

Not Naming 'Race'

Some Medical Students' Experiences and Perceptions of 'Race' and Racism at the Health Sciences Faculty of the University of Cape Town

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Dr Zimitri Erasmus
Cape Town
September, 2003

About the series

Widening circles

Case studies in transformation

Series editor: Melissa Steyn

Within the context of a changing South Africa, which itself is grappling with finding its place in a global community, every organisation and institution is affected and must address questions of transformation if they are to survive.

INCUDISA is publishing this series of case studies to contribute to a necessary information base for practical use by organisations committed to taking up this challenge in constructive and effective ways. In this endeavour, we are all sailing new waters, and need to share the charts as we go. Every time an organisation or institution embarks on a process their experience can provide meaningful guidelines for others.

Each context has particular permutations and needs to be understood on its own terms. Case studies show exactly how the details in a specific context are addressed. Where one is dealing with change management, there is no single model that can be applied across the board without careful contextualisation. In whatever way the underlying generic issues may be articulated in an organisation, interventions have to be appropriate and carefully structured to meet the needs of that situation. Case studies are useful in showing this process of engagement with a particular context at a particular time – the misunderstandings, successes, diversity issues, conflicts, breakthroughs – that form the daily lived experience of a changing environment.

This series rests on the principle that the more carefully one understands the specific issues of a particular case and the degree of success it achieves, the more useful it becomes to people facing similar issues in a different context.

Melissa Steyn, Director
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Zimitri Erasmus & Jacques de Wet , 2003

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Executive Summary

Over the past few years the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Cape Town embarked upon a series of transformation processes. Despite these efforts, students at Medical School continue to lodge complaints about racist practices on the part of staff at the School and to claim such practices undermine their learning and academic performance. Following some complaints lodged early in 2001, the Dean of the Faculty convened a meeting where a study was commissioned to provide a scan of issues to inform terms of reference for a panel to be tasked with an in-depth evaluation of processes of transformation at Medical School. These issues are specifically related to students' experiences and perceptions of 'race' and racism. Dr Zimitri Erasmus from the Department of Sociology at the University of Cape Town, assisted by Dr Jacques de Wet of the same department, conducted a qualitative study to address this issue. This summary provides a general overview of the methods and the findings, with recommendations for further action.

Chapter one outlines the conceptual framework and methodological and analytical procedures followed during the study.¹ Chapter two provides an analysis of black students' experiences and perceptions of 'race' and racism at Medical School. Chapter three provides an analysis of white students' experiences and perceptions of 'race' and racism at Medical School. Chapter four closes the study with a scan of the issues emerging from this research and suggestions for further exploration.

1. Methods

A total of nineteen (19) white students and twenty-two (22) black students were interviewed using an in-depth interview schedule. Students were drawn from 2nd, 4th and 6th years during 2001. All interviews were treated as confidential and participants' data remained anonymous. Students were interviewed by a researcher of the same 'race' (white/black) to increase their ease with the interview situation and reduce reactivity.

1. For a more detailed account of methodological and analytical procedures followed kindly see De Wet, J. & Erasmus, Z. 'Towards Rigour in Qualitative Research' in *Qualitative Research Journal*, 52 (2), 2005. In addition, see Erasmus, Z. 'Living the future now: 'Race' and Challenges of Transformation in Higher Education' in *South African Journal of Higher Education* 20 (3), 2006 for an analysis of this data using the work of Frantz Fanon.

Originally, the project intended to conduct Focus Group Interviews with students stratified by year, 'race' and academic performance. However, the practical limitations of finding students willing to participate in group discussions led the team to change its method to in-depth individual interviews with students who were willing to participate. Data on academic performance could also not be linked to specific interviewees because of commitments to confidentiality.

Qualitative methods were chosen as appropriate for the study purposes of obtaining in-depth information on sensitive topics which are not amenable to quantitative instruments. Study findings from qualitative methods are not intended to be representative but, rather, to give textured understanding to the experiences particular to specific problems. As such, it was the preferred method to investigate experiences and perceptions of students regarding racism and to recommend terms of reference for further action.

Data analysis was conducted in a three-stage process, using the approach of Miles and Huberman (1994), with strategies for ensuring analytical rigour (Morse et al. 2002) such as Investigator responsiveness, methodological coherence, theoretical sampling and sampling adequacy, an active analytic stance and saturation. Careful attention was paid in the analysis to parsing out unspoilt data, repeated readings of the text prior to coding and sequential completion of first-level manual coding. Furthermore, electronic capture of data sets for a second round of comparative first-level coding was done by the two researchers to ensure inter-coder agreement for the purposes of increasing reliability and validity of the study. Researchers used interactive dialogue to check first- and second-level coding. Thereafter, standard analytical procedures were used to generate themes, and cross-check for discrepancies, before exploring relationships in the data. These are all steps in qualitative methods directed at maximising the rigour and robustness of analytical findings.

2. Findings

Although all respondents were asked the same questions and probed equally well by interviewers, black students provided much more data during interviews than did white students. More material on black students' experiences was therefore available for analysis in this report. The findings are presented for black students first, and then for white students, before reflecting on the overall results.

2. One of the students says cross-racial interaction does happen; the other remaining student says racism does not exist in the classroom and that there is more prejudice with regard to religion.
3. For the purposes of this report 'the classroom' refers to all learning environments that involve students in group work and/or in which students are placed in groups. It thus includes lectures, tutorials, practicals, and group work in communities and hospitals.

3. Black Students' Experiences and Perceptions of 'Race' and Racism

The majority of black students (20/22)² repeatedly mention that they and their classmates (both black and white) "stick to racial groups" in the classroom.³ This is a significant finding. Some students say this pattern persists beyond the classroom to include university residences, student societies and other spaces of student life. Several say this pattern of clustering around 'race' does not necessarily indicate antagonistic relationships among black and white students. Instead, about three quarters of those interviewed say black and white students "work well together".

Furthermore, when asked directly, the majority of black students (19/22)⁴ say that they have *not* had any personal experiences of racism at Medical School and that they have *not* been personally hurt, compromised and/or misunderstood around 'race' (18/22)⁵. In the context of the data as a whole, this finding is significant for various reasons.

First, it points to the complex ways in which these students work with 'race' in this particular context. In this case, the reported absence of personal experiences of explicit racist acts does not mean students have not experienced marginalisation and powerlessness with regard to 'race'. Instead, a little over half of those who claim no personal experience of 'race' discrimination and no personal hurt with regard to 'race' say that interaction across 'race' is limited and that such interaction, when it does occur, causes them discomfort (11/19)⁶. These students mention a range of factors that trigger such discomfort. These include, in no order of importance,

- the abrupt shift for them from segregated living and schooling to the racially heterogeneous university environment;
- language differences as a source of discomfort among themselves;
- their marginality and powerlessness in both learning and social contexts which they perceive as dominated by white students and staff;
- that it is hard for anyone to name 'race' in this environment;

4. Here we account for what the remaining three respondents say. With regard to personal experiences of racism, the first student says there are individuals who are racist and that racism at Medical School occurs in "small pockets" and cannot be generalised to the school as a whole. The second says that nobody has been overtly racist towards her but that "you are still a black, even in class". The third student spoke about experiences of racism in another faculty. For the purposes of this study we are concerned only with experiences in the Health Sciences Faculty. Furthermore, we focus on the broader patterns emerging from the study and have not regarded these singular findings as significant.
5. Here we account for what the remaining four respondents say. Two students say that they have been hurt with regard 'race'. One of these reports feeling hurt by a black lecturer who he claims made a general statement that most cases of rape are enacted by black men. Another mentions feeling hurt by assumptions on the part of white staff that black students lack confidence. Of the remaining two students one says he sometimes feels misunderstood with regard to religion and culture, not 'race', while the other provides an unclear answer to this question.
6. The rest of the respondents do not specifically mention 'race' discomfort

- white staff and students' perceptions of them and insensitivity to difference in these contexts and
- their perceptions of differences among themselves.

Second, this finding suggests that a little over half of the students who say they have no personal experiences and/or hurts around 'race' find it difficult to name and/or talk about 'race'/racism when asked directly. This suggestion is confirmed by a more explicit pattern emerging from the data, namely, that some students *do* have difficulty naming 'race' and experiences related to 'race' and furthermore, tend to downplay encounters with 'race' that are hurtful and/or reinforce racialised relations of power. This manifests when students do not seem to recognise experiences of racism as such; when *they* take responsibility to act carefully around 'race' and not cause white people discomfort; when they explain away the hurt they experience and power relations at play by reducing 'race' issues to personal issues, and when they blame themselves entirely for outcomes that are most likely related to contexts shaped by racialised relations of power.

Related to the above pattern of downplaying 'race' a further significant finding is that in the context of the limited and uncomfortable interactions across 'race', black students do the 'race' work. What does doing the 'race' work mean? First, the burden of responsibility for enabling cross-racial interaction lies entirely with black students. Second, in psychodynamic terms, black students carry the negative projections of failure and incompetence at Medical School. Third, these students hold the bulk of awareness of these 'race' dynamics at the School. Fourth, at the same time, white staff and students consciously and/or unconsciously expect these students to disprove negative constructions of blackness. Fifth, black students sometimes expect themselves to work against these negative constructions. Sixth, the feelings related to this burden of 'race' (anxiety, anger, irritation, powerlessness, invisibility, marginality, fatigue) are for the most part held by these students. This dynamic leaves white students free of any responsibility for and discomfort arising from such interaction. Furthermore, the privileged position of white staff and students leaves them free of the need to be aware of *their* contributions to the 'race' dynamics at Medical School.

Importantly, black students are not passive victims who have no contribution to this dynamic and/or simply accept this role of doing the 'race' work. Instead, two factors seem to make a few students resist doing this 'race' work. First, the discomfort of such interactions makes them withdraw from contexts that require them to do the 'race' work. Second, a few students say they are "tired" of doing the 'race' work when with their white counterparts. There is some evidence to suggest that some black students find themselves in a complex situation. They might acknowledge the necessity for interaction across 'race' for the purposes of transformation while at the same time find it hard to interact partly because *all* the responsibility for making such interaction work lies with them. Interestingly, the data suggests these students often do not choose to engage with their white counterparts in ways that challenge the latter to take on some of this responsibility. Instead, they withdraw from such interaction into more comfortable and safe spaces with other black students. These are spaces that for the most part do not require 'race' work on their part. Although one could argue this withdrawal is understandable considering the

context, one could also argue that it contributes to white students' sense of freedom from this burden.

However, these black spaces are themselves by no means free of difficulty. For some black students discomfort is not limited to black/white relations. Interactions among black students are shaped along lines of nationality and exposure to racially heterogeneous schooling. Although these divisions are most likely shaped by class, students talk about them in 'race' terms. For example, for various reasons some black students refer to those from racially heterogeneous schools as 'white'. In these cases black students use the language of 'race' to police blackness and to create hierarchical divisions among themselves.

A further significant finding is embedded in the warnings received from senior black students about racially exclusionary practices at Medical School. Although only a few (about 8) students talk about such warnings, their effects are significant. As will be illustrated later these warnings profoundly shape some respondents' perceptions of the School and the ways in which they negotiate their way around it.

4. White Students' Experiences and Perceptions of 'Race' and Racism

On the whole white respondents have far less to say about 'race' and racism at Medical School than do their black peers. At times it may have been helpful for the interviewer to probe students further. However, as noted earlier, black students seem to have more information to volunteer. When asked directly, about three quarters (15/19) of the white students categorically say they have had *no* personal experiences of racism at Medical School nor have they been hurt, misunderstood or compromised with regard to 'race'. At first, these responses seem similar to those of black students. However, an examination of the data reveals significant differences, namely, that the bulk of white students show comparatively less awareness of 'race' and particularly of covert forms of racism, and that they do not talk about 'race' being a burden for them in the way that black students do. Nor, for that matter, do they talk about 'race' as a source of relief for them. These patterns indicate limited engagement with these issues on the part of white students during interviews.

Like their black peers, a little under three quarters of white respondents say all students tend to cluster around 'race', but that this tendency does not necessarily reflect racial antagonisms among students. Instead, they say black and white students "get on well together". This confirms the significance of this finding. While about two thirds of white respondents seem to accept this grouping around 'race' as unproblematic, a little over a third (7/19) show a genuine concern about this practice. Furthermore, in contrast to a little over half of their black counterparts who share moments of 'race' discomfort, very few white students talk about such discomfort. Instead, they describe what they regard as positive experiences during encounters across 'race' boundaries.

Significantly, about a quarter of the white students interviewed (5/19) are unhappy about what they perceive to be reverse discrimination. They say black students have an

unfair advantage over white students either through the "quota system", access to extra tutorials and/or to mentoring. Lastly, like their black peers, almost all the white students use the dichotomous language of "us" and "them" in what seems to be a benign fashion. However, a few students perpetuate racist discourse by constructing their black peers as inaccessible Others and as lazy, intellectually deficient beings who, in their view, should not have access to Medical School.

5. Reflecting on the Data: Experiences and perceptions of 'race' and racism

The data suggests racialised relations of power, expressed in covert form, persist at UCT's Medical School. Furthermore, it suggests both black and white students tend to deny and/or downplay the effects of 'race'. Although they do this in different ways, both sets of students tend to prefer leaving any possible feelings of antagonism unspoken. However, fractions of the data suggest some hope for change, as has been brought to the reader's attention, which could usefully serve as a basis for further action.

Issues for a Panel to Explore

In an attempt to work towards a more inclusive institutional culture at Medical School we suggest that a panel of relevant stakeholders explores ways in which to

- a) facilitate more meaningful interaction across 'race' among students,
- b) help staff members create a more inclusive and safe learning environment,
- c) challenge the discourses of deficit and reverse discrimination circulating at the School and
- d) facilitate constructive exchanges between junior and senior students at the School.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Study

Stimulus for the Research

Over the past few years the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Cape Town embarked upon a series of transformation processes. Despite these efforts, students at Medical School continue to lodge complaints about racist practices on the part of staff at the School and to claim such practices undermine their learning and academic performance. These formally lodged complaints have recurred sporadically.

On 14 March 2001 a meeting was held to discuss possible ways of responding to student allegations of racism within the Faculty of Health Sciences. The following people were present at this meeting: Prof Ncayiyana (then Deputy Vice Chancellor), Prof Padayachee (Dean of the Faculty), and Drs Kaunda (Dean of Students), Perez (Transformation Officer), and Erasmus (Sociology). These events were the stimulus for this preliminary research.

What this study does and does not do

In this study we focus specifically on an analysis of some black and white students' experiences and perceptions of 'race' and racism at UCT's Medical School. The data is used to provide a scan of issues for further exploration. Other schools and/or departments within this faculty are not part of this research and we do not focus on staff experiences and perceptions.

Furthermore, we do not review the history of transformation nor the creation and implementation of policy in this regard at UCT as a whole or at Medical School in particular. We also do not provide a profile of the student composition by 'race' for either UCT as a whole, or Medical School in particular.

Conceptual Framework

The legacies of colonialism and apartheid have shaped racialised relations of power in contemporary South African society. In this context, one could adopt a liberal humanist approach that tries to transcend 'race' by ignoring or attempting to leave it behind. Despite this approach, 'race' and divisions shaped by 'race' persist.

Alternatively, one could adopt a 'race' cognisance approach (Frankenberg, 1993), as does this study. This entails, first, an acknowledgement of the continued presence of 'race' in all our everyday lives and of racist practices in contemporary South Africa with the view

of working towards transforming the effects of this legacy. Such acknowledgement creates the space to examine ways in which both individuals and institutions may be implicated in perpetuating racial inequality. In acknowledgement of this past, the University of Cape Town is committed to a process of institutional transformation.

Second, a 'race' cognisance approach conceptualises 'race' as a socio-historical and political construct. This challenges the idea that 'race' has any biological basis. It also challenges the notion that racism is about individual prejudice. Instead, 'race' understood as a social construct draws our attention to the meanings we attach to real and/or imagined biological and/or cultural markers. Furthermore, it draws our attention to the hierarchies of power and privilege embedded within these structures of meaning. In this view, racist practices on the part of individuals cannot be separated from racialised relations of power. For our purposes, racist practices (whether covert or overt) refer to actions (whether intentional or unintentional) that serve to perpetuate already existing structural racial inequalities. We work with Essed's (1991) definitions of overt and covert forms of racism. She writes, "overt racism refers to acts that openly express negative intentions towards [black people]" (ibid.46) while with covert racist practices "negative intentions cannot be inferred from the acts themselves" (ibid.).

Often, dynamics around 'race' are spoken about as illusory because there is no biological basis to 'race'. However, this way of talking about 'race' tends to deny the realities of racial relations of power. Instead, a 'race' cognisance approach acknowledges that constructions of whiteness and blackness have real effects on positions of 'race' privilege/non-privilege within the broader society, and in its institutions, such as the Medical School, where the respondents in this study work and learn. Furthermore, these constructions shape people's perceptions of everyday occurrences and relationships that develop in these social spaces. This approach helps move away from, in our view, an unhelpful and accusatory question, namely, *Are black and/or white people racist or not?* towards Davids's (2001) challenge to ask a different and, in our view, more helpful question: *What are the ways in which we work with 'race' and what are the implications of these in particular contexts?* The latter question frames this study.

Psycho-dynamic understandings of 'race' bring new insights to the ways in which we work with 'race'. We do not claim to apply this approach to 'race' in this study. However, small parts of the analysis are informed by psycho-dynamic interpretations. For example, Davids (2001) argues that racialised inner constructs of reality are part of normal human development and that all of us, black and white, work with such constructs. This conceptualisation of 'race' helps ask challenging questions: *What role does each party/ social collectivity play in keeping 'race' dynamics alive?* and *How do these roles draw on discourses of 'race' circulating in our society?* Furthermore, Powell (1997) and Young (1993) argue that racism can be understood as a process of projective identification. In the process parts of one's Self which are not integrated into the psyche and which are hard to own are split off and projected onto the Other. This process of projective identification

1. The phrase "ways in which we work with 'race'" is different in meaning from "doing the 'race' work". The first refers to the meanings we attach to 'race' and the implications of these meanings in practice. The second refers to the burden of 'race' carried by black students in this study.

applies to collectivities (such as those racialised as white and black) as well as individuals and provides valuable insight into the ways in which 'race' works.

Finally, for the purposes of this study, 'race' matters are understood as relational in their dynamics. This requires an examination of both black and white students' experiences and perceptions in order to provide a comparative analysis of these experiences and perceptions.

Methodological and Analytical Procedures

Research Aim

The aim of this preliminary research is to provide a scan of issues to **inform** terms of reference for a panel to be tasked with an in-depth evaluation of processes of transformation at Medical School. These issues are specifically related to students' experiences and perceptions of 'race' and racism. It is well established that qualitative methodologies are most appropriate for examining variables associated with human subjective experiences. This study used the qualitative technique of semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with students. We work with a total of forty-one interviews, nineteen with white students and twenty-two with black students. This study is not representative and the findings cannot be generalised. With regard to identification by 'race', we use the term 'black' to refer to a transnational political category defining the experiences of people who have suffered and continue to suffer white domination. In this context this would include those historically classified Indian, Coloured and African/black in South Africa, as well as black people from elsewhere in Africa. We are aware that this usage of the term tars over students who might self-identify as either 'coloured', 'Indian', or otherwise.

Ethical Considerations

All interviews were treated as confidential and the agreement was that participants would remain anonymous. Furthermore, the research assistants were bound by confidentiality too. In cases where respondents may have named particular staff members and/or particular departments, these have been kept confidential.

The Journey towards a Workable Method

Initially the method chosen for data collection was Focus Group Interviews (FGIs). Students were selected from 2nd, 4th and 6th year medicine. Second year is the entry level, 4th year the crucial gateway to becoming a qualified medical practitioner, and 6th year the final year of training. The rationale for choosing to work with students in these years of study

was based on the significance of these years in the overall training because these are the more demanding years of study both academically and psychologically. We also needed to engage with students at different times in their training experience in order to assess possible variations in their experiences and perceptions of 'race' and racism.

During the planning and recruitment phase of the fieldwork, participants for the FGIs were selected using a purposive sample stratified on the basis of student academic performance. The faculty noted a possible pattern of complaints about racism put forward mainly by black students at times when their academic performance was weak. Stratification based on performance, it was thought, would access both strong and weak students' views and experiences thus limiting bias in the sample. FGIs were organised by 'race' and year of study to facilitate comfort of disclosure. Furthermore, FGI facilitators' racial identities were matched with that of participants.

The research assistant diligently contacted each student selected. First, contact was made by telephone in order to gain a commitment to participate. This was followed by a written invitation that, in turn, was followed by a further telephonic reminder the day before the FGI was scheduled. Despite these efforts, too few (between zero and two) students turned up for the arranged FGI sessions. Because of this the research team explored the possibility of holding such discussions with students in residences. This strategy was also unsuccessful. We have not conducted research into the reasons for this low response rate and so cannot provide any conclusive evidence in this regard. However, the interviewers informally probed some students about their reluctance to participate in either FGIs or workshops. These informal conversations shed some light on the failure of this method. The interviewers reported that some students felt unsafe discussing issues about 'race' in unfamiliar group settings. One of the reasons given was their fear of possible consequences of rank at Medical School. This was expressed along the following lines: 'what if someone in the FGI with you later became your tutor'. This was despite their knowledge that groups would be racially homogeneous and organised according to year of study. Other reasons given were lack of time because of a heavy workload. Finally, students responded negatively to the idea of workshops complaining that they had been asked to participate in these before and that these discussions were meaningless as it had not changed their lives on campus.

This struggle to access students, further exacerbated by their unavailability at examination periods, delayed the research process significantly (by almost one year). The research team therefore decided to change the method of data collection to one-on-one interviews with students from the years of study stated above. Interviews were conducted in English. To reduce reactivity and for comfort of disclosure the racial identities of interviewers were matched with those of respondents. A total of nineteen (19) white students and twenty-two (22) black students were interviewed. We had to rely on students who were willing to participate. This meant the actual sample was purposive but not stratified by performance. Nevertheless, the data reveals students (across 'race') whose judgement of their own performance is both weak and strong. Importantly, this is not a longitudinal study. We did not track the same students across the years of study. Instead, the study is based on three different sub-sets of students purposively selected using three criteria: year of study, 'race' and willingness to participate.

Guidelines for Methodological and Analytical Procedures

Qualitative research and data analysis is often construed as ad hoc, intuitive, unsystematic and thus without academic rigour. This study challenges this notion. We thus proceed to outline the guidelines and procedures followed in this study while working towards rigour.

We were guided by Miles and Huberman's (1994: 58, 65) pragmatic approach which combines the use of interview questions (which were obviously shaped by the research questions) and themes emerging from data to inform analysis. The "purely inductive" approach in early Grounded Theory does not allow the analyst to use research and interview questions in this way.

Morse et al.'s (2002:9) strategies for introducing rigour during analysis include "investigator responsiveness", "methodological coherence", "theoretical sampling and sampling adequacy", "an active analytic stance" and "saturation". The guidelines and guide questions below are a product of three processes: first, a close reading and application of Morse et al.'s strategies, second, utilising Miles and Huberman's (1994) procedure for analysis, and third our own thoughts on how best to start thinking about and working with the data.

Shaped by our reading of Miles and Huberman (1994) we suspended (as far as possible) any pre-conceived notions of the ways in which 'race' might shape interviewees' responses. We worked with the following questions:

- *Who are the people who are saying similar things?*
- *What are they saying?*
- *Why might they be saying similar things?*

Drawing on the strategies developed by Morse et al. we asked the following questions during analysis:

- *What are the decisions we have taken about data?*
- *What prompted us to make particular decisions/ what was the rationale for particular decisions?*
- *What are the consequences of particular decisions for the data and for analysis?*
- *How do the strategies we use during analysis contribute to optimising the research outcome?*

Sampling and Method

An initial analysis of the learning trajectory in Medical School shaped our decision to work with a purposive sample based on particular years of study. In addition, analysis of the workings of 'race' shaped both our decision to have 'race' (understood as shaping the lives of both black and white students) as a criterion for selecting participants, and for matching interviewers with respondents. This "investigator responsiveness" to broader and specific contextual issues resulted in "theoretical sampling and sampling adequacy", a strategy for working with rigour (ibid.12). The latter refers to the fact that participants interviewed had knowledge of the research topic: their own experiences and perceptions of 'race'

and racism. Respondents also expressed different views on the topic. Furthermore, the rationale behind purposive sampling in this study will enable replication of the research, a further possible verification strategy.

For Morse et al. "methodological coherence" refers to ensuring that the research question, method, data and analytic procedures match (2002:12). They write: "As the research unfolds, the process may not be linear. Data may demand to be treated differently so that the question may have to be changed or methods modified. Sampling plans may be expanded or change course altogether" (ibid.).

In this study, methods were modified in response to the context while maintaining congruence between the research question and method employed. Both the research question and the method employed are exploratory. The consequence of changing the method (from FGIs to one-on-one interviews) was that sampling plans changed (from a sample stratified by year of study and academic performance, to one stratified only by year of study) thus introducing a greater possibility of bias in the data. Active awareness of this possible bias during data analysis enabled critical reflection on coherence between data, analytical procedures and claims made in conclusions. The code 'performance' was introduced to provide some sense of students' judgements of their own performance, where this was available. Because the interview guide did not include a specific question on performance, not all respondents' transcripts could be coded accordingly. From the transcripts we could code in this way, we gather that the sample included students with various judgements of their own performance. Furthermore, the instrument (interview schedule) elicited responses that provided data relevant to the research question. These strategies as well as the analytic procedures helped researchers work towards methodological coherence.

Analysis during Data Collection

Many authors on qualitative analysis agree that analysis occurs in various degrees throughout the research process, including the data collection phase. In the case of this study we cannot comment on analysis during data collection because we did not collect data. Interviews were conducted and transcribed by various assistants. Delays in accessing students meant there was little contact between the primary researcher and assistants during fieldwork. In some cases the pilot and actual interviews were done by different assistants. When reading the data closely (as described below), we discovered this practice had several drawbacks. In some cases interviewers probed participants using leading questions. Furthermore, the interview guide was sometimes 'translated' into multifaceted questions leaving parts of the question unanswered. In addition, transcriptions were sometimes incomplete and unclear. This rendered some of the data unusable. As a result we decided to split the data into 'spoilt' and 'unspoilt' working only with the latter. Unspoilt data included responses to open-ended questions and clear transcriptions. Despite these limitations the bulk of the data was not spoilt in these ways thus allowing us to obtain much information from the transcripts. For future research we suggest that pilot interviews be done by those employed to do the actual interviews and that professional transcription services be utilised.

Although we did not do what Miles and Huberman refer to as "early analysis" (1994: 50) during data collection we acknowledge the merits of this practice in refining further data collection. However, we embarked on a form of "early analysis" by analysing a subset of the data before proceeding with analysis of all data. This analytical procedure is outlined below.

Developing an Analytical Procedure

In sum, our analytical procedure during the first phase of analysis was as follows: Zimitri Erasmus, the primary researcher and author, did a close reading of and then first level coded (explained below) a subset of the data; using this subset, her coding process was reviewed in dialogue with Jacques de Wet who also coded a subset of data; during this dialogue we produced a joint journal of our reflections on and thinking about the data and coding; where necessary, we introduced corrective mechanisms guided by the quest for rigour. We refer to this process as a trial run of the analytical procedure that includes a dialogical step in the research process. Miles and Huberman (1994:11) refer to this dialogue as "inter-subjective consensus", a practice in line with Morse et al.'s (2002) concept of "an active analytical stance". In line with the latter, the purpose of this trial run was to test our analytical tools on a subset of the data so that we could refine our analysis of the subset and apply these tools to the remaining data with greater ease later. A more detailed review of this analytical procedure follows.

Phase One of Analysis

A close reading of a subset of data

The first step in our analysis involved a first close reading, before coding, of a subset of the transcripts by Zimitri Erasmus. This step is drawn from Grounded Theory (Open University, 1993:15), a practice that Miles and Huberman (1994) build upon in arguing for systematic procedures in qualitative analysis. The subset included some variations initially observed in the data: gender, nationality, viewpoint and experiences. This first reading gave the researcher an initial sense of some of the aspects arising from the data. It allowed her a chance to interact with the data as a whole in a relatively 'unmediated' way. It also helped her understand fragments of data in context, a practice central to qualitative data analysis. It gave her an opportunity to hear the voices of respondents rather than simply listening to 'chords' thus giving her a sense of the 'spirit of the text' before imposing codes and categories on it. It helped her hear responses she might not have expected.

During this first reading she observed a consistent structure in the data that matched the structure in the interview schedule. This was a sign that interviewees were abiding by the interview guidelines.

First-level coding

Miles and Huberman (1994:58) recommend that transcripts be read "for regularly occurring phrases, and with an eye to surprising or counterintuitive material". In line with this recommendation, Zimitri Erasmus read transcripts *more than once* so as not to lose alternative narratives to what emerges as the predominant experiences and perception of 'race' and racism.

First, she read all the transcripts in the subset. Only on a second reading of each transcript (one by one) did she begin with *manual* first-level coding. This involves a process of naming and classifying data that results in a working set of codes. Codes bring together selected data and identify emerging themes, hence this is part of what Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to as "data reduction". More specifically, these authors talk about first-level coding. At this level codes might be simply descriptive or could be more interpretative in character.

Each transcript was read and coded in its entirety before moving on to the next one. This strategy prevented the possibility of respondents' voices 'flowing into each other' in the researcher's mind in an attempt to hold onto the integrity of each transcript. Following this process, transcripts were captured in electronic data sets and then coded (with the codes developed manually) *electronically* using QSR Nvivo. Following Miles and Huberman (1994: 58), codes were developed both from the research questions and by paying attention to categories emerging from the data. In some cases multiple categories were developed for single segments of text.

On this second (electronic) round of first-level coding, definitions of categories were further refined in dialogue with Jacques de Wet. Zimitri and Jacques coded the same subset of data independently. We then discussed the similarities and differences in our codes. In the odd exception where our codes were not the same, we came to a consensus regarding a common code. Our dialogical process helped produce safeguards against bias. This procedure helped us work towards "inter-coder reliability" (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 64).

Phase Two of Analysis

Second-level coding in dialogue

Once we had completed most of our first-level coding we entered into dialogue about possible patterns in the data and ways of mapping concepts for data display. This conversation marked the beginning of the second phase of our analysis. Zimitri and Jacques coded different sets of data and entered into dialogue about the emerging second-level codes informed by Miles and Huberman's (1994: 70) use of pattern codes. Second-level coding is a meta-coding process (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 69) that clusters data so as to reveal themes, regularities, patterns and possible explanations. They note that "[i]f first-level coding is a device for summarizing segments of data, pattern coding is a way of grouping the summaries into a smaller number of sets, themes, or constructs" (1994:70).

Phase Three of Analysis

We were now aware of ways in which some of the codes seemed to link and began to play with possible relationships in the data. During the third phase of our analysis we followed specific procedures. First, guided by the research questions, we proceeded to select the primary (level one) theme most pertinent to the research aim, namely, '*race*' and *racism in the learning environment* and worked with this theme in producing the final report. Second, within this primary theme we created secondary themes (level two) by selecting from themes that emerged during first-level coding. Third, we then generated electronic reports for each of these secondary themes and proceeded to re-code segments of text

with new categories, thus creating tertiary (level three) themes. Fourth, after creating tertiary themes we generated electronic reports on each of these and produced summaries of the findings. These summaries included evidence in the form of quotations from the data and a weighting of such evidence based on the number of occurrences across interviews of a single tertiary theme (in other words, how many respondents say the same thing), on patterns of repetition among respondents when talking about a topic, on unusual disclosures and on consistent silences. The latter applied particularly to white respondents. Fifth, we proceeded to check for consistencies and inconsistencies across particular tertiary themes and developed a set of relationships and patterns in the data. Finally, we made sure that all interviewees' answers to questions were accounted for in all of the reports on tertiary themes.

CHAPTER THREE

Black Students' Experiences and Perceptions of 'Race' and Racism

This chapter elaborates and substantiates our findings. By means of our analysis of these findings using the conceptual framework outlined in chapter one, we point to the significance of and relationships between the findings. We also give the reader a sense of the nuances in what interviewees say. In this chapter we focus on six themes. These include

- (a) limited interaction among students across 'race' boundaries,
- (b) factors causing black students 'race' discomfort,
- (c) what these students report about what white staff and students say and do,
- (d) ways in which black students do the 'race' work at Medical School,
- (e) discomfort beyond the black/white binary and
- (f) other students' warnings regarding Medical School.

Limited Interaction Across 'Race': "it's almost like a line down the middle"

The majority (20/22) of interviewees repeatedly mention that they and their classmates (black and white) "stick to racial groups" in the classroom. This confirms the findings of Steyn & Van Zyl (2001:35) who report a similar pattern among students at UCT. A second year student sums up this experience among students in all years of study when he says,

...in my class that was definitely a big thing especially in first year, we had one lecture theatre and there were three sort of groups ... everything was really segregated and separated (Int 01 2nd Yr BM, para 132).

Several say that this pattern is related to "want[ing] to work with your friends", in other words, those with whom you feel comfortable. Later in the same interview the student above sums up a pattern in the data that suggests grouping along racial lines persists unless a staff member disrupts it by creating learning groups that are at least numerically, if not actually, racially inclusive. He says,

Ja, that's mixed [tutorials] and then again we have our dissection groups where we choose the people we want in that group. And if you go on second floor, third floor and you just look at the tables and you see ... some groups are all white and some groups are all black. My group are (sic) all Moslem (laughs).

Interviewer: And you think that's by choice?

Respondent: Ja, it is. Because you choose those people that you're in a group with. Whereas in the tut groups you can't choose, you get put [by lecturers or tutors] in those groups (ibid. para 224-228).

About three quarters of the students (17/22) say that black and white students "work well together" and "get on well" when in these learning groups. However, some note that this amicable interaction across 'race' is limited to the learning group because "when [they] walk out of that tut group, everyone goes his (sic) separate way" meaning that black and white students "don't socialise together" (Int 01 2nd Yr BM). One student takes responsibility for his role in this pattern when he says,

I think both races [play a role]. It's also my fault that I'm not calling [on the telephone] them [white friends]. I can't just say, hey, why aren't you calling me. I'm not calling them as well (Int 03 4th Yr BM).

While the second year student first quoted above (Int 01 2nd Yr BM para 224-228) suggests segregation in the classroom is voluntary and consciously chosen by students, a fourth year student suggests the contrary. He says this pattern results from unconscious separation around 'race':

In class there is a very clear segregation ... [when a tutorial group voluntarily split to work with two different registrars] they realised that, hey, hang on, it's just black guys [in the one group] and then they stopped and from there on nobody said anything. It just happened that way. But it happens all the time. I'm not sure if people are aware of it but it just happens. It's almost like a line down the middle ... I think it becomes like a learned habit [choosing to be with people of one's racialised experience]. You just do it unconsciously now. It's not that I'm not going to sit with a white guy. You just become so used to sitting with black people you just do it anyway, without realising it (Int 03 4th Yr BM).

This view that grouping by 'race' is not consciously engineered is confirmed by the student quoted below. Furthermore, he repeatedly reassures the interviewer and, in line with a few other students, explicitly states that this pattern does not result from racial antagonisms among students:

... I think mostly there are cliques. I mean ... nobody is mean to anyone. Nobody is sort of, ja, nobody is mean. Everyone is friendly and stuff like that ... I don't think I've seen people actually being mean. I really haven't. Ja, it's a sad fact but you always going to have your cliques ... I mean it's not like you don't want to talk to them. It's just that you, you know, maybe just feel comfortable with whom you work. It's just secure with the people around you. It's nothing personal about anybody else ... no one is shutting anybody out I don't think, I don't think I shut anyone out. I try to speak to everyone you know equally ... I don't think anyone read into the idea of just choosing, okay let's just choose all coloureds. I think people went in there actually wanting to be with their friends and it just so happened that I got my coloured friends and the white guys and girls have their friends and they want to be with them. It's

really not an attack against any of the other races, definitely not ... I hope I'm not making it sound as if this is so calculating and cruel because it's not like that. It's really not an attack on anyone (Int 05 2nd Yr BM).

Like a few other black students, this respondent seems to accept "cliques" formed around 'race' as "a sad fact" of life. Another student also repeatedly says, "...it [sticking to racial groups] doesn't bother me ... it's just one of those things. The world we're living in" (Int 01 2nd Yr BM). The first mentioned student's (Int 05 2nd Yr BM) repeated insistence that there is no racial antagonism among students is in itself interesting. It might suggest racial antagonisms are, in fact, present, but best kept hidden and unspoken. If there were no such antagonisms, why then the need to engage primarily with students with whom "you... just feel comfortable...[and]...secure"? In similar vein, one student when talking specifically about dynamics among students in residences says,

... there wasn't really much racial tension per se. It was just sort of an unwritten divide but not a confrontational sort of thing (Int 05 6th yr BF).

About half the sample interviewed observe that fellow students form groups around 'race' in the classroom. The data overwhelmingly suggests the norm is for students to form groups on racially exclusive lines.

Factors Causing Black Students 'Race' Discomfort: "it's not our setting, you know"

The Legacy of Apartheid

Here we explore what causes black students 'race' discomfort and what makes interaction across 'race' hard for them. Three senior students acknowledge that their particular histories of segregated living and schooling make it hard for them to negotiate interaction across 'race' in the university setting. Their experiences show ways in which the legacy of apartheid continues to shape such interaction today. One student reports:

... I know that we all mix well and there's sort of no racism. And in our hearts everything is fine, but ... we were young in the era of apartheid where everyone was separated ... We weren't like brought up you know where your best friend is of a different race. And I think to some extent you still feel more comfortable with people of your own race and who are of the same culture ...it's just what you feel comfortable, it's cultural differences also, religious differences, language difference also. But I think in our times still there isn't 100% umm that comfort you feel you know, umm, being like completely with another. I think we still associate with our own races and stuff but there isn't sort of prejudice. There is never a bad feeling to it at all or harshness, umm there's no open prejudices anything like that (Int 05 4th Yr BF).

This respondent suggests while on the surface students seem to "mix well", and at some level ("in our hearts") they know this is the demand of the present and the hope for the future, in reality, social divisions of the past remain alive in the present. She highlights cultural, religious and language differences as sources of discomfort. She echoes patterns noted in the theme discussed immediately above, namely, that racially homogeneous

settings are the comfortable norm for most students while racially heterogeneous contexts cause them 'race' discomfort, even though "bad feeling[s], "harshness" and "open prejudices" are not articulated.

A second student notes, "it's not always easy" to deal with the shift from a predominantly coloured school to Medical School. He notes 'race' as a barrier to interaction with whites and, reiterates language and differential racialised experiences as barriers to interaction among black students:

As an Indian fellow who came from a previously coloured school, I find it easier to get along with other coloured people. Personally, I find it easy to get along with some white people. Generally speaking, it's not always easy. But as you come to university, from a predominantly sheltered environment and a coloured school, you come to university where everybody is not segregated. And then you meet all the different people. And then I find it easier to get along with them. I find it most difficult to get along with people who didn't use English as a first language. So Xhosa speaking I find it difficult to get along because I had no shared interests. With white people you always talk about the rugby or the sport or whatever the case may be. But I suppose it was partially insecurities on my part and also because I didn't know if there was shared interest or what the shared interest and I think also because on their part it's really a very different world you know (Int 08 6th Yr BM).

For this student, a common language facilitates interaction with some white people while racial difference sometimes hinders such interaction. Furthermore, he notes that language differences hinder interaction among students from different black experiences. Interestingly, he takes responsibility for his role in limiting interaction with black students who speak Xhosa when he says "it was partially insecurities on my part". However, in the same breath, he reinscribes these black students as Other when describing them as of "a very different world".

With the benefit of hindsight, a third student highlights that for her, and others like her, interaction across 'race' is a difficulty which does not necessarily stem from resistance to such interaction. In alerting us to different schooling experiences among black students, she explains why she finds such interaction hard while others might find it easier:

... but I think maybe with the children that are coming behind me, mostly now they learn in mixed schools, so it will be easier for them, it wasn't easy for me because I only sort of mixed with other races here and it was not a easy thing, you can't just say "hi" I mean you have so different interest ...

Interviewer: So you say because you didn't have mixing when you were younger, it was more difficult for you?

Respond: Ja. Ja its not like people don't want to mix, like we don't want to mix, we just find it hard that's all.

Interviewer: So it's not like you don't want to mix?

Respond: No it's not like that, we find it hard and the other thing is, oh ja, the other thing is like when we in 1st year and 2nd year, okay the first time you are in a group with someone who is not Black (Int 01 6th Yr BF).

The assumption that interaction across 'race' will be easier for black students from racially heterogeneous schools is, however, not necessarily true. Two students in the sample

mention that black and white students from the same class at high school often end up at Medical School together. They say the former often remain in this circle of friends at first, but then shift away from this one towards a black circle of friends (Int 07 2nd Yr BF, Int 03 4th Yr BM). As one of these students explains,

... the first few weeks I spent a lot of my time with the white guys that I came down from high school with. And then I met some other black guys. And then, I can't really say what changed from hanging out with the white guys to the black guys ... It is just a matter of comfort really. I couldn't discuss music with a white guy, couldn't discuss girlfriends, couldn't discuss any sort of interest really ... I don't think that's anyone's fault. I couldn't really be myself (Int 03 4th Yr BM).

This suggests that some students with a history of racially heterogeneous schooling also experience 'race' discomfort at Medical School. It also confirms a finding mentioned earlier, namely, that black and white students work well together but generally do not socialise beyond the classroom. This student gives us some idea why this is the case as he indicates a sense of discomfort and estrangement in social situations with white students.

Marginality and Powerlessness in the Learning Environment

More importantly, such discomfort is not limited to social situations. Four students mention marginality and powerlessness in the learning environment. The first reports on her experience in tutorials:

But in tuts, as I said, I tend to get very intimidated. I feel like in a tut if there is a lot of them [white students] then I feel like inferior. I don't know maybe it's just the way they speak. They sound more intelligent or something. And I feel like stupid. I feel like I'm going to say something ... They're more confident and I'm not like that. So, even if their answer is wrong they sounded like it could be right because of the way they bring it, they express themselves ...

Like last year I was in a group, I was the only coloured and there were four white girls, and I really felt like I'm doing something wrong. I never gave, like we had, we used to see patients together and I wouldn't give like, like suggest something because they ... it might be wrong. But I always tell myself, 'don't think like that', you know, 'just say it'. I mean, they can be wrong. I don't know that's just me, ja.

Interviewer: Because you think that they speak with more confidence.

Respond: Ja, because I'm not very confident. I've always been minor in class and yet whenever they say the answer it's always right what I thought, but I'm not confident enough to like say 'this is what I think'.

Interviewer: And if you were in a group of all coloureds would you feel the same?

Respond: No, like this year it's like that, just it's me and like friends of mine, only one white girl and she's like one of us basically so I don't feel intimidated at all, I answer and present patients and things like that.

Interviewer: So you're feeling absolutely confident now because of the groupings?

Respond: Yes, I do, and I know them, they're my friends, like it just happens, so it worked out to be we were all in the same group, and it feels much better (Int 04 4th Yr BF).

This respondent associates whiteness with being intelligent, articulate and confident. This racialised inner model of reality leaves her grappling with her own lack of self-confidence when she tells herself "don't talk like that". When she is the only black student among several white peers in a tutorial, this racialised inner construct of reality renders her powerless, silent and feeling 'stupid'. Significantly, when amongst her [coloured] friends and with a change in the demographics of the class, she is able to regain her confidence. Similarly, the second respondent tells us his confidence, and that of others, was challenged in the learning environment. He says,

I find that I was very confident in areas where I knew people and where I was comfortable. And, especially when I came to UCT for the first time, I wasn't that comfortable. And then it's not easy to speak up. In second year ... a friend of mine was telling me, 'you guys must not be scared to ask questions in class'. And I thought, where did that come from? And it was so true because I actually watched. And I saw the people that are asking questions in 1st and 2nd year were white students. No coloureds or blacks will ask questions because they just weren't confident enough. It's not our setting, you know. We don't have all these things at our school. It's almost a stranger attitude. And then you withdraw into your shell where you rebel ... (Int 08 6th Yr BM).

He also suggests this is because black students do not own the 'setting' or the learning space and, because they feel like 'strangers' at Medical School, they tend to withdraw into silence. Both these students suggest that white dominance hinders their learning. In the first quotation above (Int 04 4th yr BF) we see how this student's own perception of 'race' leaves her feeling powerless. Seen out of context, this student's inner construct of reality could be reduced to the only factor at play in this situation. However, the second quotation (Int 08 6th Yr BM) raises the important complementary question: *What about "the setting" makes black students feel "it is not theirs"?*

In addition, a final year student talks about her sense of powerlessness in the context of oral and clinical examinations. Although what she says is hard to prove, she suggests that examiners in some way signify, early on in the process, that they have no hope that she would pass, and that this shapes her performance. She says,

... I haven't had any sort of help because what I get ... from the examiners [in oral and clinical exams], like they give up and then I also give up. It's like, I don't know, I sort of read from their faces and I get frustrated and I can't think anymore. And sort of [the] exam ends at the beginning. It's what I've experienced (Int 01 6th Yr BF).

Numerically, this evidence is not significant. However, these three students reveal their vulnerability in the learning environment. This generally requires a certain degree of self-reflection and self-awareness and, in some cases, is in itself a powerful act. Although it would be safe to assume most students are unlikely to share such difficult experiences in an interview, this needs further exploration. At this stage, we do not know how many might be silent about similar vulnerabilities and feelings of estrangement.

Furthermore, while some black students, like those quoted above, struggle with feeling marginal and powerless, others are able to act differently in the learning environment. For example, while this student observes the powerlessness of others when learning in the hospital setting, she chooses to respond from a position of power. She says,

A few weeks ago, in our ward, we had a private patient come in, and it was a white female. And before she came, everybody warned us and said, 'here's this white middle-class lady coming and she's a private patient and she's used to have everything on time etc., etc.'. And so everybody was all hyped up and nervous about this whole thing. And I chose to see her and checked history and everything. And it's just the whole black/white issue. It wasn't, it was a non-issue. And I think people tend to create issues where they're totally irrelevant ... I think it depends on a person's attitude as well. Because for me it's not such a big issue. Whereas for somebody else for whom it is an issue, it will always come up. And on a daily basis and every encounter that they have, they can find some underlying racialistic tones (Int 04 6th Yr BF).

This student works with a different inner model of reality from the one first quoted (Int 04 4th Yr BF) in this section. Hence her view of 'race' as a "non-issue" and as "irrelevant" in this context is interesting in itself. The easy next step would be to say, 'well, if *she* can do it, others should be able to do the same'. For some, the logical question to follow would be 'what is **wrong** with those black students who do not do what she does?' This line of questioning would reinscribe the uncritical and simplistic notion that black students are the problem. As researchers, our task is to ask a different question. That is, *given the history of our country, why and in which way is 'race' an issue for those black students who feel marginal and powerless?* It is this question that guides our analysis.

This data tells us that among black students there are different racialised inner constructs of reality with different real effects on the ways in which they negotiate the learning context. From these few voices we learn significant lessons about the ways in which constructions of Self and Other shape some black students' actions and experiences in the learning environment. It is clear from the above quotations that coming to voice and standing in authority in white dominant learning contexts is not an easy task for some black students. We argue that, reclaiming these voices and this authority requires work by everyone in the learning environment: white staff, white students and black students. The challenging task ahead is to define what this work might be and how it might begin. Significantly, one student gives us hope as she reminds us that black students are not passive victims in this context. She says,

... there are situations where you feel you have been unfairly treated but I think interpretation of those situations, and circumstances, change over the years ... Previously it was easier for one to see things *happen to you because you are under-privileged* (our emphasis) ... and you start blaming other people. But ... you learn ... on my part things are getting better ... [because] ... I no longer think that people are doing things to me ... (Int 07 6th Yr BF).

This final year student who is part of the extended programme reflects on the changes in her own perceptions over the past seven years. Importantly, she constructs herself as having grown out of a perception of herself as a victim of other's actions towards one of herself as an agent. She gives us a sense of part of the work some black students might need to do. For the moment, we continue to explore what causes black students 'race' discomfort.

Consequences of an Apolitical Approach to Learning

Interestingly, three students mention the difficulty of naming 'race' as a source of discomfort for both students and staff. One reports:

There's a sensitivity around race which is strange. Like the lecturers often find it difficult to say things like 'black' children ... If we're discussing something like TB and the lecturer wants to tell us, you know, it's predominant in the black areas, he just, he can't say that, even though that's the most accurate description. He would say something like 'previously disadvantaged' or 'previously disadvantaged races'. There was a guy actually, we had a tut early in the week and one of the top students in our class, he was very blunt. He didn't really care. And I can't remember what he said. But he just used the word 'black person' and the whole group, including myself, we were just kind of, because we had, we got black guys.

Interviewer: He's a white guy?

Respond: He's a white guy and we have black guys in the class. And his comment was directed to black ... I mean it wasn't a joke or it wasn't a derogatory remark in any way. It was a valid point about the work. It's just because he said the word 'black'. And it just, I don't know, it just makes everyone feel uncomfortable. More so than saying 'white', or 'coloured' for instance. I don't know why.

Interviewer: Is it that the whole class feels uncomfortable, all the races or is it particular people that feel uncomfortable?

Respond: I think in particular the white guys are very wary of seeming racist. So they will go out of their way to avoid anything like that, ja. It's probably true about coloured people as well. But it's always directed at like, the you know, like the previously disadvantaged races. So discussing those kinds of things is always uncomfortable. We had a case about a coloured man who came to the hospital with liver failure and emphysema. And then it's very difficult for a tutor to say, you know, alcoholism is very common in the coloured community, even though the statistics show it to be true. It's just we have all of these political[ly] incorrect statements nowadays that you've got to be careful (Int 06 End Yr BM).

This quotation highlights a difficulty with naming 'race' that is not necessarily limited to Medical School. Instead, it illustrates one way in which post-apartheid discourses have delimited the ways in which we can speak about 'race'. For example, by talking about the 'previously disadvantaged', 'race', and particularly *continued* white privilege, is obscured. This is a term that refutes ways in which historical relations of 'race' privilege continue to shape the present. For example most black people in this country *remain* 'disadvantaged' in various ways. In this report, we read specifically about ways in which young, middle class black students *remain* 'disadvantaged' in the context of UCT's Medical School. It is the task of higher education institutions such as UCT to challenge such discourses.

The case reported above suggests that staff members concerned draw on these discourses and struggle to contextualise (historically, socio-economically and socio-politically) particular racialised patterns of disease. This would require naming white privilege and its role in the equation, an uncomfortable act that most white South Africans prefer to avoid. Although one can argue this discomfort is understandable, it is important to note the effects of this silence about privilege. In the absence of such contextualisation, TB

remains a disease which black people carry *because they are black* rather than as a result of racialised patterns of poverty. Similarly, alcoholism remains a disease which coloured people carry *because they are coloured*, rather than as a result of a long history of the 'tot system' utilised by white farmers in the Western Cape to keep farm workers subordinate.

'Race' discomfort for black students in the instance described above is caused *because* of the absence of a context for these diseases. An apolitical and ahistorical approach to these diseases means that 'race' and the accompanying relations of power and privilege cannot be named. Furthermore, this approach legitimates as sufficient awkward apologies on the part of white people, while its politically correct language frees them from owning their 'race' privilege. Another student gives an example of such apology:

I've noticed ... say you have a white and black South African talking about anything, you know, the white person will say, 'Oh there's some black people' whatever and instantly they'll get nervous and they'll say, 'Oh I'm so sorry, is it okay if I say black people, should I rather say Africans?', you know people are just so aware and so sensitive about this topic and at the same time I find ... on the one hand white people are scared to offend ... (Int 04 6th Yr BF).

Such paralysis around revealing privilege and naming 'race' simply leaves the power dynamics and racial divisions unspoken, and in the process 'protect(s)' white privilege. It does not facilitate an engagement with these dynamics with a view to changing them. As one student says,

... [white] people are very careful actually ... they don't really want to infringe on someone else ... They try to protect other people and themselves at the same time. It's hard to get close to someone actually, because there is a lot of barriers put up. And ... It's hard to get through sometimes.

Interviewer: on a racial level?

Respondent: Ja ... like they're retracting ... It's just with some people from other races you know, most people are alright (Int 04 2nd Yr BM).

Another says,

... you have to watch what you say and how you say it. They watch what they say and how they say it (Int 02 6th Yr BF).

In light of the theoretical frame informing this report, namely, that 'race' is dynamic and relational, the above-mentioned experiences of marginalisation, powerlessness and discomfort on the part of black students must be seen in the context of ways in which white students and staff work with 'race'. We learn from the above case that some white staff work with 'race' in ways which obscure privilege. This report now proceeds to focus on what some black students report about white staff and students say and do further to contribute to their discomfort.

What White Staff and Students Say and Do: "there's always been that patronising smile"

White Staff Perpetuate Racist Discourse

The evidence suggests that white staff work with 'race' in ways that reveal particular assumptions about black students. For example, after repeatedly asking for academic assistance, this student returned to his tutor only to be dismissed as 'emotional':

... he [the tutor] said to me ... 'I can't help you now. I'm very busy now. I'm looking at specimens. Go and wait and we will talk about this next week'. And I stood there and I have been telling him 'but I've been coming in and you say come back later' ... He didn't give me a chance at all. He told me I was being emotional and I should excuse him, he's busy he has no time dealing with emotional students coming into his office (Int 02 4th Yr BM).

Below, a second student describes an interaction between her group and their tutor. In this encounter, the tutor constructs black students as loud, obnoxious and also lazy as he questions whether they 'study at all'. She says,

... he [the tutor] is forever, not as such picking on us as such, but always making us feel small and stupid and stuff ... he will always constantly go over our specimens and making comments like 'you guys are always so loud' and 'do you guys study at all'. And I don't think it's fair because our marks reflect the fact that we do study ... I don't feel that he's got the right to say that.

Later in the same interview:

Interviewer: What was he saying to you?

Respond: Oh, but we were always like loud, or we will talk about nothing to do with [the subject] ... It was on a Monday morning and he will say, 'just stop discussing what you were discussing last night, because you guys are always the people that make the hall such a loud obnoxious place to be in' and everybody was like taken aback because he was forceful about, but he's old, so (Int 03 2nd Yr BF).

Historically, the idea that black people are primarily emotional is intricately linked to the racist idea that they have little, if any, cognitive ability. Constructions of black people as loud and lazy are part of this racist discourse. In the two cases illustrated above, white tutors work with 'race' in ways that perpetuate such discourse.

Covert Exclusionary Practices by White Staff and Students

Furthermore, one respondent notes that white students "don't greet you...[and so do not] acknowle[dge] you [are] there [even though] we used to work together" (Int 07 2nd Yr BF). In similar vein, a final year student gives examples of ways in which white staff members make her both invisible by ignoring her, and hyper-visible by giving her extra special attention. She also describes ways in which they treat her as a 'prototype' of black people and limit her to particular tasks understood by them to be suited to black students because they are black. She says,

... [first,] generally you do get people who just ignore you in a group, who will just talk to the whites. And you just sit there and you're wondering 'am I here or not?' Not be asked any questions, just ignored, you know. And then [second,] you just get to other people who just go out of their way to kind of make you feel you matter even if they go overboard. And you just sit there and [you're] thinking, 'is there a problem?' And [third,] sometimes you get people who kind of like, I don't know, use you as a prototype: because you are black, you're supposed to know everything about being black. And ... when you're in hospitals you get some people they will be assuming that you speak Xhosa just because you're black and you're in Cape Town. And you are supposed to act as an interpreter. Now, you don't get to do, what is there to do as such besides just running around interpreting ... (Int 03 6th Yr BF).

This quotation illustrates the complex racialised power dynamics at play in a learning context where it seems only white students are considered worthy of being spoken to, and only their voices are considered worthy of being heard. In the first instance described by this student, the white staff member seems to assume (consciously or unconsciously) that, intellectually, the student has nothing to contribute. Underlying this assumption is the notion that the inclusion of black students in the white classroom means that they are there simply to observe, listen to and learn from what white students and staff have to say. This idea reinforces the notion that whiteness carries intellectual authority in the learning environment. In the second instance described, the exaggerated attention given to the student highlights her presence as an exception to the norm. In the third instance described, the white staff member seems to assume that all black people are the same or have the same experiences and that they all speak the same language. In this case, the student is assumed to be a representative of all black students. Furthermore, her tasks in the hospital setting are limited to 'interpreting', in other words, facilitating and complementing the medical tasks rather than doing the latter herself. These examples further illustrate that white staff members work with 'race' in ways that covertly perpetuate inequality. Practices such as these position black students as marginal and powerless.

In addition to the practices outlined above, one student says white staff and students collude with one another in patronising and making fun of black students:

Even the staff people around this campus ... the patronising smiles that they give black people, I don't understand what that's all about. Everywhere you go there's always been that patronising smiles and it's like, am I supposed to be amused by that or something? They're very undermining.

Interviewer: and it's [patronising behaviour from whites] common you say?

Respond: Very common, if you're a black student you get the patronising smile and with the class mates as well it's there (Int 07 2nd Yr BF).

Later in the same interview:

... one of our lecturers made this remark that some people (because they're doing taste buds) ... say 'tasty' buds. They [white students] would laugh, but so I don't get the point. He's referring to taste buds. So I guess those comments on the side could decrease ...

Interviewer: and he was referring to black people when he said that?

Respond: Yes ... (Int 07 2nd Yr BF).

Later in the same interview:

Well, okay, fine, we had this lecturer and he was black, black African I suppose and [he kept] on making examples that if you were in Khayelitsha or something you could be stabbed here and there and he kept on making examples of roads in the Eastern Cape, all the hospitals don't have equipment and stuff like that and people were laughing and I didn't think it was funny at all (Int 07 2nd Yr BF).

The quotation above referring to "tasty buds" confirms the argument put forward by Steyn and Van Zyl (2001:39,40) that language use and pronunciation in the English language is used as a signifier of difference in the learning environment in a way which clearly stipulates a 'normal' way of speaking English. Furthermore, these authors note the subtle ways in which humour produces insiders and outsiders (ibid.41). When white students laugh, as in the case reported immediately above, they collude with white staff in making fun of black students in ways that make them feel marginal.

Black Students' Perceptions of their White Peers

Some black respondents say there are also other ways in which white students contribute to their discomfort. These further reveal the dynamic and relational character of 'race'. For example, nine students talk about 'race' dynamics in the classroom and note the white students' dominance in this setting. One student sums up this dominance as she shares her experience of working on a group project,

White girls tend to presume things. They tend to boss you around and, in front of people, get very loud ... when we had a project earlier on ... people were in a group together, you know. And the other races in that group ... you find that they were quiet ...

Interviewer: So the black, coloured and Indian weren't saying anything?

Respond: Ja, they're quiet. They won't speak up, you know. I can't say it happened because they were white. There was a lot of other white girls who also didn't talk. But you'll find there's never a black person or any other race who would do that, to start be the dominant one, especially the guys can do that, too.

Interviewer: And it would be a white guy?

Respond: It would be a white person, either sex. They're just generally very confident and very comfortable taking the lead ... (Int 01 4th Yr BF).

While this student says black students remain quiet in the face of white students' dominance, another says they challenge such dominance in smaller groups and tend to remain distant in larger ones:

... white students always want to dominate so that causes problems.

Interviewer: So they just take over the group?

Respond: Ja

Interviewer: And what are the responses of the black students when that happens?

Respond: They complain, they argue.

Interviewer: They argue with the white students or between themselves?

Respond: Between themselves and some complain to the person.

Later in the same interview:

Interviewer: And within the big group, how do people relate to each other?

Respond: There are no fights or anything. It's kind of very subtle. You keep your distance. It's not out in the open that I don't want to be with you. You're kind of there, and I'm here (Int 01 6th Yr BF).

Yet another reports a more positive experience which she says is facilitated by the way in which the tutor relates to the students,

... our tutor picks on people, so he'll ask you to say something ... I think when we first started out umm, the white students were more talkative than some of the black students in our class but I think as we like got to know each other and progressed it's now much better.

Interviewer: What do you mean by much better?

Respond: Umm, there's nobody that sits quietly and waits to be asked a question or hasn't got anything to say as well. Everybody just comes prepared. We've spoken about it and we know what's going on and we discussed amongst ourselves before the tutor comes and, yes, it flows basically (Int 02 2nd Yr BF).

This student suggests a process, facilitated by the tutor, by which this class moved beyond white students dominating the class towards a more inclusive learning context. This example stands out as an exception in the data.

In addition to seeing white students as dominant, black students have a few other perceptions of their white counterparts. One student describes what she means by "nice white people",

I get irritated if people ... just because I'm coloured, make an effort to be nice to me ... I find it extremely irritating. Just be who you are. If you are racist, be racist. But don't put on an act ... (Int 03 2nd Yr BF).

This suggests that "nice white people" are patronising and not genuine in their interactions. In contrast two students tell us what they mean when they talk about "sincere whites". One student reports:

... I've actually met a sincere white person ... someone who's interested in what you do and even it's a new experience for her, its not like 'oh don't you wanna do this instead' ... someone who is sincere, who's going to be interested in the way I live and my lifestyle (Int 01 6th Yr BF).

Another says,

... there are really some sincere white people that I like ... they try their best to accommodate without being patronising ... I admire that in some people, who actually acknowledge that, okay fine, I've been racist and I'm trying, I'm trying.

Interviewer: You've got more respect for that?

Respondent: Hmm. At least you own up, you know ... (Int 03 6th Yr BF).

Significantly, for this student, white people are "sincere" when they are able to acknowledge their role in keeping the 'race' hierarchy intact and make some effort to change this practice. These instances need to be highlighted as examples to emulate. Nevertheless, they are few

and far between. The data suggests the predominant pattern is that of dominance by white students. These practices on their part contribute to a context in which black students are positioned as marginal and powerless.

The Discourse of Deficit

Several students observe that mainly black students under-perform, fail and/or are academically or financially excluded from Medical School. Importantly, four students are concerned about why "black people always get low marks" (Int 01 6th Yr BF) and " why it works out that black people fail, and black people have problems, and white people don't" (Int 07 2nd Yr BF). Another grapples with the same dynamic,

... I mean it wasn't just a matter of it was just black students struggling. There were a whole lot of white students struggling. But an issue was never made of that. It was always well, focus on the black students because they're doing badly you know. I don't want to make a thing about it, there wasn't much really, much to say, but it just didn't feel right (Int 03 4th Yr BM).

The quotations immediately above are clear examples of what Powell refers to as the "discourse of deficit" used by white staff and with which white students collude (1997:4). Writing about the challenges of change in North American higher education, this author explores the pervasiveness and complexity of patterns of 'black under-achievement' through a psychodynamic lens. She posits first, that a racially coded and merit-based discourse of competence circulates in racialised institutions. Second, that white staff and students' fear of incompetence is projected onto black students via the discourse of deficit. Third, this discourse and these projections (when taken on by black students) have real effects. It devalues black students' excellence and potential while privileging their failures. As one student notes, "... It will take a while even for a black person to feel that they have something to offer to value" (Int 07 2nd Yr BF). This burdens black students with the pressure to prove themselves and has a negative effect on their performance. One student further questions this under-performance when she reports that in particular departments at medical school,

... most of the time you'll see the people who haven't passed are all black people. And I think that's a very strange coincidence that it doesn't seem to happen in the other departments ... many people don't say anything about it because they're afraid of being victimised. It just seems that the whole department is stuck in this racism ... which is not overt ... (Int 04 6th Yr BF).

Several examples of covert racism have been illustrated above. Such insidious practices are often hard to name in the moment when they occur. More so, when students are marginalised and/or made hyper-visible, it is understandable that they remain silent for fear of victimisation in a setting they do not regard as their own.

The practices outlined above serve to perpetuate white dominance. The discomfort around 'race' that black students say they experience in the learning environment cannot be understood in isolation from these institutionalised practices. In the context of a dominant white institutional culture the discourse of deficit preserves and affirms the value of such culture. In this culture, Powell argues, "white students are supported, [and] empowered ... via the discourse of potential (as though they had no deficits) and it just feels like 'they

earned it" (ibid.). White students are thus left "unfettered by the complexities of race and their whiteness ... [while] black students carry a burden of awareness and clarity about race on behalf of all" (ibid.5).

Black Students Do the 'Race' Work

Consequences of the Expectations of a White World

This "burden of awareness and clarity about race" (ibid.) which black students carry for everyone in the learning environment is what we refer to as *doing the 'race' work*. The material covered thus far gives the reader some sense of what carrying this burden entails. Here students talk more specifically about this burden of 'race'. For example, black students have to prove themselves worthy of being in the faculty, they have to answer white people's questions or explain things to them, and, *they sit with the feelings of discomfort around 'race'*. One student reiterates what others say when she reports:

I don't know I guess, like generally I know a lot of white people here get the impression that English is not your first language and that you should ... generally I get approached a lot 'where do you come from?' and you know, people think it's a compliment, but it's really annoying you know, it's like they expect less of you or they're surprised when you do better than, I don't know than they expected you to do, there's nothing that I can quite you know, but I feel I have constantly have to prove something.

Interviewer: As a Black person?

Respond: Ja constantly (Int 01 4th Yr BF).

From what this student says, the general expectation among most white people she encounters at medical school is that a black student cannot speak English and when she does, she cannot possibly be 'one of *our blacks*' hence the question 'where do you come from?' The assumption of deficit implied in this expectation leaves the black student feeling 'annoyed' and that she constantly has to prove herself worthy and/or different from white people's stereotypical views of black students. In this way, she is left to do the 'race' work.

Furthermore, black students do the 'race' work when they have to change their ways of being to fit into a white world. A second year student illustrates this point and expresses a sentiment held by other black students when she says:

We always have to go up or down and go to their [white people's] levels and even with friendship it will never be on your terms it will be on their terms ... For you to be considered an intelligent black person or well-rounded black person, you know like I said it must be on their [white people's] terms, in my [white] world, its how you fit in my [white] world (Int 07 2nd Yr BF).

This quotation highlights the ways in which black students experience their positioning as marginal and themselves as in need of adjustment. It points to two of the many burdens black students carry. Firstly, the difficult decision about whether or not to assimilate and secondly, the consequences of this decision. The student quoted below talks about some of these consequences. He says,

... to become friends with a white person it takes a lot more sacrifices on your part for you guys to find common ground of any sort. A lot of the time you've got to give up ...

Like I said, I went a white school and I learnt everything in English and I speak English all the time and I came to varsity you're taught [in] English again. A lot of the time you just don't want to speak English anymore ... not many, if any, white people are prepared to learn any other language ...

... that's the problem that I've come across [white people] were not prepared to take a step and say, okay, fine, listen, I'm going to do that to make this work, it always has to be initiated by the black person, and lot of us is [sic] just getting tired of it, and say, okay, well, fine, we can do it on our own without the white person ...

I mean I went to a school where in our matric group there were 3 black people in a class of 27 and it's just stuff we have to deal with all the time, you couldn't really get acceptance unless it's something extra special about you. We found that, if I look at the guys that I went to high school with now, there's something, you couldn't just be an average ordinary black guy and get acceptance from the white people in our class because it was, just, I guess, in a way, you can look at it the same, there was no reason for them to talk to you, what are they going to say, what can you talk about ... you're just another black person and that's it and it's the same here at varsity as well (Int 03 4th Yr BM).

This student brings to the fore the weight of the consequences of what can be seen as forced assimilation. One of these includes giving up that part of one's sense of Self that is deeply shaped by language or 'mother-tongue'. We were reminded by Professor Wa Thiongo at the Biko Memorial Lecture (12 September 2003) that language domination is the key to cultural subjugation. Another is the fatigue associated with the constant requirement of white worlds, at school and then again at university, that black students be extraordinary, in other words, not themselves. The alternative is a more pronounced isolation and denigration: "... there was no reason for them to talk to you ... you're just another black person". This quotation suggests the choice for black students is between alienation from Self and, alienation from Self and the environment. It echoes students' voices cited earlier in the report. It also shows that black students do the 'race' work when they are expected to lose aspects of their identities and to be extraordinary in order to be recognised.

Considering what these students have told us so far about their experiences in the learning environment at Medical School, it is not surprising that they retreat into safe places. As one final year student says,

You're safe with your people. You feel you don't have to perform or explain yourself (Int 02 6th Yr BF).

Black Students Downplay 'Race'

In addition to the burdens noted above, some black students do the 'race' work when they tend to downplay or deny hurtful 'race' experiences. Here we refer to the student quoted earlier on who was dismissed by his tutor as "emotional". Despite this experience in which the student is clearly stereotyped as emotional and irrational, and despite his description of this experience as "my worst experience at varsity", this interviewee said he was "very

lucky" not to have been hurt, misunderstood or compromised around issues of 'race' and "fortunate not having had bad experiences with staff" (Int 02 4th Yr BM). Similarly, the student quoted earlier on who was described by her tutor as "loud", "obnoxious" and "lazy" says, "when it happened I thought it was a really racist thing to do" but later she concludes it "could be a personal thing" because "he's old" (Int 03 2nd yr BF).

Although this student recognises racism as the problem in this case, she dismisses it as a personal error on the part of her tutor because of his age. We argued earlier in the report that this is not simply a personal issue. Instead, it is an example of white staff perpetuating racist discourse. The real effects of such discourse are political rather than personal. In addition, when black students downplay 'race' in this way, they contribute to white staff's sense of freedom from this burden.

These are examples of ways in which black students downplay the racist content of their experiences. For most black and white people who have some 'race' cognisance, these are clearly racist acts in the sense that they serve to marginalise and stereotype black students. Certain questions in this regard need to be explored: Why are some black students at Medical School downplaying the role of 'race' in their experiences? Is this a common tendency? Are they in denial as a defense against the pain of being stereotyped? Is it fear of naming 'race' because of the consequences of speaking out or talking b(l)ack? If it were the latter, what do students imagine these consequences to be? Are these imagined consequences based in fact? What needs to be done to change these facts and/or black students' constructions of these realities?

Furthermore, two black students downplay 'race' when they explain away their hurt and/ or blame themselves for outcomes that are not necessarily entirely their responsibility, but clearly shaped by racialised relations of power. We quoted a final year student earlier in the report who shares her vulnerability during oral and clinical exams. This is how she makes sense of her failure,

I wasn't happy about failing it [a supplementary exam]. I know most people are not happy about failing any course, but I don't think it was because I didn't know [my work].

Interviewer: What would you imagine the problem was?

Respond: Like I say, I don't know ... I think maybe failing is expressing yourself [not being able to express myself] because I don't put much on race. I give myself reasons.

Interviewer: So you give yourself reasons so that it's something you can change?

Respond: Ja, [this way] I can do something about it because if I blame it on race, then there's someone else involved (Int 1 6th Yr BF).

There is a fine line between taking responsibility for one's own failures and blaming oneself entirely for one's failures without an awareness of ways in which particular racialised contexts shape one's performance. As indicated earlier in this report, both the discourse of deficit and particular inner constructs of reality have real effects on black students' performance. Another respondent makes sense of her failures in a similar way when she says,

... for my failures I tend to look at myself and see where I have gone wrong instead of... say[ing] maybe it's the department or maybe it's the faculty and trying to ascertain blame. Although in some ways ... I did feel like if ... I've studied a whole year ... and I spend one month after the exam [studying] ... and not going out ... and getting less marks than when I got before, I just couldn't understand what was going on there. But then I just told myself maybe this is something I have to do. I just have to repeat (Int 03 6th Yr BF).

Black Students Act with Care

In addition, three students take responsibility to act carefully around 'race' and not cause white people discomfort. For example, this student says,

... you want to excuse these whites [because] they grew up like that and sometimes they probably act that way not knowing that they are being racist, you know. And it's such a pity because I'm sure some whites do get into situations where they think they're acting normal [sic]. But because there's this awareness around [on the part of black students] one tends to be on their toes and you keep the person at arm's distance and you watch them. So once they acting you pick it up quickly ... So for me I'll meet you and I'll keep you at arm's distance ... I won't do anything fancy. I will never ever make you feel uncomfortable. But when I feel like you trying to treat me like I'm inferior to you, that's when you'll see ... (Int 02 4th Yr BM).

This respondent empathises somewhat with white people who are unaware of the effects of their actions. At the same time, he reveals some distrust of them when he keeps them at a safe distance while watching their actions. He does 'race' work when he acts carefully around 'race' by not "do[ing] anything fancy", by "never ever mak[ing a white person] feel uncomfortable" and when, as he says later in the interview, he "[doesn't] get into arguments with lecturers, [and he doesn't] say unnecessary things when you don't have to". The second student expresses a similar empathy when she says "I'm always trying to be understanding of the other person" (Int 03 6th Yr BF). She, however, ends up doing the 'race' work when she carries the angry feelings and remains silent for fear of being constructed as a weak student who complains about racism. She continues,

but there are times when it [white staff's stereotypical perceptions of black students] gets to me and I just angry ... although like I don't come out and say anything because, you know, sometimes you don't want to be the person [about whom staff say], 'oh, well, she doesn't even do that well at school and the next thing she jumps ... (Int 03 6th Yr BF).

It is important to note that black students are not simply the passive recipients of this burden of 'race'. Instead, they resist by disengaging from interaction across 'race'. The two students quoted immediately above are not passive when the first says, "we can do it on our own without the white person" (Int 02 4th Yr BM) and when both choose to protect themselves by remaining silent about white staff's covert racist practices. Similarly, another student disengages by turning down invitations from white people because she "... really [doesn't] feel like making the effort" (Int 01 4th Yr BF) while another says, "... If I have to change who I am to fit, then I'm not going to do it" (Int 01 6th Yr BF). With regard to white students who worked with her before and who do not greet her, another respondent says, "... no, I would not suck up to a white person ... why should I say, 'hi'. Why can't they say 'hi' to me?" (Int 07 2nd Yr BF).

It is important to note this resistance. However, it is equally important to note the subtle ways in which black students unconsciously contribute to keeping the power dynamics of 'race' alive. Here we need to be vigilantly aware of ways in which particular racialised inner constructs of reality as well as patterns of remaining silent about 'race' in particular contexts can keep such dynamics alive. These practices are important to notice precisely because they point to the work which some black students need to do in order to reclaim their voices, confidence and authority and in order to make Medical School a place which is rightfully theirs.

Discomfort Beyond the Black / White Binary

Some students alert us to the reality that uncomfortable interaction is not limited to relations among black and white students, but extends to relations among black students themselves. Earlier in this report two respondents mention different black experiences and language differences among black students as a barrier to interaction. Here, students elaborate on these barriers to include intra-continental dynamics (how black Africans from elsewhere on the continent relate to black Africans from SA and *vice versa*) and intra-national dynamics (how black (inclusive) students from SA relate to each other). The data presented here does not provide any conclusive evidence. However, it points to particular issues and dynamics that some students say they encounter. For example, one student from a country bordering South Africa says,

... I am aware of what's going on. There are certain situations where I can't be myself.

Interviewer: Like which situations?

Respond: Like, you know, you have your black friends, your white friends but you almost find that the black people [from South Africa] almost look at you different. They won't say it. It's almost an inferiority complex more than anything ...

Interviewer: They feel inferior or they make you feel inferior?

Respond: They feel inferior and they feel like you basically think you're better than them. But it's not raised, but it's definitely there.

... my partner [on a project] is pretty much just like me. She's South African and she's different to a lot of the black [South African] girls. I personally don't get along with a lot of the black students. I find that they're just as rigid to work with ... (Int 01 4th Yr BF).

This black student finds it hard as a non-South African to relate to most fellow black South Africans. She suggests there are unspoken perceptions among local black students about 'who is better than whom'. This suggests national differences are used to establish hierarchical divisions among black students. This suggestion needs further exploration.

A final year student alerts us to a further divisive dynamic among black students. Significantly, this information is freely volunteered rather than solicited. She says,

... the Black people who did not go to mixed schools, in English medium schools, most

of them are struggling, like myself. I've been here longer than I'm supposed to be. And then we kind of have something in common that we're struggling. We work hard to get somewhere. We're working very hard. So ... we form friends[hips] in that way. We share something in common that we want to graduate and we must work hard. So we encourage each other ... [and] form a strong bond. And then we get other blacks who come from good mixed schools ... I think who don't have to work as much as we have to. I think it's much easier for them. So they associate better with other races than we do.

Interviewer: And because of their background as well?

Respond: Ja, and there's sort of a gap now between us and them. We're like no longer the same. We're different and they turned white (laughs).

Interviewer: Really? ... do they get called?

Respond: They get called 'whites'.

Interviewer: Really? Do they know about it?

Respond: No (laughs). You don't go to a person's face and tell them that, but they may hear about it somehow (Int 01 6th Yr BF).

This respondent measures degrees of blackness in terms of her perception of 'how much one struggles' and 'how hard one works'. In the process she constructs herself, and other students in her position, as a victim of circumstances. In addition, she suggests that students in her position "form a strong bond" based on this notion of themselves as victims. She further implies that "other blacks", namely, students from English medium and racially heterogeneous schools, "don't have to work as much" or as hard, and that it is easier for them to negotiate the racially heterogeneous environment at Medical School. We have already shown that these assumptions about students she refers to as "other blacks" are not necessarily true. Nevertheless, in the light of her assumptions, she makes sense of these differences in schooling experience by constructing these students as "white". She further admits that this naming and these assumptions generally remain unspoken in the presence of these students, but notes that they are aware of it. This student uses the language of 'race' and its embedded hierarchy to create new hierarchical divisions among black students. As a defense against her own sense of hardship she Others black students whom she perceives as not having to work as hard and struggle as much.

I have argued elsewhere that there are various ways in which blackness is policed in SA today. For example, the term 'coconut', which carries negative connotations, became part of the South African vocabulary in the mid-1990s when predominantly middle-class black African learners gained access to historically white high schools. Gradually these learners were perceived by their less privileged counterparts to have imbibed ways of being "whitely" (Frye cf Bailey 1999:96). Speaking English with a 'white' accent is one of the primary signifiers for the 'coconut', who is seen to be black on the outside *but* white on the inside and hence not 'truly' black. In response, these middle-class black youth have named their rivals 'dusty-crusties', a term signifying rural, 'backward', not so 'hip' blackness.

This language points to the continued significance of 'race' in SA. Moreover, it reveals the resilience of essentialist understandings of 'race'. As 'race' intersects with class and the urban/rural divide to produce heterogeneous black experiences, young black South

Africans attempt to construct and enforce a homogeneous, rigid blackness. These attempts are premised on understandings of heterogeneity (and hybridity) in everyday life as pathological. The quotation immediately above reveals an attempt at policing blackness.

Other Students' Warnings

About eight students mention specific advice and warnings from their senior counterparts. One respondent says, "... black students from previous years tend to warn you about certain departments and [about] the person in the department [who] is known for discrimination" (Int 01 4th Yr BF). In some cases these warnings produce fear and caution and so profoundly shape the ways in which students negotiate and perceive the learning environment, for example, the student quoted above continues, "... a lot of us worked really hard, we're scared of failing ... everyone talks about [racism towards black students] but you can never really put your finger on it ..." (Int 01 4th Yr BF).

These warnings have real effects, for example, this student was asked whether or not he will specialise at UCT. In his response, he told the interviewer about a registrar who warned him of racist practices at Medical School in the year 2001. This registrar told the student he was limited to working at the blood bank, felt he was excluded by his seniors and was not learning much, and so decided to leave UCT for another university. As a result of this warning the student says,

... it would be nice [to specialise at UCT]. All the good guys [academics] are here. But you know if the system is like that [if Black students are excluded as in the case described by the registrar concerned], no (Int 02 4th Yr BM).

A second student expresses uncertainty about whether she wants to specialise at UCT or not because,

... a [black] registrar [told] me that they have to work doubly as hard to prove themselves ... I like a challenge. So for me, I'd love to infiltrate that circle and move their comfort zone ... But it's not pleasant to go into something knowing you're gonna have to fight. I mean it's hard enough studying and working, and whatever, if there is a family, You don't want to be fighting racial things (Int 02 4th Yr BF).

For this student the burden 'race' makes her reluctant to return to Medical School. In contrast, another student is sceptical of warnings. She says,

... registrars ... tell ... scary stories ...[they] tell you that you won't get accepted, and you do get accepted. And they tell you that you will fail and they're going to chuck you out. You fail, and they don't chuck you out ... they give you a chance and they support you ..." (Int 03 6th Yr BF).

Yet another says,

... I have heard ... If you're a black person and you want to survive at Medical School, you must make sure that you do not, whatever you do, ... challenge the system in any way. Because once you do that, you will ... be known and you will be marked down and you will never graduate ... (Int 07 2nd Yr BF).

Allegations of racism are an issue in their own right. Racist practices are a problem in their own right. Such allegations and practices significantly affect public perceptions of Medical School and ways in which some of its students negotiate this learning environment.

Summary of the Findings Presented

From what black students tell us, the evidence indicates that black and white students at Medical School tend to group around 'race'. In addition, black students sometimes group around divisions among themselves forming groups of coloured, Muslim and black African students. Repeated mention of these patterns in the data makes it a significant finding. This tells us that interaction across 'race' among students is limited. Furthermore, the predominant reason students provide for this phenomenon is that they prefer to work with their friends (who are generally of the same racialised experience) and with people with whom they feel most comfortable. The latter are also generally from similar racialised experiences. This repeated emphasis on comfort suggests there might be antagonistic feelings towards white students, and that some students feel safer when these are left unspoken. We gather from these voices that racially homogeneous settings are the norm of comfort for most students. In contrast, as indicated by a little over half the students, racially heterogeneous contexts cause them 'race' discomfort even in the absence of overt racial antagonisms among students.

Among some of the factors causing them 'race' discomfort, black students mention the abrupt shift for them from segregated living and schooling to the racially heterogeneous university environment. They also mention language, cultural and religious differences sometimes as a source of discomfort among themselves. These factors alert us to the ways in which social divisions under apartheid continue to shape the present, even in the absence of overt racial antagonisms among students. Furthermore, some students mention their marginality and powerlessness in both learning and social contexts which they perceive as dominated by white students and staff. Although one respondent was able to act powerfully as a learner when in a hospital setting, we cannot simply expect others to follow suit. The challenge is to acknowledge that black students are not completely powerless while simultaneously exploring what gets in the way of their ownership of this learning environment. Such exploration cannot exclude an examination of the effects of various racialised inner constructs of reality held by black students. Importantly, we note the real effects of learning about diseases without placing them in context and of some staff members' paralysis around revealing privilege and naming 'race'.

Furthermore, the evidence suggests that some white staff perpetuate racist discourse when they refer to black students as emotional and loud, and suggest they are lazy. It also suggests white staff engage in covert exclusionary practices and white students sometimes collude with these practices. In addition, black students say their white counterparts dominate the classroom. In response, some say black students remain silent while others say they challenge such dominance. There is also some evidence that a discourse of deficit operates at Medical School. The real effects of this discourse are to devalue black students' contributions and emphasise their failures while, simultaneously, affirming those of white students and remaining silent about *their* failures. In reality, of course, all students have strengths and developmental needs.

The evidence suggests black students carry, though not without resistance, the burden of 'race'. This means that they constantly have to prove themselves worthy of being at Medical School; they carry the feelings associated with the discomfort caused by

'race'; the onus is on them to disprove white staff and students' stereotypical perceptions of black students; they are expected to lose parts of their identities in order to fit into the white world; they are expected to be extraordinary in order to be recognised; they make decisions about and weigh up the consequences of various ways of negotiating this world, and they downplay the significance of 'race' in shaping their experiences.

Our approach to 'race' as a dynamic and as relational implies that all parties are agents with capacities to change these dynamics and relations. In light of this approach, it is important, firstly, to recognise particular practices on the part of some black students that might contribute towards keeping these 'race' dynamics alive. We point to examples and counter-examples of such practices. Secondly, it is important to note that in suggesting this we do not simply blame black students. It is clear from this report that we see the difficulties they talk about in context. Although it might be hard to acknowledge these practices, on their part, we argue that they are key to defining the work some students can do to empower themselves in this learning environment. As these dynamics stand at present, white students are left free of responsibility for and discomfort arising from interaction across 'race'. Furthermore, the privileged position of white staff and students leaves them free of the need to be aware of their contributions to the 'race' dynamics in the learning environment.

Some students alert us to the fact that uncomfortable interaction is not limited to relations among black and white students. Instead, there is some evidence to suggest that both intra-continental and intra-national differences are used by some black students to establish hierarchical divisions among themselves. Finally, warnings from senior students regarding racist practices at Medical School shape new students' perceptions of the School as well as the ways in which they negotiate the learning environment.

CHAPTER FOUR

White Students' Experiences and Perceptions of 'Race' and Racism

This chapter elaborates the findings regarding white students' experiences and perceptions of 'race' and racism at Medical School. The findings are substantiated by what white respondents say. As noted earlier, these respondents have far less to say about these issues than do their black counterparts. Although this leaves us with less material to analyse, the available data reveals some ways in which these students' experiences and perceptions are both similar and different. As will be illustrated, white students' silence is in itself a comparatively significant finding.

In this chapter we focus on five themes. These include

- (a) that white students have little to say about 'race' and racism at Medical School,
- (b) their confirmation that there is limited interaction across 'race' among students,
- (c) that they express little 'race' discomfort in racially heterogeneous settings,
- (d) that some argue equity practices result in reverse discrimination and
- (e) the ways in which some students marginalise their peers through dominant practices and perceptions of them as Other.

Little to Say about 'Race' and Racism

When asked directly, about three quarters (15/19) of the white students categorically say they have had *no* personal experiences of racism at Medical School nor have they been hurt, misunderstood or compromised with regard to 'race'. At first, these responses seem similar to those of black students. However, the data reveals significant differences.

First, it is interesting to note that *all* but one of these students give short answers like "No" or "Not that I can think of", with very little further engagement on the topic even when probed by the interviewer. On the contrary, most black students would say they have not had personal experiences of racism but have heard of other students who have. Alternatively, they would say they have not had experiences of overt racism. We did not

specifically ask white students how they thought their whiteness affected their experiences at Medical School. In retrospect, it may have helped to include in the interview schedule a question along these lines: *What is it like to be a white student at Medical School?* This may have given us some insight into the ways in which these students position themselves in the racial hierarchy.

Nevertheless, in the context of the data as a whole, and considering that black students (who were asked the same questions) *did* tell us how 'race' shaped *their* experiences, this lack of further engagement from white students is in itself significant. It might suggest that these students (consciously or unconsciously) do not see 'race' and racism as issues which affect their learning experiences. Should this be the case, this view holds that whiteness is not racialised and that white people carry no responsibility for racist practices, whether overt or covert. Instead, in this case, if there were any forms of racism at Medical School, it would be black students' problem. For us, this view is problematic. First, it denies that growing up white results in racialised experiences shaped by 'race' privilege. Second, considering the histories of colonialism and apartheid, it denies white students' implication in racialised relations of power and inequality by virtue of their beneficiary status in this society. Third, it frees white students from responsibility for their implication as beneficiaries and for their actions, when these marginalise black students. This is significant considering that black students say their white peers work with 'race' in ways that marginalise them.

There is a second way in which the data reveals significant differences among white and black students' responses to these particular questions. Unlike their black counterparts, all but two white students say they have not witnessed racist (overt or covert) practices, and they are not aware of anyone who has experienced 'race' discrimination at Medical School. One student sums up this lack of awareness when he says, "I really haven't come across any real issues around race, ... while I've been at UCT" (Int 04 4th Yr WM). Another suggests all the dynamics around 'race' have been resolved and that 'cliques' among students 'ha[ve] nothing to do with race'. He says,

... there's more openness [at Medical School as opposed to Departments of Natural Sciences] about it ['race'], there is more frank discussion ... and basically anything ... that might have stood in the way of helping people to mix with each other ... has been talked about ... has been blown open ...

Later in the same interview:

... if the [racial] dynamic is to talk about any blockages then that's not there ... my class is getting along with itself very well, you know ... there's room for improvement but ... it has nothing to do with race ... cliqueness [sic], that's just a syndrome of high school (Int 03 6th Yr WM).

The evidence gathered from both black and white students suggests the contrary. For example, one white student says, "[racial] issues come out very frequently". She seems to contradict herself when she says this racial tension is not "antagonistic at all". Significantly, she suggests that black and white peers get on well *and* engage with one another about these issues. Unfortunately, the interviewer did not ask this student to give examples and elaborate on these engagements and the tensions. She says,

... There was some friction and that's expected sometimes ... I didn't notice anything

that was like nasty and antagonistic at all ... Well, these [racial] issues come out very frequently. Well, not always in a bad way and we are discussing them. And I think it's because we are going through a transformational stage and we're kind of young people and it's our prerogative to question things. So, I mean and race is just like pretty much out there (Int 02 4th Yr WF).

This respondent's view stands out as somewhat of an exception. The lack of awareness shown by most white students, and illustrated in the first two quotations above, is in sharp contrast to the heightened awareness among black students of covert 'race' dynamics at the School. This is a significant finding. A third significant difference is that, in contrast to the numerous, various, detailed and explicit accounts given by their black counterparts, when asked *other* questions during the interviews, the bulk of white students do not talk about 'race' being a burden for them in any way, or for that matter, a source of relief. This, also, is a significant finding. When considered in relation to the burden of 'race' carried by black respondents, one can only conclude that the data suggests white students are left free of these concerns mainly because of their position of 'race' privilege.

Considering the long history of racial domination in our country, it is highly likely that most white students (and staff) do not see 'race' and racism as issues that profoundly affect their lives and everyday practices. Again, the point here is not to blame white students for this lack of awareness. Instead, it is to point to the work these students and staff can do in order to contribute to a more genuinely interactive and affirming learning environment for all students.

Limited Interaction Across 'Race'

Like their black peers, a little under three quarters of white respondents say that all students tend to cluster around 'race', but that there is no overt racial antagonism among students. Instead, they say black and white students get on well together. One respondent sums up this view expressed by students across all years of study,

It's [race' dynamics in the classroom] fairly good I would say. I mean, I don't see any sort of racism in our class as such, but we are quite segregated. There're not many sort of black and white people that are friends as such. There're sort of groups of people and they stick to themselves (Int 04 6th Yr WF).

Another says,

... like our dissection groups there'll be a black group and there's a white group and you know another black group ... Very separate. But I mean, I don't think that's racism (Int 01 2nd Yr WF).

In contrast, another respondent, quoted below, comments that there is only "a little bit of segregation" and "lots of interaction" among black and white students even though interaction is "not brilliantly integrated":

My experience is that we relate well to each other. [Although] generally I think there tend to be like white students' closest friends will be other white students and likewise with the other racial groups. But like for example, we were down in the computer lab and it was myself and another white person and then four black people. And we were having a great laugh about ordering pizza and stuff, so there's always interaction.

her to negotiate relationships across 'race'. First, her friends' blackness is "bracketed and ignored" (ibid.147) and second, the seemingly more benign language of 'culture' allows her not to notice 'race'. For this respondent, "cross-cultural relationships" are "very good" and "equal" because her approach to 'race' allows her not to engage with any hidden, unspoken inequalities and/or antagonisms. In other words, her approach allows her not to experience 'race' discomfort.

It is important to note not only white students hold this approach. A few black students are complicit with this discourse. Furthermore, we reiterate, the purpose of the analysis here is not to blame white students. Instead, it is to bring to the surface the implications of ways in which some of these students work with 'race' with a view to helping them change these ways of working with 'race'.

The student quoted above shows little awareness of the difference 'race' can make. In contrast, another student shows some awareness of such difference and suggests a sense of discomfort and/or lack of awareness on her part. She says,

I had a lot of black students in my group and I related to them very well ... it was enlightening and quite a positive experience for me ... I always ... felt maybe black students [in the four year programme] felt bad because they had a lot to live up to, and there was a lot more pressure on them, and maybe that white students didn't understand that pressure and didn't understand the academic pressure that they felt ... but ... it doesn't seem to be [the case] ... there's ... an understanding that everybody's under academic pressure ... [I] sometimes ... [I] felt that I didn't understand enough about their situations. But I mostly find that like the students that I work with are excellent and umm very like open about the whole thing [being on a four year programme] (Int 01 4th Yr WF) .

Although this student does not show an overt awareness of her white privilege and its effects, she shows some awareness of the difference 'race' often makes. In this case she learns about the difference 'race' makes through engaging with her peers about the four year programme introduced at Medical School to facilitate black students' entry into the School. She also suggests that white students like herself might not be fully aware of black students' experiences of the learning environment. Furthermore, in contrast to the discourse of deficit mentioned earlier in the report, this student suggests that black students are not the only ones who sometimes struggle academically. This level of awareness is an exception among the respondents interviewed.

Reverse Discrimination

One white student who says she receives extra tutorials says academic support programmes at Medical School are open to both black and white students. Nevertheless, two white students are particularly unhappy with academic support programmes like "extra tutorials" and mentoring. They see these as exclusively for black medical students. Both these students cite this as an example of racial discrimination against white students. They suggest that academic support is based on one's 'race' and not on one's need for assistance. When asked whether he noticed any racism in the faculty, one student talks about how his friend "... was upset that some black students were getting extra tutorials ...

[which] weren't offered to white students ..." (Int 01 6th Yr White Male). The other student says,

I don't know if you can call it racism, but ... in first year I ... didn't understand what ISS was ... I was brand new and didn't know anything ... ISS is a ... black student society at Medical School and they [black students] were talking about mentors and I thought it should be a very good thing. I would like to have a mentor. And I went there and I was the only [white] one who was in there and I got a lot of strange looks from people, like, 'but why are you here?' (Int 01 4th Yr WF).

This respondent suggests she felt excluded from access to a mentor and black students present seemed to signify that she did not belong at this meeting. It remains unclear to us whether these support programmes are open to all students. Furthermore, a few students, black and white, mention that in their view the Impelo Student Society does have exclusivist practices that they do not support. In addition, a few black students mention that Shawco involves predominantly white students in its activities and also has covert exclusionary practices. We do not have any conclusive evidence in this regard. This matter remains open for further exploration.

Three white students express some ambivalence about what they call "affirmative action" and "the quota system". They suggest equity programmes allow academically weaker black students into medicine and keep good white students out. These students strongly suggest this is a form of racial discrimination against prospective white students. The first says,

I do know of people who've been refused admission to UCT with excellent marks, excellent all-round ... Interviewer: White people? Ja. (Interviewer: They've been refused ...?) Ja, from my school particularly, and I struggle to rationalise that. And on the other hand ... people... with two or three grades below their grades ... have gained admission because of their colour. I think there's a necessity for that ... not to that extent (Int 02 6th Yr WM).

Another says,

... [It is] much harder [for white students] ... the kind of hoop I had to jump through ... I would say was stress a lot higher than the students of colour for whom the quota system was more amenable, you know, much more conducive to getting in (Int 03 6th Yr WM).

And the third student says,

... the only problem I've ever had was with the whole racism issue was the selection process for medicine ...

I'm all for affirmative action, but when you're in that position ... being one of seven, I think they're taking it a little bit to the extreme. I mean, the number of white males in my 4th year class is probably about 15 ...

If there was one thing I could change that would be it (Int 04 4th Yr WM).

These students show little awareness of the historical and socio-political arguments for equitable practices in institutions of higher learning. Instead, the first suggests black students gain admission simply because they are black. The other two respondents suggest white students are victims of equitable practices.

Marginalising and Othering Black Students

Like their black peers, almost all the white students use the language of "us" (to describe themselves) and "them" (to describe black students) in what seems to be a benign fashion. There are however, a few examples that confirm some of the things black students say about their white peers.

For example, this student reveals what some black students in the sample might describe as a patronising attitude towards his peers when he says,

I've got a lot of non-white friends and they seem quite happy. And I think efforts have been made if they're not up to speed, because of circumstances, they've been helped (Int 02 6th Yr WM).

This student associates black students with academic under-preparedness and with needing support. Another student gives an example of what some black students might see as dominance on the part of their white peers. She says,

If you're writing up a [joint] report and English isn't someone's home language and then if everyone contributes the information ... you have to re-write the whole thing (Int 05 4th Yr WF).

This quotation suggests white students re-write group project reports without necessarily engaging with their peers about this practice. The act of re-writing a joint report could be construed as an assertion of imagined intellectual authority.

Another student implies that black students live in a different world that whites find hard to access. She says,

I find it so fascinating ... where they come from, what they've been through and everything ... you know, you can't speak to them. I find black people are still a little bit sensitive, you know, like they're a bit over-sensitive actually ... and not so trusting (Int 01 2nd Yr WF).

This respondent portrays black students as different and mysterious outsiders. A white male student related his feelings about equity,

I have seen black students who come in and ... they can't cut the work. They can't do it, you know, they can't keep up. And they just don't have that motivation for it, but they were allowed in because ... they fitted the quota of being a black male and female ... that gave them the great advantage of being accepted, you know. I wouldn't mind if a person gets accepted on a basis of ... merit, that's all fine. I'm very certain that ... quotas for black male could easily be filled with exceptional black male students, you know. But that I've seen black male students ... or black female students ... I've seen them come in you know ... with no problem. They've had no difficulty getting in and they can't perform in the course. That means to me that there's a white guy out there who did very well, and had his heart set on it, that didn't get in, because there's someone else there who's actually just lazy, isn't committed to the course. But for reasons outside of ... he is now in that course. He got the place. The poor guy who wanted it so badly didn't (Int 03 6th Yr WM).

First, this respondent suggests that black students "can't cut the work", namely, that they are intellectually incapable of doing medicine, because they are black. Second, he says black students "don't have the motivation" to study medicine and that they are "actually

just lazy". Third, he suggests these students are admitted to Medical School because they are black, rather than because of their intellectual potential. Fourth, for him, black students have to be "exceptional" in order to meet the requirements of merit. Here he confirms what some black students say, namely, that they have to be extraordinary to be accepted in the learning environment at Medical School. He also confirms our earlier suggestion that a discourse of deficit in relation to black students circulates among both white staff and students. Furthermore, this respondent constructs himself and fellow white students as victims of affirmative action when he says "the poor [white] guy who wanted it [a place as Medical School] so badly didn't [get it]".

The students quoted here may not reveal any conscious antagonism towards black students. However, the first two respondents construct black students as deficient while the third describes her peers as inaccessible Others. The senior student quoted immediately above perpetuates racist discourse and practice both overtly and covertly. Such practices are constitutive of what Essed (1991) calls "everyday racism", namely, the everyday practices which draw on racist discourse to keep racialised relations of power alive.

Summary of the Findings Presented

Black and white students say some similar things about 'race' and racism at Medical School. First, like their peers, most white students say they have had no personal experiences of racism and nor have they been hurt, compromised or misunderstood with regard to 'race'. Second, they say that all students tend to cluster around 'race' despite the absence of overt racial antagonisms among them. These are significant findings. These students also sometimes work with 'race' in similar ways. For example, like some of their white peers, a few black students adopt a colour-blind approach to 'race'. We note the problems with this approach. In addition, both black and white students tend to downplay the role of 'race' in the learning environment, even though they do this in different ways. Finally, although they do this for different reasons and in different ways, some black and white students construct themselves as victims of the dynamics of 'race'. There are also a few students, both black and white, who construct themselves as agents in their own experiences. In this report we attempt to expose the reader to both these self constructions on the part of both groups of respondents and we note the implications of each for dynamics of 'race'.

Alongside these similarities, there are significant differences in the data shared by white and black students. Firstly, with one exception, white students show very little awareness of the difference 'race' makes in their own experiences and perceptions of the learning environment, as well as in those of their peers. Secondly, with the exception of those students who argue that equitable practices amount to reverse discrimination, about three quarters of white respondents do not talk about 'race' being a burden for them in any way, or for that matter, a source of relief. These are significant findings. They reveal the dynamic and relational aspects of 'race' and the ways in which these students have learnt to work with 'race'. Crudely put, black students' burden allows white students' freedom. The challenge is to bring to view for critical reflection (and without blame) these dynamics and the contributions various parties make to help keep them alive. This is what we attempt in this report.

CHAPTER FIVE

Closure: Some Observations and Issues for a Panel to Explore

At this point it might be useful to remind ourselves what prompted this study. Despite Medical School's efforts at transformation, black students continue to lodge complaints about racist practices on the part of white staff at this School and to claim such practices undermine their learning and academic performance. These complaints recur sporadically. This study suggests covert racist encounters between staff and students and discomfort with 'race' are an everyday reality for most black students at the School. In other words, it suggests such encounters are a norm.

The cumulative effect of such experiences becomes a burden for these students. Often, such encounters are considered in isolation of the broader context and of other similar experiences on the part of the student. In such cases the student's experience as a whole is fragmented and so diminished. Adjudicators in cases where students allege racism need to be careful not to focus on students' weak academic performance as the key factor. This approach fails to see the full picture and can often dismiss their allegations. Such practices might re-inscribe the discourse of deficit while simultaneously legitimating covert racist practices. We suggest that, as far as possible, the allegations and the students' performance be dealt with as separate issues.

If covert racist encounters are a norm, as this study suggests, why then are the complaints from students sporadic? There might be several reasons for this pattern. One is that covert racist practices are often not easy to name making it hard to formulate a complaint. A second reason might be related to the cumulative effect of the burden of 'race'. In this case students might wait until the burden has become too heavy for them to bear before they take action.

It must be remembered that the aim of this preliminary research is to provide a scan of issues to **inform** terms of reference for a panel to be tasked with an in-depth evaluation of the processes of transformation at Medical School. These issues are specifically related to students' experiences and perceptions of 'race' and racism at Medical School. Drawing on the findings presented here we note certain dimensions of 'race' and racism and suggest possible ways for a panel to begin to address them. These are simply suggestions to be further discussed or jettisoned, as is deemed suitable. Panelists would have to decide on the limits and parameters of the issues and any possible interventions.

In general, students voluntarily group themselves along lines of 'race' in the learning environment. This inhibits interaction across 'race'. Panelists might want to explore ways in which to facilitate more meaningful interaction across 'race' among students. In this exploration strategies beyond forced interaction by a quota system need to be considered. Furthermore, considering how marginalised black students feel in white dominated learning contexts, panelists might want to explore ways of ensuring somewhat of a balance in the racial composition of learning contexts to help redress some of the power dynamics drawn from the data. In addition, educators might need to learn some skills in facilitating a more inclusive learning environment.

The data reveals particular racialised inner constructs of reality on the part of both black and white students. These constructs contribute to keeping the power dynamics of 'race' alive when they depict black students as powerless, lacking confidence and academic ability and white students as confident and academically able, and/or both these students as victims. Panelists might want to explore ways in which to help students deconstruct particular mental frames of themselves and of Others. One way is to actively challenge the discourses of deficit and reverse discrimination. In addition, black students can be informed of the implications of constructing new divisions among themselves. 'Race' and racism raise questions about how to build an institutional culture that is inclusive and affirming for all students.

Panelists might also want to explore ways in which to make white staff members aware of the impact of their authority and practices when these perpetuate racist discourses and/or racialised inequalities, whether in overt or covert ways. One possibility for starting such a process is that panelists find ways to assist staff members with curriculum development in order to help contextualise particular racialised disease patterns such as tuberculosis and alcoholism. Another possibility would be for panelists to find ways of engaging with staff about their difficulties in the learning environment while at the same time alerting them to examples of covert racist practices (this report provides some) from which they could refrain.

In light of the warnings junior students receive from their more senior peers, panelists might want to think about ways to facilitate social learning/mentorship relationships between senior and junior students that enable the latter to step out of the fear and distrust with which some step into Medical School. These relationships could promote an easier entry into the learning environment on the part of new students.

Finally, it is important to bear in mind that the task of transformation cannot be left in the hands of a transformation officer or a set of panelists. All members of the community at Medical School need to take responsibility for changing the 'race' dynamics at the School. To begin with, there needs to be some recognition of what these dynamics actually are. This report points to certain work students and staff might consider doing in order to promote the transformation of the Medical School. It is our hope that this research constructively contributes to this process.

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Appendix

Interview Schedule for Student Interviews Health Sciences Faculty

Age

Male/Female

Nationality

Religion

Identification B/W

Year of Study

No of years registered at UCT?

Have any members of your family attended UCT medical school?

1. What do you enjoy about being a medical student/a student in the Health Sciences Faculty? Where you can, please give examples of the things you enjoy.
 2. What are the main stresses you face as a 2nd / 4th / 6th year student? Please give examples of these.
 3. What are your experiences of the learning environment with regard to
 - staff
 - their teaching
 - staff feedback on your learning
 - tutoring
 - examinations
 - living in residence/ not living in residence (explore why white students are not living in residence if they are not).
- (NB) Please ask students to give examples. If they identify problems, please ask them to suggest constructive ways in which they think these can be addressed.
4. What are your experiences regarding racism in the faculty? Please give examples.
 5. How do black and white students relate to each other in class and when working in groups?
 6. Have you at any time felt hurt, misunderstood or compromised around issues of 'race'? Please give examples.
 7. If you were to specialise will you choose UCT for this specialisation?
 - Why would you choose UCT?
 - If not, why not UCT?
 - If you have not thought about it, can you think about why it has not yet crossed your mind?
 8. What would you most like to see changed at medical school/in the Health Sciences Faculty?



INCUDISA Widening circles 2