TOWARDS A MATRIX FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF BLACK WORKING CLASS STUDENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA'S HISTORICALLY PRIVILEGED UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

As a result of educational reform, historically privileged white universities are experiencing an influx of black students, whose 'underpreparedness' is evidenced in low throughput rates. My research question is: How should black students' views on key factors in their learning be incorporated in a historically privileged South African university's student support measures? Utilizing the model on student development by Chickering and Reisser (1993) which propose seven vectors that represent the main aspects of student development, the empirical data contributed towards the development of a matrix for the advancement of black working class (BWC) students in South Africa's historically privileged universities.

Key words: working class students; student support; learning barriers; learning assets; student development; historically white universities.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1994 South Africa has been ruled by a democratic government, and subsequent transformation has taken place in all levels of society. Educational reform is one of the most noticeable terrains of change; Fiske and Ladd (2006) mention that a major task of South Africa's new government was to design a racially equitable education system using three concepts of equity: equal treatment of race, equal educational opportunity and educational adequacy. A primary aim of educational reform is the broadening of participation in higher education to reduce the highly stratified race and class structure of the country (Fraser and Killen 2005). In its attempt to rectify the imbalances of the past, the government has endorsed the view that education is 'one of the most critical arenas (perhaps the most critical) for interventions to foster a more democratic society' (Schutz 2010, 5), and thereby opened the doors widely to all students regardless of their intellectual, social or emotional abilities. Passing scores were adapted to allow more students the opportunity to enrol for tertiary education with the result that many students who are not capable of completing tertiary studies are currently

admitted to institutions.

In his book, *Education and the social order* Bertrand Russell (2009, 15) discusses three 'negative theories of education' that he maintains are present in all education systems; the emphasis on a particular theory determines the trajectory that such a system will take. The first theory regards education as a means to escape from or rectify injustices and obstacles, and is firmly entrenched in liberation movements, such as the African National Congress that was initially a liberation movement, but now governs South Africa. The second theory departs from the premise that the individual needs to be educated; in the words of Russell (2009, 15) 'to give culture' in order to allow one to develop to one's full potential. The third theory holds that the individual should be transformed into a balanced citizen who can benefit society. The South African government embraced all three theories, but emphasised the first in a quest to bridge all the inequalities of the past without putting support structures in place to prepare these students adequately for the demands of tertiary education.

According to Gbadamosi and De Jager (2009), universities subsequently have had to cope with a substantial increase in student numbers and a dramatic demographic shift occurred at former white universities, where 64.8 per cent of the South African student population is currently black (Smith 2011). Researchers such as Botha, Du Plessis and Menkveld (2007) as well as Fraser and Killen (2005) opine that the throughput rate of these students is cumbersome. Their failure to complete their studies may be ascribed to their cultural, social and economic histories which render them 'underprepared' (Zulu 2011, 447) – a term used to describe the academic stance of specifically black first year students when entering higher education institutions.

Another reason may be social class as a determining factor for success in tertiary education. Arum, Gamoran and Shavitt (2012) postulate that while educational expansion has many advantages it does not reduce class inequalities. For the purpose of this article, black students are referred to as black working class students (BWCS) to align the discourse with the work of Weiss and Dolby (2012) who investigated the impact of social class on involvement in higher education. These two researchers view family and school as the most important mediators of class (Weiss and Dolby 2012). In applying this simplistic paradigm to the South African situation, it becomes evident that the political history of this country created roughly two classes of citizens –the white privileged middle class that had the best educational resources at their disposal (Lemon and Battersby-Lennard 2009), and the black working class (BWC) that received inferior education and that currently enters tertiary education mainly from a dysfunctional educational background (Bergman, Bergman and Gravitt 2011) and who are most

often first-generation students and which can be associated with race (Heymann and Carolissen 2011). Rubin (2012) furthermore characterizes working class students as a) feeling less prepared for higher education than their middle-class peers; b) less likely to be academically involved; c) less likely to obtain good results and to develop cognitively en less likely to drop out prematurely and complete their degrees.

In accordance with the social class theory, Harris and Steyn (2014) ascribe the reason for the low success rate of BWC students to factors within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that may deliberately or unintentionally exclude these students as a result of their western ideologies and expectations which BWC students cannot meet, and were not prepared for at secondary school level. In this regard Hay (2008, 936) notes: 'How cultures meet, what kind of interactions take place, how applicable and acceptable the content is for students, the appropriateness and user-friendliness of study guides, examples for applications of knowledge, culture friendliness of assessment strategies, the way in which questions are asked, etc., are often a secret enterprise between lecturers and students'. Arum et al. (2012, 16) refer to 'differentiation' and explain it as dividing 'clients' (in this case students) into 'homogenous units'. Although these authors acknowledge that differentiation allows for greater efficiency, they also caution that 'a differentiated system of higher education preserves the elite status of those born into privilege'.

Sedlacek (1999) indicates that the academic self-concepts and subsequent retention rates of BWC students are informed by how inclusive an institution is perceived to be and how well these students can relate to an institution. Similarly, Toni and Olivier (2004, 195) refer to the academic identity of BWC students that constitutes their perceptions in an academic environment. In this regard Davis et al. (2004) report that failure to align with an institution's culture and the feeling of being excluded, are predominant experiences of BWC students who are part of traditional white universities. This perceived lack of belonging paves the way for academic failure. The current debate about the need for transformation at South African higher institutions is slamming the notion that former white universities are still part of the demographics that developed them (Smith 2008) and aims specifically to change the language policy of these institutions to make it more accessible to black students. A comprehensive reconsideration of the needs of all students in South Africa is therefore crucial.

This research uses a needs-driven approach as well as the asset-based approach as points of departure which according to Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006) can be used depending on the context the phenomenon finds itself in. The needs-driven approach is rooted in the challenging situations which people tend to find themselves in, and which externally impacts on their

experiences and perceptions. In the words of Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006, 426): 'This approach starts out by focusing on the needs, deficiencies and problems of communities, and accordingly devises strategies to address these needs and problems'. On the other hand there is the asset-based approach which implies that every person has certain strengths and when these strong points are activated, these can be used to counteract challenging situations. I wanted to determine what BWC students identify as obstacles and resources as they are part of an intellectual domain which they may perceive as restrictive and challenging on the one hand, and on the other as accommodating and really caring. I believe that this information will be able to inform a supportive framework for black working class students. Basically my empirical research question is: What do BWC students view as learning barriers and assets in their studies at a historically privileged university?

I situated my research within the theoretical framework of Chickering and Reisser (1993) on student development.

TOWARDS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

The primary aim of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) has always been recognized as generally ensuring the progress of society and more specifically unleashing the potential of its students (Erguder 2010). The latter is of importance in this research as it implies that development of students should occur in two domains – *within* (intrinsically) and *without* (extrinsically) – that is, in the context in which the student operates.

Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) initially developed a model of student development based on the premise that the student's background as well as 'pre-college characteristics, together with the structural and organizational characteristics of the institution' influences the student's drive to succeed (Chickering and Reisser 1993, 455). Chickering and Reisser (1993) expanded on this model and included student variables such as socio-economic status and gender, by basing their research on the notion that the main psychosocial task of the adolescent (student) is to form an identity (Erikson 1959).

Chickering and Reisser's (1993) framework consists of seven 'vectors' which are explained '... as maps to help us determine where students are and which way they are heading' (Chickering and Reisser 1993, 34). Although these vectors do not follow a specific sequence, each of these signifies a more advanced level which '... brings more awareness, skill, confidence, complexity, stability and integration' (Chickering and Reisser 1993, 34). These vectors are: (1) developing competence; (2) managing emotions; (3) moving through autonomy towards interdependence; (4) developing mature interpersonal relationships; (5) establishing identity; (6) developing purpose, and (7) developing integrity. Apart from these vectors, 'key

influences' have been identified that may play a determining role in how students develop. These are: (1) institutional objectives; (2) institutional size; (3) student-faculty relationships; (4) curriculum; (5) teaching; (6) friendships and student communities, and (7) student development programmes and services (Chickering and Reisser 1993, 265).

The aim of this research was to explore how these identified obstacles and strengths align with the vectors as well as the 'key influences' as to allow for 'golden threads' to inform guidelines for student support.

EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

As the purpose of this research is to understand the challenges and assets experienced by BWC students, I decided on a qualitative research approach. An interpretive paradigm, which is also referred to as the constructivist, humanistic, or naturalistic paradigm and acknowledges that social reality is constructed and interpreted by the individuals who participate in the social world themselves according to the ideological positions they possess (Scotland 2012, 11). The key strength of the interpretivist paradigm is that it places premium on the viewpoints of individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated (McDevitt and Ormrod 2013, 49). My role as a researcher in the interpretivist paradigm was therefore to, 'understand, explain, and demystify social reality through the eyes of different participants' (Mack 2010, 8) by paying particular attention to their different perspectives and providing rich descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation (Nieuwenhuis 2007, 60).

I made use of the photo voice method to collect my data, a concept which was developed by Wang and Burris (1997) as a participatory action research approach. Wang (1999) concludes that this framework holds that the images that people see influence their focus, their worldview, and that by contributing to how people look at the world and how they see themselves, images can influence policymakers as well as the broader society that they are a part of (Wang 1999) which was based on the notion that images teach, pictures can influence policy, and that community people ought to partake in generating and describing the images that shape healthful public policy (Wang 1999, 2006).

Wang and Burris (1997) methodology has a nine step strategy and in Table 1, I illustrate how these nine steps featured in my research.

Table 1: The application of the nine step strategy of Wang and Burris (1997) in this study

Steps	How it features in the research
1. Select and recruit a target audience of policy makers or community leaders.	For the purpose of this research, the target audience is university management and the Department of Higher Education who may use the outcomes of this research to put support structures in place for BWC students.

Steps	How it features in the research
2. Recruit a group of photo voice participants.	This research was situated in the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria. Eight BWC students (three males and five females) were purposively selected based on my knowledge of their home backgrounds as they have been in my Life Orientation class for the past three years.
3. Introduce the photo voice methodology to participants, and facilitate a group discussion about cameras, power, and ethics.	At the orientation session, the photo voice method was carefully explained to the participants, which involved that each one would be issued with a disposable camera. It was emphasized that participation was completely voluntarily and that they could withdraw at any stage without being penalized. All participants were very excited and expressed their willingness to participate.
4. Obtain informed consent.	An ethical application had to be prepared which had to be submitted to the ethics committee of the University of Pretoria. This application included signed letters of informed consent by each participant to indicate their willingness as well as their understanding of the research process. Once ethical clearance had been obtained, I contacted the participants as we were ready then to execute the data collection process.
5. Pose initial theme/s for taking pictures.	The scope of the research was explained to participants and we decided jointly on the prompt which was to take pictures of anything that represent a barrier(s) as well as asset(s) when they consider their academic life at the university.
6. Distribute cameras to participants and review how to use the camera.	Each participant was granted the opportunity to take a photo of something, to ensure that they knew how the camera would work.
7. Provide time for participants to take pictures.	Participants were granted a week to take the photos, and then a date and time was organized in which they submitted the cameras. I had the films developed and we decided on a next appointment to discuss the photos.
8. Meet to discuss photographs and identify themes.	At the next meeting, photographs were posted on a lecture wall and each participant got the opportunity to discuss the various photos that he/she took. Participants were then requested to choose one photo per asset or barrier that they feel best represent their learning experience at the university. I then requested them to write a narrative of more or less 300 words about these selected photographs and to submit these narratives within a week's time.
9. Plan with participants a format to share photographs and stories with policy makers or community leaders.	This stage couldn't take place in the true sense of the word, as I had to analyse and interpret the data according to various themes that emerged during the analysis process. Students however each got a copy of the final draft of the research, and were informed that this research will be published in journals, and presented at conferences to make the relevant stakeholders aware of the findings.

I subsequently analysed and interpreted the pictures and narratives.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Background information on participants

Of the eight BWC students who took part in this research, five of them had bursaries and stayed in residents on the campus, while two of them rented rooms in a suburb close to campus. One student lived in a township with his little sister (township refers to a suburb for black people on the outskirt of cities and towns, which came into existence during the apartheid regime). Three students came from former white schools while the rest of the students attended schools in predominantly black areas. Research indicates that 80 per cent of township schools can be

regarded as dysfunctional (Johnson 2015), and the marks of these students were also noticeably lower than their peers who attended former white schools.

Phase 1: Barriers to learning

The participants' photographs reflected minimal overlap – the participants had distinguishable points of focus in their discussion of the selected pictures.

Only two pictures showed thematic overlap. Sequentially, the selected nine photographs and accompanying narratives depicted the following: a desk calendar (topic: time management); a TV set with DVD player (topic: inferiority, not being accustomed to luxury); two students in discussion (topic: problems in expressing oneself in proper English); a photocopier (topic: textbooks unaffordable); a student at work at a computer work station (topic: need for maintaining social networks while on campus); a little girl sitting against a corrugated iron wall (topic: care-giving to younger brothers and sisters); a suburban train (topic: transport challenges); a student being pulled away from his desk by a fellow student (topic: study distractions due to peer pressure), and a family of four in a small, cluttered room (topic: survival needs of a poor family).

In analysing the narratives through continuous reading and re-reading, I identified the themes and categories indicated in Table 2. It is important to note that the themes and categories are not presented and discussed in any order of priority. From the outset and according to my interpretative approach, I was interested in a profile of needs, rather than in a priority sequence of needs. The responses of participants are given verbatim.

Table 2: Themes and categories – learning barriers

Themes	Categories
Campus barriers	Self-discipline Self-esteem Time-management skills Language skills Resources
Context barriers	Care-giving Family support Transport

Campus barriers

It soon became clear from the narratives that the participants struggled considerably in controlling their personal selves in the campus context. Staying on course amidst strong and unexpected distractions proved to be a considerable challenge:

I plan to study for a certain text, suddenly my chum comes and wants me to go with him to watch

movies, because of the deficiency of self-discipline, I go.

Consequently, the student often wrote tests without being prepared, and failed.

A second strong challenge in the participants' self-control was the constant struggle against feelings of socio-economic inferiority. The following quotations illustrate this.

> You start feeling intimidated by your roommate, her room is a more comfortable one and more like home, and you find out that you cannot even afford to have a comfortable room. You start feeling depressed whenever you are in your room.

> One of the worst things is that they will pair you with a roommate who brings a TV and a DVD to his/her room that is unfamiliar to you. This makes you feel small and less confident about yourself.

Two study barriers that were directly related to the participants' deprived secondary school background were struggling with a lack of time management skills (i.e. study planning skills) and language skills in dealing with and comprehending vast amounts of learning matter.

> At university everything seems to be doubling, except time; the work load doubles, compared to high school. This shift is physically and mentally overwhelming, and can influence grades badly.

> If you do not have proper time management skills, you can end up dropping out of university because at some point you start procrastinating and you end up always catching up because you were left behind.

Regarding the language issue, it was mentioned that black BWC students come from communities where they were exposed mainly to only one language, also in their schools. At university, proficiency in English is essential. BWC students experience problems in following lectures and text material properly. Perhaps more importantly, they have problems in expressing themselves to their peers and lecturers about their problems. This often leads to their being given incorrect guidance. Friends also often lack proper language skills. Some students are still stereotypes by one another (black – white), which results in a reluctance to consult one another.

> Another problem is that, during class presentation, black students cannot give presentations because they are scared and shy of making mistakes. This reflects badly on their marks and their confidence, so they end up losing their concentration and are not focusing on their studies.

Not unexpectedly, the matter of insufficient resources was prominently raised by the participants. The required resources were mainly financial, but others were also mentioned:

> I end up copying the textbook from my fellow students and this does not help because much of the information is omitted, and this makes me perform poorly in my studies at university. This really affects me, because sometimes I have to sacrifice myself and not buy something to eat with the money that I am given for food at school.

The problem is aggravated by the fact that copying textbooks is not allowed:

> ... if ever I may be found out it is possible that I will be expelled. To be financially unstable causes my life and my academic future to be in danger every time I enter the varsity gate.

Context barriers

It was an eye-opener to learn from the participants' narratives just how strongly they felt about and were responsible for their (extended) families. Leaving campus usually meant to return to the real world of looking after siblings, even to the extent of moonlighting in order to meet family care commitments:

> My life is very much divided into two parts; there is my academic life and my role as guardian to my little sister who is everything to me. There are things that I know that my late mother would like her to achieve and I want to help her become a responsible person to the best of my ability.
>
> Providing for a teenager is not an easy task because there are things which she needs that I must provide, like clothing, food, school trips, Sunday school trips and others.

The position of many families was also such that financial support, and the availability of proper study facilities, could hardly be counted on.

> What is disturbing me is I don't feel welcome in the family; I am always thinking about the fact that my mother abandoned me. This makes me feel that I am not important. I am useless, I don't deserve to live.

Transport problems constituted another significant contextual barrier to learning. One of the participants stated disadvantaged students' plight as follows:

> Trains are fully packed in the mornings and also in the afternoons also so I always stand all the way from Mamelodi to Pretoria, standing with people pushing from all corners of the train and the moment I get to campus I am so tired that I can't even concentrate in class; the same applies when I have to get home in the afternoon so when I get home I am tired to the extent that I can't even study.

The participants' feedback on their learning barriers at university was indicative of the students' resilience in overcoming sometimes formidable challenges.

Phase 2: Learning assets

Data gathered during this phase, also produced useful and insightful information. Once again there were minimal overlap and where this occurred; it highlighted the importance of the

identified theme. In what follows I firstly provide a summary of the photographs and the narratives, and then I provide a brief description of the various themes and categories that emerged with regard to the assets that BWC students identified.

In these photographs, the following was portrayed: a text book (topic: academic literacy); a notice board with several pictures (topic: inspiration, i.e. people who inspire this student); a basketball field (topic: sports facilities); a photograph of the one participant standing on a pedestal, with two other children looking at him in awe (topic: role model); a telecommunication tower adjacent to the university campus (topic: perspective, symbolic of the extended perspectives that university life offers in terms of, for example, diversity in cultures and life styles); part of the campus garden (topic: peace); a security guard (topic: safety); and lastly a photograph of two white and one black student, working together on an assignment (topic: studying together).

After the analysis of the narratives, the following themes and categories were identified as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Themes and categories – learning assets

Themes	Categories
Inspiration	Achievement vision Role modelling Broadened perspectives Religion
Encouragement	Language Facilities (sport) Resources (library, ICT) Fellow students, family, friends, church
Security	Peace Safety

Inspiration

All participants experienced a strong driving force to succeed in their studies, as this generation often is the first to be able to attend tertiary institutions and are role models to old and young in the community. One participant explained:

> The old people admire me because they could not get to university for a variety of reasons; the young ones admire me because they have now learned that Grade 12 on its own is not enough for one to acquire a good job.

Tertiary education is also regarded as a means to improve future prospects, and one of the participants remarked: 'I have seen that education is one of the reasons which I can use to fight poverty'.

Studying in a first world environment where various resources are freely available, and

where there is an opportunity to mix with other cultures and people from various backgrounds, exposes participants to a broader perspective on life, its people and various possibilities. In the South African context, the social interaction between various population groups serves as a reconciliation instrument to overcome the country's turbulent past. In this regard one of the participants mentioned that interacting with students from other population groups were a definite asset, as she has never encountered any communication with people from other races where she came from (rural area).

> The diversity on campus enables us to know that all of us as people have a lot in common despite our different cultural beliefs or different economic status.

Another characteristic that was noteworthy was the religious conviction of all the participants. Without exception they mentioned their Christian belief system as the motivating force for persevering in often difficult circumstances.

Encouragement

Nearly all participants mentioned some form of support gained to complete their studies. One participant mentioned a compulsory course on Academic Literacy that she regarded as very helpful:

> It deals with construction of sentences, grammar usage, spelling and writing an essay. Black students have a very limited vocabulary since English is not our mother tongue.

Mention was also made of access to sports facilities on campus, where participants can keep 'the physical parts in shape by using the sports facilities provided to us' as well as easily available resources such as the Internet, library and computer laboratories. One participant mentioned that it felt like 'another world' because technology was always available.

Two participants mentioned their support structure at home, which included church, friends and families:

> I am away from home when I am here at university but I still receive that support from church, friends and birth family. Through the support I get from church I am able to resist most temptations of the world and stay true and faithful to the blessings that God has given me.

Security

Although it was not anticipated that this theme would manifest in this study it highlights the violence and crime that BWC students are exposed to – not only in their home communities, but also at schools. Two of the participants chose a campus photograph depicting a secure and

peaceful environment:

> It is a safe place to be, I am provided with security services. Around campus there are security guards. I feel safe on campus; I am not even scared of walking around campus at night.

The assets that these students identified emphasise what they value and regard as important. Aspects that other students from more affluent backgrounds take for granted are regarded as a privilege – such as access to electronic media and academic resources, the ability to mingle with other population groups where everybody is on the same footing, and last, but not least studying and moving around in an environment that is safe, peaceful and protected.

DISCUSSION

In my view the participants' feedback was detailed and enlightening. As far as campus barriers are concerned, it is clear that BWC students struggle with the self-discipline they need to devote time to their studies and maximise their opportunities. Heymann and Carolissen (2011) ascribe the lack of academic skills in terms of time management and self-discipline to adhere to an educational schedule as challenges first-generation students (FGSs) encounter. These authors note that FGSs score significantly lower on self-regulation behaviours than non-FGSs (Heymann and Carolissen 2011, 1381). As these students have no academic role models, they have never been exposed to academic disciplined behaviour. However, even if they do overcome this problem, the lack of proper study planning skills and problematic language barriers definitely stand in the way of these students to do well academically. In this regard Nwaila (2013, 2) refers to the deteriorating status of English in black rural schools, where teachers' qualifications are 'limited to a Grade 10 education and two years' professional training'. Although the Language Policy for Higher Education (Department of Education 2002) allows students to be educated in their mother tongue when possible. Ngcobo (2014) points out that the promotion of mother tongue in the academic domain is failing, 'due to the prestige that continues to be associated with English in the economy and society' and furthermore maintains that 'the rejection of the vernacular was apparently because of the socio-economic benefits associated with English' (Ngcobo 2014, 696). Interestingly, these problems are certainly not confined to BWC students. It would be informative to know what percentage of the broad student population is bogged down by the same problems. However, the two remaining categories of campus barriers as indicated in the table (a lack of self-esteem and resources) are particularly true for BWC students and constitute serious impediments to their studies. Another barrier which constantly came to the fore was lack of finances which caused feelings of

inferiority and which also caused students to miss meals in order to finance academic resources. Low socio-economic status is a trait most strongly associated with BWC students (Padgett, Goodman, Johnson, Saichaie, Umbach and Pascarella 2010). Breier (2010, 60) argues that because of the South African political history, 'Blacks achieved the worst quality and least financed education and were – and still are – the poorest in spite of a growing elite'. With regard to accommodation, BWC students can only afford accommodation in townships, which are situated on the outskirts of cities, and which are remnants of the apartheid regime, where segregation determined urban geography for South African citizens (Walker 2005). Hannaway (2012) mentions that Smith (2008, 150) investigated the correlation between race and socio-economic status and found that young people from impoverished backgrounds have the potential to succeed at university, 'but they are often derailed by the perception that the cost of tertiary education far exceeds the financial abilities of their families which causes them to explore more tangible, realistic options' (Hannaway 2012, 44).

From some of the participants' narratives it became apparent that context barriers to learning can be serious and one can only admire participants' tenacity and academic survival skills. Given the deprivations and responsibilities mentioned by these participants, it is clear that their succeeding in graduating is a momentous feat.

With regard to what BWC students identify as assets, one of the major findings relates to the fact that these students are inspired by the fact that they are privileged to attend a tertiary institution with abundant resources. These students regard themselves as role models in their communities and have a strong sense of responsibility towards personal achievement, but also towards motivating and inspiring the less privileged in their communities to do the same. This finding correlates with a study done by Griffin (2006) who mentions that BWC students see themselves as front-runners who may give evidence of the possibility to escape dire circumstances and to lead successful lives and to address the underrepresentation of black professionals and reach out to underserved members of their community. The same sentiments are found in Chinese culture where Ru-Jer (2012, 72) reports that 'education is seen as an extremely profitable investment for a family's future' and that education is seen as a way to improve the family's social status. In the words of Kamper and Steyn (2011, 120): 'Tertiary education is therefore perceived as a doorway to financial and personal success'. Religion also plays a role in maintaining the motivation to study. Various researchers indicate that religion plays an important role in the world views of black people. Adegoke (2015) in her study of the coping mechanisms of HIV positive Yoruba adolescents, singles religion out as the common factor helping these girls to navigate their resilience. Similarly, Packard (2011) found in his

study that black students significantly refer more often to religion that has an impact on their academic experiences than white students. Black people have a collective identity (Van Bavel and Cunningham 2012) which in this context means that the good of one is the good of all. Encouragement as resource is therefore held in high regard, as communities in general and families in particular will often make financial sacrifices in order to ensure that one of their own succeeds academically. Consequently, I also found no sign of alienation from the home and community environments, but rather a strong support network which can be ascribed to what Smith (2008, 151) remarks about tertiary education in that it 'represented a step up for their families and helped them to exceed their parents' level of education'.

The third theme, security, came as a surprise, and I was once again made aware of the stark differences between my life world, together with those of affluent students, and the circumstances of BWC students. I found it astonishing that students could regard a safe and secure environment as a learning asset. This finding highlights once more how traumatic the civil and schooling situations in South African BWC communities are. Johnson (2015, 232) ironically ascribes the reasons for the persistent inequalities in South Africa to 'the dreadful education system which prevents most young South Africans from gaining the means to advancement'. Sennett, Finchilescu, Gibson and Strauss (2003, 108) furthermore point out that many BWC students come from communities characterized by trauma, violence and poverty.

It is noteworthy that the two themes, encouragement and security, are external factors impacting on participants' experiences, but the first theme, being inspiration, is an internal motivational influence. One would expect that the university management will make use of this opportunity to support BWC students in such a way as to keep them motivated and assisting them in supporting others in their communities.

I must reiterate the value of the photo-voice approach in stimulating an impressive extent of symbolic interactionism in the participants' identification of their learning barriers and assets. Barriers regarding time management, socio-economic deprivation, language deficiency and logistics were all symbolically depicted, as were learning assets in terms of inspiration, encouragement and security. In summary it was clear that the BWC participants regarded the university as a symbol of hope, with learning assets that could overcome (sometimes very serious) learning barriers.

CONCLUSION

In this research, I have referred to the seven vectors of student development as well as the seven

key institutional influences identified by Chickering and Reisser (1993). In the following matrix (see Table 4) I could link these vectors and influences to the empirical findings.

Table 4: Student development and support matrix

LEARNING BARRIERS OF DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS		STUDENT DEVELOPMENT VECTORS (Chickering and Reisser 1993)		KEY INSTITUTIONAL INFLUENCES (Chickering and Reisser 1993)
Campus barriers	⟷	• Establishing identity • Developing purpose • Developing integrity • Developing competence	⟷	• Institutional objectives • Curriculum • Teaching
Context barriers	⟷	• Managing emotions • Autonomy interdependence • Interpersonal relationships	⟷	• Institutional size • Student – faculty relationship • Friendship and communities • Student development programme
Inspiration	⟷	• Establishing identity • Developing purpose • Developing integrity	⟷	• Institutional objectives • Curriculum • Teaching
Encouragement	⟷	• Developing competence • Managing emotions • Autonomy – interdependence • Interpersonal relationships	⟷	• Institutional size • Student – faculty relationship • Friendship and communities • Student development programme
Safety	⟷	All vectors	⟷	All influences

As indicated in this table, the main themes that came to the fore as learning barriers (campus and context barriers) and learning assets (inspiration, encouragement, safety) are *conceptually* linked to the student development vectors, as well as being *contextually* linked to the key institutional influences. For example, the BWC students' level of inspiration for their studies has to do with their sense of identity, purpose and integrity, and these should be propagated and stimulated by the institution's objectives, curriculum and teaching. In the same way the factors in BWC learner encouragement, as well as BWC learners' sense of security, can be addressed.

The matrix (see Table 4) can indeed be applied in many ways, for example a categorical comparison makes it clear that BWC students' campus barriers to learning can best be dealt with through measures of inspiration, while their contextual barriers to learning are best suited to measures of encouragement.

Yet, two important questions can be raised: What are the implications of this matrix on the experiences and advancement of black students in historically privileged universities; and what are the implications of such a matrix for historically privileged universities? Answers to these questions necessitate an in-depth interrogation into the fundamentals of historically privileged universities and therefore need to be addressed in a follow-up article.

Within the scope of this article, I can offer the following insights: Pertaining to the first question, namely the impact of the matrix on the experiences and advancement of BWC students, the crucial finding was that, essentially, the key, all-encompassing learning asset for BWC students is security (see Table 3). In the context of the present study I refer to security not only as featuring in the physical sense, but also a sense of security in the future, because tertiary education is perceived to be the pathway to a better future (Chetty 2014, 89). In this vein the university essentially becomes a symbol of hope, as has already been alluded to. However, the matrix also points to the absence of cognitive and emotional security which may culminate in perceptions and experiences of exclusion; which can be seen as the driving force in the recent student protests and unrest at historically privileged universities. As Issmer and Wagner (2015, 1) aptly remark: 'Social exclusion can evoke aggressive responses'. Buildings were set alight, student registration and classes were disrupted and demands are currently made about language of instruction and increasingly, demands for the abolishing of any visible and hidden form of the previous dispensation's heritage which caused the ostracism of BWC students.

Williams and Nida (2011, 71) distinguish between two elements when defining ostracism, namely being ignored an excluded. Williams (in Williams and Nida 2011) developed the need-threat model of ostracism which suggests three stages: immediate (or reflexive), coping (or reflective) and long-term (or resignation). From a historical perspective, BWC students have moved through these three stages, but due to a revival of the Black Consciousness movement, which 'gave the oppressed their own separate identity that had no one else as a point of reference' (Azanian People's Organization Manifest 2014), the first two stages of this model are currently being acted out on the stage of Higher Education. Williams and Nida (2011, 71) explain the first stage (immediate or reflexive) as experiencing a threat to four fundamental needs: belonging, self-esteem, control and meaningful existence. There is an abundance of literature referring to the alienation that BWC students experience at historically privileged universities and which attests to the materialising of these threats (Rubin 2012; Ru-Jer 2012; Ladson-Billings 2011; Gay 2010; Schutz 2010; Russell 2009; Diamond 2008; Delpit 1995). The second stage of this model (coping or reflective) involves the reaction to these threats:

'During the coping stage, ostracized individuals reflect on the meaning and relevance of the ostracism experience and, if it merits attention, will think and act in ways that fortify the threatened need(s). During this stage, contextual factors and individual differences do play an important role and can amplify or minimize the reaction and desire to cope' (Williams and Nida 2011, 71).

This brings me to the second question: What are the implications for historically privileged universities? There is a lot to be done, which requires amongst others profound changes such as the decolonisation of curricula, emotional and financial support to BWC students and training of and support to a new generation of black scholars. But fundamentally, universities should meet the broader aims of education by fostering 'democratic citizenship, social responsibility and social justice' (Tchinsala 2014, 4) and refrain from commercialising the 'academic culture' where universities are 'geared towards professional placement rather than critical thinking' (Wilbraham 2016, 551). This sector should take cognisance of Adam Habib's (2016, 45) perception that 'profitability rather than sustainability seems to be the driving ethos'. In the frantic pursuit to be acknowledged in the global academic arena, South African universities should return to their mandate of '[shaping] a young generation of socio-politically literate subjects and citizens, who would be equipped to respond appropriately, and creatively, to social problems and issues' (Wilbraham 2016, 548).

Because this research was based on the obstacles and resources that BWC students experience, this matrix can form the point of departure for the planning and execution of emotional, social and cognitive support for BWC students at Higher Education Institutions. Although a study of this nature is always limited, the findings bear sufficient evidence that enough data have emerged to serve as basis for a possible pilot study. Yet, I regard the matrix as a workable institutional framework, and the identified themes as legitimate building blocks for a far more extensive empirical study in which each of these themes can be explored in depth. The data and findings of this study are deemed invaluable in improving and refining the present urgently required study support to the large and still increasing number of BWC university students in South Africa, with all the implied individual, HE institutional and national benefits.

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