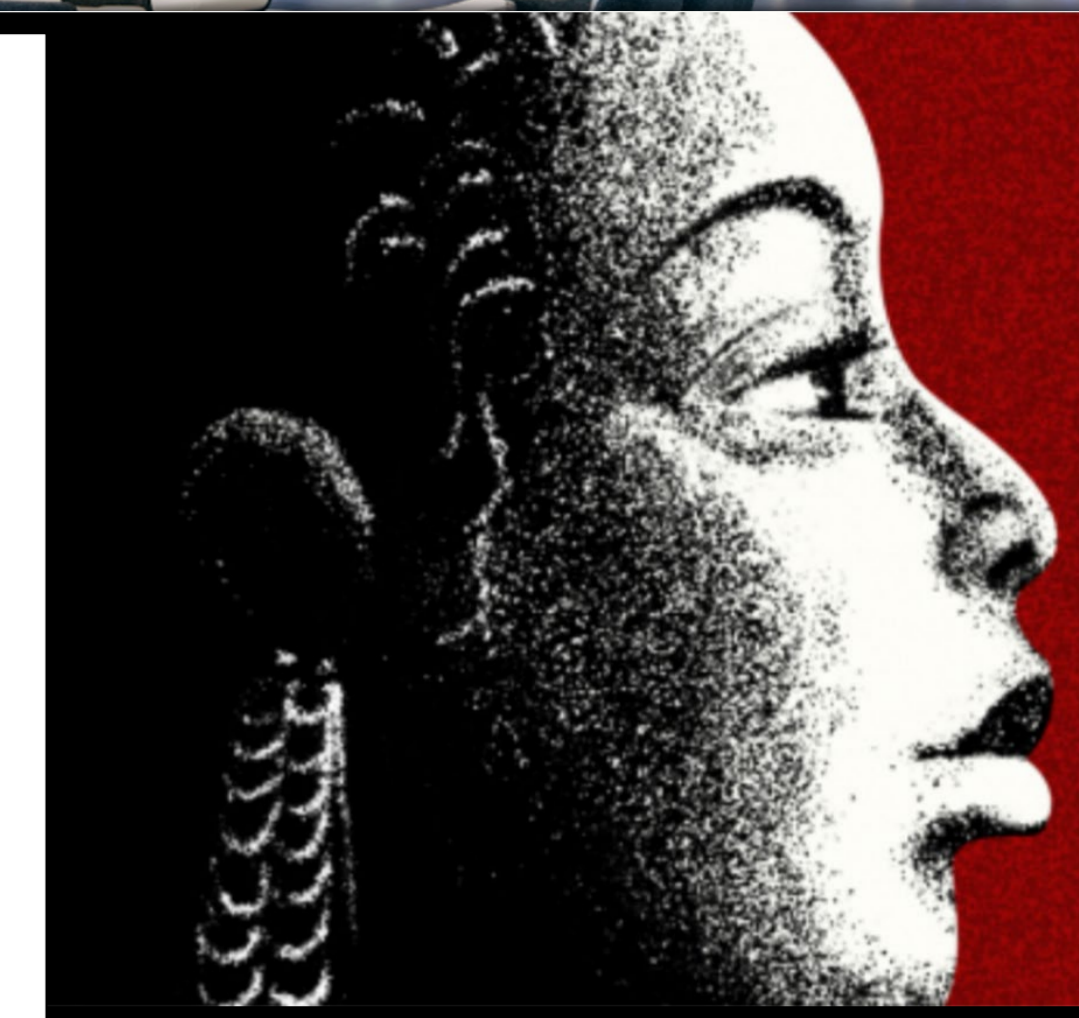# University of Northampton

Widening Participation and the Experiences of Students of African descent studying in Higher Education: A study of Students at a Post-1992 University in England

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1. Introduction and research background

Higher education (HE) participation has expanded dramatically in UK over the last half century. Although some good progress has been made in relation to widening participation (WP) inclusion and social change, evidence suggests that inequality of access to university for socio-economically disadvantaged students remains a major policy challenge. It has been observed that candidates from black and minority ethnic groups go to university in good numbers, but they also tend to associated with lower educational performance and less high profile job opportunities compared to their White counterparts.
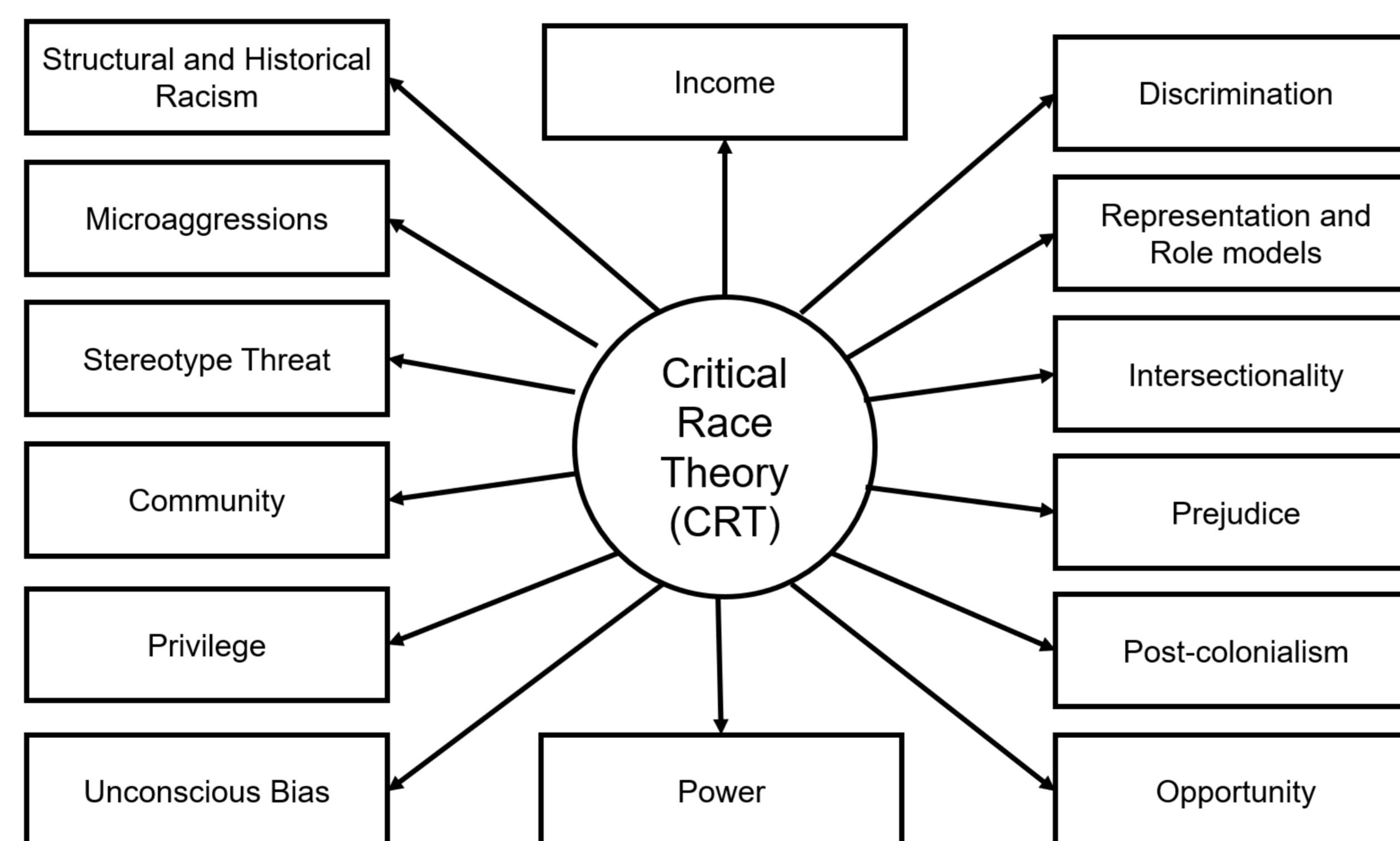

Socio-economically disadvantaged students

- Students from low income families (less than £25,000 PA)
- Students who care for a family member
- Those estranged from their families
- Mature students
- First in their family to go to University
- Children leaving local authority care
- Disabled students

2. Major contributions

- A model to better understand the challenges of African descent students in HE
- A framework will provide a clear guideline for higher education providers to support their ethnic minorities students
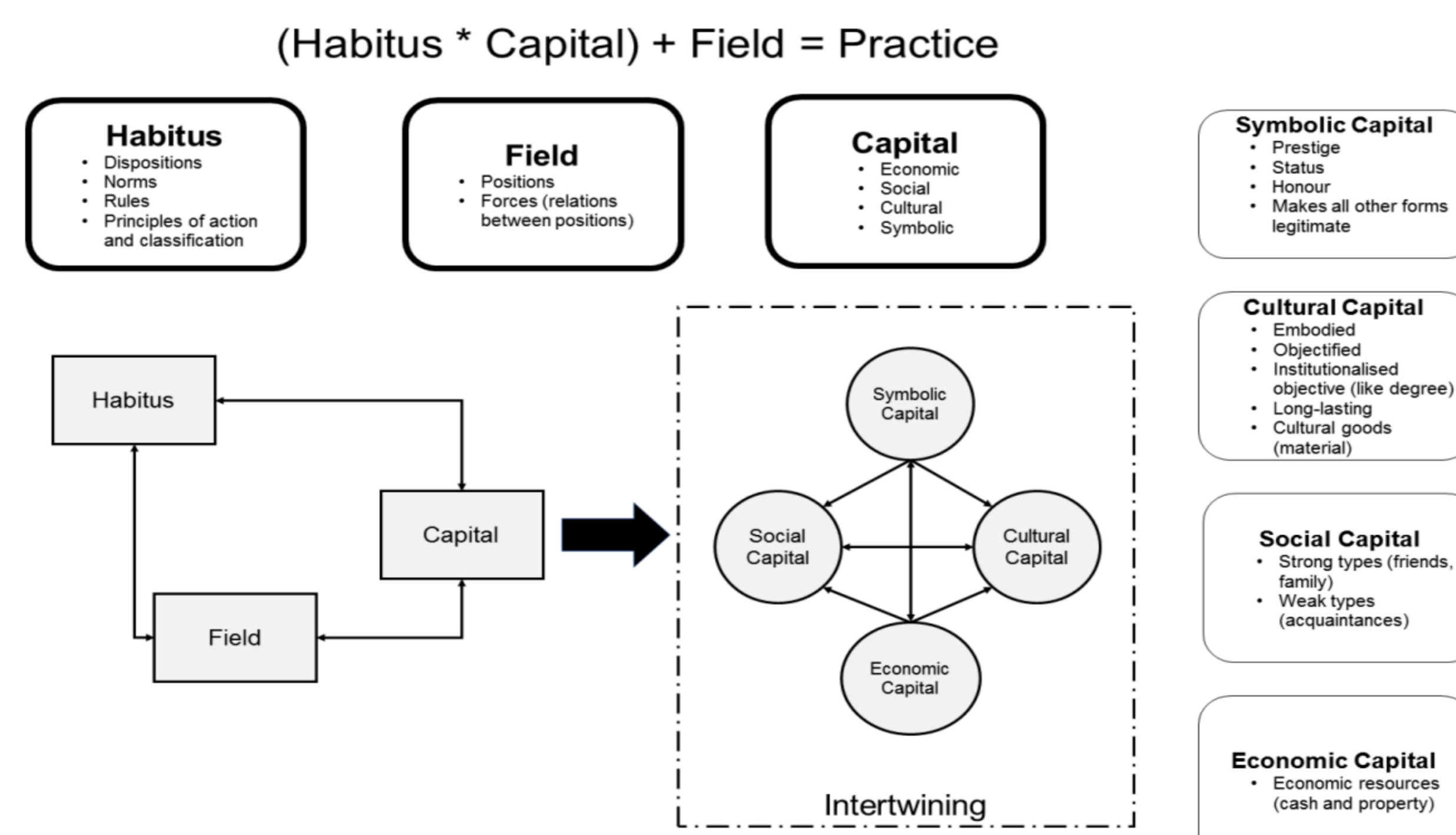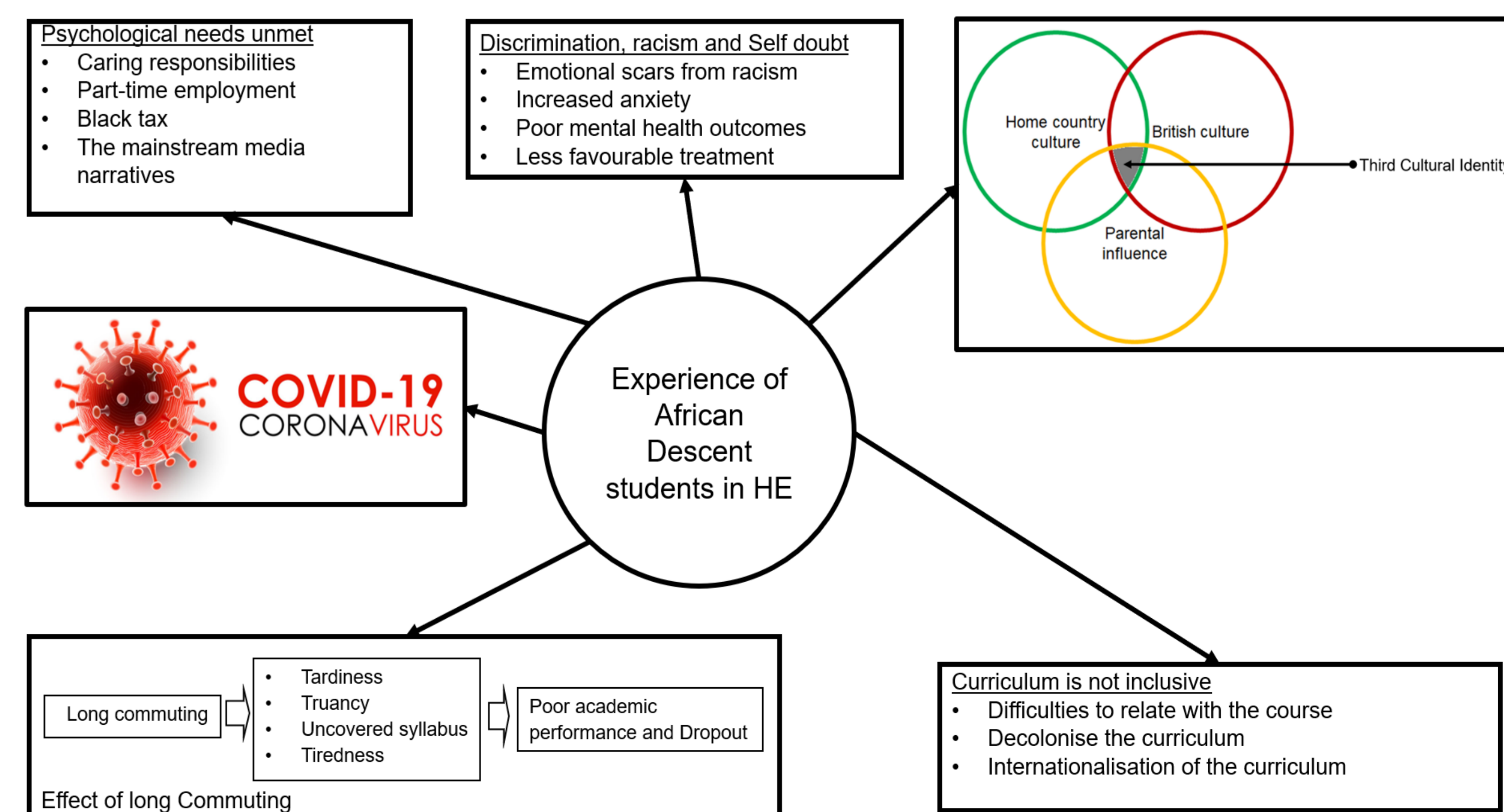
3. Theoretical Framework

$$(Habitus * Capital) + Field = Practice$$

Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

4. Methodology

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)
- Concerned with the detailed examination of human lived experience and the meaning of that experience as expressed by the individual in his or her own terms, without any pre-defined categories (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).
- **Ontological position:** Subjectivism
- **Epistemological position:** Social Constructivism
- **Qualitative**
- **Sample Selection**
  - Purposive: African descent students
  - Homogenous - sharing similar characteristics
  - Sample size - 14 participants
- **Data Collection Method**
  - In-depth interviews with participants at all level (Undergraduate & Postgraduate level)
- **Ethical issues**

5. Key findings of The study