category. Individual feelings of ambivalence and uncertainty seem to occur in attempting to grapple with and redefine one's identity. Participants seemed to demonstrate that it was often easier to view racial matters from a distance,

rather than examining one's own racial beliefs. The previous theme demonstrated the way that participants spoke of relating to other white people, as well as the groups in which they find themselves. This theme attempts to describe the way that participants spoke of relating to black people.

Throughout the focus groups, it seemed as if the majority of participants spoke of or viewed whiteness and racial issues from what seemed to be an outsiders' perspective. Within particular social circumstances, many participants seemed to observe rather than become involved. In a sense, within particular social circumstances as well as in attempting to relate to others, many participants seemed to use a metaphorical lens in order to view and reflect on their external surroundings. When participants were asked to reflect on their own accounts and on their own involvement in certain actions, they tended to view themselves as individuals in relation to an Other and struggled to turn this lens on themselves. The next core theme was derived in relation to the way in which most participants seemed to easily speak about others and view others in what seemed to be a voyeuristic manner, often struggling to interrogate their own actions critically, feeling guilty or ashamed when doing so. The following sub-themes will engage with the way that participants spoke about #FeesMustFall and participants' involvement in the movement. It discusses the way in which participants demonstrated a desire for harmony within South Africa, a desire to be viewed and understood as an individual separate from the white racial category.

4.5.1. Joining blackness from a distance

Often, participants would speak about the #FeesMustFall movement. It emerged from the focus groups that there was limited involvement in the #FeesMustFall movement by the participants and seemingly white people in general. There seemed to be many reasons for this lack of involvement. Firstly, some participants spoke of how they felt unwelcomed and unwanted within the movement. Others suggested that they felt that to be involved in the protests would have been putting themselves in a dangerous situation, which could have led to physical harm and possibly disturbances within their studies. Some participants suggested that although they believed in the efforts and the movement itself, they disagreed with the manner in which the protests were conducted. At the same time, some participants suggested that they did not agree with the protests and did not believe that the movement would result in any significant change and so to join may have been redundant. Participants implied that white people observed the movement and seemed to make use of the movement as an opportunity to learn about the black Other.

Some participants spoke of how white people remained somewhat separate from the #FeesMustFall movement. There seemed to be an understanding that #FeesMustFall was not necessarily a movement which was meant to involve white students directly. However, many participants suggested a desire to be involved in the movement and to support their fellow students. While many of the participants did not become too involved in the movement, they would track its progress, watching on television or observing from a distance. Some participants wanted to be more actively involved and joined the protests. It seems as if many joined during the initial stages and found that they became less involved soon after. Those who were involved suggested that their involvement was limited and that they mostly observed from the outskirts. The value and importance of the movement seemed to be recognised and implied by many during the focus groups. Some participants who valued the movement suggested that they were happy to be involved as they would like to be remembered as being part of the movement. One participant spoke of how she doesn't like crowds and that she tried to be involved by providing a space where black students who were evading the police could hide. Others said that they went to one of the protests but that they didn't return for future protests, either because they didn't agree with the form of protest or because they felt unwanted. Many participants spoke of how they wanted to be more involved in the movement but that they found it difficult to do so.

Julie: I just thought, listen, this is history being made, I've got to go and check it out you know. And I went to go and check it out but I wouldn't say that I was at the frontline, like you know, with the blow horn, leading the protest. I was just kind of just in the back, you know, just observing more than anything.

James: During #FeesMustFall, when it broke out, I was working for an African publication, online publication. And, as it was happening I messaged my editor and I was like; I should do something and he was like; ja, you should. So I went and interviewed people to kind of understand what's going on.

Darren: I was, I was also very active in the protests and I also support the protests quite a bit. Um, but more because of the, I feel like it addresses the colonisation as well, not just #FeesMustFall. And I want to be on that side, and it was also exciting (laughter).

It may be proposed that although the multiple reasons given for a lack of involvement in the #FeesMustFall movement are valid, one which was seemingly overlooked is that perhaps white students do not need free tertiary education. This is not to take away from the many reasons given by participants which seemed to reflect their real thoughts and feelings, but rather to gain an understanding of the way that white students and white people were involved. It seems as if some participants joined the movement in its initial phases. The reasons given for this generally seem to

reflect an awareness of the importance of the movement and a desire to be remembered as or to be able to tell others that they were there, they were a part of the movement. In so doing, it seems as if there was a desire to share in the black struggle of inequality and poverty. This may have provided an opportunity to further distance oneself from one's white racial category and the white Other. During the initial phases, when white students joined, it seems as if they stood on the outskirts and were in this way given an opportunity to observe the movement; to observe the expression of black people in response to inequality. This seems to mirror the later stages of the movement, when white students seemed to observe the movement from behind a screen.

It appears as if the engagement that was undertaken was done so in something of a voyeuristic manner, in that white people were able to view the movement from the safety of their homes. For many participants, the #FeesMustFall movement offered a unique moment in which a considerable amount of learning could occur with regards to race and inequality based on the socio-political history of the country. The way that whiteness was challenged during the movement may have allowed white students to gain a greater perspective of whiteness and their racial category. In this way, for white students, the #FeesMustFall movement may have been a spectacle which allowed them to gain some insight and awareness into the plight of black students as well as the effects of whiteness. Thus, white students seem to have been both included and not included in the #FeesMustFall movement. Although there was a desire to join the movement, it does not seem as if the demands of #FeesMustFall represented aspects of white students' material needs and so this remained a desire.

Ratele (2007) suggests that there is a constant need for black people to educate white people about the past and how this continues to create inequality. Ratele (2007) goes on to suggest that this may become both a tiresome and frustrating act, in which black people may have to relive their oppression and generational oppression through the re-education of white people. At the same time, whiteness is often defined as an empty category which exists only in relation to the Other (Green & Sonn, 2005). Thus, it is understandable that the #FeesMustFall movement offered a unique space for the education of white students. One in which white students could gain an understanding of whiteness in a voyeuristic manner, through the struggles of the black Other. This voyeurism may provide an explanation for the desire of white students to enrol at Wits, seemingly for the racial diversity that it offers. This seems to further imply the desire for the recrafting of one's identity. However, it also implies the limited nature of this redefinition in that the #FeesMustFall movement allowed participants to gain a greater awareness of the system of whiteness, without giving them the ability to turn this lens on themselves in

order to gain a critical understanding of their lack of involvement in the movement. This may continue within other aspects of white students' lives in which their own complicity in whiteness may remain hidden as they attempt to distance themselves from the white racial category and to avoid a deeper melancholia which may occur if this lens were turned to the Self. Thus, in contemporary South Africa, whiteness may remain a system which continues to exist and be defined in relation to the Other. However, the once invisible system seems to have been made visible and white students seem to attempt to grasp a sense of invisibility as an individual, perhaps this functions to protect oneself from the painful realisation that one may be complicit in the system and ideology of whiteness.

4.5.2. A yearning for the return of white invisibility

Some participants stated that they are liberal in their beliefs, seemingly creating a sense of oneself as an individual in the world, one who should not have meaning attached to oneself based on social constructions. Often one's racial category, particularly within the context of Wits, was seen to be something that could not be overlooked or escaped. It seems as if, within the university setting, white students have lost a sense of invisibility which they still seem to attain in some contexts outside of Wits. Many participants implicitly spoke of how they long for this invisibility at Wits as it might make navigating the university an easier task. Participants suggested that at Wits, white people are construed in a certain way which creates discomfort. Some participants spoke of a desire to be able to get on with their day, study and make friends without this looming sense of judgement which comes from both the Self and the Other in relation to whiteness at Wits. In constructing oneself as a liberal, some participants seemed to attempt to remove themselves from being part of a broader system of whiteness by understanding oneself as an individual within a just and fair society (Frankenberg, 1993a).

During the conception of the focus groups, the author received an email from one participant. In this email, the participant seemed to question whether she would like to join the group or not, whether the group would create more racial tension or whether it would assist in creating unity amongst racial categories. This sentiment was further reflected by some participants within the focus groups, who showed a desire to create racial harmony within the country and within Wits particularly. Some participants seemed to become quite frustrated with the lack of harmony and described different means of attempting to create this sense of harmony within everyday interactions. Participants spoke of how they preferred to address black people as individuals and in conversation would attempt to find and speak about similarities rather than differences in order to create a sense of likeness. Within the context of Wits, many participants expressed the need to avoid offending black students and as such would

often have to restrain themselves, a restraint which does not appear to be required in their lives outside of Wits. Participants reflected that outside of the Wits context, there was no particular need to think about one's race as critically as one does on campus. There seemed to be a desire, from most participants, to be able to have a sense of peaceful integration within campus life; to be accepted by black people.

During the focus group discussions, on occasion the groups would shift the conversation to blackness, as well as the way in which they believed that the current government was to blame for the continuation of poverty in post-apartheid South Africa. A few participants suggested that black people don't take responsibility for any of the current dispositions within society, claiming that there should have been more of a change since democracy. However, this line of thinking was challenged by a few participants within the groups who suggested that this inequality was in fact a direct result of apartheid. A few participants went on to speak of the possibilities that might arise from this feeling of discomfort at Wits as well as by engaging with this discomfort. These participants reflected that having the opportunity to engage in these topics within Wits created a space in which one may learn and gain a greater sense of identity and self-awareness.

Tara: I feel angry sometimes that like, I just wish we could all be together in this incredible community. I know it's a little bit rainbow nationy, you know. […] I mean part of the reason that I'm learning Zulu at the moment. I mean; know the culture, know the language. But, it's also to try help bridge that divide. To try to say like; let us not communicate with one another based on a stereotypical assumption but rather on like a commonality.

Chris: One of my best friends is a Taiwanese South African and nobody, really successful in business also, but nobody really worries because it's a minority. So I feel like if white people uh, I know it sounds a bit strange, become a bit more of an actual minority, not uncomfortably so, you know, overwhelmingly like in the spotlight, I, I might feel more comfortable claiming the space.

Stuart: I think it's difficult because it feels like you have to work all the time. You have to work on what you say and how you are because there's always eyes on you, there's always that; you're privileged. And, I feel that not everyone, yes there's certain privileges but like Nicole is saying, there wasn't always privilege and even in these days you try and, I feel myself trying to work away from that privilege. I try and not show that I'm privileged if you know what I mean. Because I don't want to stand out.

It seems as if the unique nature of Wits has resulted in the need for self-awareness in order for white students to avoid possible personal attacks from black students. There appears to be a desire for a

harmony at Wits in which one does not need to hold onto this self-awareness; a hope that whiteness may regain its invisibility. It seems as if the sense of harmony, which was spoken of by certain participants, reflects one in which whiteness retains its privilege in a manner which does not result in anger from black people. In this sense, it seems as if whiteness maintains a level of invisibility within the South African context which is challenged at Wits. The desire to create a concept of oneself as an individual or as a liberal in relation to whiteness seems to further suggest the desire for whiteness to avoid critical interrogation (Frankenberg, 1993a). However, a few participants challenged the desire for this invisibility. This may suggest that whiteness may no longer be able to hold onto its invisibility within the Wits context, or that whiteness may have had to evolve within this context in order to retain a certain level of invisibility. The focus groups often seemed to shift the focus of the group itself from whiteness towards blackness, seemingly in an attempt to mask the effects of whiteness. However, this was further challenged by certain participants who seemed to reposition whiteness at the centre of these interrogations.

Participants seemed to demonstrate a yearning for the return of invisibility in order to create a sense of harmony. However, this invisibility is a way for white people to retain their privilege and avoid the feelings of shame and melancholia which arise in response to the visibility of one's privilege. In the context of Wits, this response may remain nothing more than a yearning as it was challenged by some participants. Outside of the Wits context it would appear that white students may retain some of this invisibility. However, one's whiteness will not fall easily into invisibility within the South African context (Vice, 2010). It may be understandable that participants desire racial harmony, yet this may not be accomplished until the racialised inequality within the South African context is effectively addressed and redressed. Thus, the visibility of one's whiteness and the discomfort which arises may be necessary in providing an urge for one to grapple with one's identity (Vice, 2010). Furthermore, the discomfort which arises may in some ways assist white people. White people may gain a certain criticality and perhaps come to the realisation of the ways in which one contributes to the re-occurrence of the system of whiteness. The discomfort and the difficult task of claiming these feelings may represent an understanding that one is not effectively working towards producing a shift towards equality within the nation.

4.6. Attempts at relieving the burden of being the oppressor

Throughout previous themes, feelings of ambivalence and uncertainty seem to have arisen in participants as they attempt to grapple with identity and redefining their identities within contemporary South Africa. At the same time, a sense of discomfort has been portrayed with regards to the unique climate of Wits, as well as within certain contexts in which one's racial category is strongly activated, such as in Alexandra or Soweto. Participants have taken advantage of Wits and certain moments in order to gain perspective on the climate of race in South Africa. In this way, white people often appear voyeuristic in that they attempt to view blackness and whiteness from a distance. The desire for a return to invisibility is a way to manage the difficult emotions which are brought up with regards to one's white racial category and the inequalities which exist because of whiteness and the atrocities of the past. As such, whiteness was portrayed by participants as being a burden, in that one may feel that one is required to own these difficult emotions as a result of one's identification with the white racial category. This theme attempts to describe this burden and its impact on participants, as well as the manner in which one may attempt to relieve oneself of this burden.

It emerged from the focus groups that participants felt a desire to be proud of their history, culture and ethnicity. However, given the violent history of the white racial category as well as the way in which whiteness is reconstructed within South African society, it was suggested that white people cannot express a sense of pride in their racial group. White shame is a concept which seems to have continued within contemporary South Africa and which emerged in the focus groups. Although participants suggested that they could not be proud of being white, it may be argued that they feel lucky to be white but cannot express this gratitude in a society where one's racial category is associated with the oppressor (Steele, 1990). Thus, white people may feel ashamed about the way in which their privileges have been attained while at the same time feel grateful to have these privileges. Thus, the feelings of shame and guilt may be compacted, as individuals possibly feel guilty for actually being grateful that they were born into privilege. Participants seemed to portray the desire to make up for the wrongdoings of the past in order to regain a sense of pride in oneself rather than one's racial group. However, participants seemed to be unsure as to how this could be done, seemingly hoping that black people could guide their retribution; asking what black people want from white people.

4.6.1. White shame

It is not unexpected that feelings of shame, guilt and resentment were expressed by the majority of participants on multiple occasions. Some participants spoke of identifying with this feeling of shame yet acknowledging that in themselves, they didn't do anything wrong. Thus, there seemed to be a pessimism and cynicism around identifying with the white racial category; some participants felt both shameful and as if this feeling was somewhat misconstrued. Some participants suggested that it was not their choice to be white or to be born into privilege but that the feelings of shame remained. Although some spoke of feeling guilty, it seemed as if it was expressed as shame in that these feelings seemed to arise in relation to something which they had not done on a personal level. Participants recounted specific instances in which they felt this shame. These instances reflected times when poverty associated with black people was observed in an explicit manner, such as seeing black beggars on the side of the road or in seeing the struggles of black students during the #FeesMustFall movement. This resonates with Iyer et al. (2003) who suggest that white shame is activated when one is faced with the racial inequalities and moral wrongdoings committed by one's white racial category.

Most participants suggested that they were aware that they were benefitting from white privilege but went on to acknowledge that personally, it was not their fault and that they could not be held accountable for this. Some participants reflected on Wits and how Wits played a role in exposing participants to inequalities based on racial categorisation. Thus it seems as if much of this shame has come as a result of this exposure. A few participants suggested that they had previously been grateful for being white but that they now feel as if they must apologise for their racial category. Certain accounts suggest that in particular moments, wherein one's white privilege may be viewed, one may feel the need to undercompensate in order to downplay this privilege. Participants spoke of the desire to make up for the wrongdoings of the past, using their privilege to give back. One participant stated that he had joined the #FeesMustFall movement because of his white shame. Participants suggested that they would like to make amends for the inequality that continues but seemed unsure as to how they could do this. A couple of participants questioned whether black people purposefully make white people feel shameful but were unable to link what this could be in relation to. A few participants suggested that although white people may hide themselves as a result of white shame, they believed that this was not useful and that it may be more beneficial to be able to speak about these feelings.

Julie: I was talking to a group of friends, actually earlier today, saying I've got a really interesting focus group this afternoon, maybe we can just have a few chats about, you know, certain things about how you

guys feel? And, nearly every person I've chatted to, it ah, it was a diverse group. So it was black and white; we're all really open with each other. And we said, you know, white people do carry such a thing called white guilt.

Megan: You feel kind of guilty that you know, you have money when there are people that can't afford to come here and that do fight to come here. You know, I personally feel a lot of guilt over that and it's not something that you can control. You were born into the family you were born into, you didn't have a choice but you know, there's a lot of guilt over what you have.

Angela: I remember last year during the, during the strikes and we were having all these class discussions and things, I felt very ashamed about being white. […] it's almost made me see it in a bad light because I felt guilty and all of that but now, I'm not sure how yet, but I think I'm trying to see a hope in my privilege, to see how I can use my privilege to help those who aren't privileged instead of looking at the shame in it, if that makes sense.

Some participants suggested that black people may attempt to evoke shame in white people and perhaps this is accurate. As has been suggested in the literature review, evoking this shame may provide the opportunity for black people to witness the crippling of white people. This may bring a sense of pleasure in that black people may enjoy witnessing the crippling of the oppressor (Stevens, 2018). The crippling effect which seems to occur in response to this shame may reflect a desire to make up for this shame, while not having an answer as to what could be done to create this redress. The author suggests that perhaps this crippling more accurately reflects the way in which white people may feel that the only way to create redress for this shame would be to have the power and privilege of whiteness stripped away. Perhaps the crippling and silence which accompanies this is an attempt to avoid what seems to be a drastic solution, one which may remove one's privilege. As such, the avoidance of such solutions may allow for whiteness to retain its power. This may further compound one's shame and move towards more guilt in knowing that one is not willing to make such a change.

White shame remains a dominant feature of what it means to be a white student at Wits. Accounts from participants suggest that this shame is experienced frequently within contemporary South Africa and particularly within the Wits context. In gaining a more empathetic understanding of the struggle of black students and the effects of the legacy of whiteness, participants felt shameful more readily in response to multiple scenarios. An increased awareness of one's own privilege may allow white students to view the way that whiteness has caused inequality, therefore resulting in shame being evoked more often (Steele, 1990). Perhaps this shame is related to the silencing of white voices in that

it may be experienced as being crippling, requiring withdrawal. Perhaps the fear of this shame being provoked results in white people taking a step back and observing the struggle of black students without offering white voices and perspectives. Shame may result in the desire to regain a sense of innocence or purity, to create a more positive view of the Self and thus there seems to be a yearning for invisibility (Steele, 1990). At the same time, shame may create an idea that one has explored one's contribution to and involvement in current inequalities. Thus, Straker (2011) suggests that perhaps white people hold a globalised sense of shame which masks the potential for a genuine experience of shame and guilt which may arise with the exploration of the Self and one's contribution to inequality. Although it may be necessary for one to turn the lens of criticality onto one's own privilege, shame seems to create a need to remove this shame, resulting in actions based on one's own needs, rather than addressing the cause of shame: inequality (Steele, 1990).

4.6.2. The white saviour

As has been discussed under previous themes and sub-themes, it emerged during the focus groups that participants have often felt silenced, unwanted and shameful as a result of their whiteness. Participants suggested that, depending on the context, they felt as if they had no voice or as if their voices and privileges were unwanted. White shame appears to be a phenomenon with which the majority of the participants could identify. Some participants spoke of a desire to feel valued at Wits as well as to become more involved with black people, or perhaps feel more integrated. It often seemed as if participants were unsure of what they could do to try to make up for the atrocities of the past. Participants spoke of a desire to make amends for the legacy of apartheid and in doing so regain a sense of value at Wits and within South Africa. Some participants suggested that they were unsure of what could be done in order to rectify the divide which continues between black and white people. These participants questioned what black people wanted from them in order to make up for the past, to be accepted and seemingly gain a sense of belonging.

At Wits, participants suggested that they often felt as if they stood out by virtue of their racial category. Some participants spoke of how they attempt to prove that they are not racist, attempting to avoid being interpreted as a stereotypical white racist. Many participants spoke of how they would like, or attempt, to use their privilege to give back and help others. It emerged that most participants felt as if they could use their privilege to amend some remnants of apartheid and the legacy of whiteness. Participants seemed to link this to the #FeesMustFall movement, claiming that they would have liked to have been able to use their privilege to assist the movement. Often, participants seemed unsure as to

how they could go about doing this, feeling that they had some sort of responsibility to make amends. A few participants suggested that they felt as if they had a responsibility to give something back to others who are less fortunate. It was suggested that through the experience of giving back, one might feel as if one had gained something; it was suggested that this could be quite rewarding. However, one participant spoke of how she feels as if black people do not want white people in South Africa, they do not want nor appreciate help from white people. She suggested that black pride may prevent black people from feeling as if they require help from white people.

Rebecca: We had a discussion about; but what do you want us to do then? If we're not allowed, technically, to be part of the protest and we're not allowed to be. What do you want us to do to make up for this? Or what do you want us to do to accept us?

Tara: There's of this, kind of like well this is who I am and this is who you are and you are diametrically opposed to me because of the colour of our skins. And I'm saying; well, it's got nothing to do with that, we're here to serve a community um, this is about helping students and, and it's not, it's not taken in that way. It's taken like you know, someone once said to me at a time it's because people think that you're patronising them, maybe they don't actually want your help.

Helen: Maybe I should just go back to where you [black people] think I belong because I don't know how to help them. I feel like if black people are so convinced they need to do this on their own, there's no way a white person can help because it becomes an issue of pride.

Students expressed a desire to make amends for the past and seemed to be unclear as to how they could do this. They seemed to address this question to black people, asking what it is that they want from white people, in order for white people to feel accepted. It seems a difficult proposal to answer, and one which may not have a practical answer. However, this represents the strong urge to rid oneself somehow of one's feelings of shame and to remove oneself from being the object of hatred. In proposing this question, as well as in attempting to take part in volunteer work, it may be suggested that white people believe that black people require the assistance of white people; that they need a white saviour. Perhaps this reflects that whiteness is a system which continues to promote itself as being a means to an end, a system which continuously attempts to strive for its own normality by promoting itself as the saviour even when faced with the inequalities which it has created. Furthermore, whiteness itself may perform such tasks in an attempt to regain a sense of invisibility and to avoid critique by attempting to become reconceptualised as a saviour rather than an oppressor.

When accounting for the specific volunteer work that some participants are involved in, it seemed as if participants reflected on their privilege as being something which could be used constructively to assist others who do not have the same privilege. This appears to be a productive way of assisting those who are less fortunate and may reflect a desire to assist in making amends for the atrocities of the past. However, to a large extent, this type of volunteer work may be better described as an effort to alleviate white shame rather than an effort to create equality (Iyer et al., 2003). This may explain the rewarding aspect of volunteer work; it rewards one by alleviating parts of one's white shame. It seems as if such efforts may allow white students to, partly, separate themselves from the legacy of the white racial category and in doing so create an individual identity within which one may regain a sense of pride. Thus, white shame may re-centre one's identity as the site of development, rather than addressing the original cause of one's shame (Iyer et al., 2003). Volunteer work seems to imply a liberal response to inequality in that it assumes that one's efforts in assisting the oppressed allows one to be understood as thoughtful and giving, while negating the reasons for the requirement of assistance (Sonn & Quayle, 2013; Gushue & Constantine, 2007). Although these efforts may be successful on some level, it seems as if they are often not enough to create a sense of pride in the white racial category (Steele, 1990). Furthermore, participants suggested that such volunteer work is often viewed in light of privilege. Perhaps these interventions are viewed by black people who receive them as being both useful as well as a means to rectify white shame. The fact that, in participating in these interventions, white people may be able to assist for a period of time before returning to the comfort of their middle-class homes which their privilege has afforded them, may be quite frustrating for black people.

4.7. The recrafting of contemporary whiteness

White students are attempting to grapple with the redefinition of their identities within contemporary South Africa. Previous themes and sub-themes have attempted to portray the ambivalence and uncertainty which arises during this process of redefinition and recrafting. While attempting to come to terms with one's racial category and its effects on one's identity, participants developed multiple strategies in an effort to recraft one's identity. Participants attempted to navigate contemporary South Africa in a way which might address white shame as well as in a manner which could assist in one's development. White students portray a desire to assist black people and make up for the inequalities which continue based on the socio-political history of South Africa and the ideology of whiteness. Thus, participants seemed to take every opportunity to learn about the black Other while attempting to distance themselves from the white racial category. Wits seems to offer students a context in which

one may be immersed in diversity and in which previous notions of race, racialisation, racism and whiteness may be challenged. Contexts such as Wits seem to result in the adaptation of one's identity and beliefs which may in turn result in the evolution of whiteness itself.

Whiteness seems to evolve and adapt based on the context in which it finds itself (Hartigan, 1997). Within the South African context, whiteness may present itself in a unique manner, based on the generation in which it is located. As has been discussed in previous themes, participants suggested that within South Africa, whiteness seems to adapt to suit the differing contexts within the nation. Within the focus groups, participants spoke of a generational difference between themselves, their parents and their grandparents. This difference presented itself as occurring in terms of beliefs with regards to race, racialisation and racism. It would appear that this difference was often a site of frustration and shame for many participants, as they grappled with the ethical dilemmas of disagreeing with the perceptions of older generations of white people, while finding it difficult to overtly challenge these ways of thinking. Participants also spoke of the complexities of belonging or not belonging, as a white person, in contemporary South Africa. This often led to participants sharing their views on what the future of whiteness may look like and how it may further evolve within the South African context.

4.7.1. The intergenerational transmission of racism

It emerged during the focus groups that participants felt as if they had different mindsets to that of the older generations of white people when it came to perceptions of race, racialisation and racism. Participants suggested that whiteness is connected to a legacy of oppression; a negative legacy. It was further implied by some participants that this legacy may be tied more closely to older generations of white people, seemingly because they may have played a more active role in the apartheid era. It was suggested that the white racial category may represent the economic majority within South Africa and that perhaps this wealth lies mostly with older generations of white people. During the focus groups, it was suggested that older generations may hold racist ideologies and that the older the generation, the stronger the racist ideology. Thus, some participants spoke of how their grandparents are particularly racist and open about this racism. Furthermore, it was suggested that participants' parents seem to try not to be racist but may still hold beliefs which participants find to be unacceptable. Thus, it seems as if the manner in which racist ideologies are expressed may become more overt in older generations.

Speaking about generational racism seemed to be quite difficult for participants and appeared to be a site of internal conflict. Some participants expressed this as being a harsh truth. Thus, participants

understood that they formed part of a group which contained and seemingly tolerated racist beliefs and ideologies. Although participants expressed the desire to break away from generational racism and gain a greater understanding of racial matters, they also seemed to acknowledge that they were a part of their family structure and therefore seemed to remain attached to this racism. Some participants stated that they often become angry when speaking to older generations about race as older generations seem to portray overt racism. Furthermore, it was suggested that grandparents were often stubborn and unwilling to change their beliefs and therefore challenging racist beliefs often led to arguments without resolutions. One participant spoke of how he still had to live with his family and so it was difficult to challenge this racism, as it would undoubtedly lead to an argument. Another participant expressed his frustration with the older generation of white people, stating that he believed that they were the reason that South Africa was struggling to move forward, seemingly portraying older generations as a form of the *white Other*. Some participants spoke of how their parents had expressed the desire for their children to emigrate from South Africa, demonstrating a lack of faith in the future of the country and perhaps whiteness in South Africa.

Michael: I'm sure the generation that gave birth to us have very, very different mindsets or very different perspectives. Like my dad for example; um, he isn't racist but he's got inherent, it's, it's just the way he's been raised and he will have off-hand comments and they'll just not be acceptable in any politically correct forum.

Stuart: All my grandparents, well the ones that lived in South Africa are very racist and the thing is, like the Facebook thing, you, you have them on Facebook and you feel like; when you share that stuff, people can see we're friends as well and you kind of feel like, is that going to affect me? You don't want to be associated with that stuff.

Angela: At my grandad's house, it was his birthday and some of his friends were there and stuff. And, the one guy started talking about everything and just started saying a few racist things and um, you know, they're very um, ja they won't change the way they think. They um, you know I try and raise a few points to say you know, to almost change the way they see things but there was just no willingness to see things from the perspective. Added to that um, my mom started to tell me to just keep quiet.

Participants seemed to express a frustration with the way in which the Wits context differs to the broader South African context or the context at home. It has been suggested that older generations may hold onto overt racist beliefs which are often in contrast to the beliefs held by white students. However, the younger generation seems to struggle to challenge such beliefs and thus seem to

inadvertently become complicit in the older generations' racist ideologies. Participants appear to suggest that although one's parents may express racist ideologies, this was accidental and doesn't represent their true beliefs. Thus, students seem to ignore these ideologies to a certain extent. Although some generations may be less transparent with regards to the racist ideologies which they may hold, there seems to be a frustration with this generational difference and the unwillingness of older generations to gain awareness. Participants seemed to express a sense of shame when reflecting on the racist ideologies which their parents and grandparents hold.

When stereotypical white talk is challenged within a family context, it often results in an argument without resolution. Perhaps the manner in which these racist ideologies are challenged reflects what has been discussed in previous sections. Perhaps this challenging occurs in a very gentle manner, in an attempt to maintain relationships, which undoubtedly seems to lead to conflict and a lack of change. Older generations may not have been exposed to experiences, such as those which are offered at Wits, which may more effectively assist in one gaining a greater self-awareness. The author suggests that by holding these stereotypical beliefs, the older generation may be able to create a black Other, in order to hold onto a privilege and exclusivity which somehow gives meaning to the atrocities which they may have more explicitly played a role in (Gillborn, 2015). By holding onto the view of black people as being inferior, one may effectively absolve oneself of what one has done, rather than having to accept the hard truth that one may, in fact, have committed these atrocities towards other human beings (Distiller & Steyn, 2004).

It would appear that, outside of the Wits context, white people don't have to be as careful about what they say, racism seems to be more acceptable. Older generations' way of thinking may dominate outside of Wits and thus white students may live through generational racism. However, the expression of generational racism may point towards the way in which implicit racist ideologies become implanted in the minds of the younger generations and are expressed in a subconscious manner rather than the overt manner in which they are expressed by older generations. Perhaps these beliefs are passed down in a systemic manner which may make it difficult to eradicate such beliefs. Furthermore, accounts of generational racism from participants seem to imply that whiteness evolves over time and over generations in order to adapt to the context in which it is placed (Fletcher, 2015). It seems as if, in the context in which older generations of white people find themselves, explicit racism may be more acceptable and useful for whiteness in retaining its power and privilege. However, in younger generations and the contexts in which they find themselves, these explicit views may be rather

disadvantageous to whiteness itself. Thus, whiteness seems to be changing and it is proposed that it may continue to adapt and evolve in an attempt to retain the power and privilege which it holds in contemporary society (Green & Sonn, 2006).

4.7.2. The ambivalence of white belonging in South Africa

During the focus group interviews, participants discussed what they believed to be the role of white people within contemporary South Africa. A sense of belonging or not-belonging became a topic of discussion within the groups, often leading to conflicting views between participants. As has been discussed under previous themes, participants expressed a sense of being unwanted within multiple spaces in the South African context. This was reflected in the way that belonging was spoken of, with a few participants suggesting that it may be better for white people to emigrate rather than continue to live in a space where one is the object of hatred and anger. However, most participants felt that they would like to live in South Africa and felt that they belong, proposing that the role of white people may be to create a sense of unity, harmony and integration beyond racialised difference. There seemed to be a split, with some participants suggesting that they felt as if they were South African and that this was their home while others suggested that they felt as though, emotionally, they were not South African.

Many participants suggested that perhaps South Africans need to work together in order to create acceptance and a sense of unity. Some participants seemed to claim a liberal position in stating that they belong to the planet rather than to a specific country. Furthermore, participants questioned whether one could serve one's own purpose or whether one needed to help black people in order to rectify one's shame and create redress. It emerged from the groups that many participants have strong links to other countries around the world to which they might easily emigrate. It was suggested that white people may often rely on this ability to leave South Africa if it became necessary. Based on this, participants in one group spoke about whether white people really had a role in contemporary South Africa, if they were to use this ability to move away from difficulties as they emerge. It was suggested that emigrating to other countries may be understood as being an easy option, to escape the feeling of being unwanted, whereas, there may be a responsibility for white people to remain in South Africa and assist in rebuilding the country. Thus, it was suggested that perhaps it was necessary for one to place one's own agenda aside if one is to remain in South Africa.

One participant suggested that, as a result of being white, one could not truly identify as a South African. Others suggested that they felt a sense of integration and belonging within the country. Some

participants suggested that at Wits, as a white person, they felt unwanted and that white people didn't belong in that context. This was expressed in contrast to the rest of South Africa as it was suggested that off campus, white people may feel as if they are South African and that they do belong. It was suggested that one who is prepared to lose or change one's racist mindset, and who wants to assist the country, belongs. Many participants suggested that the role of white South Africans is to gain self-awareness as well as an understanding of how the socio-political history of the country has affected current society. Some participants suggested that perhaps the role of white people within the South African context going forward may be in taking a step back, and allowing the white racial category to become a minority. Furthermore, some participants suggested that they have hope in their privilege and that they could use this privilege to assist others and create a sense of integration within South Africa. Many participants suggested that it may be necessary to create an understanding between and across racial categories in order to move forward. It was further suggested that this could occur through an acknowledgment of the past and by attempting to move forward. A couple of participants suggested that white people may need to be willing to lose certain aspects of what it may currently mean to be a white South African in order to assist in the rebuilding of the nation.

James: I was born here, I, I identify as a South African. I do have heritage in Germany um, but I feel like I was born here so this is who I am, you know. This is how I grew up, I'll probably die here. I might move somewhere for a bit but this is home.

Kristen: When I come to Wits, I don't feel like I belong in South Africa but in spaces out of Wits, I'm South African through and through. I also have heritage from other countries but South Africa will always be my home.

Rowan: Ja, in addition I think to, I want to say it's, I think acknowledgment sometimes just not to do anything. Just to sit aside and accept um, that you're white and you have to respectfully um, put your own uh, your own sort of agenda aside. And, I think that's, that's incredibly uh, incredibly important, difficult at times but important to know when to just be quiet.

Some white students had a strong desire to belong in South Africa, yet felt as if they require the permission of black people in order to attain this. It may be suggested that such permission may only ever be granted once there is real equality within the country. As a result, participants seemed to express individual means of attempting to make meaning in relation to this, perhaps suggesting that if this permission is not granted, they still retained the opportunity to move to the countries of their ancestors, a privilege which they may have to invoke (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). However, participants

often spoke of how they felt as if they belonged in certain settings within South Africa. Perhaps the division which occurs in the nation has created spaces and settings which may allow white people to feel more or less comfortable and safe (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Furthermore, it seems as if these spaces may reflect spaces which have been tainted by whiteness and racialisation; economic settings, middle-class settings etc. Therefore, it was suggested that white students often do not feel as if they belong at Wits. This may suggest their minority status, the overt inequality as well as the criticality which exists within the context of Wits. Alternatively, some participants suggested that they belong in any setting as a result of their liberalism. This seems to infer that one does not need to play any role within the context of contemporary South Africa in order to feel a sense of belonging. Perhaps the attempt at the redefinition of contemporary white identities suggests the need for whiteness to evolve within its context in order for white people to gain or maintain a sense of belonging (Matthews, 2011).

Discussions implied a difficulty which white people may face in knowing what their role is within contemporary society. It was suggested that perhaps white people need to take a metaphorical step back and to be silent. Although this may better resemble a yearning for invisibility, it also suggests that white people recognise that whiteness and white identities need to be reconstructed within the South African context. It seems as if there is a desire for white people to adapt and gain awareness of themselves and their racial category and in doing so assist in deconstructing the inequality which persists as a result of whiteness. Although this desire seems to exist, it may be suggested that this evolution may maintain power and privilege while attempting to regain a sense of invisibility. If the power and privilege which whiteness affords was to be stripped away in some sense, white people might act on their ability to emigrate to countries in which whiteness continues to maintain this power and privilege more effectively (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Thus, it seems as if the development which is required is one which may not occur easily and one which may be confronted with much resistance. Thus, it may become a difficult task for white people to know what to do and what is expected, making it somewhat easier for white people to continue to play an ambiguous role and maintain an ambiguous sense of belonging within the South African context. Although this may result in a feeling of unease in discussing topics such as these, it may allow whiteness to hold onto its current role in South Africa without being effectively challenged. The difficulty in placing the role of whiteness and white people may reflect its invisible nature. Furthermore, it seems as if whiteness may hold onto a sense of belonging within certain contexts (areas of white comfort) and so this unease may easily be avoided by remaining in such contexts (Distiller & Steyn, 2004).

4.8. Navigating a hostile social terrain within a history of oppression

Whiteness seems to be evolving within contemporary South Africa. This is evidenced by the intergenerational difference of the expression of whiteness. This evolution and adaptation seems to serve as a means of creating a sense of belonging for white people as well as to maintain, or perhaps, retain, the privileges which whiteness affords; serving the continuity of whiteness (Fletcher, 2015). Furthermore, racist ideologies held by older generations seem to be passed down to younger generations who hold such ideologies subconsciously and express such ideologies in an implied manner. Although such ideologies often remain unchallenged in areas of white comfort, there seem to be certain contexts and instances in which such ideologies are challenged and critically engaged. Wits seems to represent one of these contexts. Although whiteness continues to adapt in this manner, the history of oppression within the South African context seems to continue to affect contemporary society both socially and economically.

The effects of apartheid seem to linger and continue to shape contemporary contexts in many ways. The next core theme attempts to address some of the ways in which the ramifications of apartheid reportedly affect participants within society. Furthermore, the following sub-themes attempt to capture the way that participants accounted for these ramifications as well as the way in which they reportedly react and respond to incidents, and an environment, in which the ramifications of the past remain. Participants spoke of South Africa in a way that inferred a land of racial and social hostility. Participants suggested that in particular social settings, social hostility could be felt more intensely. Moreover, Wits seems to represent a location in which social hostility, fueled by racial inequality, seems to be experienced by participants. Participants implied that there was a need to navigate and traverse the social environment of Wits in order to both learn about society and to gain a tertiary education. The #FeesMustFall movement seemed to represent a unique instance in which the hostility towards white students at Wits may have been felt more powerfully. The following sub-themes attempt to explore the way that participants accounted for the manner in which the ramifications of the past affect society and how they attempt to navigate this social hostility.

4.8.1. The recipient of social hostility

Participants spoke of South Africa as being socially hostile, with much of this hostility occurring between racial categories. Specific environments, such as Wits, were considered to represent locations where this hostility may be felt more intensely. During the focus groups, it was implied that the

hostility which is experienced at Wits was directed at white students by black students. Some participants spoke of how they were overtly aware of falling within the racial minority at Wits and that perhaps this is related to this hostility. Participants suggested that they felt bullied, unwanted, ostracised, hated or marginalised at Wits because of their racial identification. However, some participants suggested that although the hostility at Wits can feel like a personal attack, it was more useful to understand it as an attack on the semantics of whiteness rather than on oneself as a white person. Thus, it seemed as if some participants attempted to depersonalise this hostility in order to better navigate or understand oneself as an object of hatred.

Certain topics of conversation within lectures were described as catalysts for this hostility. It was reported that lectures with political content often resulted in feelings of being under attack and these represented moments in which participants suggested that one would have to be careful about what one said as one could easily find this hostility directed towards oneself as a white person. Some participants spoke of their frustration with the thought that black people may speak negatively about white people, whereas white people often felt that they had to remain silent. Participants spoke of their own anxiety with regards to volunteering to be a part of the focus groups as they felt as if this hostility may be directed towards them if they were to volunteer. Furthermore this hostility was often portrayed via messages which were spray painted on walls around campus, written on bathroom walls or even on the shirts that some black people wear on campus. In attempting to understand the hostility directed towards whiteness participants often suggested that the hostility which is aimed at whiteness comes from only a small group of black people and that these feelings do not represent the way that all black people feel. #FeesMustFall was identified as a moment in which there was much hostility directed towards whiteness. It was suggested that most white people attempted to avoid becoming too involved in order to avoid this anger and perceived threat. Although most spoke of the difficulties of this hostility, a few participants suggested that the discomfort which comes from this hostility might be a chance to learn and might actually be thought of as useful. It was suggested that this hostility might give certain participants the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the nuances of society.

> *James: You kind of have to realise that when people are referring to white people, it's not a direct uh, attack on you as a person. It's an attack on the semantics of what whiteness is. So I think, coming to Wits you need to realise that that's something that you need to remove out of your head. That if there's something that's happening that maybe you feel uncomfortable with because whiteness is being attacked, it's not a personal attack on you, it's an attack on the semantics of what whiteness is.*

Tara: I've heard comments at Wits around, I mean also when you walk past a tagged thing on a building and it says 'fuck white people', and you read on the back of bathroom doors. And, it feels hostile, that kind of environment with those kinds of messages feels like a hostile environment.

Frank: I remember my first day at Wits I walked on, it was the day of registration and I was walking behind uh, a black fellow, quite a big guy and on the back of his shirt was you know, the slogan 'fuck white people'. And it was really like, scary for me at that point. I didn't know what to think, I was like you know, what am I doing, it's my first day on campus you know.

It seems as if participants are acutely aware of the social hostility which occurs within the South African context, suggesting that this hostility is felt as being stronger within the Wits context. In this sense, it seems as if white people may feel that they are the objects of hatred (Eagle, 2018). By being present on campus one may become an object onto which black people may project their hatred for whiteness and a socio-political history which has resulted in inequality and poverty (Eagle, 2018). Participants varied in their responses to being this object. Some expressed how it was unfair that they were to be this object when in fact they personally had not played a part in this inequality. In these instances, participants seemed to hold feelings of anger and frustration which seemingly could not be expressed towards the black people who were making them feel this way. Participants suggested that these projections were unfair, and perhaps they are correct. However, in avoiding retaliation, it appears that white students may on some level feel shameful for producing, or playing a part in producing, this hatred and hostility (Stevens, 2018). Perhaps, in some ways, white students understand this hostility and thus their shame outweighs their anger, resulting in an inability to retaliate. Furthermore, a lack of retaliation may be an attempt at avoiding this hostility, as to speak may result in further attack. Similarly, it seems as if the conception of this hatred as coming from a small group of black people may serve to alleviate a sense of shame and to allow one to feel as if one is still wanted at Wits. It may also serve as a mechanism which attempts to delegitimise this hatred and thus avoid ownership of this hatred.

Some participants seemed to suggest that by being white, one may represent the oppressor, the being that has led to the suffering and poverty of black people (Eagle, 2018). In portraying this understanding, it would appear that some participants are able to accept the hatred of black people by deflecting it towards whiteness, or by holding a greater understanding of this hatred as being an attack on a broader system, rather than on oneself as an individual (Stevens, 2018). This seems to suggest that some participants held a level of self-awareness as well as an awareness of the broader system which

has created such inequality. Thus, these participants may both identify with and separate from the oppressor. Some participants identified moments of such hostility as being uncomfortable while suggesting that this discomfort may represent an opportunity for one's own development (Straker, 2011). Perhaps such instances represent moments at which whiteness becomes unsettled and thus require an adaptation or evolution (Stevens et al., 2006). Such moments may assist in the recrafting of one's identity.

4.8.2. (Non)Acceptance of privilege

During the focus groups, participants spoke of white privilege; it either emerged organically or was brought into the space based on the focus group questionnaire. When speaking about white privilege, the majority of participants spoke of accepting and acknowledging this privilege. However, when it was explored further, it emerged that participants each had differing understandings of what white privilege referred to. Some believed that it referred to economic wealth and being born into wealth while others agreed and added that it also referred to the privileges which are afforded to white people in everyday life. During the discussions, some participants seemed to take the opportunity to explain and explore white privilege to those who had a limited understanding. Although all participants acknowledged white privilege and their own privilege, some challenged this, suggesting that some white people struggle and some black people do not. It seems as if some participants showed insight into the concept of white privilege while others did not; some were open to learning more about privilege while others were more guarded. However, all participants claimed that they acknowledge their white privilege and tended to speak of Other white people who do not.

Upon reflection, some participants spoke of how they have always had privilege and as a result have never been denied anything based on their identity and racial category. Furthermore, a few participants spoke of privilege as being normalised and as being something which white people have come to expect, suggesting that white people may choose to be ignorant of this privilege and continue to benefit from it. A few participants spoke of how, from their experience, white people tend to acknowledge privilege yet go on to capitalise on this privilege nonetheless. One participant spoke of how he liked to address and accept privilege overtly so that it could be discussed and so that he could then move past this. Furthermore, the awareness and acknowledgment of white privilege were seen to be gained from the Wits environment and the #FeesMustFall movement in particular. The acknowledgement of one's privilege often led to a sense of shame and responsibility. Participants seemed to believe that it was the responsibility of white people to use their privilege to help others and to give back. When asked about

white domination, most participants requested a definition and attempted to describe it themselves. Participants seemed to view it as a legalised domination, similar to that of the apartheid era and thus suggested that white domination no longer exists.

Michael: I think, from my experience, what I've seen, the patterns I've seen is; ja, ja ,ja, we fully acknowledge that we're privileged and the thing, this is the thing but nothing will change, they'll go on with their life and they'll go on to be successful, maybe leave the country um, be apathetic.

James: I think to a large extent I like addressing [white privilege]. I like pointing out that if there is an issue, we speak about it because uh, I don't want it to be something that's like underneath and like boiling up kind of vibe. I like putting it out in the open, acknowledging it and then getting it over and done with because once it's done, if there's any more issues then you can be like; well, you're being racist yourself.

Rowan: Whites were economically privileged, I think even so, it's, it's, it's a social construct that we often can't get a grips of just because, the mere fact that we're white. Um, and that's why often, often it's like, in discourses like this I often just say; I don't have the right to say that, you know.

Within the South African context, one cannot easily negate whiteness and the privileges which it affords (Vice, 2010). It emerged from the focus groups that all participants accepted that white privilege exists and that it affects them. Furthermore, all participants spoke of how they both accepted and acknowledged their own privilege. However, some participants seemed to have a narrow view of the concept of white privilege and the way in which it may affect them. Some participants took the focus group as an opportunity to educate others about the magnitude of white privilege and how it cannot be rendered down to merely economic wealth alone. Most participants were able to accept and take on further explanations of and insight into privilege, which seems to suggest a willingness to learn and remain critical. However, following this acceptance, some participants would go on to challenge the concept of white privilege and the validity of this. In these instances, it seemed as if white privilege was accepted as a politically correct statement, as if it was a necessary acceptance which was required regardless of whether one believed it to be true or not. Thus, in some instances, acceptance may be used as a means to discontinue discussions regarding privilege and systemic inequality. This acceptance may be a strategy which allows one to avert social hostility, seemingly presenting oneself as an object on which anger may not be justly projected.

The acceptance of white privilege may be an effective method of ending discussions or conversation with regards to white privilege. Perhaps whiteness has evolved to a point at which this strategy is used to silence the criticisms of whiteness. As such, whiteness may deflect criticism by accepting its

privilege yet simultaneously maintain this privilege. Thus, it is difficult to differentiate between an individual who has gained an actual acceptance of their white privilege and one who uses this acceptance as an effective means of navigating the social hostility within the South African context. Either way, one may accept one's privilege and go on to continuously benefit from this privilege. The acknowledgment of one's privilege seemed to be held as being particularly important by participants. This seems to suggest a fair amount of thought and some sort of unspoken requirement. However, individually accepting privilege does not seem to create systemic change effectively (McIntosh, 2003). Thus, one may verbally accept one's privilege without truly accepting it. Moreover, one may accept this privilege as a means of averting critical attention while one continues to benefit from this privilege.

4.8.3. Diminishing radical transformational efforts

When speaking about #FeesMustFall, participants generally spoke about the protests and the manner in which the protests occurred. When asked about the demands of #FeesMustFall, most participants seemed to ask for clarity around the demands; free tertiary education and decoloniality were given as the main demands of the movement. In response to this, the majority of participants suggested that they supported these demands and thought they were fair. Furthermore, they seemed to acknowledge the importance of the movement. However, many participants reflected on the practicality of the demands and generally followed this acknowledgment with individual opinions surrounding how the movement might be more effective by stating more realistic demands. A few participants attempted to redirect conversation away from the demands of the movement towards the manner in which the movement played out and may have disrupted their own studies or inconvenienced their experience at Wits.

Some participants supported the means of protest used in an attempt to bring attention to the movement, which was seemingly going unnoticed. However, some participants suggested that the means in which the movement attempted to acquire these demands was not aligned with their moral judgement and so they could no longer support the movement when violence and destruction of property began. When probed further, these participants acknowledged the need for the measures which were undertaken, however, continued to state that they disagreed with these measures based on moral beliefs. Some participants commented on how it may be unrealistic to attempt to provide free tertiary education in a developing country, suggesting that it might be more useful to try to improve education at a primary and secondary level. Furthermore, some participants spoke of the demands as being short-sighted and inconceivable. Although most participants agreed with the call for

decolonialised education, it was proposed that tertiary institutions could not merely throw away knowledge. The complexity of moving towards decoloniaity seemed to leave most participants without a proposed solution.

James: I think that, I think free education is something that we can't do but I think addressing the tools that can lead us there is an important, like NSFAS. So like NSFAS has so many, millions of misappropriated funds and I think a lot of the times, energy is directed in the wrong areas. Um, but when it comes to like sort of situations where students are tearing up the floorboards, I do support it to a degree because if there's no tension to the issue, and if that's how you're going to get attention then get attention.

Tara: I think if we could get free education in this country, it would be awesome for everyone. I think the avenues and the way people went about crediting the movement, getting the movement heard. I understand the point of; no one's listening to us, we need to get some sort of exposure. I uh, vehemently disagree with the destruction of property, vehemently disagree with violence of any kind.

Frank: Um, well I think, almost like whiteness aside you know, as a person I feel you know, that the call for free education is definitely justified. Um, whether it's possible in the next twenty years or not is another question. But, I feel like there needs to be a concerted effort you know, to make education more accessible and I feel like the decolonisation is extremely valid. It's very important you know, to actually get to look at what Africa has to say about intellectual pursuits you know. Let's study African literature you know, let's look at postcolonial documents you know, let's look at Steve Biko's you know, critical race theory and not necessarily you know Bloom's or whatever, you know. So I definitely think like, that's a very powerful and very positive thing; decolonisation of the space and of the curriculum. And, ja, education needs to be more accessible but the way that it's you know, the movement that's gone about trying to make that uh claim has been very uh, short-sighted and detrimental to the claim itself.

Although a few participants disagreed with the demands of the #FeesMustFall movement, the majority of the participants suggested that these claims were valid. However, participants would often go on to suggest that although the demands were valid, they were possibly exaggerated or unrealistic within the current South African context. It is useful to consider that focus groups occurred in 2017, a point at which #FeesMustFall had lost traction, a point at which it seemed as if it might regain traction towards the end of the year. Thus, it seemed as if participants were preparing for an expected increase in conversation around #FeesMustFall, perhaps preparing their comments likewise. Participants seemed to support the demands of the movement while concurrently holding criticisms for both the manner in which black students attempted to reach these demands as well as the practicality of these demands (Steyn & Foster, 2008). Thus, participants offered solutions which they believed to be more viable.

This seemed to be an attempt to assist the movement but may also have implied that black students might require white voices in order to gain practical changes. Furthermore, this may suggest whiteness' attempts at representing its superiority to blackness and the methods used within this movement (Green et al., 2007). Participants seemed to focus on the nature of the protests rather than the demands of the movement. In this way, it seems as if participants were able to extinguish the idea of free decolonialised education. Thus, responses seemed to act as a means of blunting the possibility of such transformation (Steyn & Foster, 2008).

In criticising the nature of the protests, participants seemed to implicitly critique the manner in which black students protested which might not be considered appropriate to white people. Perhaps in this sense the protests reflected a separation from what may be considered an appropriate form of protest from a context of whiteness and the system of colonialism. Thus, the protests themselves may represent a sense of decoloniality. In disagreeing with the methods of protests, some participants may have expressed an urge to hold onto colonial ideologies and what is considered acceptable within a system of whiteness. It may be proposed that the nature of being a student at Wits has exposed white students to the poverty and inequality that many black students face in terms of funding education as well as the struggles of attempting to conform to colonial education. Thus, the supposed support for #FeesMustFall may imply a sense of empathy for black students at Wits.

The responses from participants seemed to function as a way to preserve one's sense of self, avoiding social hostility by acknowledging the importance of the demands and presenting oneself in a positive light. However, it also seemed to reflect a similar function to that which was found in Steyn and Foster's (2008) study of white talk. Talk surrounding the transformational effort of #FeesMustFall seemed to show a sense of understanding and altruism, followed by the implication that although transformation and redress is necessary, it is invalid and unrealistic (Steyn & Foster, 2008). Furthermore, responses seemed to function as an attempt at re-inscribing the power and domination of whiteness by suggesting that white solutions may be more effective (Steyn & Foster, 2008). These responses also seemed to be an opportunity for participants to criticise black people and a primarily Afrocentric movement. Thus, responses to the demands of the #FeesMustFall movement provided an opportunity to implicitly criticise black students and may represent an attempt at retaining white domination and the power of whiteness.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

5.1. Introduction

The socio-political history of South Africa has resulted in a unique climate of race, racialisation and racism within contemporary society (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). A history of oppression and the legalised domination of whiteness during the apartheid era reflects the division and inequality which seems to continue in post-apartheid South Africa (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). In contemporary South Africa, whiteness has lost political power. However, systems of oppression seem to linger as socio-economic inequalities continue to divide the nation (Terre Blanche, 2006). Furthermore, implicit racist ideologies seem to have persisted through the transition from apartheid to contemporary South Africa, as the social divide in the country seems to remain (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). Whiteness seems to evolve and adapt over time and within certain contexts in an attempt to retain the power and the privilege which it affords white people based on a globalised system of power (Green & Sonn, 2005). Thus, although whiteness in South Africa seems to have lost certain privileges and power, it continues to retain many of the implicit and explicit forms of privilege and power which were established in the socio-political history of the country (Terre Blanche, 2006). Whiteness as an ideology remains and continues to play an important role in the constant development of the socio-economic landscape of South Africa.

5.2. Summary of findings

The current study utilised data obtained from three focus groups in which accounts of whiteness from white South African students living in contemporary South Africa were explored. Participants in this study were second and third year students who were enrolled in psychology courses at Wits in 2017. A semi-structured, open-ended interview guide was used in order to gain data and accounts of whiteness. This qualitative study falls within the interpretive paradigm in which Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of analysis were utilised in order to conduct a thematic analysis on the data collected. The analysis resulted in seven themes which reflect both descriptive accounts from participants as well as the researcher's subjective interpretations of these accounts in relation to the literature review.

The anxiety of race talk amongst white people was the first theme which emerged from the analysis. This theme reflects the difficulties and uncertainties which arise when speaking about race. The context in which one finds oneself as well as the particular racial makeup of the group in which one is located affects one's comfortability in talking about race. Participants seemed to attempt to create a

rhetorical distance between themselves and their racial category. This seems to function as a means of regaining a sense of invisibility in which one may be viewed as being separate from the white racial category, the privileges which it affords and the inequality which it has created and maintains. Thus, it seems as if white people may attempt to absolve themselves from the atrocities and oppression associated with the white racial category by defining oneself as an individual.

Universities as unique sites for critical thinking in South Africa was the second theme to emerge. Participants spoke about Wits as being a unique context in which concepts such as race are often challenged and critically discussed. Furthermore, Wits allows for an experience which has affected the way that participants think about and conceptualise their identities within contemporary South Africa. This theme points to the tension which arises at Wits as students are exposed to certain hard truths about society and the white racial category in which they are placed. The social context of Wits seems to have resulted in racial melancholia for many of its white students. As one becomes aware of the injustices of the past which continue in contemporary society, one mourns the loss of a previous understanding of one's racial category (Eng & Han, 2000). The belief that the world is fair and just may be discontinued as one learns of how one's racial category has affected others (Straker, 2004). Furthermore, this tension seems to persist as white students attempt to grapple with and redefine their identities through such contexts and within particular moments.

The myth of the rainbow nation was the third theme to be discussed. This theme describes the divide which continues within contemporary South Africa based on racial categories. It seems as though racialised relating continues within post-apartheid South Africa as the country remains somewhat divided by race. At the same time, there seems to be a desire to define oneself in relation to Other white people in order to retain a sense of oneself as a unique individual, separate from the atrocities related to the white racial category (Hook, 2006a). This Other may further assist in developing a positive self-image in light of the legacy of one's racial category.

The ambivalence of relating to the black Other is the fourth theme, which discusses what appeared to be a desire to join blackness from a distance. It seems as if participants had the desire to be involved in certain black movements. However, this involvement occurred in something of a voyeuristic manner, as if white people may observe and learn from the struggles of black people. Participants seemed to observe from a distance as their privilege allowed them to observe without a need to become more involved. Furthermore, white students seem to long for a return of invisibility which was displaced

upon enrolment at Wits. Attempts at separating oneself from the white racial category and the act of white Othering may develop from a search for individual invisibility.

Attempts at relieving the burden of being the oppressor is the fifth theme, which alludes to the burdens that participants implied that they carry as a result of being identified as a part of the white racial category. The white racial category is associated with a history of violence and being the oppressor. Thus, white people often seem to represent an embodiment of whiteness as an ideology and may therefore become the target of anger and frustration. White students seem to be aware of the privilege afforded to them, to some extent, as well as the resulting inequalities associated with whiteness. Thus, white students seem to feel shameful about their identification with the white racial category and the historical injustices committed by their racial category. Participants expressed a desire to relieve oneself of this shame. Often, it was expressed that one hoped to be able to make up for one's feelings of shame. Participants often had suggestions for how this may begin. This seemed to imply that although whiteness may be the cause of inequality, it may also be the solution, attempting to re-centre whiteness within society.

The recrafting of contemporary whiteness is the sixth theme which emerged from the analysis. This theme speaks to the way that whiteness has evolved over generations and the way that it adapts within certain contexts. Participants suggested that there are marked differences in beliefs between generations of white people. Ideologies of whiteness have adapted to become more covert in younger generations while remaining more overt in older generations of white people. Furthermore, the difference in beliefs between generations seemed to be a site of frustration and shame for many participants who reportedly struggle to successfully challenge the racist beliefs of their elders. This theme also explores the manner in which participants spoke about belonging or not belonging in South Africa. Participants portrayed mixed views with regards to this as they attempted to recraft an identity which would allow them to feel as if they belong in contemporary South Africa. Participants suggested that white people who are willing to assist in reconstructing whiteness belong in contemporary South Africa. However, participants also held onto their ability to emigrate to ancestral lands if this was required.

Navigating a hostile social terrain within a history of oppression is the last theme which emerged. This theme discusses the way that the socio-political history of South Africa continues to affect contemporary society. It seems as if white South Africans are often the recipients of social hostility as a result of the systems of power which create inequality in the country, as well as the country's past

and a legacy of whiteness. Whiteness seems to be a site of critique within multiple contexts in contemporary South Africa and participants spoke of a hostility which often left them feeling unwanted and ostracised. Furthermore, this theme discusses the way that participants attempt to respond to this hostility. It seems as if white students attempt to hold onto the privilege which whiteness provides while attempting to portray themselves as individuals, separate from one's racial category. Thus, attempts at radical transformation within the country are often responded to in a way which retains one's sense of virtue, while criticising the effectiveness of these attempts in order to hold onto this privilege (Steyn & Foster, 2008).

In contemporary South Africa, whiteness attempts to retain the power and privilege which it affords white people. The power which whiteness holds seems to remain somewhat invisible while the privilege of whiteness is a difficult truth to negate within a context where inequality is so clearly drawn along racial lines (Vice, 2010). Certain contexts within contemporary South Africa seem to critically discuss and remove the invisibility of this power and the systems which continue to advantage white people at the expense of black people. Wits seems to be one of these contexts. The nature of Wits and its criticality have allowed it to become a unique site in which one may broaden one's self-awareness as well as gain an awareness of the systems which create and maintain inequality. Furthermore, there seem to be specific moments in which whiteness becomes unsettled, such as the #FeesMustFall movement. Such moments in which whiteness become unsettled are occurring more frequently in contemporary South Africa, perhaps offering opportunity for the challenging and recrafting of whiteness (Eagle, 2018).

Throughout the majority of the themes produced in this report, there seems to be a common, deep sense of ambiguity and uncertainty which was held by participants. This ambiguity and uncertainty arises within white students as a result of certain places, spaces and contexts in which white students are located. Perhaps these feelings reflect the more frequently unsettled nature of whiteness within contemporary society as the ideologies, power and privileges of whiteness become more visible within certain contexts. There is a need to recraft one's identity in order to evade this ambiguity and uncertainty. This recrafting may represent the hope of gaining a greater sense of belonging within the South African context. Thus, white students have a precarious notion of identity, one which holds a racial melancholia as well as a sense of self-awareness which calls for the renegotiation and recrafting of one's identity. However, this ambiguity and uncertainty may not be laid to rest until white people manage, or attempt, to lose their privilege and find a way for this privilege to cannibalise itself.

The broader systemic power and inequality of whiteness may be becoming more visible within multiple contexts and thus, may need to be addressed and redressed effectively in order to recraft an identity which may reclaim a sense of pride. However, this may be a difficult task and one which white people may not feel they are prepared to accept. Thus, it is suggested that the South African context holds the possibility for the challenging of whiteness and the systems which create inequality, yet these challenges will most likely fall on deaf ears; these challenges may not produce the change required. Such a concrete end point to the unique socio-economic difficulties within South Africa may not be possible within the current generation. Rather, it is argued that the process which society undertakes in order to aim for such change may be a more important task within contemporary South Africa. The desire and need to recraft one's identity within contemporary South Africa seems to be a difficult and ongoing process, but one that suggests that whiteness is becoming more frequently unsettled and negotiable.

5.3. Limitations of the study

The most significant limitation of this study emerges as a result of the methodology which was selected and utilised, including the sampling as well as the data collection and analysis. Firstly, within the sampling process, it is acknowledged that only second and third year psychology classes were approached as a population group. Although the sampling was both convenient and purposive, it may have resulted in only a certain kind of potential participant being included in the focus groups. Psychology students may have very different experiences and accounts of whiteness to students who are enrolled in different courses within the university. Thus, there may have been a certain lack of diversity within the sample itself which may affect the validity of the study and the way in which themes may be suggested to represent certain populations. Furthermore, white students who were willing to participate in the study may also represent a particular kind of white student; those who are willing to discuss whiteness and concepts such as race. Thus, accounts of whiteness given do not necessarily represent those of all white students.

Qualitative research and studies which occupy the interpretive paradigm are often criticised based on their validity (Soafer, 2002). It is acknowledged that within this study, validity may be brought into question. In such research, the researcher's subjectivity becomes an integral part of the research itself. The researcher's subjectivity played a role in the construction of the open-ended, semi-structured interview guide which was used within focus groups. Furthermore, within the data collection phase, the researcher's subjectivity may have directed the groups at some level, following themes which

seemed relevant to the researcher at those moments in time. Thus, although the open-ended, semi-structured interview guide, along with the research methodology, may attempt to increase the study's reliability by making it replicable, the researcher's subjectivity may have been a limitation within the data collection phase.

Within the data analysis phase of the research, the researcher's subjectivity once again seems to create a limitation to the study. From the vast amount of data collected from the focus groups, the researcher's subjectivity was vital in the co-production of themes and sub-themes (Scotland, 2012). Interpretations of themes and phenomena are acknowledged as being subjective and are formed in a co-production of knowledge between the data and the researcher (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The researcher selected themes and sub-themes based on what the researcher believed to be significant. This suggests that if another person was to conduct the data analysis, they would most likely find alternative themes and sub-themes based on their subjectivity. Thus, it is acknowledged that the themes selected and the data analysis itself does not represent the full extent of what was portrayed within the focus groups both explicitly and implicitly, it rather represents what that researcher found to be significant within the focus groups and the researcher's interpretations of these themes (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Although the research methodologies selected for this study arrive with limitations, such as that of validity, such research attempts to claim a sense of legitimacy and trustworthiness without the need for a certainty which is uncontested (Angen, 2000). Without such research, in which the certainty of the research's validity may be challenged, research into what it means to be human would in itself become limited. Angen (2000) suggests that the loss of certainty which comes with such research is alleviated by what we may stand to gain in both moral and applied relevance with regards to what it means to be human.

5.4. Directions for future research

In South Africa, whiteness has historically blossomed on the premise of threat. Colonisers arrived to the supposed threat of the 'savage' natives. Apartheid created a geographical segregation in order to protect white people from the continued threat that the black racial category was believed to hold. In contemporary South Africa, this perceived threat seems to remain as the fear of white genocide and the narrative that black people are taking white people's jobs etc. continues. The loss of political power also seems to have been perceived as a political threat to white people. There seems to be some sort of requirement for the continual defense against a perceived threat from the black Other, a constant fear of white genocide. Thus, it may be suggested that in South Africa, whiteness is not necessarily

preserved through privilege as it seems to be in many other countries. Rather, it may be suggested that what holds white people together and preserves whiteness in South Africa is the constant, perceived threat of the black Other. In the South African context, whiteness seems to have grown and developed on the back of black threat. Thus, privilege may be better understood as a consequence of such threat perception. Interestingly, in attempting to navigate whiteness, this threat seems to be reproduced in contemporary society, holding some sense of whiteness together and reproducing white privilege. Although it seems as if white people are attempting to grapple with whiteness and with conceptions of white identity, sometimes, white people may in fact repeat the patterns which have maintained whiteness for so long.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical clearance form

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (SCHOOL OF HUMAN & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: MACC/17/008 IH**
PROJECT TITLE:	Accounts of whiteness from white university students living in contemporary South Africa
INVESTIGATORS	Sly Daniel
DEPARTMENT	Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	06/06/17
DECISION OF COMMITTEE*	Approved

This ethical clearance is valid for 2 years and may be renewed upon application

DATE: 06 June 2017

CHAIRPERSON
(Dr Hugo Canham)

cc Supervisor:

Prof. Garth Stevens
Psychology

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR (S)

To be completed in duplicate and **one copy** returned to the Secretary, Room 100015, 10th floor, Senate House, University.

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 a revised protocol to the Committee.

This ethical clearance will expire on 31 December 2019

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix B: Letter of request for permission to approach students (each personalised dependent on whom they were to be sent to)

PSYCHOLOGY
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 · Tel: 011 717 4541 · Fax: 011 717 4559 · E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Day, Month, 2017

Dear X

Letter of request for permission to approach students for research purposes

This letter serves to act as a request for myself, Daniel Sly (a student in the Master of Arts in Community-Based Counselling Psychology Programme), to approach third year psychology students during class time in an attempt to gain a sample of participants for my Masters research.

The title of the research is: ***Accounts of whiteness from white university students living in contemporary South Africa***. This study is aimed at investigating accounts of whiteness from the perspective of white South African university students. It aims at exploring experiences of whiteness and what we can infer with regards to the current social terrain of contemporary South African society as it pertains to whiteness. A copy of the research proposal as well as Faculty approval letter, are attached.

I am requesting 5 to 10 minutes at the start or end of lectures (depending on the preference of lecturer) to address the class.

I look forward to your response, and trust that my request will be favourably reviewed.

Sincerely

Student: Daniel Sly (danrsly@gmail.com)

Supervisor: Prof. Garth Stevens (Garth.Stevens@wits.ac.za)

Appendix C: Participant registration form

Participant Register – Whiteness Focus Groups

Name	Email Address	Contact No.

Appendix D: Contact detail cards

Whiteness Research Participation	***Whiteness Research Participation***
Daniel Sly	Daniel Sly
danrsly@gmail.com	danrsly@gmail.com
Whiteness Research Participation	***Whiteness Research Participation***
Daniel Sly	Daniel Sly
danrsly@gmail.com	danrsly@gmail.com
Whiteness Research Participation	***Whiteness Research Participation***
Daniel Sly	Daniel Sly
danrsly@gmail.com	danrsly@gmail.com
Whiteness Research Participation	***Whiteness Research Participation***
Daniel Sly	Daniel Sly
danrsly@gmail.com	danrsly@gmail.com
Whiteness Research Participation	***Whiteness Research Participation***
Daniel Sly	Daniel Sly
danrsly@gmail.com	danrsly@gmail.com
Whiteness Research Participation	***Whiteness Research Participation***
Daniel Sly	Daniel Sly
danrsly@gmail.com	danrsly@gmail.com

Appendix E: Participant information sheet

PSYCHOLOGY
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 · Tel: 011 717 4541 · Fax: 011 717 4559 · E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Good afternoon

My name is Daniel Sly. I am currently studying Master's in Community-Based Counselling Psychology at the University of the Witswatersrand. The topic for my Master's dissertation is: *Accounts of whiteness from white university students living in contemporary South Africa*. I am conducting this research for the purpose of obtaining this degree. This study is aimed at investigating accounts of whiteness from the perspective of young, white South African university students. It aims at exploring experiences of whiteness and what these infer with regards to the current social terrain of contemporary South African society.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. Participation in this study will involve taking part in a focus group discussion which will centre around whiteness in South Africa. I will be facilitating this focus group. The discussion should take approximately one and a half hours. Participation is voluntary. Everything you say during the discussion will be kept as confidential as possible. The discussion will be audio-recorded and only my supervisor and I will have access to these recordings. The recordings and transcripts of these recordings will be stored in a password protected laptop. Although I know who you are, and other participants may identify you, confidentiality will be maintained by not disclosing any information that is of a personal nature in the report. I also ask that you all respect each other's confidentiality. I will assign a pseudo name to your information in the report. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. You also have the right to refrain from answering any question should you wish to do so. Feedback in the form of a short summary of results will be emailed to you upon request. You may e-mail me if you would like to receive this. My contact details as well as my supervisor's appear below. The feedback will be available approximately 8 months after the collection of the data.

Before beginning the interview I will need you to read through and sign the consent form. These forms will confirm that you are aware of everything that we have discussed concerning confidentiality, feedback and privacy. Please detach and keep this sheet.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Sly

danrsly@gmail.com

084 521 7553

Supervisor:

Prof. Garth Stevens

Garth.stevens@wits.ac.za

Appendix F: Informed consent form

PSYCHOLOGY
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 · Tel: 011 717 4541 · Fax: 011 717 4559 · E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Consent form for Whiteness Focus Group Interview

I_____, consent to being interviewed within a focus group by Daniel Sly for his study on *Accounts of whiteness from white university students living in contemporary South Africa* with the full understanding that:

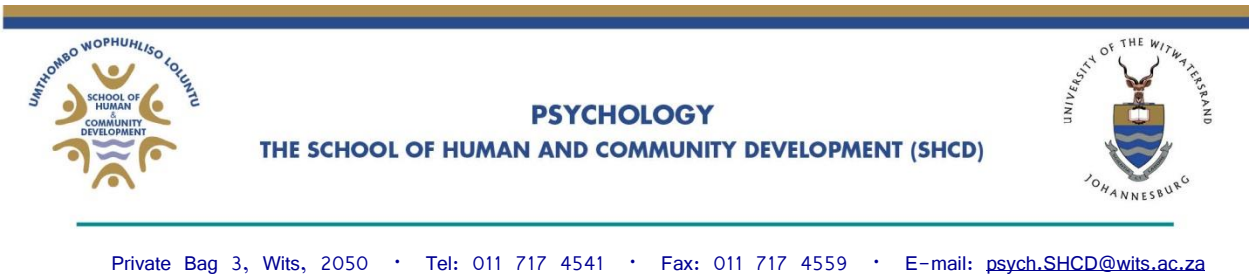
- Participation in this focus group is voluntary.
- Refusal to participate will involve no penalty.
- I have a right to refuse to answer any questions that I prefer not to answer.
- I may withdraw from the study at any time.
- No identifying information will be used in the research report except for direct quotes. However, through the use of pseudo names in the writing of the research report, the researcher will keep all responses as anonymous as possible.
- An audio recording device will be used to record the focus group interviews.
- The recordings and transcripts will not be seen or heard by anyone other than the researcher and his supervisor.
- The tapes and transcripts will be kept in a digital format in a password protected laptop.
- Pseudo names will be used to identify different participants in the report to maintain confidentiality in the write-up.
- Quotations from focus groups will be used in publications.

Consent for focus group participation

Date: _____

Signature of Participant:

Appendix G: Consent for recording form



Consent Form (Recording)

I, _____ give my consent for the focus group interview with Daniel Sly to be audio recorded for his study. I understand that:

- The recordings and transcripts will not be seen or heard by anyone other than the researcher and his supervisor.

- The recordings and transcripts will be stored in a password protected laptop.

- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.

- Although direct quotes from the interview may be used in the research report, I will be referred to by a pseudo name.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix H: Semi-structured, open-ended interview guide

Welcome

Good afternoon and welcome. Thank you all for being here and for agreeing to participate. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and experiences. My name is Dan, I'm currently a student in the Masters of Arts in Community-Based Counselling Psychology programme. The topic for my Master's dissertation is: Accounts of whiteness from white university students living in contemporary South Africa. You were selected because you are all white, South African university students. The results of this focus group will add to the understanding of what whiteness means in contemporary South Africa. I will be facilitating two other focus groups like this.

Guidelines

The focus group will go on for about an hour and a half. There are no wrong answers, and I'd like to hear all of your points of view. I'm interested in hearing all of your experiences. You don't need to agree with each other, but I ask that you listen respectfully as others share their views. You may comment once they are done. We're not trying to achieve a consensus; we're trying to gain an understanding of your experiences. My role as facilitator will be to guide the discussion through questions, listening to what is said and by making sure that everyone gets a chance to give their point of view. Please discuss your thoughts amongst the group. I'm recording the audio of this discussion, so I am requesting that one person speak at a time and that you turn off your phones. We're on a first name basis in this discussion. However, the information and insight that you provide is confidential. I may use quotations in the write-up, but I will not associate your name with anything that you say. Your name will not be included anywhere in the report. I also ask that you all respect each other's confidentiality

Are there any questions before we begin?

Semi-Structured Interviewing Guide Questions

Warm up

Let's get started by going around the room and introducing ourselves; tell us something about yourself that we don't know.

Questions

1. ***Meaning***

- What does it mean to be a white student at Wits?

2. ***Experience***

- What are some of your experiences of being white?

- How would you describe your experiences of group identity and cultural identity as a white person?

3. ***Feelings***

- How do you feel about being white?

- How would you describe some of the feelings associated with being white?

4. ***Situational***

- In what types of situations do you feel that being white plays a role on and off campus?

5. ***Relational***

- How are your relationships with other people on campus affected by you being white?

- How is being white different when you are with your friends at home compared to when you are with others on campus?

- As a white person, how do you relate to other white people as opposed to black people?

6. ***Privilege***

- How do you think that being white has benefitted or disadvantaged you specifically?

- In what way do white people have more opportunity than black people at Wits?

- In what way do black people have more opportunity than white people at Wits?

7. *Fees Must Fall*

- What role did you play in the Fees Must Fall movement?

- What role did white people play in the Fees Must Fall movement?

- As a white person, how do you feel about the demands within Fees Must Fall movement?

8. *Social Injunction*

- To what extent do you speak about issues of race with your friends?

- How do you feel about speaking about issues of race?

- When and how do you speak about issues of race with black people?

- What was that like?

- What do you think that would be like?

9. *Impact*

- To what extent do you think that white domination and privilege still exist?

- If it does exist, how does it affect people on campus?

- If it doesn't exist, how do you think that its absence affects relationships among and between white and black students?

10. *Sense of belonging*

- What is the role of white people in contemporary South Africa?

- In what way do white people feel that they belong or not belong in contemporary South Africa?

Conclusion

Following a brief spoken summary of the main points of the discussion the moderator will ask:

Is this an adequate summary?

Considering that the purpose of this discussion was to gain an understanding of what it means to be white in the current social terrain of South African society, is there anything else that anyone would like to add before we end?

That concludes our focus group discussion. Thank you all for participating and for your insights. They will be very valuable to this study. I hope that you have found this discussion interesting. If there are any further questions about the study, please feel free to contact me.