



INTERVENTIONIST RESEARCH STRATEGIES FOR EMANCIPATION

**11th Annual UKZN Higher Education
Conference**

Mahali, A., Swartz, S. and Rule, C.

**Race, Education and Emancipation:
A five-year longitudinal, qualitative
study of agency and obstacles to
success amongst higher education
students in a sample of South
African universities**

THE METHODS

- (1) Social Network Interviews (SNIs)
- (2) A private Facebook weblog (ongoing for 5 years)
- (3) Annual Participant Interviews (APIs - ongoing for 5 years)
- (4) Final Written Reflections (at the end of the study)
- (5) Optional and invited participation in a Documentary (over 2 years)

Expanding social capital through Social Network Interviews

- from your hometown who never went to university
- you consider more privileged than you
- you consider less privileged than you
- who works at student support services
- dropped out of university this past year
- consider to have helped you over this last year at university (or life)
- a recent graduate that you know

- **“It was so helpful to interact with other students, it helped me get different perspectives especially on how to deal with stuff that we generally face as students. Some of the interviewees had very helpful tips that I also applied to my life...A lot of people were just talking about discipline, studying hard and stuff and I actually realised that wow, I don’t do all that, like I’m not that disciplined” (UJSTUD8)**

Facebook: “Who Succeeds, Who Doesn’t?”

- Smartphone & airtime
- Status updates
- Images and Photo’s
- Inspirational Quotes
- Memes
- Video clips
- Newspaper articles
- Blog posts
- Bursary/Funding Info

- **“It does not matter really which university you go to, but we face pretty much similar challenges with regards to finances, academic work, the difficulty of the work, trying to understand the work.” (UCTSTUD2)**
- **“I usually go to it [the Facebook group] when I’m feeling really down about school or something, so it’s nice to let other people know how you feeling.” (UJSTUD7)**

ANNUAL PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWS

Independence/away from home (2013-2014)

- Different people: cultural shifts, diversity and tolerance
- No prior knowledge, little information about programme and minimal self-introspection
- Employability and work
- Drop out/ Stop gap year
- Work experience & internships = motivation/confidence
- 3rd year course (academic workload)
- Belonging
- The practice of being self-reflexive

“Last year was a very tough year for me, because like I said it was not easy being away from home, it was not easy being on my own... and I have learnt to voice up my opinions and I can say that’s what my first year taught me.” (NWUSTUD10)

- **“I don’t feel like what they teach us really prepares you for life... and I just feel like if all of us are to be employable we have to be given skills not theory.” (UKZNSTUD6)**
- **“I took a gap year because I didn’t get accepted in what I want to do. Most students who do not get what they want to do, they compromise their lifelong career. [They say] ‘Okay no, since I can’t do this I’ll do that’ and then two years down the line they realise that they really don’t like it, then they drop out. I don’t want that for myself.” (UJSTUD1)**

Written Reflection

- Do proper research about your course/degree/university (do not rely solely on your university to give you this information)
- Take notes during the lecture or download slides the same day they are presented and go through them.
- Build a good relationship with your lecturer and form study groups with people motivated to succeed.
- Watch tutorials on YouTube if you don't get what the lecturer was saying.
- Pray and be strong in your faith, it will get you through difficult times.
- Do vacation work and engage with people who are qualified and working in the field.
- Do physical exercise/sports to keep you fit and able to learn.

Ready or Not!: Black Students' Experiences of South African Universities

- 23 (4 'main characters')
- UKZN, UL, UJ, UCT, DUT, Fort Hare, NWU, CPUT
- The multiple voices we hear in the documentary are a visual account of the study highlighting structural and personal obstacles, and embodying the many ways in which these challenges can be addressed both individually and collectively.

Thank you

