

THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF BLACK STUDENTS AT A 'WHITE'
UNIVERSITY

P. MABENA

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UNIVERSITY

P. MABENA

Thesis submitted to the Department of Psychology, University
of Cape Town in fulfillment of the requirements for the
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Abstract

Black students constitute a minority within 'white' universities in South Africa. These students' academic performance has consistently been lower than that of white students. The existing but scarce literature on educational issues with regards to black students has been predominantly a cross-racial comparison of white and black students.

The minority status of black students within 'white' universities, and the need for more extensive study on factors affecting these students, provide a rationale for a study of this nature. This study has avoided cross-racial comparison, since such studies are based on the assumption that racial categories are homogeneous. The study demonstrates diversities within the group of black students.

This thesis covers the educational experiences of black students at the University of Cape Town (UCT). The aim of the study was to explore qualitatively what relationship exists, if any, between the students' school, university and home/community lives. Three areas were chosen as focal points: First, it was important to establish a comparison between the students' experiences of school and university. It was important to establish whether students experienced school and university as different.

Second, it was important to establish whether students from private schools had very different educational experiences

compared to students from the Department of Education and Training (DET). In other words, it was important to establish whether formal South African education is perceived differently by black students who studied in DET schools and compared to those who studied in private schools.

Third, the research focused on a comparison between the students' experiences of school and university, and their private lives at home or in their communities. In other words, it was important to establish whether there was a continuity between these two environments or not.

A total of 48 black students made up the sample in this study. There were 21 students from 'white' private schools and 27 from black schools (i.e. those under the Department of Education and Training). Students were chosen from three faculties namely; Arts (18), Commerce (15), and Social Science (15). Forty three of the entire sample were students who were in their second year of study, while 5 were in their third year of study. The age-range of the students was 18 to 35 with an average of 24 years.

Students were interviewed on their experiences of school, university, home and community. The interview schedule consisted largely of open-ended questions and some closed-ended questions. A new schedule was constructed as none of the existing interview questionnaires on students' experiences covered all the areas of interest in this study.

The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim by the author. The analysis of the results was of a qualitative nature where theme/content analysis was mostly utilized. In some parts of the results, frequency counts were done.

The results of the study showed that for these students there was no sharp differentiation between school and university education. That is, school and university education was found to be similarly alienating. It was also found that some experiences of students from private schools and those from DET schools were quite similar. In other words, apart from differing access to educational resources, the educational experiences of black students are similar. Students did perceive, however, that there was a discontinuity between school and university, and private lives at home or in their communities.

The conclusion is that, to explain the effects of the academic performance of black students, both cognitive or subjective and structural factors are important. Cognitive factors such as language, writing, studying and other necessary academic skills are an issue with respect to black students. Cognitive factors cannot be separated from structural factors. Structural factors include problems in both school and university education. Most important, however, is the lack of recognition of cultural diversity in the education within these educational institutions.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of Cape Town. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

Signed by candidate

Signature removed

05... day of APRIL, 1974.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims and Rationale

This is an exploratory study into the educational experiences of black students at a 'white' university. By a 'white' university the author refers to English-speaking, historically white universities. Some prefer to call them 'open'. This study questions this notion of 'openness'. Thus the reference to these universities as 'white'. Specifically, the study took place at the University of Cape Town (UCT).

In this thesis, the term 'black' refers to the indigenous people of this country, otherwise known as Africans. It excludes 'Coloureds' and Indians. Where it is used in a generic sense, the author indicates it as such.

Black students' educational experiences differ, among many things, with respect to their schooling. There are black students who studied at white, 'coloured', and black schools. The sample in this study has been chosen from those who studied at white private schools and black schools.

White schools comprise private non-governmental schools as well as state schools. Black schools, on the other hand, are government schools which are meant for black students. White and black schools differ at least with respect to racial composition and educational resources. Initially, white private schools did not admit black students because

of apartheid laws. Presently, there are few black students compared to white students in most white private schools. In addition, white private schools are well equipped and black state schools are not.

This study was motivated by three factors. The first factor refers to the paucity of local literature on educational issues affecting black students. In spite of a sizeable amount of literature that exists on black students, the area of educational issues affecting black students is little understood. The dominant research in the area comes from overseas literature. There is a need for South African-based research into black students' educational experiences because of the major differences in both the composition of the societies and the unique nature of apartheid education in South Africa. In addition, there are major political and educational transformations occurring in this country. Thus while there is a lot to learn from overseas research, there is a dire need for a local focus.

The second motivating factor for this research is that black students constitute a minority in 'white' universities (see Tables 2 and 3 on page 16). Presently, black students comprise only 17% of the entire student body. 'White' universities have a chequered history in admitting black students. This alone makes it important to investigate what factors could be affecting students who are in the minority on the UCT campus.

The third motivation for a study on black students at a 'white' university is because of the widely cited differences in achievement between black and white students while at university. Black students (in a generic sense), both in South Africa and in other countries, have been known to attain on average, lower marks than white students. Debates on the cause for such differences were largely sparked off by Jensen's (1970) and Eysenck's (1971) publications claiming a genetic base as the reason for the difference in performance. More specifically, the debates originated around issues of the difference in the intelligence quotient (IQ) between white and black people. Since then, various authors have highlighted what they think best explains why black students perform the way they do.

It is important to add that whenever black students (generally) are studied, they have been compared to white students. This 'cross-race' comparison with regards to academic performance has been done quite extensively. Less attention has been given to black students as an autonomous group. Allen (1985) referred to this as a 'within-race' approach, and emphasized the paucity of this type of research.

Focusing on black students as an autonomous group has many advantages. For a start, this approach could highlight why black students cope differently with what seem to be similar situations to which they are exposed. A study which examines the higher drop-out rates of black, as opposed to white

students, fails to acknowledge those black students who succeed in completing their degrees. A study which focuses solely on black students, has the advantage of isolating differences among these students.

The broad aim of this study was to look at how black students experience education in South Africa. The study was done in order to provide empirical data on the students' own perceptions of their situation in a 'white' university.

In order to contextualize this study, the introductory chapter outlines the historical background of apartheid education, and then examines secondary and tertiary education in South Africa. Factors which may contribute to the poor academic performances of black students are then reviewed.

1.2 A Brief Historical Background of Apartheid Education

Western education in South Africa had its beginnings as early as 1658, six years after the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck in the Cape (Newman, 1980). Newman sketches the debates that ensued on whether or not education should be introduced among black people.

By the 18th century, it is said that there were a few schools for slave children in the Cape. Sir George Grey, a Governor of the Cape Colony in the 1850s is said to be important in formulating an education policy for black

people. He supposedly promoted the need for the 'civilization' of black people through education. The main aim of educating black people therefore, was from the onset to 'civilize' them, in other words, make them Westernized (Newman, 1980).

Prior to 1933, there was little need for educated blacks, as the material wealth in South Africa relied on mining and farming (Coovadia, 1986). Coovadia (1986) notes that educational institutions, that is universities and schools, then spread to keep up with the changing demands of production. It is noted how, for example, the situation began changing with the industrial revolution from 1933 onwards, and the subsequent need for skilled black labour. Worth noting, however, is that while education became more accessible to black people, there were limitations as to how far and what they could learn. It could be added that limitations even extended to the kinds of educational institutions they could attend. University education, for example, was inaccessible until later in 1933.

The essence of Coovadia's argument is that change in education goes hand-in-hand with wider economic changes. In other words, it was realized by the authorities that it was no longer productive to deny black people exposure to education. This is the reason why black people were allowed access to education. Whites, however, had never been denied such opportunities. A narrower focus on the developments within pre-university and university education follows.

1.2.1 School/Pre-University Education in South Africa

Provision of school education in South Africa has always been separate for black, Indian, 'coloured' and white people. As a result of apartheid, there are currently eighteen departments of education, each concerned with its 'own affairs' (Themabela, 1991). All the whites fall under the Department of National Education, blacks under the Department of Education and Training (DET); 'coloureds' and Indians, too, fall under the Department of Education and Culture (Ormond, 1985). Racially-mixed schools were not allowed until quite recently, and imbalances in government expenditure differed for the different groups (see Table 1). Christie (1985) noted that the government spent more on a white child than it did on a black child. Presently the same differential expenditure is still a reality.

Table 1

Per Capita Expenditure on School by Race

	African	Coloured	Indian	White
Year	R	R	R	R
1989/90	929	1983	2722	3561
1990/91	1194	N/A	3109	4103
1991/92	1248	2701	N/A	4448

Key: N/A- Not Available
(Source: Race Relations Survey: SAIRR, 1993)

The problems with the racial stratification of education in South Africa are well documented. One of the major problems

is inadequate government expenditure on black education (as noted above). This has resulted in problems, such as the lack of basic facilities, for example furniture, books, laboratory equipment, (properly qualified) teachers, overcrowding in classrooms, and a lack of schools (de Villiers, 1991).

In the words of Verwoerd, the Minister of Education in the 1960s, black education was tailored to meet the needs of black people as servants for white people (Christie, 1985). The curriculum was seen by Verwoerd as adequate in fulfilling the task of educating black people as 'hewers of wood and drawers of water'. Thus criticisms from the opponents of apartheid education have also focused on problems with the curriculum in black schools.

The curriculum in black education has been strongly criticised for excluding and repudiating black culture (Kutoane and Kruger, 1990; Ngugi wa Thiongo, 1983; Ntshoe, 1990; Thembela, 1984 & 1986; Vilakazi, 1983 for example). Kutoane et. al. (1990) investigated whether black culture was a factor in deciding the curriculum in schools. Their main finding was that the indigenous culture of the people of South Africa was not considered in the drawing up of the curriculum in black schools.

An example of a strong and most fought-against aspect of black education was the unilateral implementation of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in black schools by the

Nationalist government in the 1970s. This resulted in the well documented black student uprisings in 1976 and subsequent strikes by black students in South Africa. The early 1970s marked a turning point in the history of black education and resistance by black people to it. The nature of the strikes and boycotts themselves was different from then on. For example, it was for the first time in youth resistance that students co-operated with workers. Students implemented stay-aways in 1976 which effectively called on workers, and 70% to 80% of workers responded (Christie, 1985). This obviously impacted on the economy of the country, forcing the government to consider changes in its policies.

In response to the crisis in black education in the 1970s, there was the desegregation or 'opening' of white private schools to a few black students. These instances were, however, individual responses which attempted to oppose the legislation that prevented racially mixed-schools.

Private schools' responses to the education crisis by admitting some black students has also been a source of controversy in South Africa. While some academics (e.g. Cross, 1986, in Beard & Gaganakis, 1991) approved, others were totally opposed to this move. Cross (1986), for example, saw it as a good move which in fact provided the 'laboratories of the future' for non-racial education (in Beard & Gaganakis, 1991).

Christie (1990) examined the curriculum within open schools (or private schools) in South Africa. The aim was to investigate if any changes had been made with respect to the curriculum since the intake of black students in those schools. It was found that few schools had made changes. Some of the changes were the inclusion of black languages, of literature by black authors, and a more relevant view of South African history.

It is important at this stage to look briefly at a study on the effects of racial desegregation of schools in the United States of America (USA). As stated earlier, more extensive research in the area of black students comes from overseas literature.

Bradley and Bradley (1977) reviewed twenty-seven studies on the effects of school desegregation on the academic performance of black students in the USA. Among the twenty-seven studies, twenty-one produced favorable results with regards to academic performance of black students who were in desegregated schools. Six studies came up with unfavorable results.

What is important to note, however, is that none of the studies which came up with favorable results indicated a closing in the achievement gap between white and black students (Bradley & Bradley, 1977). In other words, there still is a need to address the gap in achievement between black and white students even within the same educational

environment. The present study looks into the experiences of black students who studied in white private schools, and attempts to deal with differential academic achievement.

There are problems with apartheid education, but these continue from secondary education to tertiary educational level as well. A brief history on South African universities, with specific focus of 'white' universities follows.

1.2.2 Tertiary/University Education in South Africa

At present, there are 17 fully-fledged universities in South Africa, two of which offer distance tuition. These universities have a chequered history regarding the admission of blacks. Like schools, they were segregated along racial lines. While early in the twentieth century, university education was a white prerogative, later, in the 1950s, separate universities were set up for blacks.

The Extension of Universities Act of 1959 made provisions for black universities which were divided along ethnic lines. These were: University of Fort Hare and the University of Zululand for Xhosas and Zulus respectively, University of the North for Sothos and Pedis, University of Bophutatswana for Tswanas, and University of Venda for Vendas (Christie, 1985). Coloureds had to go to the University of the Western Cape, and Indians to the University of Durban-Westville. Problems of inadequate government subsidies, lack of basic facilities, and

overcrowding were, and still are, among the many problems plaguing these institutions (Moletsane, 1986; Sobahle, 1990 for example).

'English' universities (Witwatersrand, Rhodes, Natal and Cape Town), were the first to be considered 'open'. 'Afrikaans' universities (Rand Afrikaans Universiteit, Stellenbosch University, Potchefstroom University, University of the Orange Free State and University of Port Elizabeth) have historically remained 'closed' until quite recently.

Prior to the introduction of the Extension of Universities Act of 1959, only two universities were regarded as 'open'-the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and UCT. To what extent they are 'open', needs further examination.

Murry (1990) examined the process by which Wits became an 'open' university, and the significance of the Second World War on this process. He demonstrated that the university doors were not more than half open to black students. For example, certain departments such as Dentistry never admitted black students until the Second World War. He defines the term 'open' university as: "their criteria of admission were supposedly purely academic, and were applied without regard to considerations of race, colour or creed" (Murry, 1990: 649).

At Wits, it is said that there was no segregation of blacks except on formal social contact. That is, there were separate training facilities for blacks and whites (Murry, 1990). It is said that the Second World War facilitated the process by which Wits especially the medical school was 'open' to black students. There was a need for black doctors in the six years following the War, because of the growth in the economy. With urbanisation, it is said that the government and business became aware of the pervasive ill-health of the country's black labour force. This gave rise to the need for black doctors, and for the universities to train blacks. It is interesting to note, however, that by the War's end, there were only 150 black students at Wits, which included 82 in the medical school, out of a student population of three thousand (Murry, 1990).

The Extension of Universities Act of 1959 introduced stricter rules in the admission criteria at all universities, and all black students had to attend their own specially created universities. To study at white universities, blacks had to obtain special permission from the state.

Muller (1992) states how universities responded by attempting political neutrality, by, for example, keeping black enrolments to a limit. Students at these universities are said to have resisted the interference of the state through boycotts. They also challenged the universities on

the basis that they could not divorce themselves from the wider society.

It was said that 'open' universities showed their commitment to being 'open' in spite of the introduction of the Extension of Universities Act of 1959. This was done by holding 'academic freedom' lectures every year, which still occur to-date (Christie, 1985).

The history of UCT does not depart much from that of Wits. UCT was founded in 1829 as the South African College, and is the oldest university in South Africa (Goosen, Hall & White, 1989). Goosen et. al. (1989) sketch the ethos of this university from its heritage of the British colonial tradition. UCT is said to have assumed, like other universities of its kind, the characteristics and ethic of nineteenth-century British universities.

Academic freedom and university autonomy are some of the values which are enshrined within the university. A detailed discussion of these concepts would take us beyond the confines of this brief history, but broadly, academic freedom is identified by Dr. T.B. Davie as the freedom of the university to determine for itself on academic grounds who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught, and who may be admitted (Goosen et. al., 1989; du Plessis, Chaskalson & Mahomed, 1986). The freedom of speech is said to be the freedom to hold and impart opinions (du Plessis et. al., 1986). These terms are central to this study as

they deal with issues such as the curriculum, the intake of students and the freedoms which the university as a whole is entitled to. These are issues which will be revisited frequently in this study.

The 'openness' of UCT is directly linked to the freedoms which are enjoyed by members of the university community. For example, to say that UCT is 'open' is to say that it is free to teach students of any 'racial' category. This would occur in spite of government policies to the contrary.

A situation which has, at least for UCT, raised controversy around issues of freedoms (speech and academia), was the widely documented Dr. O'Brien affair in 1986. The invitation of Dr. O'Brien to UCT on a scholarly visit occurred during a period when the major political groupings of the oppressed majority of the country had called an academic boycott (du Plessis et. al., 1986).

Consequently, the arrival of this controversial academic and political figure caused a surfacing of conflicts largely between the black and white community of the university (du Plessis et. al., 1986). The findings of the Commission of Inquiry pointed out that while on one hand, the general white community of the university (with a few exceptions) perceived this invitation in a positive way and as an exercise of academic freedom, black (and a few white) students on the other hand, saw the invitation as a breach of the academic boycott. More so as the individual concerned

was known to be negative towards the academic boycott. The differences culminated in a boycott, largely by black students, which lasted two days.

In short, the O'Brien conflict on this campus serves as an example of a conflict of political values between the black and white communities of the university. In other words, the situation represented a clash of values. It is the university's policy to invite speakers to address the student body, in the light of its commitment to academic freedom. It was also, on the other hand, a cultural practise of the major political groupings in the country to use effective means (such as an academic boycott) to pressurize the illegitimate government to yield to the wishes of the majority. Thus what was of value to the students was freedom from an illegitimate government. The two values, although essentially not mutually exclusive, clashed in this instance. The Report of the Commission of Inquiry, set up to investigate the incident which took place over a two-day strike, provides more detail on these issues (du Plessis et. al., 1986).

The author perceives the disciplinary measures taken against the students involved in the strike by the University government as a sign of insensitivity to political and cultural diversity. This insensitivity to political and cultural diversity on campus, raises the question as to whether 'liberal' universities such as UCT were in fact 'open' or tolerant.

Black students, arrived at these universities in relatively bigger numbers around the late 1970s and 1980s (see Tables 2 and 3 below).

Table 2
UCT Black Student Enrolment Figures (1951 - 1985) As Percentage of Total Number of Students.

Year:	1951	1974	1975	1977	1979	1981	1983	1985
Black	4.7	5.9	5.9	7.3	9.3	11.7	13.8	15.0

(Black here includes Africans, 'Coloureds', and Indians)
 (Figures obtained from UCT's Vice Chancellor's Report: 1985)

Table 3

UCT Student Enrolments by 'Population Group' (% African in brackets).

Year	African	Coloured	Indian	White	Total
1980	71(0.7%)	750	205	9357	10383
1985	338(3%)	1154	269	10079	11840
1990	1415(10%)	1937	492	10257	14101
1991	1699(12%)	1951	556	10205	14411
1992	1970(14%)	1870	594	9843	14277
1993	2417(17%)	1836	674	9267	14194

(Source: Table 2.7 Annual Sapse Returns. UCT Records)

The academic performance of black students was notably below that of white students. This is indicated in Tables 4 and 5 below.

Table 4

UCT's Undergraduate Success Rate (Percentage) in Terms of Courses Taken That are Passed.

	1989	1990	1991
African: First time entering:	64%	67%	71%
Other:	70%	72%	74%
Coloured: First time entering:	67%	65%	66%
Other:	79%	78%	81%
Indian: First time entering:	62%	69%	70%
Other:	78%	80%	81%
White: First time entering:	83%	85%	84%
Other:	88%	88%	90%
Total: First time entering:	78%	79%	79%
Other:	85%	84%	86%

Key: African- here refers to black students
 (Source: Table 2.9 and 2.11 Annual Sapse Returns. UCT Records)

The above figures indicate how consistently the performance of black students is far below that of white students. The same applies for coloureds and Indians. This state of affairs becomes even more obvious when a narrow focus is applied to the grades for the different courses (see Table 5 and Table 6 below). The above 'success' rates obscure deeper underlying facts. Passing, for instance, does not indicate differences in grades. Students who obtain first class passes and those who obtain third class passes (on writing a supplementary examination) are all considered to be a

success. An example of students' academic performance in the psychology department is used to illustrate this point:

Table 5

First Year University Results in the UCT Psychology Department (1984 - 1987).

	Final Category						TOTAL
	1st	2+	2-	3	F	W/D	
Population							
White	0.07	0.12	0.39	0.30	0.09	0.03	1592
Other	0.04	0.04	0.25	0.39	0.23	0.05	337
African	0.02	0.02	0.13	0.31	0.44	0.06	45

Key: Proportions in each row add to 1.00
(Source: Bokhorst, Foster & Lea, 1990)

Table 6

First Year University Results in the UCT Psychology Department (1988 - 1990).

		1st	2+	2-	3	F	Total
White	(N)	79	175	653	315	148	1370
	(%)	5.77	12.77	47.66	22.99	10.80	73.89
Col/Ind	(N)	1	14	113	145	67	340
	(%)	0.29	4.12	33.24	42.65	19.71	18.34
African	(N)	0	1	18	73	52	144
	(%)	0.00	0.69	12.50	50.69	36.11	7.77
Total	(N)	80	190	784	533	267	1854
	(%)	4.31	10.25	42.29	28.75	14.405	100

Key: Row % Adds to 100 Across the Row.
(Source: Bokhorst, 1994)

Table 5 indicates that from 1984 to 1987, 7% of the white students obtained first-class passes, compared to 2% of the black students (or African as used by Bokhorst et. al., 1990). In other words, 111 white students and only one black student obtained a first-class pass in three years. A similar picture occurs where 191 white students and only one black student obtained upper-second class passes. The findings also indicate that majority of the white students (i.e. 39%) obtained lower-second class passes in first year, and many black students (i.e. 44%) failed Psychology 1.

Bokhorst et. al. (1990) largely explain the situation of poor academic performance of black students in terms of the 'disadvantaged' school backgrounds of the students. A more extensive review of literature highlighting factors which explain this situation is covered in Chapter Two. It is nevertheless the author's view that contextual factors as in school and university, together with subjective factors in individual black students, are important.

According to Bokhorst (1994), the situation of poor academic performance for black students did not improve in the period from 1988-1990. It is noted that while 5.77% (of a total of 1 370) of white students obtained first-class passes, none of the black students obtained a first-class pass in three years. In other words, 79 white students in these three years, compared to none of the black students obtained first-class passes. As in the previous years, the majority

of 'successful' black students still lie within third-class passes (51% meaning 73 black students).

The 'white' universities in general and UCT in particular, responded to the problem of incoming 'under prepared' black students through the provision of Academic Support Programmes (ASP). Academic Support was introduced in the early 1980s (Scott, 1986). The aim was to address the inadequacies of black students' past education and help these students meet the heavy demands of university education. A review of these programmes is also widely documented (Agar, 1987; Howcroft, 1986; Hunter, 1991; Khanyile, 1986; Lazarus, 1987; Mabena, 1990; Mehl, 1985; and 1988; Moletsane, 1986; Moll, 1987; Sanders, 1987; Scott, 1986; and Sobahle, 1990).

Educationists have debated over the years what the real cause of these students' poor academic performance is. Some of the debates have located the weaknesses within these students. For example, black students are said to lack abstract thinking skills, reading, writing and study skills. This has led, among other things, to the establishment of support programs to help these students to 'adjust' or 'cope' with the standards at these universities. Other educationists located the problem at a contextual level, where factors such as the predominantly 'white' staff, the curriculum and the university establishment are cited. A review of factors seen to cause poor academic performance by various researchers follows in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

POOR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: INDIVIDUAL VERSUS STRUCTURAL FACTORS

2.1 Introduction

There are different factors which various researchers identify as the real cause for the poor academic performance of black students. This chapter highlights some of the major factors. For example the lack of appropriate skills of writing, reading and studying; and the environmental factors such as the powerless existence of these students in 'white' institutions; are considered as important factors in contributing to poor academic performance.

It is neither possible nor desirable for this study to demonstrate empirically the weaknesses or strengths of all the factors highlighted. This thesis therefore, does not pretend to tackle all the issues to be highlighted in this chapter. The responses of students to the interview questions will, however, be compared to some of these issues. The author divides the factors which are perceived to be central to black students' academic performance into three:

First, there are those who identify factors which are linked with the students' past educational experiences (eg. lack of reading or appropriate study skills) as being of central importance. The brief history of black education in chapter one indicated that there are inequalities in the budget for

white and black education. As a result, inequality in the allocation of resources has led to the lack of basic resources in black schools. The view on the importance of past educational experiences focuses on the quality of black pre-university education as being central to the performance of black students at white universities. (

The second view perceives the problem not with black students or their school education, but with the present educational context. The white university environment is perceived as problematic for the way in which it interferes with these students, leading to poor academic performance. In other words, some factors within the university environment, such as the racial composition of students and staff, are understood as contributing to the poor academic performance of these students. ✓

In both views there seems to be a common theme. In the first, black schools are perceived as different from 'white' universities in the way in which education is disseminated. With regards to the second view, 'white' universities are perceived as being different from black schools in the ways in which they affect black students. The author is critical of the perception that school and university are highly differentiated educational environments. ✓

The third view with regard to the cause of poor academic performance is that which focuses on broad socio-political and psychological factors. These are factors which run

through both school and university. Over-arching problems such as socio-economic, ethnic, cultural and other related factors are examples of the third approach.

Worth noting in the literature in this field is the paucity of a theoretical focus in explaining the issues which affect black students' academic performance. Largely documented are factors (such as particular skills which black students supposedly lack, issues of racism, and socio-economic factors) which various authors link to the student's academic performance. What is missing however, is adequate theorising on how these factors are linked to academic performance.

2.2 A Focus on Pre-University Education as the Cause of Poor Academic Performance

2.2.1 Study habits

For some authors the explanation of 'poor' academic performance of students in general, and black students in particular, can be explained through the methods of studying they utilise (de Vetta, 1986; Fullard & Beerhall, 1985; Meyer & Muller, 1989 and 1990; Meyer & Parsons, 1989; Meyer, Parsons & Dunne, 1990; Penny, 1984). Meyer and his colleagues draw a distinction between holistic and surface level processing perception of the learning context. Study orientations are further seen to be either 'meaning' or 'reproducing' oriented. These authors argue that a combination of 'holistic' perception and a 'meaning' oriented style of learning has a positive effect on the academic performance

of students, and by implication a different combination has a negative effect on the academic performance of students.

A similar conception of study habits as being the determining factor for students' academic performance is also held by Fullard and Beerhall (1985). Fullard and Beerhall see the problem as being black schools which do not equip students with 'good' study habits. It should be pointed out that Meyer and Parsons (1989) see the problem as students' faulty perceptions of the learning context. Instead of using deep-level processing, black students are said to use surface-level processing, i.e. rote-learning (Meyer & Parsons, 1989). Poor school education is said to be reflected in the training of students to rely on rote-learning to pass. University education however, is said to be reflected through deep-level process learning.

The *differences hypothesis* is evident in the arguments such as the ones which identify different skills demanded by school and university. In other words, poor academic performance is explained through looking at what the differences are between school and university. Cloete and Shochet (1985) however, who worked with black students at the University of the Witwatersrand, believe that students correctly perceive the learning context at university as memorization, fact-gathering and rote-learning. The issue of which context demands which methods of learning is therefore controversial.

Elsewhere, it will be realized that some educationists choose to focus on differences between formal education generally (ie. school and university) and the home background of these students when explaining levels of academic performance. It is the author's view that while differences may exist between school and university education, perhaps there is a need to look for similarities between these environments to explain poor academic performance in both instances. In other words, the *differences hypothesis* fails to address poor academic performance of black students at school level.

Not only is the issue of perception of the learning context questioned (by for example Cloete & Shochet, 1985), there are, in addition, some educationists who question the reliability of study habits tests (for example Penny, 1984; and Tennant, 1988). These authors are critical of study habits tests, and they question the criteria used for regarding study habits as 'good' or 'bad'.

Penny (1984) noted that some of these tests (though he was not specific), have not been standardized other than for the white student population. In addition, he raised a question with respect to the relationship between 'good' study habits, attitudes and different cultural experiences. It is also stated that taking for granted that the content of the tests are free of cultural assumptions is inadequate. Penny (1984) asserted that "it is unlikely that there is such a thing as 'good' study habits and attitudes as is implied in

the Brown-Holtzman Survey of Study Habits (SSHA), and that to apply a good-bad dimension to characterize such behaviors is to simplify the complex processes involved" (Penny, 1984:22).

Tennant (1988) prefers to talk about learning styles as 'different' rather than 'good', 'poor', 'average', etc. He points out that reference to 'different' rather than using value-laden concepts such as the ones above "highlights the importance of learning processes (rather than teaching techniques), and it thereby raises questions concerning the idea or contribution of power and control among teachers and learners" (Tennant, 1988:89).

What is common, however, amongst these researchers is their belief that study habits are central to the issue of academic performance. The author agrees that study habits play a role in academic performance, and demonstrates this through investigating it in the present study. Yet it is not the author's view that study habits alone explain academic performance. There are both structural (eg. cultural factors) and subjective factors (eg. feelings of inadequacy) which should be taken into account.

2.2.2 Reading Skills

It is also argued that the lack of reading skills among black students is the cause of poor academic performance. The slow pace of reading, the difficulty in understanding

what is read, are some of the examples cited to indicate a lack of reading skills (Blacquiere, 1989; Machet, 1991; Ortiz, 1986).

Machet (1991) perceives the lack of reading skills as central to the poor academic performance of black students. He argues that the lack of reading skills is a result of a lack of appropriate cognitive schema. This author draws a distinction between appropriate and inappropriate cognitive schemata. Cognitive schemata is said to be linked to cultural backgrounds. He further argues that the cultural background of black students equips them with inappropriate cognitive schema for university study (ibid).

It is important to note that there is an assumption in the above argument that the cognitive schemata used by these students was appropriate at school. It is only at university that problems of cultural mismatch occur. In other words, this again means that university and school are perceived to be necessarily different educational environments. In addition, this view fails to explain poor performance at school level.

Jardine (1986) in his study among urban and rural black high school students used a technique called 'imaging'. He presented urban and rural groups of students with short prescriptive passages and requested them to draw a picture from the passage. Results indicate differences between the groups in their inaccuracy of the story. Rural blacks were

even more puzzled by the content of the stories than urban blacks. He argues in conclusion that these are the 'sort' of problems blacks encounter in reading.

This is on one hand a demonstration that black students have reading problems. It is, on the other hand, a demonstration that these problems occur at school-level as well. Further, both writers argue that there are appropriate and inappropriate cognitive schemata for reading purposes and that these are culturally specific. By implication, they argue that there are 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' cultures when it comes to reading and approaches to study within schools and tertiary institutions.

What the realization of cultural differences in education should indicate to us is perhaps that the problem resulting in poor academic performance is with a culturally biased education system. The central question, is, however, whether the solution is to teach (or incorporate) blacks within a 'white' culture so that they can perform better at university. This is an important question since the practicality and desirability of such an act is questionable.

2.2.3 Meta-Cognitive Skills

Craig (1988) is one of those who see the problem of 'poor' academic performance as a lack of meta-cognitive and epistemic cognitive skills. These are said to show themselves in behaviors such as: inability to separate

statements of claim from supporting evidence, inability to grasp theoretical perspectives, or to assess the validity thereof.

2.2.4 A Dissonance of Ground Rules

While some authors blame students for lacking reading or appropriate cognitive skills, Moll (1987) and Moll & Slonimsky (1988) prefer to argue this issue from what they call an anti-deficit model. They use theories of cognition from Luria, Buck-Morss and Vygotsky, to argue that the "cognitive deficit model" that has been used to explain poor academic performance is not productive.

Arguments that black students perform poorly because they lack skills are seen to fall under a cognitive deficit model. Moll (1987) asserts that it is wrong to say that black students lack cognitive skills (e.g. Mehl, (1985), that students fail Physics, because they lack the necessary mental operations such as analytical and critical reasoning). According to Moll (1987), such skills exist, though at a latent level because DET schooling failed to help black students to develop them. Through its emphasis on rote-learning, DET schooling has made students rely on 'surface-level' rather than 'deep-level' processing of information. ✓✓✓

In other words, black students perform poorly not because they lack certain skills, but because they have been denied access to them. Moll uses the notion of 'ground rules' to

characterize basic academic expectations for different learning contexts. Thus, the failure of black students is seen as a result of a dissonance of 'ground rules'. DET 'ground rules' are said to be those of rote-learning and regurgitating, whereas these universities expect critical and analytical thinking from students. This represents a classic case of the view which explains poor performance at university by highlighting differences between university and school. As stated earlier, the weakness of this argument is its lack of focus on the effects of poor academic performance at school.

It is clear that Moll (1987) attempts to avoid blaming the victim by saying that these students are not deficient. Yet implicit in his argument is that these students bring inappropriate ground rules to an otherwise appropriate environment.

2.2.5 Linguistic Skills

Some authors see the underlying problem to the academic performance of black students as being language, that is, the lack of appropriate linguistic skills. Linguistic skills are seen by Jardine (1986), for example, as crucial to academic performance since they affect reading, writing and other cognitive skills.

Jardine (1986) draws a distinction between 'standard' and 'non-standard' language. He states that the language used in schools and higher institutions of learning is closer to

the 'standard' language used by middle-class English-speakers. The language used by the middle class is said to be standard, and by implication language used by the working class is non-standard. In essence, working-class children perform poorly because they are discriminated against, seeing that the language used in schools and higher institutions of learning favors those from the middle class.

The solution, as far as Jardine is concerned, is to incorporate language courses for black students, which should supply them with appropriate linguistic skills to cope with their academic work. } remedy

On the issue of language, it is worth noting that intertwined with the distinction between language and the different socioeconomic classes, comes the notion of deficiency. Various authors, Jardine (1986) for example, refer to linguistic deficiency. Mostly, languages of the ethnic minorities and working class have been seen as deficient.

Ogbu (1978) is another author who has a view that the language of the working class is deficient. He makes a distinction between 'black' and 'white' English in America. He challenges those who support the use of 'black English' in the school curriculum. It is argued that 'black English' is not in keeping with the social and economic roles in the American society. In his book, he reviews theories of cultural deprivation where it is clear that some see 'black English' and black culture as deficient, yet this goes

unchallenged in his book. He only opposes (for purposes of international standards), those who argue for its incorporation in the school curriculum.

According to Labov (1970), all languages function equally. What has brought about the view of inadequacy of some languages over others are the experiments that were undertaken (Labov, 1970). He argues that the psychologists who performed experiments on the different languages did not have enough knowledge of the 'non-standard' dialects they were investigating. Labov (1970) performed a study to investigate the validity of the view that children from working-class backgrounds are deprived linguistically. This was evidenced by their speaking in monosyllables. He demonstrates in his study the importance of context within which the experiments take place. Through the use of a black familiar figure and within a familiar setting, speaking in the same dialect, he demonstrates how well the children spoke. This is in direct contrast with their performance in strange situations, where the children were found to speak in monosyllables. He concluded that it is not the language which is deficient, but the methodology used by these psychologists.

Bernstein (1964 and 1970) also studied the language of children from ethnic minorities and the working class in the United States. He argued that different contexts generate different meanings. He opposes those who say that working class children are non-verbal/linguistically deprived since,

in particular contexts, these children produce elaborate speech.

In short, some authors perceive the poor academic performance of black students in South Africa and minority students in America as a lack of linguistic skills. It is further argued that a provision of language courses would solve the problem of 'poor' academic performance. It is worth investigating if language courses at the various institutions of higher learning do achieve better results. A glance at such a course offered at one university indicated that this does not solve the problem (Yeld, 1986). ✓

It is clear that some researchers see poor performance of black students as a result of the lack of skills in studying, reading, writing, language and cognition for example. While these skills are usually not separated from one another, different researchers emphasize different skills. What is common, is that poor performance is explained in terms of what is lacking in these students, and that the students' past education did not provide these students with the appropriate skills. Worth noting is the fact that the presence or absence of a skill is not as absolute as some authors would have us believe, but is in fact a relative phenomenon. In conclusion, it is noted that underlying many of the arguments is the idea that school and university education are perceived to be different. In addition, the differences can be used to explain poor

academic performance. This is an assumption worth investigating.

2.3 The University as an Institution

Previously the poor performance of black students was explained through focusing on individual psychological factors. Some researchers argue that it is not because black students are cognitively deficient that they perform poorly, but it is the result of the institutions themselves. These researchers identify factors within institutions which could explain why students perform poorly (For example, Cartwright, undated; Gardner, 1989; Khanyile, 1986; Leon & Lea, 1988 and Vilakazi, 1986).

Some researchers see the problem of failure by black students as the result of the powerless existence of these students in white universities (e.g. Vilakazi, 1986; Khanyile, 1986). They point out that black students are dominated by racial and class assumptions in 'white' institutions. These researchers are concerned with the notion of power-relations within the university environment, the academic discourse, the curriculum content and other factors that are said to discriminate against black students. Unfortunately they do not provide an explanation on how the curriculum, academic discourse, and the university environment give rise to powerlessness among black students.

While Vilakazi (1986) and Khanyile (1986) focus entirely on contextual issues (such as class and racial domination), thereby removing attention from students or schools. Nzimande (1988) offers a more inclusive argument. In addition, Nzimande not only recognizes contextual problems, but also notes that black students have a problem (evidenced by poor academic performance). Nzimande further argues that to approach the issue of black students' academic performance from the premise of the 'inferiority' of black education compared to white education, is to address the problem from a wrong angle. He points out that just like black education, white education has its own problems, such as the inability to prepare white students for the inevitable democratic future, thus giving rise to severe adjustment problems for these students.

He challenges what he calls the emptiness of the claim that white education teaches whites 'how to think' (Nzimande, 1988). Within the university context, Nzimande does not only address the question of students, but also the staff themselves. According to him, the staff is not in touch with the lives and conditions of the majority of people in South Africa. In essence, they are unable to connect with the socially derived 'subjectivities' and the weak intellectual foundations of black students. He further adds that white students' academic performance should be linked to the fact that they share a similar background and common world view with the average white academic.

Unfortunately Nzimande does not clarify what this shared 'world view' between whites (students and staff) is, and also what the 'personal' and 'intellectual' discontinuities between white academics and black students are. What is clear from Nzimande and those who blame the university context is that, school and university are perceived as different educational contexts. In other words, researchers such as Nzimande fail to explain poor academic performance of black students using arguments of this nature.

2.4 A Focus on General Ethnic Identity, Socioeconomic and Cultural Factors

2.4.1 Ethnic Identity

The issue of ethnic identity, especially with regards to ethnic minorities, has been linked to academic performance by a number of authors (e.g. Gurin & Epps, 1975; Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Oliver, Rodriguez & Mickelson, 1985; and Stikes, 1986; and White, 1988). Some see ethnic identity as affecting black or minority students' academic performance, while others have found no such relationship.

Matute-Bianchi (1986), in her study on Mexican-American pupils, found ethnic identity to be directly affecting students' academic performance. The identity of being a Chicano/Cholo (of Mexican descent) was found to be in direct contrast with the identity of being a good student. The good students' identity was seen by these students as adopting the norms, assumptions and code of conduct associated with the white dominant group. Being a

Chicano/Cholo meant resisting, subverting and undermining, challenging and opposing school policies (Matute-Bianchi, 1986).

White (1988), in his study among different ethnic group university students in America, did not find any relationship between identity and academic performance. He states that the importance of ethnic identity on classroom 'performance' depends on the extent to which the meanings and traits a person attributes to an ethnic identity were seen to be relevant. In his study, ethnic identity meanings held by his sample were not relevant to academic work.

2.4.2 Socioeconomic Factors

A large number of writers agree that socioeconomic factors affect academic performance (Chasten, 1970; Grey, 1959; Havighurst, 1970; Jubber, 1988; Morris, 1986; Rist, 1970; Grey, 1959; and others). They see the chief factor in the poor performance of black students as a result of their poor socioeconomic status. Indices of poor socioeconomic backgrounds are usually identified as overcrowding, inadequate study materials, inadequate nutrition, attendance of 'poor' schools, etc.

There are some researchers, however, who still tend to underplay the role of socioeconomic factors in academic performance. Allen (1985), in addressing the problem of failure among black students at universities in the United States focused on structural, interpersonal and

psychological correlates of success. He asserts in his study that high college grades were not related to social class. What gave rise to success, according to the author, were factors such as students having favorable faculty relations, more years in school, and better high school grades. Failure at university is said to be due to the persistence of 'earlier disadvantages' through school into college.

A critical consideration of the notion of 'earlier disadvantages', does however lead us back to issues of social class. This is clear in Allen's study. For example, those who had better high school grades came from better and more expensive schools. Thus his argument cannot adequately explain the role of socioeconomic status in the academic performance of these students.

Other researchers place emphasis on mediating agents or significant others as affecting performance. By mediating agents is meant those people who mediate in the learning of children or students. For example, teachers and parents serve as mediating agents in the learning process of children or students.

The view that mediating agents are important is true in so far as the authors acknowledge that the actions of significant others or mediating agents are directly influenced by their social class. Miller (1989) is one author who believes that broad and concrete factors of a

socioeconomic kind are not very useful in explaining human action, or academic performance in this case. He rightly points out, however, that mediating agents, in regulating the child, play a central role. He argues that to explain performance, we need to use immediate factors such as parents, rather than socioeconomic status.

The recognition of the role played by mediating agents or significant others is also dealt with by Shade (1983). It is worth noting that Shade pushes the notion of significant others beyond the narrow confines of parents/teachers as reflected in Miller's argument. The concept is expanded to include mass media, peer group and 'street subculture'. She further argues that the reason why black youth in America perform as poorly as they do, can be explained via the effect of 'significant others' or mediating agents. For instance, that mass media and other socializing agents advance negative stereotypes about black people.

What seems unsatisfactorily dealt with by Miller, and seems to be missing in Shade, is the notion of social class. While Miller out-rightly dismisses social class as a useful explanatory concept, Shade hardly deals with the effect thereof. The author argues that one cannot talk about significant others or socializing agents without taking cognizance of the influence of social class on these people's actions. What misleads Miller from realizing this, is his conception of social class as identified by pens,

porches and parents' occupation (p. 157). There is no evidence in his conception of social class that explains power-relations.

A better and more adequate treatment of social class and its effect on academic performance is given by Morris (1986). Morris (ibid) did a study to examine the relationship between social class and matric results. He moves beyond the arguments that black education as unequal to that of whites in terms of resources as the cause of poor performance among black students. While he acknowledges that the racist allocation of funds is a crucial factor in differential attainment, he further points out that "social class and capitalist social relations severely limits our ability to understand differential educational attainments" (p.24).

Morris draws a connection between social class and culture, that is, that there are cultural differences between school and background of the working-class students. He points out that the discrimination against the working-class is such that for the children who come from middle class backgrounds "their families had interpenetrated state education from its earliest days" (p. 25). He also adds that the overthrow of the racist state is not the ultimate solution, and that there is a need to look at the notion of social class.

In his study, Morris (ibid) indicates that there are substantial differences in matric results obtained by white

schools composed of pupils from different social classes. He found that "those white schools in the sample dominated numerically by pupils of middle- to upper-class petty bourgeois origins, outperform those schools whose pupils are predominantly lower/middle petty bourgeois" (Morris, 1986: 27).

Among 'coloured' schools, the influence of social class is also explicit. Within black schools, he notes that regionally, the same pattern develops. The most affluent Bantustan region, Bophutatswana, reflected a 68% pass rate, compared with 35% in KwaZulu, which is the poorest (Morris, 1986).

Morris' argument is useful, but there are some limitations to its usefulness. It cannot be said that black and white working-class children are equally discriminated against. For instance, he argues for the lower attainment of white working-class matriculants in a similar way as that of the black-working class. The weakness in his argument is with the inadequate explanation of the distinction between culture, class and race. He fails to acknowledge the notion of 'national oppression' which characterize the situation for blacks both culturally and socioeconomically (Ngugi wa Thiongo, 1986).

2.4.3 Cultural Factors

Wallace & Adams (1989) do not use notions of deficiency to explain the 'poor' performance of black African children in

KwaZulu. While the problem is seen as a manifestation of underdeveloped cognitive functions, they differ from Craig (1988), Moll & Slonimsky (1988), and Nzimande (1986) in that they acknowledge the influence of cultural issues.

Wallace & Adams (1989) emphasize the importance of cultural transmission and intentional mediation of the learners' experiences for proper cognitive development to take place. While others, such as Craig (1988) and Jenkins (1989), see the problem being that of 'cultural constraints', these authors explain the problem as a result of 'cultural discontinuities' between school and these children's backgrounds. They also argue for a solution which incorporates black 'culture' in school. They do not, however, explain how this should be done.

It is important to draw the reader's attention to the differences which Wallace & Adams (1989) highlight. For these researchers, the difference is between school and home culture of black children. These researchers, however, do not concern themselves with university education. This marks an important distinction among authors who deal with the educational issues of black students.

2.4.3.1 Culture as Used in This Study

Seeing that culture as a concept has been repeatedly used, and since it is such an elusive concept, there is a need to explain what is meant by this concept. Defining culture is a difficult, if not impossible exercise. Anthropologists

themselves do not have an agreed-upon and concise definition of the concept.

For purposes of this study, Boonzaier and Sharp (1988) provide a useful explanation of what culture does rather than what it is. Culture it is said, creates boundaries of class, ethnicity, race, gender, generation, neighborhood and territory within which we live (Boonzaier & Sharp, 1988). The boundaries which culture creates, are said to be observed, learned and internalized and thereby provide ways of doing things which are specific to that boundary.

In South Africa, for example, apartheid has clearly made the racial boundary extremely important. Black and white people have been made to live apart and have differential access to the country's resources. Social class has also been interlinked with notions of 'race' whereby, white and middle-class, black and working-class have become the norm. Thus we talk of the 'culture' of black people (mostly working class) as distinct from the 'culture' of white people (mostly middle-and-upper class).

The author is aware that the term 'race' is as problematic as the term 'culture'. For purposes of clarification, whenever the term is used by the author, it refers to the existing groupings otherwise called 'population' or 'ethnic' groupings in South Africa. As identified by the state, these racial groupings are; black, white, 'coloured' and Indian.

2.5 Conclusion

The reviewed literature attempts to explain the issue of academic performance either as a contextual or as an individual issue. There is an underlying belief that black students are similarly affected by the absence of 'appropriate cognitive' skills through poor black education. What such explanations fail to consider are situations where black students have gone to white schools, yet still perform less well than white students. There is a need therefore to stop blaming DET education entirely for this problem. Psychological explanations of study habits, reading skills, linguistic skills, meta-cognitive skills, while important, ignore the notion of 'national oppression' of black people educationally and otherwise.

The focus on cognitive factors is important, but more important are the social origins of these factors. Luria (1976) and Vygotsky (1978) argue that fundamental human activities are socio-historical and socio-cultural developments. Central to Luria's understanding of cognition is that the structure of thought depends upon the types of activity in different cultures. Abstract thinking is said to predominate in societies where activities are of an abstract and theoretical form. These are technological societies. Practical thinking is said to predominate in societies where activities are practical, such as in rural areas.

Using this understanding, it could be expected that since most of the black students interviewed in this study come

from urban societies, then they do possess abstract thinking skills. The author agrees with the widespread view that apartheid education frustrates the development of these skills. What is important, however, is what it is about apartheid education which ensures the non-development of such skills.

The scope of the thesis is limited to discussing and analyzing the students' views of what they perceive to be the problem with their education. The thesis explores three important issues: The first area which the study explores is whether, as the literature highlights, there is a wide difference between school and university education. A response to this question will help to highlight whether the revamping of education should only take place at a pre-university level or not.

The second area which is important in this research is to find out whether black students who received 'white' and those who received 'black' education have had similar experiences of education or not. This investigation was carried out in order to find out whether indeed, as it is claimed in the literature, the problem is with black education only. Perhaps white education could be similarly problematic for black students.

The third area of importance is the relationship between formal (school and university) education and informal (home and community) education. The aim is to find out whether, as

some authors claim, there are clear differences between the two environments.

In short then, the main research question in this thesis is: How do black students experience education in South Africa? The breakdown of this question focuses on three questions:

1. Do black students from private schools have different experiences educationally to those from DET schools?
2. Do black students perceive university and school education as different?
3. Do black students find a direct relationship between formal and informal education?

The next chapter covers the methodology used in exploring these issues.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 METHOD

3.1 INTRODUCTION:

The previous chapters provided background literature in regard to black education in South Africa, as well as factors affecting the academic performance of black students at university. From the literature, the emphasis has been on the differences in education or educational demands within 'white' universities and black schools.

From the above crude summary there are three areas which clearly need to be addressed and to which the author pays attention: One objective is to investigate whether for these students, school and university were very different educational environments. The second objective is to investigate whether the experiences of private school students differ significantly from those of the DET students. The third is to find out what relationship, if any, exists for these students between formal and informal education.

3.1.1 Hypotheses:

3.1.1.1 Educational background/ Matric Authority

There are wide differences in the experiences of black African students from private and DET schools with respect to education.

3.1.1.2 University Versus School education

There are differences between school and university education for black students.

3.1.2.3 Education and Home

There is a difference in the culture in black homes/community and that found in school/university education.

In order to investigate these issues, the author interviewed two groups of students: One was a group of students from 'white' private schools and the other was a group of students from black schools. The students interviewed were in their second- and a few in their third years of study. They were sampled from the university records of the student population, and are a fairly representative group of black students. The interview schedule (Appendix A) covers different areas of the students' lives from school, university to home/community experiences. This chapter provides more detail of the methodology employed.

3.2 Sampling

The list of all black students registered in the different faculties was made available to the author after the approval of the research proposal by the university's ethics committee. Faculties from which the sample was chosen from are: Arts, Social Science and Commerce.

A stratified random sampling method was used initially, ensuring a representative sample with respect to gender, educational background and faculty registration. A random sample was drawn by selecting every fifth name, ensuring a balance in the above-mentioned categories. This proved difficult since black students from DET schools far outnumber those from private schools. Although a small sample of private school students would have still been representative of the population of these students in the faculties concerned, the results would have easily been skewed by the DET students. This problem resulted in a less random selection of private school students.

3.3 Respondents' Biographical Information

3.3.1 Matric Authority

A total of 48 students made up the sample in this study. Twenty-seven of these came from a DET school background, whereas twenty-one came from a private school background. These are schools in South Africa, as well as the former Bophutatswana, Transkei, Venda and the Ciskei.

3.3.2 Faculty

Respondents were initially selected from the Arts and Social Science faculties. The reason for the choice was to draw out a representative, and manageable sample. Taking students from all faculties would have demanded a bigger sample. Later, however, students in the Commerce faculty

were considered as there was a shortage of private school students in the Arts and Social Science faculties.

The cell breakdown in terms of educational background and faculty registration in the sample is seen in Table 7:

Table 7

Matric Authority and Faculty Registration

	PRIVATE	DET	TOTAL
BCOM	10	5	15
SOCIAL SCIENCE	5	10	15
BA	6	12	18
TOTAL	21	27	48

3.3.3 Year of Study

The research targeted students in their second-year of study, since first-year students were still at the initial stages of adjustment at university. There were difficulties which the author experienced in obtaining private school students for the interview in second-year, especially in the Arts and Social Science faculties. There is an under-representation of private school students in the Arts and Social Science faculties, as compared to a better representation of these students in other faculties such as Commerce, for example. This bias away from Arts and Social Science necessitated an inclusion of some third-year students in the Arts and Social Science faculties, as well as some second-year students from the Commerce faculty. Only five third-year students from both private schools and DET schools were included in the sample.

3.3.4 Gender

The selection of the sample aimed at attaining as representative a number of men and women students as possible. The general UCT black student population gender ratio men to women is represented in table 8 as 2:1. In the sample, there were 26 men and 22 women students, meaning the ratio is almost 1:1. The cell breakdown with regards to matric authority and gender is as follows:

Table 8
Matric Authority and Gender (Sample)

	PRIVATE	DET	TOTAL
MEN	10	16	26
WOMEN	11	11	22
TOTAL	21	27	48

Table 9
UCT Student Enrolment by 'Population Group' and Gender: 1993

	Men	Women	Total
African	1627	790	2417
Coloured	918	918	1836
Indian	405	269	674
White	5412	3855	9267
Total	8362	5832	14194

(Source: Annual Sapse Returns 1980-1993. UCT Records)

3.3.5 Living Area

All except three students were in the university residences. Those who were not in a residence noted that it was out of choice that they stayed outside university accommodation. Students came from varied geographical backgrounds such as Cape Town, Free State, Transvaal, and the former Bophutatswana, Transkei, and Ciskei.

3.3.6 Work and other Educational Experience

Forty came straight from school to university, while eight spent a year or more between matric and their first year at UCT. Among these, five have additional tertiary education, and three have work experience.

3.3.7 Age

Their ages range from 18 years to 35, with an average of 24 years.

3.3.8 Social Class Background

Respondents came from varied social backgrounds: Four came from rural areas, and 44 came from urban areas. Using the information obtained in the biographical section of the interview schedule, it was identified that 23 came from upper-middle-class to middle-class and 25 from working-class backgrounds. Nineteen of the 23 upper-middle-class to middle-class were private school students and 23 of the 25 working-class students were DET students.

3.3.9 Parental Information

From the biographical questions, it was ascertained that occupations and educational qualifications of the students' parents were as follows:

Table 10

Occupational Status Differences Between Parents of Private School and DET School Students

	PRIVATE	DET
PROFESSIONAL		
(e.g. doctors, nurses, teachers managers, directors etc.)	19/21	4/27
NON-PROFESSIONAL	0/21	17/27
(e.g. domestic workers, factory workers, laborers, etc.)		
SELF EMPLOYED		
Own established businesses	2/21	
Own makeshift businesses		3/27
UNEMPLOYED	0/21	3/27

Table 11

Highest Educational Levels Among Parents of Private School and DET School Students.

	PRIVATE	DET
University Degree	5	0
College/Technikon Diploma	10	3
Other Diploma	4	3
Std 10-6	2	16
Std 5-0	0	5

3.4 The Interview

As already outlined, the study focuses on interviews among black students at UCT. It is important to reiterate that studies on black students have up until now compared them to white students. Very few studies have focused on black students' subjective experiences as a group, and even fewer of these operate on a multidimensional approach where home, school and university are taken into account. This study is therefore at its preliminary stages, and in-depth information is essential. Interviewing students was deemed appropriate rather than using other data-collection devices.

Information about these students' experiences, and self-perceptions that have consequently arisen, is central to this research. Meanings that the respondents attach to their own experiences are of utmost importance. It is only through interviews, that such issues can be adequately addressed.

The issue of academic performance of black African students in particular, is a sensitive one. Only through taking time to talk with these students, rather than mailing them questionnaires, can one obtain adequate information. The interview opens with factual non-threatening questions, thus sensitive issues are dealt with once a good rapport has been established. The fact that an interview provides in-depth information qualifies it to be considered in this research as the best data-collection device.

A semi-structured interview schedule was used in this study. It comprised both closed-ended and open-ended questions which allow the interviewer to probe where necessary. The schedule was divided into five sections which covered the students' biographical background, school and university experiences as well as their home lives (see Appendix A).

To the authors' knowledge, there was no other available interview schedule suitable for this type of research. Research on black students has narrowly focused on particular factors such as alienation, socio-economic status, study habits which various authors perceive are affecting these students' academic performance. Some studies have also used psychological tests of study habits, personality factors, self-concept and others, whose validity is highly questionable. Issues of the culturally biased content of these tests have been widely debated. The aim of this research was to explore, rather than prescribe, factors that have a potential of influencing academic performance.

Following pilot interviews wherein the author spoke to several students generally about their educational experiences, the present interview schedule was drawn up. In the pilot interviews, students had to provide a brief historical background of their home background, school and university experiences.

3.5 Procedure

Students were contacted either telephonically or, for those without access to telephones, through a letter (see Appendix B). The students were told that the research was for the purposes of a thesis, and was an investigation of their educational experiences of both university and school. They were further assured of confidentiality and anonymity in participating in the research. The students were also encouraged to ask questions for further clarification where necessary. In this initial contact, the researcher emphasized that there was no obligation to participate in the study.

Among those contacted, only two refused to participate in the study. Reasons for refusal included work overload and having been interviewed several times before.

Students did express initial concerns, mostly about how the author (the interviewer in this case) had got hold of their names and addresses. Having clarified this, they gave consent and appointments were set up.

The students were given a choice between the psychology department and their rooms for the venue of the interview. Venues, however, were determined mostly by the times when the interview could take place. All the evening interviews took place at the interviewees' own rooms. Some of the

daytime interviews took place in the psychology department, whereas others took place at the interviewees' own room.

Only three (n =3) students did not turn up for the interview. It could not be ascertained why the students did not turn up for the interviews.

All the interviews were tape-recorded. None of the interviewees objected to this. The interviews lasted an average of one-and-a-half hours. The shortest interviews took forty minutes, while the longest took two hours.

The tapes were transcribed verbatim. Most of this work was done by the author herself, whereas a few interviews were done by a trained transcriber. The analysis of the transcriptions was done through theme/content analysis and frequency counts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

CHAPTER FOUR

SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on students' school experiences. Students were asked various questions relating to their school experiences (see Appendix A). The academic aspects of their schooling elicited were: Factors affecting choice of school, subject choices, content of subjects, studying patterns, academic performance, and social aspects of their schooling (including, for example, involvement in extra curricular activities and career choices).

The results broadly indicate some differences with respect to school experiences between DET and private school students. These differences seem to emanate from the differences in home backgrounds between the two groups.

4.2 Factors Affecting Choice of Schools

The question relating to factors motivating school choices is one of the series of questions asked in the interviews in order to find out what influenced students' educational experiences. Similar questions to be dealt with later are with respect to factors affecting choices of subjects and careers.

In response to the question 'Why did you choose to attend the high school you went to?', several answers were given. The influence of parents, peers, and socio-political factors

were highlighted by the students as having motivated them to attend particular schools. In addition, some mentioned that there really was not much of a choice for them. These factors are summarized as follows:

4.2.1 Parents

In both the DET and private school groups, parents seemed to have played a crucial role in the choice of schools for their children. In spite of the fact that students were asked to focus on high school, some of the students from private schools included primary schools in their histories. According to these students, by the time they could choose for themselves which schools they could go to, their parents had already chosen private schools for them.

A few (5) DET students mentioned the influence of parents with respect to choosing a high school for them. Parents seemed to have suggested particular schools for their children based on reasons such as: Family members had attended those schools, or on the academic record of particular schools.

A large number (15) of the private school group cited parents as influential in their attending particular private schools. For some, this had been done at primary level, while others were taken to private schools at high school level. According to the students, their parents decided on private schools because these were judged as providing the

'best education'. On probing further, 'best education' seemed to be related to university entrance.

Some of the private school students who perceived parents as highly influential in their attending the schools they went to, mentioned that they had no choice in the matter. Feelings of dissatisfaction with regards to their parents' choices were expressed by some of these students. 'Being forced to attend particular schools' was a statement used by some of these students. The rest of these students felt satisfied with the choices their parents made.

Noting that some of the private school students' parents had tertiary educational level, it could be said that the parents had made choices for their children based on their own experiences. Most DET parents, however, had no tertiary education, and therefore no past experiences to make use of. Unlike in the private school group, fewer DET students seemed directly influenced by parents in terms of school choices. These students mentioned other factors, peer influence, teachers and political socialization.

4.2.2 Peers

Most (15) DET students, and a few (4) private school students mentioned that they chose particular schools based on opinions from friends. Schools were judged by peers on several factors such as teacher attitudes, tolerable level of discipline and a good academic record.

4.2.3 Political Socialization

Some DET students (9), predominantly men, mentioned that they chose particular schools on the basis of the teaching staff's sociopolitical tolerance. This again includes peer influence, as students mentioned that some schools were known by peers for their intolerance towards student activism.

The fear of victimization for political activities seemed to be a very important factor for these students in deciding on which high school to attend. Not all students chose schools on the basis of how tolerant staff members were in terms of political activism, however.

Some students chose schools on the basis that they were relatively free from township unrest. In other words, these were DET students who were more concerned with stability in the school environment.

Factors such as tolerance towards political activism did not come up in the private school group as a motivation for school choice. It is noteworthy that the educational experiences of the DET students are mostly unfree from sociopolitical issues in their communities. This marks the beginnings of these students' political socialization, as opposed to the relatively more academic socialization of private school students.

4.2.4 Lack of Resources

While some students from both groups gave reasons why they decided on particular schools, there were three students from rural DET schools who said that they had no choice. For these students, there was only one high school in a village to which all students go when they reach high school.

For private school students, although choices of schools theoretically include even DET schools, the latter were already not part of the scope in decision-making. In addition to the limitations within private schools, was the major factor that they had to like what their parents approved of. There could have been other factors possibly such as some private schools were not liberal enough at some point to accept black students.

Students went to DET or private schools also on the basis of financial resources. DET students sometimes had some choice as to which schools to go to, and sometimes they had no choice. Worth mentioning is the fact that even when they had a choice, this did not include private schools. For students who opted to attend private schools, they could afford to do so. For them DET schools were unattractive options.

4.3 Perceptions of Academic Aspects of Schooling

4.3.1 Factors Affecting Choice of Subjects

Students were asked what subjects they did in matric, as well as how they decided to take particular subjects. Having established this, questions on students' perceptions of the curriculum at school were posed. The results show marked differences between students from private and DET schools with regard to factors affecting choice of subjects. In both groups for example, parents seemed to play unequal roles.

The aim of this exercise was to initiate a situation where students began thinking about the choices they make in their own educational experiences. Further, it was also to attempt a process of reflection on the students' part about what they were taught at school now that they were exposed to tertiary level education. Factors elicited in the interviews as affecting subject choices include the following:

4.3.1.1 Peer Influence

The influence of peers was a factor cited by students from both groups. Students seemed to have chosen particular subjects based on opinions of friends about the nature of the subjects. Thus peers' attitudes and experiences of certain subjects were for some students important factors.

Tied up with these attitudes, are attitudes of students to teachers who taught particular subjects. Thus some subject would be chosen based on peers' perceptions of those teachers.

4.3.1.2 School Teachers

As noted above, perceptions of teachers played an important role in the subjects their students took. It would appear as if the role played by teachers differ between students from DET and private schools.

Private school students cited teachers as having played a constructive role in assisting them to choose subjects. They stated how teachers, based on the students' standard 7 results, would advise them on the appropriate subjects to take.

The role of teachers as far as some DET students were concerned was quite controversial. These students mentioned that they had no choice as to the subjects they did at school. Arbitrary rules (eg. favouritism) were said to be used by teachers in allocating students into the various subject classes. Some students mention that allocation into popular classes such as the science class would be done on favouritism. Others state that only students whose performance was good, would be allocated into the science class. In other words, these students, whose performance was good, would even be allocated into the science class against their will.

It should be kept in mind, however, that DET teachers very often struggle to cope with providing adequate education because of scarce resources. For example, in most DET schools problems of overcrowding (eg. 70 students in one class), and a lack of adequately qualified teachers are the norm. Thus the few available teachers were likely to be put into situations where they had to be authoritarian in order to deal with the problems they were faced with.

4.3.1.3 Parents

Parents were cited by both groups of students as an influential factor in their choice of subjects. The differences however, were twofold. First, three DET students mentioned parental influence in the choice of subjects as opposed to 12 in the private school group. This coincides with similar results with regards to school and career choices. Parents were cited as highly influential, if not over-involved, by the private school group. This differs from the almost non-involvement of parents for the DET group.

The same pattern of parental role as was found with regard to school choice re-emerged in the discussion of school subjects. The reason for the perception of lack of involvement from parents from DET students could be that these students tend to be more educated than their parents. In the private school group, most parents had tertiary educational qualifications. This issue was illustrated by the fact that

among the private school students, those whose parents were not highly educated, mentioned lesser involvement of parents.

In addition, the role played by parents in assisting their children also differed. Private school parents seemed more involved than the DET parents. Private school students mentioned how they were forced by parents to do subjects they did not want to do. One of the students, whose parents were said to be forceful, noted:

"My mother and father wanted me to become a doctor... I wanted to become a clinical psychologist."

4.3.1.4 Curriculum Content

Students were asked to comment on the curriculum content at their schools. Students from both groups seemed to be similarly dissatisfied with similar aspects of the curriculum content. One of the concerns from both groups was the absence of books written by African writers and in private schools, the absence of African languages.

Only three private school students mentioned that they had an option of studying books written by African writers. None of the DET students had read books written by African writers, with the exception of course, of the vernacular or mother-tongue subject. Some of the DET students even stated that some of their home language grammar books were written by white Afrikaner authors!

For most of the private school students however, African languages were not taught at their schools. Only six out of the 21 students from private schools had an option of taking an African language.

Another source of concern among both groups of students was that what they were taught at school was far removed from their own reality. One student said:

"I can say the curriculum is European centered... I liked history a lot at school but then, like being a black student I had questions about about it, about the curriculum."

When asked to elaborate on his questions, the student mentioned that a large part of the history at school was European history, and a small part was South African. He added that even the South African history was presented from the view of the Afrikaners, and all the text books were written by Afrikaner writers.

Another student who supported the argument of a biased perspective illustrates his point as follows:

" I would like to say that the history they taught us is extremely inappropriate, because they teach you about Rhodes as this hero and Shaka as this mini cruel person."

In other words, the students touched on the issue of history at school being the history written from a perspective foreign to them (an Afrikaner perspective). Another example still on history follows:

" History... at home my father told me a different history. At school they would say Africans stole the cows/sheep. You wonder, they (whites) came from Europe, did they bring the sheep all the way to Africa?"

In addition to a biased school history, this student illustrates another important issue. For her, there was a disconnection or a clash between what she learned at school and at home. Although issues of the disconnection between home and school are dealt with later, the point is worth making at this stage.

Not only were students of history critical of the curriculum, but also in languages too. English was also questioned by some for having been too 'foreign'. Students mentioned that they would have preferred to study English within their own context of South Africa. One student said:

"I don't know whether it is really necessary that we are taught Shakespeare...Whatever is taught in Macbeth is not our experience. I think we should be taught things that are more to us, than things that are Eurocentric... What we should be taught are things that are happening in South Africa. English should be relevant to the South African situation, not things that are outside that we cannot identify with."

These students identified problems with their education which have been identified by other African educationists. For example, Ngugi wa Thiongo (1986) noted that good education teaches the individual about him/herself first, so that s/he can understand the world around him/her. He says, "... education is a means of knowledge about ourselves. Therefore, after we have examined ourselves, we radiate

outwards and discover peoples and worlds around us..." (wa Thiongo, 1986: 94).

The comments from the students indicate that the education they received taught them about other societies and cultures first. Thus the debates about education having to be relevant, deals precisely with issues such as these ones. The concerns among students for a more relevant curriculum form part of the general debate on the need for restructuring the curriculum in South Africa. It is worth noting again that these are some of the issues that white students have not had to deal with in their educational experiences. It will be worth noting how a restructuring of education and an introduction of a new curriculum would affect their present status.

4.3.2 Studying and Academic Performance

Students were asked about their study patterns and academic performance as part of their experiences of school. The impression was that there was a direct, positive correlation between study-time and academic performance. In other words, those who reported more quality time studying, reported that they performed better than those who reported less study-

times at school. DET students, however, mentioned less formalized study-times. Private school students mentioned having studied an average of five hours per day in matric, while DET students averaged two hours per day.

In addition to the differing lengths of study-time, another source of difference emerged. This source of difference between the two groups was the 'history of studying'. Private school students mentioned having started studying (although for some they were compelled to study) much earlier than matric. Generally, private school students mentioned studying on entering high school. Most DET students however, mention studying only in matric level in preparation for final exams.

The DET students who reported only studying at matric level were asked to elaborate on this. Some mentioned that they felt no need to study, others cited the continuous political unrest in the black townships as a deterrent. Generally, these students seemed to think that studying at matric was good enough to prepare them for university.

The third source of difference between the two groups concerned students' attitudes to studying. As far as some DET students were concerned, peer pressure negatively affected them with regards to studying. Among their peers, studying was regarded as a bad thing. One student illustrated this issue as follows:

"We wouldn't go and read at home (after school), people had this attitude that you think you are clever, you don't have time for other people."

Mátute-Bianchi (1986) studied the influence of ethnicity on academic performance among minority groups in America. The main finding was that among the Mexican-American pupils for example, the identity of being a Chicano/Cholo (of Mexican descent), goes against the identity of being a good student. The identity of being a Chicano or Cholo meant resisting, subverting and undermining educational policies, as pointed out earlier.

White (1988) noted that if the attributes of the identity are relevant to performance in the classroom, then the identity will affect performance. Negative attitudes expressed by DET students in this study seem to fit this pattern. Thus one would expect that the students who adopt this attitude, who want to fit in with their peers, would develop a negative attitude to their work. This ultimately of course would affect their academic performance.

4.3.2.2 Academic Performance

Students were asked about their academic performance in matric. On average, private school students obtained a C aggregate symbol (60-69%), while DET students reported on average a D aggregate symbol (50-59%).

Most private school students (15) felt satisfied with their performance and attributed their results to hard work on

their part. Only a few (4) were dissatisfied, and three of these blamed the marking system for bad results.

Most DET students were disappointed with their results and they blamed an unfair marking system, lack of properly qualified teachers, political unrest and lack of facilities. The few (4) who obtained a C aggregate symbol attributed this to hard work on their part and support from their teachers.

The relationship between the reported time spent studying and academic performance is again worth noting. Table 12 summarizes these results.

Table 12

School Matric Results and Matric Authority

	DET	PRIV
Average Hours Spent Studying	2/24	5/24
Passed All Subjects	27/27	21/21
Aggregate Symbols:		
A	0	0
B	0	3
C	4	16
D	17	1
E	6	1
TOTAL	27	21

The first row of figures indicates that on average DET students spent two hours per day studying, compared to five

hours per day by private school students. The second row indicates that both groups passed all their subjects at matric. The third to the seventh rows reflect academic performance.

It is clear from the table that private school students performed better in matric than DET students. The relationship between academic performance and study-time also held true within the groups. From the interviews, it was clear that the DET students who obtained a C aggregate symbol were the ones who mentioned studying hard at matric; that is 'above average' hours of studying.

4.4 Social Aspects of Schooling

Questions were asked in the interviews relating to the students' social experiences while at school. Issues elicited were students' involvement in extra-curricular activities, career choices, school choices, and their relationship with teachers.

The main finding was that students' experiences were similar with regards to gender differences in extra-curricular participation. Students' experiences further differed with regards to political socialization and parental influence.

4.4.1 Extra-curricular Activities

Students were asked about activities they took part in at school. It was hoped that these would indicate levels of involvement (or estrangement) at school, and that this could

be compared with their activities at university. Although students initially interpreted the question as tapping sporting activities, further probing enabled them to include other general social activities in their accounts.

For private school students, a variety of sporting activities were mentioned. In addition, other activities such as debating committees, drama, music, exchange programs, and interest groups were mentioned.

DET students mentioned a few (compared to private school students) sporting activities (mainly netball and soccer), debating committees, Christian organizations, political organizations and drama. Differential access to resources certainly played a part here as well. Thus the difference in levels of activity between private school and DET students should be seen in the light of the abundance of resources or the lack thereof between the respective schools.

In both groups, men seemed more interested in sport than women. The following comments from two private school students illustrate this point (similar quotes can be given for DET students):

Woman: "Most of the children were into sport. You know how white schools are towards sports. I hated sports."

Man: "We had soccer, volleyball, baseball, tennis, athletics... I did everything. I was captain of the sports team... If I had a choice I would have made a career out of sports."

The difference between private school and DET students in terms of political socialization mentioned earlier, re-emerged here. While a majority of the DET students mentioned having been active or a member of some student political organization, none of the private school students mentioned this. Political socialization seems to be a differentiating factor between private school and DET students. This is in spite of the fact that the education system which both groups are part of does not nourish such interests. The lack of nourishment of such experiences, according to the author, adds to feelings among students that education is irrelevant to their day to day lives.

The gender difference was also reflected within the DET group with regards to political activism. Those who mentioned activities in student politics were predominantly male. Female students seemed more skeptical and distanced from political activism. The following is a comment from a female DET student:

" ...I didn't join the political structures at school because for me they were frustrating in the sense that I thought at times I felt the students didn't know exactly what they were into, and they were sort of leading us astray at times you know, and you couldn't just stand up there and oppose everything. I agreed with them on their objectives, but at times they were misinformed, they were misinterpreting things."

4.4.2 Factors Affecting Career Choices

Students were asked about the careers they envisaged for themselves while they were still at school. Careers mentioned by the DET students mostly differed from those

mentioned by private school students. In other words, educational background seemed to be a differentiating factor in career choices among the students.

The most frequently cited careers among the private school group were Medicine, Engineering, and Chartered Accountancy. Among the DET students, Teaching, Law and Medicine seemed popular. This result indicates that Medicine was quite a popular career among these students. Students were also asked to indicate why they chose these careers. Factors which came up as influential in the careers chosen by these students can be summarized as follows:

4.4.2.1 Monetary Gain

Students from both groups felt that what motivated them to choose particular careers was the fact that these had high monetary gains.

What seemed to differ between the two groups were the reasons for the need of the money. There seemed to be an individualistic approach among the private school students whose main aim was to maintain a high standard of living for themselves. Some of the DET students mentioned that the money would help them educate their siblings and support their parents who now depended on them.

4.4.2.2 Life Experiences

Some of the students from both groups mentioned that they were motivated by particular experiences in their lives to

choose particular careers. This reason was frequently cited by students who wanted to be doctors and lawyers. Some mentioned particular instances (for example an illness in the family, or harassment by the police) in their lives which led to either the intervention, or the lack of intervention, of the particular professional concerned.

The need for particular professionals in their communities emerged as another influential reason. This was an issue most frequently mentioned by the DET students. It can be said that the lower socio-economic levels of DET students generally mean poor or no access to health care. As indicated in chapter three, most DET students come from lower socio-economic backgrounds as opposed to higher socio-economic levels of the private school group.

4.4.2.3 Parental Influence

The influence of parents came up more often among private school students than DET students with regard to career choices. Some of the private school students noted how they were channelled by their parents against their will into particular careers. One student mentioned for example that she was interested in drama, which her parents were very much against it.

Another student described how her parents made her change schools as she was not allowed to do maths at the one school. She notes that her parents wanted her to do Medicine whereas she wanted to become a clinical psychologist.

Although she managed to get her way by failing the school entrance tests, some students ended up studying what they were not interested in.

4.4.3 Social Problems at School

Students were asked whether there were any aspects of their schooling that they were dissatisfied with. Dissatisfaction with curriculum content has already been mentioned. Private school students furthermore mentioned racial tensions at school, whereas DET students commented more about teacher attitudes, for example, authoritarianism.

4.4.3.1 Racial Tensions in Private Schools

Students from private schools seemed to have had problems with racial tension. The tension came from teachers, principals, and fellow students. Incidents were cited where they felt discriminated against because they were black.

While some of the racial incidents were said to occur in class, others took place in student residences as well as within the school premises. One student described a situation where they as black students were not allowed to speak their own language or be together as blacks:

" You find we (blacks) sit down as a group and lapse (sic) into Xhosa because all the blacks were Xhosa. The teachers at school had a problem with that, they didn't want us to speak the language because it separates us. So we had to speak English. And walking together as a group we were told 'no, don't walk together as a group, if visitors come they will see this and think there is segregation at the school'."

In addition to some of the already mentioned issues, the majority of the students who entered private school at an early stage, described some of the humiliations they experienced. Most importantly, these students mentioned how their inability to express themselves in English was a source of humiliation and affected their adjustment in these schools.

In addition, even those who entered private school at high school level describe the difficulties they experienced in communicating with students and teachers in what they called a 'different' accent. They mentioned the pressures they felt to change and speak English like the white students. The following examples illustrate the general communication problems experienced by the private school students:

"My brother and I were the second black students there and what was worse we couldn't say anything. The kids would talk and at times you get the feeling they are making fun of you, but then you don't know because you don't know what they are saying. It was terrible..."

" I couldn't speak English very well... and I really hated school cause I couldn't communicate very well and they used to laugh at me..."

"Most of the time we (blacks) are under this pressure to have the right accent. It was difficult, you had to acquire this accent. The children used to tease us about the accent when we first got there. We had to learn to adapt to this accent of white children."

The results show that the accent which private school students had to adopt, was actually a survival mechanism. That is, in order to 'fit in' at school, they had to speak like white children. In chapter six of the thesis, the

consequences of such adaptation to 'white' circumstances are discussed.

Some of the consequences have to do with their home backgrounds. These students reported how when they went back home, their manner of speaking for example, immediately separated them from other black children. Thus adjustment at school occurred at the expense of maladjustment in the black community.

Other students mentioned that apart from problems of racism in class or problems of language, they had problems with the way of life of their fellow white students. Aspects of what they felt differed, were, for example, religion, lifestyle, interests, and other cultural issues.

A more frequent example of differing interests between black and white students which came up in the interviews was that of preferences of television channels and programmes. Some students indicated how programmes preferred by white students would be of no interest to them as black students. Since they tended to be in the minority, they would either be forced to watch or leave the television room.

Some students mentioned that they were made to feel uncomfortable by what they perceived as a heavy religious atmosphere in their schools. One student put it as follows:

"My main clash was religion, it was a very religious school... I was anti-religion at that stage."

Some lifestyle issues which also came up included, among others, relating to parents, dealing with physical development at puberty, and ways of communication. With regard to parents, some students noted that there are differences in the way black and white children relate to their parents. While open confrontation was supposedly encouraged in the white community, this is said to be taboo within the black community. These students mention the difficulties of having to behave appropriately in both environments.

An additional issue pointed out by one student was that of having felt under pressure to do things that white students did. The student added that this was a general experience among black students at the time. She illustrates feeling under pressure to behave the same as white students as follows:

" I was young and felt under pressure to do all the things that the white children did. I wore a bra at a very early stage..."

What was clear in the interviews was that students felt that things done by white students are not the same, nor are they necessarily desirable within the black community. Further, that since the schools were predominantly white, and that they were trying to 'fit in', they would do things they would otherwise not do.

4.4.3.2 Social Problems in DET Schools

Apart from the general problems with DET schools such as lack of facilities, students seemed concerned about what they perceived as poor student-teacher relations at school. Teachers were said to have a punitive approach, others were said to be quite insensitive to students' needs. A few quotes illustrate these issues:

"We had rude teachers and in return we were rude... You know when a teacher asks you a question you are afraid of answering in case you say the wrong thing. That I would like to see change..."

" ... I didn't like the teacher, he had an attitude. And he wasn't good at all, like I stayed outside, he chucked me out of the class for six months. It was bad."

Q: Why were you chucked out?

A: He said that I was stubborn and I knew a lot...

Power relations between teachers and students have come up as problematic in both groups. Among the private school group, these power relations are compounded by a racial factor. Thus private school students arrive at UCT with perhaps an advantage of having had to deal with both the power relations between teachers and students as well as relationships between black and white students. It can be said that perhaps this is a contributory factor to their better academic performance at university during their first year there. In addition, white students too, have so far not had to deal with problems of power relations between black and white at university.

4.5 Summary

In summing up what one could call the educational experiences of these students of school, at least two issues need mentioning. One is that although black students come from a variety of social groupings, they do share some important similar educational experiences. The alienating nature of the curriculum is one factor which seems predominant in both groups. In addition, the ways in which society socialises women and men differently and the role played by schools in reinforcing these forms of behaviour run across socio-economic and other social divisions.

Another issue worth mentioning, is the role of parents which emerged as important in the choices made by students with regard to their education. Parents, as mediating agents, seemed to play differing roles, depending on their socio-economic status. Parents who belong to a higher socio-economic group seemed not only instrumentally supportive to their children, but also according to students' perceptions, overinvolved. This differs from the almost non-involvement of parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This finding highlights a weakness in the argument that the socio-economic background of significant others (such as parents), is not important.

There are obvious limitations to the kinds of interpretations and generalisations one can make on the basis of these findings. For one, the size of the sample is small,

and these are the views of the students in the sample, which exclude those of the teachers and other educationalists. The results do indicate, however, how black students perceive education. The next chapter addresses their university experiences, and examines the question of differentiation between university and school experiences.

CHAPTER FIVE

UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCES

5.1 Introduction

Having looked at school experiences, it was important to focus on students' experiences of university with the aim of finding out whether school educational backgrounds affect university experiences. The overall aim was to investigate whether there were any discontinuities/sharp distinctions between school and university experiences.

The questions which were asked to elicit the students' experiences of university were the following: How did you decide on UCT as opposed to other universities? What were your expectations of university in general? And how did your expectations relate to your actual experience of university? Students were also asked about their choices of courses in much the same way as they were asked about their school subjects in the previous chapter. The results do not support the notion that pre-university education is sharply differentiated from university education.

5.2 Factors Affecting Choice of University

5.2.1 Academic Standards

One of the factors cited as important in the students' consideration of coming to UCT was the notion of academic standards. Both groups of students cited their perceptions of high academic standards at UCT as a major consideration influencing their choice.

When asked to elaborate on what they meant by saying that UCT's standards are high, their understandings varied. Some private school students said that they knew UCT had a high prestige and this is what they meant by high standards. Some of the DET students said that high standards of UCT are reflected in the job market. That is, a UCT degree is said to give one easier access into the job market as opposed to degrees from other universities. Most notably, UCT was compared to black universities, whose standards the students felt were lower. Other students from both DET and private schools, felt that high standards meant that UCT is an academically challenging place .

The issue of academic standards is still a controversial one within academic circles. Ramphele (1993) in her article 'Standards- a loaded term', looks at some of the historical issues with regard to 'academic standards' at 'white' universities, specifically at UCT. She highlights some of the debates on academic standards, and looks at what UCT is doing to ensure the maintenance thereof. Figures on 'success rates' are tabled, as partly a demonstration of maintenance of standards. What is useful in her argument, is the questioning of the beginning of the preoccupation with standards, which became more prevalent with the entry of blacks in to 'white' universities.

In other words, those concerned with the 'maintenance of standards', seem to be the same people who are against the

entry of black students into these institutions. The results of the study, however, indicate that even black students themselves were concerned about standards of the universities they choose to study at. This highlights the fact that these students are also interested in maintenance of standards. They do not perceive their entry into 'white' universities as indicative of dropping of standards.

5.2.2 The Location of UCT

Another common factor between the two groups which motivated their coming to UCT was the location of UCT. For some students, UCT was far from home and this facilitated their choosing UCT as opposed to other nearby universities. Other students mentioned that there did not seem to be much unrest where UCT was located, thus they opted for UCT. Natal University was repeatedly cited as an unsafe environment to be in.

5.2.3 Family Influence

One of the factors which again differentiated the DET students from the private school students was the notion of family influence. Some private school students mentioned influence of family members in coming to UCT, and none of the DET students mentioned this factor.

Some of the private school students mentioned that they came to UCT because their siblings were or had studied at UCT. Some even mentioned that their parent(s) had studied at UCT before. The fact that some of these students have parents

who studied at UCT is important. They (ie. students) were not the first ones from their families to study at UCT. Thus their families are familiar with institutions such as UCT.

Family background is an important factor, since it means that some of the private school students are second- or even third generation at tertiary level. This is contrasted with most DET students who are the first generation in their families to gain a tertiary qualification (see chapter three on biographical background).

5.2.4 Limited Choices

Another differentiating factor between the two groups was that of limited choices. Some DET students mentioned that they came to UCT because it was the only university where their applications were successful. Students understood this to be related to their matric results which were not competitive enough. None of the private school students mentioned having had limited choices.

Other DET students mentioned that in addition, UCT was less financially demanding in terms of fees involved in the application and registration processes. Thus their choices were influenced by both their matric results and financial positions.

5.3 Expectations of the University

Since DET and private school students tend to have different socioeconomic backgrounds, one would expect their ideas on what university has to offer them to also differ. That is, since some private school students either have a parent, or siblings, or both who have tertiary educational experience, it could be expected that their knowledge of a university context would be more accurate than those without such backgrounds. This expectation did not materialize as expectations about university did not differ significantly between the two groups.

Both groups of students were concerned about the high first-year failure rate, a heavy work load, and the 'change' from school to university. In addition, students seemed to have looked forward to the 'freedom' from parental/teacher authority which was the case at school.

The only difference in students' expectations of university was the concern of 'race' which was prevalent among the DET students. Unlike private school students, most DET students had never been taught by white teachers, nor had they attended school with white students before. Thus most students stated a concern about possible problems that could ensue. Some of these problems were related to language, especially having to listen to a white lecturer who spoke English in a 'different accent'. There were some however,

who looked forward to the opportunity of mixing with white and other 'racial' groups for the first time.

5.4 General Experiences of University

The results show that the main difference between the two groups was that most of the private school students seemed to fit in much easier academically than the DET students. The private school students reported finding first-year courses easier than they expected. This is in direct contrast to most DET students who mentioned experiencing difficulties with their academic work in their first year. The issue of academic performance is dealt with later in this chapter.

The difference in experiences with academic work could be explained through both family background and school educational background. The schooling of private school students as opposed to DET school students, is expected to prepare them better for university.

5.4.1 Academic Aspects of University Life

5.4.1.1 University Courses

Students were asked what courses they did in first year and who assisted them in choosing those courses. While some mentioned factors they considered in choosing first year courses, there were some students from both groups who did not have a choice in terms of what courses to take. These were students predominantly from the Commerce faculty who had a set curriculum.

Factors mentioned by both groups were friends, student advisers, senior students and self-reliance. Only some private school students mentioned that their parents helped them to choose courses.

What came out strikingly clearly was that very few students mentioned having been to student advisers. Only five private school students had been to student advisers, while none of the DET students had been to student advisers for help. The under-utilisation of student advisers whose function it is to help students choose courses, needs attention.

One of the possible reasons for the under-utilisation of student advisers could be an element of suspicion by black students with regard to authority figures. The following comment illustrates this point:

"A friend of mine went to a student adviser. They told him to do really strange courses. They don't really know you, so how can they advise you?"

Most students seemed to rely either on people they knew such as friends, or on people they could trust, such as senior black students. A large number of the DET students mentioned having been helped to adjust by members of the Pre-Orientation Programme (POP), specifically organised for black first-year students. It must be noted that that members of this program include chiefly, black students who belong to different political organisations on campus.

Some of the difficulties with academic work which were mentioned by the DET students include: Lectures, that is, an inability to take notes; difficulties in writing essays; and generally an inability to cope with the work load.

Lea (1987) found a difference between black and white students in their experience of Psychology 1. She found that while most white students found first-year at university exciting, black students (especially from DET schools) found their first-year Psychology course agonizing.

Generally students who come from deprived educational backgrounds have been found to experience more difficulties adjusting to first-year university work (eg. Lea, 1987). The findings of the present study are therefore in keeping with findings in the area.

Students' impression of their courses varied. They described their courses as difficult, easy, overloaded, interesting or uninteresting. When asked to elaborate on what they thought about the content of their courses, students' dissatisfactions surfaced. Since the students' courses varied, it is easier to summarize their impression of a course most had in common.

Although these students took varying courses from within the Arts, Social Science and Commerce faculties, what they had in common was an experience of having taken the Academic

Support Programme (ASP) courses. Various departments provide ASP tutorials which run concurrently with their courses in first year, which black students are encouraged to attend. For those whose matric results are said to be poor, that is, mostly those with DET schooling, ASP is compulsory. In addition, the ASP Department runs an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course, which these students are also encouraged to register for. For those whose English matric symbol is below a C and or have failed the English literacy test, EAP is compulsory.

Thus the ASP courses were designed specifically for black students, whose matric points were low and/or had failed the English literacy test. Almost all the students did at least one ASP course. In addition, most of the students in the sample were registered for the EAP course.

Most of the students in the sample expressed a negative attitude towards ASP (and EAP). Most disliked the fact that ASP was exclusively for black students, and that it was compulsory. The following comments describe the anger that some of the students felt towards ASP:

"Definitely one develops an attitude why it is designed for blacks only... One realizes that it is useful. It's like you arrive here after being accepted, you are having the idea that you will be attending with white students. But you are surprised when you arrive here that there are courses designed specifically for blacks."

"As black students we do have a negative attitude towards it because it is meant solely for black students... We find it not working because maybe you write an essay in the other

course you would pass but in EAP you will just fail, whereas they say it equips you with skills"

The importance of focusing here on ASP is the fact that it is yet another facet of the students' lives which reminds them that they are black. The reminder goes together with whatever connotations are associated with being black. For example, students noted that ASP was meant for weak and struggling students who turn out to be black students.

All the students shared the sentiment that ASP unwillingly separated them as black students from the rest of the student body. The difference between the students was that some felt they could benefit from this isolation, while the rest resented this fact.

In spite of these negative attitudes towards ASP, some students felt quite positive towards it. According to a few students, EAP was useful in some aspects such as essay-writing and note-taking skills. The fact that ASP constituted black students only, was for some of these students a useful thing since they found the atmosphere less intimidating than in situations where there were other 'racial' groups. One student said:

" We had contact with students who come from the same background as us...In EAP we were all black and you felt free to say whatever you like."

they would be told that they come from a disadvantaged background.

Another situation where these students felt all black students were treated in a similarly condescending way was in tutorials. One student said:

"The white tutors tend to assume that black people don't know and don't understand. It's like you are taken back to primary and they are trying to spoon-feed you: Do you understand? Do you want me to repeat it?..."

This student gives an account of what it felt for him as a black student being taught by white people whom he perceived had little understanding of black people. The student felt that white tutors are misinformed about the academic abilities of black students. In other words, there is a tendency among white tutors to treat black students as a homogenous, equally weak group of people.

5.4.1.3 Studying and Academic Performance

As with school experiences, a possible relationship existed between (quality) time spent studying and academic performance at university. Students were asked how much quality time they spent studying both at school and at university. Private school students reported having started studying formally much earlier in high school and mentioned more hours on average than DET school students. The matric and first year academic results in both groups differ accordingly: Private school students' academic performance

in both matric and first-year university is better than that of DET students.

5.4.1.3.1 Studying

As noted in chapter four, private school students reported having had more structured and formalized study times at school. DET students mentioned less formalized study times and only started studying in Standard 10 for purposes of exam preparation.

At university, patterns of studying at first-year level for both groups did not seem to differ much from those at school. Study patterns only seemed to change at second-year level. Reasons for a change after first year include experiencing less of a work load than at first-year or school, lack of discipline and overindulgence in social activities.

Seventeen private school students reported having worked hard during their first year at university. They quantified working hard as studying everyday, some 5 to 6 hours and others 3 hours. Worth noting however, is that some of the private school students who reported studying little at first-year level also quantified this as averaging 3 hours. In contrast, some of the DET students who felt they worked hard in their first year mentioned studying on average three hours per day.

5.4.1.3.2 Academic Performance

There was a direct correlation between the amount of time spent studying and corresponding academic performance. In other words, students who reported spending more time studying at school and at university, also attained better results than those who reported less time studying (See Table 12 page 72 and Table 13 below).

Table 13

Sample's First Year University Academic Performance and Matric Authority

	DET	PRIV
Hours Studying Daily	3/24	6/24
Passed all Courses	(30%) 8/27	(76%) 16/21
Failed One Course	10/27	5/21
Failed Two or More Courses	9/27	0/21

The first row indicates that DET students on average spend three hours per day (21 hours per week) studying compared to the six hours per day (24 hours per week) among private school students. The second row indicates that only eight of the 27 DET students (30%) in the sample passed all their first-year courses. This is compared with 16 private school students of the 21 in the sample who passed all their courses (76%). The next two rows also indicate academic performance.

This finding by no means implies that studying hard causes better academic performance. It simply means that there is a

relationship between the two variables. Meaning, in this study, it was found that those who tended to spend more time studying, obtained better results.

Most private school students reported having passed all their first-year courses, while 24 DET students failed at least one course in first year. These students attributed their first-year results to factors such as the difficult nature of the courses, unpreparedness for university, heavy workload and unfair 'racist' marking at university. One student expressed doubt with marking as follows:

"You gauge your performance by comparing courses, in others you are getting better marks but in this one why? I didn't do English but if in the course my points get across, so why can't this one too..."

In short, the two groups differ in terms of studying and academic performance, and a correlation seems to exist between the two groups. Within-group comparison, although not evident from the table, also indicates that there is a correlation between academic performance and the amount of time spent studying. Those students who obtained a C aggregate symbol were the ones who reported spending more time studying.

This finding of a positive correlation between matric results and academic performance supports Bokhorst et. al.'s (1990) study. These authors did an investigation into factors affecting academic performance of all students at UCT. They found matric points to be a high predictor of

academic performance at university. They did however, note that pre-university education for black students from DET schools has its own problems. Thus on their own, matric points are not very useful predictors for these students.

All these factors indicate that black students' educational experiences do differ in some aspects. While some grew up rarely exposed to formalised studying such as DET students, others began studying early in their schooling careers. In addition, while some students studied relatively undisturbed by and uninvolved in political unrest, this is not so for a group of students with a DET background (who happen to be more politically aware). While all these are black students with a common 'racial' group identity, there are differences in educational experiences which do need to be taken into account.

5.4.2 Social Aspects of University Education

5.4.2.1 Extra Curricula Activities

At university level, none of the private school students and 17 DET students mentioned political activism as an extracurricular activity at university. Gender, however, emerged as a major differentiating factor here. Most of those who mentioned political activism (14) were men. One student even pointed out that political organisations on campus such as SASCO and PASO are male-dominated, and that this should change.

5.4.2.2 Sexual Harassment

The issue of the Sexual Harassment Policy recently launched at UCT will be used to demonstrate another facet of gender differences as it frequently came up in the interviews. The UCT Sexual Harassment Policy was launched in 1991 to address the increasing rates of rape and other forms of violence against women on campus (Sutherland, 1991).

When students were asked about aspects of UCT with which they were dissatisfied, the issue of sexual harassment policy was mostly cited by male students from both educational groups.

Male students expressed concern at this policy which they felt discriminated against them both as men and as black people. On the contrary, the female students who commented about this policy seemed quite positive about it. Some of these female students raised concerns about the seemingly negative attitudes of male students about the policy. One female student said:

"The attitude of black students (male) here at UCT to Mamphela's sexual harassment... People feel like black females are hiding behind Mamphela's harassment thing. They say when we get to the township the protection is not there anymore. I think somehow they are resisting change... If intellectuals are going to respond like this, how can we hope to educate people in the townships to change their attitude towards women?"

Male students on the other hand explained how the policy contradicted their own culture. One mentioned that unlike white men who persuaded women with flowers, they as black

men could not afford, nor were they interested in, buying flowers. They therefore resort to traditionally effective and acceptable ways of relating to women. For example, some cited continual persistence by men towards women as a natural approach. These ways, they said, are now being labelled as sexual harassment.

Another dimension which perhaps further explains men's negative reaction towards the policy is what some male students labelled as UCT's lack of priorities. They noted that it seemed more urgent for UCT to institute a sexual harassment policy, yet racial harassment was not even subject for debate. (This, however, has changed recently, with the preparation to launch a racial harassment policy underway). These students note how racism on campus has long been affecting black students, yet black students are now being told that gender issues are more important, thereby causing division between black students on the basis of gender.

In short, it became clear to the interviewer that not all male students were against the protection of women per se, but that some were concerned about the lack of focus on issues they regarded as more important. It was also clear that the very fact that female students were in favour of the sexual harassment policy meant that this was obviously an issue to which they could easily relate to as women. These are issues which differentiated them from black male students. In other words, issues of sexual harassment

accentuated differences among black students, thus rendering gender identities more salient.

5.4.2.3 'The Outsider Identity'

Students were asked questions about how they saw themselves in relation to the university establishment. One of the questions asked was: Do you feel like you identify with UCT or not? Most students clearly felt that they do not identify with UCT, and frequently referred to UCT as a 'white' university. The following examples illustrate high levels of estrangement:

"Well I am here to study, being part of the university does not make any difference, even if you feel part of the university, the university is run by whites for whites, that's how it is, ... the strike for instance... normally I would associate myself with workers, most of the black guys were penalised because of the strike."

" ... whatever affects black students does not really matter to the university. Say somebody, a black student dies, much later you see in the Monday Paper a very short reference to this. The two day strike for instance, UCT chose not to close, just a token closure for a day, you feel you are here as a temporary person, you don't belong."

"... During the strike, every single black student on campus felt very strong about the strike, the white students go on as normal. You think when something affects you so much you can't go on; it doesn't bother other people..."

The finding supports Allen (1985) who studied how structural, interpersonal and psychological factors correlate with success among black students at white American campuses. He found that most of the students felt themselves not part of the campus life. He noted however that integration into campus life was not a precondition for success. Success he reckoned, is determined by students

having favourable faculty relations, more years in school and better high school grades.

What is not clear from Allen (1985) is how the same students who feel socially estranged from the campus itself could simultaneously have favourable faculty relations. The only part where this author supports Allen (ibid) is where he says that integration is not a precondition to success for these students. Allen (1985) found that some of the students in the sample do perform quite well in spite of not being integrated into the university. Yet it has to mentioned that integration into campus life does play an important role in the students' academic life.

While black students in this study generally felt they do not identify with UCT, some pointed out a different dimension of this estrangement: while they could not identify with UCT within the university campus, outside of the university for example at home they would. In other words, the students aptly captured the dynamic and yet contradictory nature of social identity. One said:

" ... It depends on the situation. If you are here (i.e. UCT) you see UCT as a white university. Especially things like what happened in the strike last year. But when you meet your friends at home, or another university, you would identify yourself with UCT. So that perception could change -depending on the situation."

This describes the notion of salience of a social category as identified by Tajfel (in Hogg and Abrams, 1988). It can be argued that the UCT context makes the 'racial' category

salient in most cases. Thus while black students might differ from one another with regard to other social identities, their identity as a 'racial' group is frequently more salient than their other identities. In essence, these issues make black students feel like outsiders at a university which is situated in a country where they are in the majority.

Outside of the university context, students reported an ability to identify themselves as UCT students. This ambivalence with respect to context and identity is only explicable if one assumes that there is an element of alienation which the 'white' university as an educational context evokes in these students. Close contact with an environment they consider 'white' reminds them of their blackness and thus an inability to identify with the institution. Outside of UCT (for example at home), there seems to be little that reminds them that UCT and 'white' go hand-in-hand. Thus they identify themselves as UCT students. In addition, the feeling could also have something to do with UCT being regarded as fairly prestigious by both the students and their communities.

5.3.2.4 Language Issues

Language was one of the factors in shaping students' experiences as black students at UCT. One way in which it emerged was in terms of perceived differences in spoken English between the private school and DET students. Private school students were perceived by some of the DET students

as speaking English like 'white' people. In addition, this perception of private school students led some DET students to conclude that private school students identify themselves more with white rather than black people.

Private school students, while realizing that they were identified by other students as speaking in a 'white' way, pointed out how they were made to feel different by other black students. One private school student even used the phrase 'campaign against private school students' to characterize her feelings about these issues. Most private school students seemed to feel quite strongly about themselves as a group which had similar experiences. It was noted in chapter four that these students felt under pressure to attain a correct accent while at school. On campus, the tension between private and DET school students can be illustrated as follows:

" ... it seemed to me that blacks from private schools tended to be on their own here at university. It seemed that people who hadn't been in the same context with white people still had that slave mentality. If something went wrong there was resistance to speak up if it was a white person. We tend to speak if something upsets us, we say so. It seemed like we are more, we try to put ourselves on a white level" (authors' own emphasis to illustrate social divisions created by interviewee).

In short, black students do tend to identify themselves in terms of whether they speak English the 'black' (in this case DET) way, or they speak English the 'white' way, ie. the private school way. These differences also seem to be accompanied by power relations, since there are power differences between white and black. One black private

school student for instance referred to DET students as having a 'slave mentality'.

5.5 Dissatisfactions Within UCT

5.5.1. Perceived Racism

The theme of race re-surfaced when students mentioned certain aspects of UCT that they were dissatisfied with. Perceived racism was identified in the following areas: entrance criteria into the university and other courses; staffing; marking; academic exclusions; and residence problems. Students felt that generally as black students, they were discriminated against.

5.5.1.1 Selection Criteria

Students in both groups expressed dissatisfaction with the selection criteria into the university and different courses. The students felt the existing rules effectively discriminate against black students. Here students were referring to rules of admission into some courses where prerequisites were based on good matric results. The general feeling was that these rules (eg. the minimum C aggregate symbol for entry into psychology was cited quite frequently) had to be revised to take into account the change in the student composition.

Some departments (frequently the psychology department) and faculties (frequently law) were cited as ensuring low numbers of black students through their selection criteria.

5.5.1.2 Staffing

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In addition, students cited the imbalanced ratio of black to white staff members as a source of concern. They noted that there was not only discrimination at UCT against admission of black students, but this occurred at the level of staff as well (note Evans, 1990).

Evans (1990) deals with the 'racial' question and South Africa's intellectual world. He notes that black people are marginally involved in the production and shaping of knowledge within the academic sphere (Evans, 1990: 21). Thus the concern raised by students with respect to the lack of black academic staff members at UCT is an important one, not only to students. The issue, however, is whether this 'racial' imbalance in the academic sphere can be linked to the students' academic performance.

The question of the importance of future job opportunities and academic performance was addressed by Ogbu (1978). His thesis is that the poor academic performance of minority students in America is related to the lack of better employment opportunities later in life. He calls the state of affairs in America where minority groups are not given opportunities of employment in high professional levels a 'caste system'. In short, he blames this 'caste system' for demotivating black minority groups educationally. The academic performance of minority groups he says, reflects the students' preparation for low-level jobs.

Ogbu's assertion about poor job opportunities affecting academic performance at school has been strongly challenged on the issue of women. Mickelson (1989) refers to the exposed myth of female under-achievement. It is stated that women's motivation and behaviour to achieve is not only equal but often surpasses that of men. Statistics on achievement in America are said to demonstrate that more girls than boys graduate from high school. In addition, that more women than men receive bachelor degrees and are registered in Masters programs. These issues are raised to challenge the argument that discrimination in the work place affects academic performance. That is, women are said to achieve, even though men are favoured in the work place.

The significance of the arguments about the academic performance of women (Mickelson, 1989), and minority groups (Ogbu, 1978), indicates the complicated relationship that exists between future job opportunities and academic performance. That is, it cannot be simply concluded that the reason why some black women students perform poorly is because of the lack of black women academic staff members at UCT. The present author, however, argues that the lack of black academic staff at this university is a factor in students' academic performance.

5.5.1.3 Marking

Marking of scripts came up frequently as a source of dissatisfaction among students interviewed. Students were convinced that there was discrimination against black students in marking. A solution of using student numbers rather than names was suggested.

5.5.1.4 Residence

Students further identified racism at the residences as being a problem. The allocation of students into residences and within residences was cited.

With regard to the allocation of students into residences, while black students are predominant in the residence system, there are some residences which students noted as predominantly white, and others as black. Students gave examples of such residences.

With regard to allocation within the residences, students felt some sectors of the residences were predominantly white while other sectors of the same residences were predominantly black. In other words, some corridors/floor levels in the same residence would be predominantly white, while others are black. Students also pointed out the rarity of situations where black and white students would be allocated the same room to share.

Students generally felt that social activities at residences still catered for white students. They mentioned formal dances and Rag shows as examples. These activities are said to cater for white students in music, and in their generally expensive nature.

5.5.1.5 General Feelings of Ineffectiveness

Students were asked whether they as black students saw themselves as powerful to be able to effect change or not. Most pointed out that black students are powerless especially as they were in a numerical minority. These students felt that black students are not taken seriously. One student said:

"... All they do is just give students a platform to complain and they do nothing about it."

Students mentioned that unless black people are well represented in positions of power within the university, black students will remain ineffective.

5.6 Summary

The results on black students' university experiences point out that school matric results do have an effect on students' experiences at university. It was noted that students from private schools reported less academic difficulties compared to those from DET schools. First-year university results demonstrate the differences in school educational backgrounds. This indicates that to some extent, success at university is influenced by school education.

School education results are, however, influenced by socioeconomic status, meaning that rich schools yield better results than poor schools (Morris, 1986). The results of this thesis indicated that students who attended private schools had better matric results than those from DET schools. What could not be ascertained, however, was a comparison between DET schools. That is, it was not possible to ascertain which DET schools were better equipped than others, as has been done by Morris (1986).

In addition, the results of the present study indicate similar experiences of university from both the private school and DET group. That is, common problems which these students outlined, included the academic discourse, the alienating university environment, and perceived racism from lecturers and tutors. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, the results also indicate that for these students, there is no sharp differentiation between school and university education.

CHAPTER SIX

COMPARISON BETWEEN SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY

6.1 Introduction

The present study had as one of its aims, an investigation into whether there is indeed a sharp differentiation between school and university experiences or not. In chapter two, it was demonstrated that there is a basic assumption among some educationists/researchers that school and university are highly differentiated. In other words, that there is a difference in education between school and university, and that university tends to be viewed as less problematic than school education. Such assumptions have implications for the restructuring of education.

In order to explore the issues of school versus university education, two areas were focused on. The first was a direct question put to students to compare their educational experiences of university and school. The second was to link education in the formal sense (ie. school and university), with experiences of home/community. These two areas yielded the following results.

6.2 University and School Education as Perceived and Experienced by Black Students

When students were asked to compare their experiences of school and university, freedom of expression (or the lack thereof) was mentioned first. That is, students began grappling with the notion of freedom of expression supposedly cherished within academic institutions. Even

though students initially differed slightly on this issue, the ultimate conclusion is that this 'freedom' was not enjoyed by these students.

A few students felt that while there was suppression of views at school, university was different in that lecturers encouraged students to be 'critical'. When asked to explain their understanding of this encouraged 'critical' attitude, students referred to a comparison of authors. They said that they were able to find fault with some authors' views through using other authors. What is worth noting is that none of the students made reference to their own thinking and development of their own ideas. Generally, students tended to think that their role in the process of being educated was only that of learning and mastering others' views.

Most of the students in the sample felt that there was similarity between their school and university education with regards to an intolerance of differing views. The following responses illustrate this:

"At school we (black students) learned that the best thing is not to come up with your own ideas because you might be considered subversive, so you learn to suppress yourself. I was concerned that if I raise something it might be considered in a similar way... particularly as a black person because you know that you are used to that culture that any objections are not welcome."

"University (education) is indoctrination. You are given specific material to cover, and sometimes you come up with your ideas you lose marks because you can't reference it... They don't acknowledge our own ideas. We are being told this is it! This is what governs! We all have minds."

"... I was trying to tell them (black students) how to pass a course. So I think you have to know, is this lecturer a capitalist? Then your essays in the exams etc. have to agree with it, because it is like writing about nationalism, you will loose marks. This is how you pass."

Students seemed to agree on the issue of intolerance of differing views. Some pointed out that the intolerance at school is more obvious with the emphasis being on regurgitation. They added that this occurs at university level too, though in a more sophisticated manner.

These findings correlate with Cloete & Shochet's (1986) view that students correctly perceive university education as memorization, fact-gathering and rote-learning. Even the students who alluded to 'critical thinking', still understood this to reflect rote-learning.

In short, students perceived suppression of ideas as a factor in failing at university. Some students were also under the impression that the chances that a black student would differ ideologically with the average white lecturer were greater than those of a white student and a white lecturer. Students seemed convinced that success at university was highly dependent on a student's ability to figure out what lecturers find acceptable. Such a task, it is believed, is the determining factor of one's academic performance. It would be interesting for future research to find out what black students in the natural sciences believe determines success at university.

Nzimande (1988) argued that there are discontinuities between black students and white academics. Nzimande asserted that white students' academic performance should be judged in terms of the fact that they share a similar background and common world view with the average white academic. The findings of this study support this viewpoint. Students seemed convinced that success at university is dependent on the students' ability to know what the lecturer wants to hear; not the students' viewpoint.

6.3 The Relationship Between Formal Education (ie. school and university) and Home/Community Life

There is a general assertion that what black children are taught at school is discontinuous with their home/community life (Jubber, 1988; Kutoane & Kruger, 1990; Ngugi wa Thiongo, 1983; Thembela, 1984 & 1986; Wallace & Adams, 1989; and others). Furthermore, such discontinuities are seen as crucial in explaining the academic performance of black children. While some might imply that the solution is to change the culture in black homes to fit with the school/formal education culture (eg. Jubber, 1988), most authors have begun to question this stance.

To test the *discontinuity hypothesis*, and to find out its manifestation at tertiary level, students in this study were asked to compare their experiences of school and at home/in the community. Questions asked were the following: Did you find that what you learned at school was relevant to your experiences at home/in the community? In turn, was what you

learned at home/in the community applicable at school? Or was school and community life totally separate?

The same questions were posed with regards to university education. Various authors assert that part of the reasons why minority group children/students in America and blacks in South Africa fail is because of the discontinuity between university education and the students' home/community life (de Winter Hebron, 1991; Jenkins, 1989; Machet, 1991; Stikes, 1986; Willie & McCord, 1972; and others).

Some of these authors refer to 'cultural mismatches' which are said to occur between black students' home culture and the culture within which tertiary education is based. Terms such as 'cultural constraints', 'cultural discontinuities', 'cultural deprivation' are some of the terms used by different authors to describe this scenario.

The results of this study support the *discontinuity hypothesis*, in that students did report that formal education (school and university) was generally different (and to some extent less relevant) to their home/community lives. One unexpected finding was that in their comparison of school and university, most students felt that school was more discontinuous with home/community life than university education.

To start with, some of the DET students felt that they could explain the discontinuity between the two environments

through the non-involvement of their parents with their schooling. It was even stated by these students that parents were at times suspicious of what they were taught at school. Descriptions such as 'you are taught the wrong stuff' were frequently cited by these students as coming from their parents.

The earlier example of a student who had two different versions of African history from school and home illustrates this point. A further example is illustrated by the following statement from a DET student:

" ... Biology we are taught about the spider. You can't discuss with your grandmother the structure of the spider..."

Interestingly enough, none of the private school students reported similar experiences with their parents. Private school students felt that some aspects of their education at school were continuous with home life. They mentioned how they freely discussed aspects of their subjects with their parents at home. Of course as pointed out earlier, private school students come from more educated families than DET students. Hence, if parents received tertiary education, then there are more continuities than when it is not the case.

The private school students mentioned, however, that some of the teachers' expectations of them were unfair. They mentioned that some of the things teachers took for granted

as general knowledge, such as books read and films seen by white children were virtually unknown to them. These were times when they felt their life experiences, culture and knowledge were not given validity at school.

As far as university education is concerned, some students from both DET and private school background, felt university education differs and to some extent is not relevant to home/community life. Aspects of differences cited include language, ideas, and the application of knowledge in the community.

With respect to language, students from both groups explained that at home/community and at university they speak different languages. They are expected to speak and write in English at university, and communicate in their mother-tongue, or a black language at home. For both groups of students, mastering communication in English, and being used to speaking in English had given rise to problems of 'fitting in' at home. The following examples illustrate this point:

" Ja, now that you've met other people (at university), you are used to speaking in English. When you get home you feel like speaking the way you are used to. They (home/community) are not going to welcome you." (DET student)

" Like here (at university) I always speak in English. I'm so used to it. When I get home sometimes I forget and speak in English. It's like they (home/community) say 'there she goes again with her English'. It's not like it used to be..." (DET student)

" ... They (community) would tell me 'you are black and yet you speak English, the language of the oppressor, you are culturally disoriented'." (Private school student)

Vilakazi (1986) questions the language used at universities. He asserts that there is a need to change the discourse used at universities in books and verbal communication by lecturers. The present discourse at university is said to be limited in that it is only accessible to a small sector of society, predominantly the white academic world.

Some of the students who felt university is discontinuous with community life mentioned aspects of their courses which were not applicable to black communities. Several students who were doing social work mentioned how they would study particular American theories in class, and be expected to apply them in a totally different context to black communities. Other students from the Social Sciences made mention of inconsistencies between what they were being taught and where they come from. Courses were criticized for being irrelevant to the general South African context, and biased towards the white community in South Africa.

This finding supports Lea (1987) and Leon & Lea (1988) who made mention of the experiences of black students at UCT. These authors noted that black students felt alienated by the curriculum and general life at university.

In contrast to the view that university education is irrelevant to black community life, is the view that unlike school, university education is relevant. This view came

from some students from both DET and private schools. The following examples illustrate the point:

" Here (at university) you learn things in a broader way. You learn things which take you back to what's happening at home. Like you can make people aware of environmental issues..."

" We had a textbook in Afrikaans (at school). It didn't even link to the way I lived. Many things didn't connect... Last year (university) we did an option in Economics, the economics of poverty. We read a book by Mamphela and Wilson on Natal. In so many ways I found that even though I didn't live in Natal where there was drought, I felt that book was about South Africa, about me. Not the van Riebeeck stories (at school)."

These examples indicate that for these students, the difference between school and university education is that the latter is more useful and relevant. This view is in keeping with the idea that there is a big difference between university and school. A difference widely cited is that school promotes rote-learning while university education promotes critical thinking.

The students who felt that university education was more relevant and continuous with home/community life were asked whether the reverse was true or not. In other words, did they find that they could apply their own knowledge gained from home/community in what they were learning at university. This was done in order to find out whether the relationship of applicability of knowledge was one-way or more complex.

These students agreed with each other by saying that they could only apply knowledge gained from university into the

community. They felt that there was no space in the university education, in writing of essays and other academic exercises, for their own input. This could be a central reason for these students' poor academic performance, when compared to white students. It could be argued that education for these students reinforces powerlessness. With respect to school, the students described how they studied a distorted history, how they never got exposure to African writers and how discontinuous formal education was with their own reality. Rather, students have learned that education is all about learning and knowing the other (ie. white) and by implication look down upon oneself. Students have been made to believe that the black community has no role to play in the construction of knowledge.

Students reported experiencing problems of alienation in the present educational system. Yet this does not mean that restructured education should be completely continuous with black culture only. Rather, it should be noted that education which discriminates against any culture, is not an option. Thus what the author argues for is not a different form of cultural domination, but a type of education which is sensitive to cultural diversity.

6.4 Summary

To sum up, this chapter focused on issues which affect black students on a 'white' campus. These students seem to share

common beliefs about the discriminatory nature of their education and the context within which this is transmitted. The students also have in common experiences of feeling estranged, not only academically or educationally, but also socially. They gave examples of alienating incidents within the university residences for example. In short, these students seem to share a common distinct black identity on the UCT campus. Thus the context within which education takes place, together with the education itself, are issues that need to be taken into account when the academic performance of these students is addressed. Not all white students struggle to the same extent with issues of this nature.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

The background literature discussed in chapter two highlighted pertinent issues around the education of black people in this country. The brief history of apartheid education traced the beginnings of education for blacks in South Africa. The main function of education for blacks was that they should be of service to white people. Unequal allocation of resources for black and white people formulated a fundamental part of the problems with education in South Africa. In turn, the academic performance of black students both at school and tertiary level, has been poor. Black students have exhibited higher rates of drop-out, failure and exclusion on academic grounds (than white students) within universities.

Literature on factors seen to best explain the situation of poor academic performance for black students, has focused on their failure at university more than on their performance at school. Some researchers/educationists have located the source of the problem in the black students' school education. The educational background of black students at school is seen to handicap rather than equip these students with 'appropriate' skills for university study. In other words, skills which black students acquired and utilised at school are not useful for university study.

The assumption seems to be that school education for black students is sharply differentiated from university

education. That is, the two educational environments are perceived to differ significantly.

Academic Support Programmes (ASPs) that exist at universities emanate from views such as the ones above. From their inception, ASPs were mainly seen as a way to redress the inadequacies of black schooling, particularly the DET schools. Through ASP programmes, black students could be equipped with skills to help them meet the demands of university education.

The review of literature also indicated that some researchers have located the source of poor academic performance within the university context itself. Such factors cited chiefly include the 'racial' imbalance of both students and staff (especially those in positions of power). In this argument, the university context was also said to have an alienating effect on black students.

This view seems to be more of a reaction to those who find fault with black students for being ill-equipped for university study. Those who focus on the university context as being problematic, point out that black students are not the ones at fault, but rather the educators and those in power. This view needs further exploration. There is also a need to identify specific factors which might be problematic within these institutions. In other words, there is a need to address the issue of how the 'racial' composition, and structural alienation, translate into intellectual

powerlessness among these students. The thesis has attempted to address such issues.

The results of the study indicate that for black students, there is no sharp differentiation between school and university experiences. An important example cited in this thesis was the over-arching problem of the alienating nature of formal education. This had been found to permeate through both school and university education. Students in the sample mentioned that aspects of the school syllabus were totally removed from their experiences outside of school. For students from DET schools, this issue has been even more so, since they tend to have parents who lack much of a formal education. The parents of private school students, however, seemed to serve as buffers from the otherwise alienating nature of education that their children received. The students from private schools mentioned the role played by their parents in education, including factors such as choices of schools, subject choices, careers, and discussions of subject content. The parents' involvement seemed to serve as a continuation rather than a disconnection between school and home.

In spite of the relatively higher educational level of parents of private school students, there were issues pertaining to their being black that parents could not deal with. For example, private school students, when citing alienating aspects of their schooling, mentioned the tendency among teachers to make reference to books or films

(supposedly general knowledge among whites) to which they had never been exposed.

Parents of private school children not only played a supportive role, but perceptions among some students were that they tended at times to become over-involved in their educational choices. These students felt that they were not allowed to actively make choices for themselves. Parents seemed to make crucial decisions about their children's education.

The issue of differences in socio-economic background and differing parental roles puts private school students at an advantage. Obviously private schools are expensive, and are better equipped with educational resources than DET schools. In addition, these schools are relatively free from political unrest, unlike their DET counterparts, situated in black townships. It has been noted that private school these students enter university with better matric results, and in addition, exhibit better first-year results.

The literature in the field highlights a direct relationship between the socio-economic status and academic performance of students. The socio-economic argument however needs further attention. Black people from high socio-economic backgrounds (private school students) still perform less well than white people at similar socio-economic levels. Evidence for this fact can be found in for example, Table 12, where it was found that none of the private school students obtained an A

aggregate symbol in matric. The same cannot be said for white students in private schools.

Thus, cultural alienation adds another dimension to the debate. In spite of parental involvement, black private school students cited contextual factors which they found alienating in the schools they attended. They perceived the way of life in private schools, the racist attitudes of some white teachers, the biased content of their education, the limited opportunities of studying black literature and black languages, and a 'white' historical perspective as alienating. Socioeconomic status is therefore not enough to explain academic performance at university.

The issue of alienation could be further illustrated as follows: Many of the students in the sample (both DET and private school), came to university with high expectations of studying at a tertiary level. What repeatedly came up in the interviews was the fact that the UCT context reminded them that they were black and largely unacceptable. Students cited attitudes of lecturers and tutors, attitudes of fellow white students, and the attitudes of those in powerful positions as constant reminders that they did not belong to UCT. For example, the Academic Support Programme was largely perceived by students as degrading, because it set them apart from other students. In other words, UCT was found to be generally alienating by the students interviewed for this thesis.

Chapter six highlighted some of the issues which demonstrated a weakness in the assumption that school and university education are very different. This assumption is the one which justifies the existence of ASPs alongside general departments in universities. The study shows that the differentiation between university and school education is not useful. Black students expressed feelings of restriction from airing their own views both within university and at school. The view that what is different from the dominant is unacceptable seemed for these students to run through school and university. In other words, in both school and university education, students perceive these environments as denying self-discovery.

Another important issue raised was that of political socialisation. This seemed predominant among DET students. DET students seemed more politically socialised than those from private schools. This is an important source of differentiation between these two groups.

What seemed missing in school education, has been a recognition of and a way of incorporating these experiences into the students' education. Political socialisation is an important part of these students' experiences, and requires recognition. Students noted that censoring activities prevailed in their schools. Even at university, these students have come to believe that in order to pass, they need to deny their own experiences and adopt those of their educators. In Nzimande's (1986) terms: There is a

discontinuity between a black student and an average white academic. This study provides a specific example of such a discontinuity, with DET students as an example.

It is suggested by the findings of this study that several issues are important in analysing the issue of academic performance of black students. Although socio-economic status is a factor, it is overshadowed by factors of cultural domination in formal education.

In addition, it is a fact that most black students enter university with little in the form of meta-cognitive skills, to help them succeed. These students suffered from a lack of resources which are readily available in white schools. Yet the major resource that education (as a whole) lacks is sensitivity to cultural diversity. While university might be attempting to deal with 'ill-equipped' black students, there is also a need to look at contextual problems such as the ones already highlighted in this thesis. Most importantly, there is a glaring insensitivity (exaggerated by the 'racial' composition in these institutions) to cultural diversity.

Another dimension which needs attention, is not only that of assisting black students with difficulties in their academic work, but also with the unique psycho-social issues these students experience. These students repeatedly referred to feeling alienated, being made to feel inadequate/incompetent, and feeling unwanted. It is highly

questionable whether a focus on how to write essays or how to adopt effective study methods will work in a context where such emotional issues abound. The author is however not calling for massive psychotherapy for all black students as a solution to all problems. Rather, in addition to support of this nature for those who need it, effective ways of redressing the effects of apartheid and racism are needed. Practical ways of resolving the problem might well be to change the racial and gender composition of the staff, and those in powerful positions in university government. This would go a long way to making black students feel accepted and understood.

An attempt at documenting these experiences took the form of discussions with a group of randomly chosen black students from UCT about their educational experiences. Some issues regarding the experiences of women emerged (sexual harassment for example). Just as it is important to document experiences of black students, it is similarly important to focus on the experiences of black women at school and university. The author suggests the need for further research - a documentation of how black African women's experiences affect their academic performance.

What this thesis has attempted to demonstrate is that it is not very useful to talk about cognitive issues separated from the context within which they occur. Cognition is a social process, and it is affected by political, economic and most importantly, cultural factors. When claiming that

black students lack cognitive skills, we have to consider the social origins of these inadequacies. In South Africa, the social origins of educational problems are not that black students sit on broken desks throughout their school years. The social origins go beyond the economic, to the psycho-cultural. There is a need to develop an educational philosophy which empowers 'minority' (in the present UCT context, although majority elsewhere) cultures. This is the overall thrust of this thesis. The culture of the majority of people in this country has not, up until now, been a factor in determining what black children are taught at schools (Kutoane et. al., 1990). In conclusion, there is hope that the re-working of the education syllabus will take into account students' life experiences, while teaching them the necessary meta-cognitive skills.

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APPENDIX A**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE****A: BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND**

Can you tell me a little bit about your background. I would like to know the following about you:

-where you come from

-about your family: your parents and siblings

what their occupations are,

what their highest educational qualifications are

their ages

who supports you financially etc.

B: SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

With respect to your education, let us for now focus on secondary education. Tell me:

what school you went to

why you went to that school

what your worst and best moments were

what you would have liked to change about your schooling experiences.

Extracurricula activities

Subjects: Which; levels of difficulty; choice; performance; study time; attitudes; curriculum.

Future aspirations?

C: UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCES

Why UCT?

I would also like to know more about your experiences at university, in first year.

Degree: Choice

Courses: which; performance; study time; attitude; choice

Social: experience vs expectations

adjustment

problems

extracurricula activities

power of student body

identification with UCT

Academic: curriculum

ASP: manner of involvement

general feelings about ASP

D: COMPARISON BETWEEN UNIVERSITY AND SCHOOL

Now that you have told me about your school and university experiences, I would like us to focus now on a comparison between the two environments. What are the similarities and or differences between the two?

subject/course content

discipline/authority

study patterns

support systems etc.

**E: COMPARISON BETWEEN FORMAL EDUCATION (SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY)
AND INFORMAL EDUCATION (HOME AND COMMUNITY LIFE)**

Briefly, can you give me your impression of the link/relationship between the two environments. Are they totally separate or do they influence one another? What kind of relationship do you see emerging between the two?

APPENDIX B

Psychology Department
U. C. T.
Rondebosch
May 1992

Dear

My name is Pindi Mabena and I am doing research on black African students' educational experiences for my masters thesis. I obtained a list of all second year students from the administration, and shortlisted on a random basis.

The shortlist, on which your name appears, has the names of people I would like to interview for my research. It is difficult to get hold of you since

- a) I do not have your telephone number.
- b) It is difficult to find you when calling.

I would appreciate it if you could phone me for further clarification and or for making an appointment for the interview. The interviews normally take about an hour.

(H) 685 7079 (W) 650 3434

Thank you,
Pindi Mabena