

**"LIKE THAT STATUE
AT JAMMIE STAIRS..."**

**Some student perceptions and
experiences of institutional culture
at the University of Cape Town in 1999**

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by

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	
ANC	African National Congress
EORP	Equal Opportunity Research Project
EE	Employment Equity
IAPO	International Academic Program's Office
JCFEE	Joint Consultative Forum on Employment Equity
NEHAWU	National Education Health and Allied Workers Union
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UCT	University of Cape Town
UWC	University of Western Cape
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand

ABSTRACT

In this project, students spoke out about their experiences at the University of Cape Town. In particular they described how they perceived the university and the other students, and how their experiences impacted upon their academic performance and general well-being while attending UCT. In the study, we consulted a variety of policy documents and publicity materials from the University of Cape Town. We then held nineteen workshops with focus groups of students. Five were mixed while fourteen were purposive in that certain designated students, such as black students, foreign students, women etc. were targeted. The initiator of the study conducted ten of the focus groups, but for the others peer facilitators were used.

- *From the findings it is clear that in students' experiences 'whiteness' still largely characterises the institutional culture. Many black students and some white students described incidents of overt racism against black academic staff and students.
 - *More usually though, unstated, taken-for-granted assumptions arising out of the particular, culturally-specific positionality of patriarchal, white, middle-class, English-speaking South Africans are simply taken as normal and unproblematically appropriate in all contexts. These culturally inflected and gendered assumptions operate in an unmarked, largely invisible manner to control the institutional culture. This does not necessarily reflect the intention to be exclusionary. Nevertheless, the power of the norm has the effect of creating deep-seated discomfort and alienation among students who do not fit the norm. While they may not always be able to articulate exactly what it is that they experience, many black students have a general sense that the system does not really work for them. Many students felt that the colonial values of UCT were still entrenched in the symbols around campus such as the names of buildings, and that this made a mockery of calling UCT an 'African' university.
 - *The discrepancy between the worlds which white and black students inhabit as they move through the university system was quite apparent. For some—mostly white—students 'world-class' meant perpetuating European values. Many black students, by contrast, are critical of UCT's whiteness and Eurocentricity, and see it as an institution caught in a time warp. Many black students, and some white students, were excited by the prospect of 'Africanising'. English as the *lingua franca* of the campus came under much debate, and many suggestions were made to respect multi-lingualism and multi-culturalism.
 - *Most of the students interviewed felt that little structural change was happening in the staff hierarchy, with white males still dominating the teaching. Generally we found that white students, although accepting that there is a need to change, still expect the 'other' to adapt.
-

Although the question of 'race' tended to predominate in the discussions, it was clear from the students who spoke about gender issues that in their experience patriarchy is still firmly in control in the institutional culture. Similarly, those students who fall in the non-normative classifications of the construction of sexuality, were acutely aware of the powerful grip that heterosexuality as an ideology as well as practice has on the heart and mind of UCT. Students with disabilities told the same story in relation to their non-normativity.

✱Our conclusion has to be that, while certainly not homogenous, the dominant institutional culture at UCT subtly still supports established privilege and the practice of exclusion, evidenced in the lived experience of the student body. There is no reason to doubt the commitment of those that have led the institution to the values which the institution officially espouses; yet there is still a great deal of ground to be covered in the quest for a truly democratic and supportive culture—a culture which enables all its students to develop to their full potential.

This report documents suggestions made by students, and also puts forward some recommendations. It is hoped that these will be received in the spirit in which the research was undertaken, namely to be helpful to UCT as it continues along the road of transformation. This report provides a forum in which diverse student voices are collated and reflected, on behalf of the students and committed educators, and for the continuance of outstanding education at this university.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past ten years South Africa has undergone major changes. The University of Cape Town has put a great deal of effort into transformation, particularly at a structural level. However, various forms of institutional inertia may result in a learning environment that does not always deliver the educational experience the university seeks to give its students.

Any structural interventions should be based on sound knowledge of the particular context, and be cognisant of the perceptions which operate within the communication field. Consequently, it seemed correct that some basic research needed to be conducted into the way in which students perceive and experience the institutional culture of UCT.

The research project was designed to include groups that are already identified by the university through vision and policy documents (and relevant legislation) as 'designated groups'—who are acknowledged to have been disadvantaged in the past, and are entering the mainstream system from marginalised positionalities. But the research also solicited views from traditionally centred groups.

This study endeavours to make the perceptions and expectations of a cross-section of the student population visible. We present these views to the university community as a contribution to the university's transformative initiatives and strategies.

It is hoped that the views expressed here may inform relevant future plans to give weight to the vision statement that describes UCT as a 'world-class African university'.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research was initiated by Melissa Steyn, then director of the Professional Communication Unit at UCT early in 1999. Midway through 1999, the Transformation Office joined in the project in a collaborative role. The research aimed to investigate how students perceive and experience the prevalent culture(s) of the institution. Although the focus is on academic life, other related aspects of their lives were also discussed.

The research employed selected focus groups across ages, levels of seniority, races, sexes and faculties. Participation was entirely voluntary, and the identities of those interviewed remain anonymous.

Project Aims

- ① To investigate and document how diverse students perceive and experience the institutional culture of UCT.
2. To focus on how some students experience the teaching and learning

processes of studying, tutoring, curricula, supervision, interactions with academic staff, access to resources, examinations etc.

3. To focus particularly on the experiences of black students, women, disabled students, foreign students and other groups who do not form part of the traditionally dominant groups on campus, though the experiences of these groups are also solicited.
- ④ To refer to the institutional context, including policy documents as well as material facilities to contextualise the research.
5. To contribute to the constructive engagement by the university as an institution with the view to making transformation a positive reality for students.

Methods and Research Tools

Desktop study

Policy documents, both published as well as in public circulation at the university, were consulted.

The workshops

Nineteen participatory workshops were conducted with groups of volunteers. The aim was to get a representative cross-section of views, rather than proportional sampling. The first five workshops comprised mixed groups, recruited through student contacts. After that, purposive sampling was applied in securing fourteen other workshops. These volunteers were recruited through various student organisations on campus. Nine workshops were facilitated by trained student peer facilitators. Workshops were tape recorded and transcribed, and the transcriptions formed the database for analysis. All workshops were conducted in English.

Consent

Each informant was assured of anonymity. During the workshop, speakers were identified on the tape by numbers for the purposes of transcription.

Data Analysis

Documentation relating to UCT was used for information relating to the vision and context of the institution as it (re)presents itself.

The transcripts were analysed for content, based broadly on the aims of the research. Emergent themes were identified, and representative quotations documented.

A database was constructed from the demographic information supplied by participants. From the data certain profiles of the sample were able to be drawn.

DIVERSITY IN CONTEXT

UCT, like all educational institutions in South Africa, has been skewed by the apartheid past. The university has been undertaking programmes to change the profiles of staff and students. The question of institutional culture, while on the agenda, has received less attention, yet it is central to the process of transformation. The institutional culture at UCT has been shaped by a very specific historical cultural positioning, and the world view which informs this position has been normalised within the UCT environment. To a large extent this cultural milieu has been characterised by 'whiteness'. Part of what has sustained this culture is a particular discourse reflecting a selective memory of the university's role in the past, and also certain tropes, such as 'educational standards', which have been used to contain the effects of change.

STUDENTS SPEAK OUT

Students provided valuable insights into how they experience studying at UCT. Generally, it emerged that those who were in subject positionalities that are centred were able to move through the university a great deal more comfortably than those towards the margins. Mostly these centres include: whiteness, Euro-American worldview, English-speaking as mother tongue, maleness, heterosexuality, able-bodiedness, (upper) middle-class-ness, South African nationality, urban background etc. Students in the focus groups gave numerous accounts of how being at the margins of such axes adversely affected their ability to bring out their best while at UCT. Students experience a strong staff-student divide, and felt that diversity is poorly handled in most contexts at UCT, including its symbols and educational practices. Students felt that UCT's vision of becoming a World-class African university is therefore undermined.

STUDENTS OFFER SUGGESTIONS

Each focus group discussed suggestions for how the university can better create an institutional culture that would be enabling to a larger group of students. While their comments were geared particularly to be helpful to academic staff, a general consensus seemed to emerge that more awareness of the demands of studying and teaching in a diverse environment needs to be developed across the university, also within the student body itself.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is hoped that the research findings will be useful at a number of levels in the institution as they impact deeply on transformation at UCT. They show that students experience UCT culture as characterised by centres and margins. Those at the centres are comfortable, and largely unaware of the alienation experienced by those at the margins. For example, in the interviews most of the students

disadvantaged by the past political system found the learning environment of UCT difficult, while historically privileged students find it much less problematic. Moreover, across the spectrum, a noticeable gap exists between the values of transformation as reflected in various policy documents and vision statements published by the institution, and the accounts of students' experiences.

Reflection on the student comments led to several conclusions and recommendations.

Conclusions

- Levels of awareness into the impact of diversity are unequal.
- Issues of diversity require a different paradigm than 'disadvantage'.
- 'Whiteness' characterises the institutional culture.
- Establishing a more inclusive institutional culture for the future requires a more inclusive account of the past.
- Students find UCT's culture *de facto* still reflects segregationist tendencies.
 - There is a shifting of centres and margins within racial groups.
 - Issues of diversity on campus are multi-faceted.
 - Students experience the institutional culture as largely indifferent to them.
 - Students ascribe some of their problems to the composition of the academic staff.
- The university's attitude towards knowledge, language, as well as other symbolic resources, is regarded as ethnocentric by many students.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on reflection of the students' comments.

1. Ambivalence towards transformation needs to be addressed.
2. Debate around diversity should be encouraged.
3. Transformation should be a mainstream issue.
4. The 'problem' must be correctly identified and understood.
5. The 'African' aspect of the university's vision should be fully embraced.
6. Creative integration of the values document ought to be sought.
7. Changing the staff profile should continue to be a key aspect in transformation.
8. Training programmes should be set in place to assist the university community in adjusting to change.
9. Staff development in managing diversity should be introduced.

10. Students should be enskilled to function in contexts characterised by diversity.
11. A more inclusive representation of UCT's past should be developed.
12. Each faculty and department should consider initiating their own contextually appropriate focus on diversity.
13. Some of the student recommendations, given in the report, should be seriously considered.
14. Current processes of transformation should be continued.

CONCLUSION

Transformation cannot simply be proclaimed. It is a difficult and ongoing process which looks towards something as yet unattained. It will be effected by engaging with the difficult moral and ethical questions around our historical identity, by building trust through structures and practices of accountability, and by setting a firm foundation for respecting human rights, understanding the impact of social context, and appreciating diversity. By doing so UCT stands to enhance its institutional culture to the changed social context. It will build on its commitment to provide a stimulating and challenging academic environment where true academic freedom can thrive, and excellence can be the entitlement of all its students, irrespective of race, gender, class, culture, ability, or sexual orientation.

PREFACE

All organisations and institutions in South Africa, especially those pre-dating the last decade of the twentieth century, are presently struggling with issues of institutional transformation.

Within the context of the legacy from our past, transformation inevitably means having to deal with entrenched whiteness and patriarchy as primary axes along which institutional culture is re-negotiated. UCT has committed itself to tackling the long-term transformation of the institution, and to integrating diversity in order to maintain its goals of providing a world-class learning environment for students—from South Africa, Africa and the rest of the world.

The report does not wish, at any point, to imply that UCT is more racist or less concerned with transformation than any other South African institution. Rather, it examines the ways in which a problem that is common to all our institutions plays itself out in this particular context.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Part I gives an overview of the study. In this chapter we discuss the start of the project, and give a brief account of the theoretical approach and scope of the research. We briefly mention our approach to some methodological and theoretical issues which arose.

HOW THE RESEARCH PROJECT STARTED

Over the past ten years South Africa has undergone major changes. The University of Cape Town has put a great deal of effort into transformation, particularly at a structural level. However, a large ship is not easy to turn around; various forms of institutional inertia, coupled with the inevitable confusions of change, result in an environment that does not always deliver the hoped-for nurturing of all the students who pass through the system.

Not unexpectedly, academic staff vary in their awareness of, and concern for, their competence at meeting the demands placed on them by a transforming student body. In 1997–1998 several members of staff, at different times, approached Melissa Steyn for advice on how to handle communication with the more diverse classes they were teaching. Clearly, any interventions should be based on sound, situated knowledge of the particular context, and have to be cognisant of the perceptions which operate within the communication field. Consequently, it seemed correct that some basic research needed to be conducted into the way in which students perceive and experience the classroom culture of UCT, and to find out what their expectations are of the learning environment.

The original enquiries by academics staff were concerned with changes in the demographics of race and (perhaps) culture. The research project, however, was framed in broader terms to include all groups that are already identified by the university through vision and policy documents (and relevant legislation) as 'designated groups'. The project focuses on groups acknowledged to have been disadvantaged in the past, entering the mainstream system from marginalised positionalities. Some of these groups are already identifiable through official student organisations, such as the Disability Unit and the Rainbow Organisation, others are less specifically organised. At the same time, the research also solicited views from traditionally centred groups, in order to acquire a full range of opinion.

This study endeavours to make the perceptions and expectations of a cross-section of the student population visible. The intention of the research team has been to present these views to the university community as providing one important piece in the larger, more comprehensive puzzle that needs to be pieced

together to ensure that the university's transformative initiatives and strategies are well-informed, and stand the best chance of success. While student perceptions can be influenced by a large number of factors, and need to be evaluated within a broader context, these are the perceptions that determine the outcomes of our educational efforts, and to a large extent the reputation of the institution. We cannot afford to ignore the ways in which our 'clients' experience the 'service' we offer.

Needless to say, all institutions of learning in South Africa are having to undertake major transformation. The kind of information which this study provides is essential in the entire process of democratising higher education, a goal which cannot be achieved without understanding the sense-making of the students themselves. The way in which we draw on such knowledge can provide the foundation for making this institution a role-model in dealing with diversity.

It is hoped, therefore, that the views expressed here will be taken in the spirit in which they are offered, and in which the research was initiated, and may inform relevant future plans to give weight to the vision statement that describes UCT as a 'world-class African university'.

THEORETICAL POSITION, SUBJECT AND SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

Theoretical Position

In this research we bring in a diversity of voices from the student body, and allow them to speak to the subject of whether the present learning environment of UCT is in step with the needs of students in a democratic, culturally diverse South Africa in the twenty-first century.

International thinking on human rights increasingly recognises diversity as a human rights issue: valuing diversity is seen to be a counter measure to racist, fascist, imperial and colonial ideologies. The declaration of the World Conference against Racism, to be held in Durban in 2001, is headed *Tolerance and Diversity: A vision for the 21st Century*. It unequivocally identifies a new attitude towards diversity as holding the key to the 21st century:

Instead of allowing diversity of race and culture to become a limiting factor in human exchange and development, we must refocus our understanding, discern in such diversity the potential for mutual enrichment. ... For too long such diversity has been treated as threat rather than gift. And too often that threat has been expressed in racial contempt and conflict, in exclusion, discrimination and intolerance.

WCAR Declaration, 2001.

The failure to create an equitable environment for the diverse groups that live, work, study, and play in any social context is now recognised to constitute a form of human rights abuse. This is, of course, crucial in the context of South African education which is struggling to overcome the legacy of educational injustice it has inherited.

Academically, this study is informed by interdisciplinary readings on issues of diversity, transformation and identity. The position which the researchers adopt in relation to the material can best be described as a Critical Multiculturalism (Goldberg, 1994, Giroux, 1992). The strength of this position is that it does not present itself as value-free (no research ever is) but rather declares its social agenda upfront. In brief, this particular stance towards diversity

- starts from a profound commitment to the values of democracy, social justice, equity and empowerment
- recognises that incorporation of those once marginalised involves not assimilation, but a transformation of the cultural milieu to bring about new meanings and representations
- rejects essentialised notions of identity, naturalised notions of race, gender etc. and discourses which reify homogeneity
- stresses that identity and difference are constructed within specific historical, cultural and power relations.

In its commitment to bringing about equitable education in the context of a historical legacy of unequal distribution of privilege and power, Critical Multiculturalism informs much of the thinking which gives impetus to the transformation of the national education system. (Chisholm 2001; Lubisi 2001; Ministry of Education 2001)

A crucial notion in the contemporary debates on multiculturalism is that of 'whiteness'. This can be seen as the social positioning which was opened up for those of European descent in relation to 'others' through the enormous differences in power, wealth and influence established over three or four hundred years, and then further rationalised in the past one hundred and fifty years through 'race' theories and discourses. (Wander, Martin, Nakayama 1999). This privileged position continues to reproduce itself socially and ideologically, through normalising itself as the invisible centre of power, while keeping attention focussed on 'others' which it marginalises, and constructs as being the source of the problems that need to be solved in a multicultural context. (For a discussion of Whiteness, see, for example, Delgado & Stefancic 1997; and Nakayama & Martin 1999)

Various schools of multiculturalism can be distinguished in terms of the position they adopt towards this centre. *Conservative* approaches to multiculturalism try to keep the colonial and white supremacist relations as intact as possible, without naming it as such. Characteristically, such versions of multiculturalism construct those seeking to be accommodated in systems from which they were previously excluded as coming from 'culturally deprived backgrounds.' Other groups are 'add-ons' to the dominant culture, and can benefit from 'joining the club' provided they denude themselves of their 'other' practices. It posits monolingualism, and the knowledge, practices, measures and discourses of dominant (Anglo) culture

(McClaren 1994). *Liberal Multiculturalism*, by contrast, posits a natural equality between all groups, maintaining that with a certain measure of reform everyone would be able to compete equally. Nevertheless, the legitimising norms are identified with white (usually Anglo) cultural and political communities (McClaren, 1994). It largely ignores the workings of established power and privilege, and universalises the privileged white subject. (McClaren 1994)

In other words, in contrast to Critical Multiculturalism, both Conservative and Liberal Multiculturalism serve to (re)stabilise centred whiteness, and to maintain systems of unequal power and influence while (and through) tampering with the margins.

We may fairly position the university as historically a white institution, emerging, like all institutions within the country, out of the era of apartheid. By virtue of its positioning, UCT has been privileged within the education system, and has traditionally served a privileged, quite narrowly circumscribed community. UCT's roots reflect that it was built for white colonial settlers, aiming to give their children an education comparable to one they could have received in Europe, had they remained there. Eurocentrism (mostly Anglocentrism) is therefore deeply inscribed in its culture, and has to some extent been an advantage in ensuring that the university has always readily received recognition within the broader network of Euro-American higher education.

The changes in the demographic composition of the university's student body is already a fact (Cooper 2000), and increasing diversification is inevitable, and essential. The challenge for UCT in transforming its institutional culture, therefore, is largely a choice of which form of multiculturalism to adopt in the coming years.

Scope

While we wish to keep our comments firmly situated within the immediate South African context, it is important to note that adjustments of this nature are not peculiar to South Africa. As Goldberg (1994:32) puts it:

White, middle-class, middle-aged, non-handicapped, and heterosexual men assume institutional authority in the academy more, and more readily than anyone else (although it is not quite so stark as it once was). Men are brought up and socialised into such positions of authority, assuming authority's institutional positionality, voice and tone. They are more practised at social articulation and persuasion, tend materially to be more privileged, more confident, and have a history of institutional backing.

As the centres of the modern era are increasingly challenged, and as heterogeneity increasingly becomes the rule rather than the exception, changes are afoot in education internationally which call for institutional adjustment. Having said this, though, the South African context is characterised by the present need to build a cohesive nation out of deep, historically entrenched division and profound inequity in educational opportunity. The extent of this challenge sets its educational reform agenda apart from most other contexts in which issues of diversity in education are being debated.

The report deals only with student perceptions. Decisions regarding transformation, by contrast, need to attempt to address the totality of the institution. Moreover, students have their own agendas, and not all discontent may be the consequence of legitimate distress, rather being an expected consequence of the rigours of university education. In sifting through the material, we have tried to be discerning, and have not reproduced what we recognised as simply griping for the sake of griping. We have also been aware that the students are not powerless—they had the potential to undermine and subvert the process of the workshops. The students themselves were also aware of this power, as expressed so ironically by this student:

I thought we were getting paid for this. Naaa, so we bitched and moaned for nothing. (15)

APPROACH

A few issues arose in the course of the research project that have a bearing upon the research procedure. Each of these opens up into profound methodological and/or theoretical questions which are beyond the scope of this report, so we merely document what our approach has been in dealing with them.

In asking students to discuss issues of identity, a question arose around the extent to which dominant definitions in the university environment influenced ways students presented themselves. For instance, a dynamic was observed on occasion where students would present what appeared to be authentic feelings, but would then contradict, trivialise or subvert their comment, seemingly to 'cover their backs.' Students were clearly aware of the dominant relations operating within university discourse. In dealing with this problem, we felt that the technique of bringing peer facilitators went a good way towards countering this research pitfall in this context. In evaluating such contradictions, we noted that the students did welcome the opportunity to participate (which was entirely voluntary) and our overall impression was that with few exceptions, their comments were made in good faith.

An issue for students centred on the usefulness of participating in this study, and whether their efforts to speak about their experiences of discrimination would disappear into the silence that they were trying to break. We communicated our understanding that this report would be passed on to key role-players. Nevertheless, a general impression was gained that there is a good deal of cynicism amongst students as to the seriousness with which their views would be received.

Researching diversity brings along problems around definition—the question of 'who defines what'. This has various theoretical and empirical consequences in research. As many social theorists have argued from different perspectives, (Fine 1994; Foucault 1970; Kristeva 1974; Spender 1980) those with the right to define are in particular dominant relations of power in discourse. Many definitions in

identity politics are contested areas, with people struggling to reclaim their right to definition. Some of these controversies emerged during the study, often within the focus groups amongst the students themselves. In this research we use the definitions generally used in South African society, also by the university administration. This is a strategic decision to ensure that our research will be included in debates regarding these issues, but does not necessarily indicate a lack of problematisation on our part.

Lastly, we have tried to give a brief sense of the social and historical times in which the students find themselves. The main thrust of our approach, however, has been to let the students speak for themselves. We let their voices be a tangible presence in this report, so that our readers can be touched by the human dimension of our research. We hope that we have succeeded in capturing the diversity of their experiences.

In the next chapter we detail the methods we used to elicit (a) the historical context of the study period, and (b) the personal experiences of our informants. We also introduce the reader to our sample of students.

CHAPTER 2 THE STUDY DESIGN

In the previous chapter we covered the impetus that gave rise to the study. In this chapter we look at the composition of the research team, and the rationale for the study. We also discuss the scope of the research, the research methods and some of the difficulties arising during the research process. Finally we present a picture of the students who were interviewed for this research.

This research forms part of the documentation on transformation at UCT, and was undertaken under the auspices of the transformation portfolio of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Daniel Ncayiyana in 1999.

THE PROJECT TEAM

Reference team

At the time of the research Melissa Steyn was the director of the Professional Communication Unit at UCT. She is presently director of the Institute for Intercultural and Diversity Studies (iNcudisa) in the Graduate School in the Humanities. She initiated and directed the research, and was assisted by Thandi Lewin from the Transformation Office at UCT, and Terri Grant of the PCU.

Report

Mikki van Zyl from *Simply Said and Done* collated the research, structured the report and co-wrote the final report with Melissa Steyn.

Peer facilitators

Anwar Jappie, Karly Mackintosh, Mpho Matsipa, Jazze Mokoena, and Mbulelo Ntlati were the peer facilitation team.

Backup team

Ntombi Shongwe, Linda Nkomo, and Pauline Mitchell provided various forms of assistance.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research was conceived and conducted within the framework of assisting transformation at UCT. It aimed to help particularly teaching staff identify and address the problems they encounter as the university serves a more diverse student population, by deepening insight into student perceptions of their learning environment.

Project Aims

1. To investigate and document how diverse students perceive and experience the institutional culture of UCT.
2. To focus on how some students experience the teaching and learning processes of studying, tutoring, curricula, supervision, interactions with academic staff, access to resources, examinations etc.
3. To focus particularly on the experiences of black students, women, disabled students, foreign students and other groups who do not form part of the traditionally dominant groups on campus, though the experiences of these groups are also solicited.
4. To refer to the institutional context, including policy documents as well as material facilities to contextualise the research.
5. To contribute to the constructive engagement by the university as an institution with the view to making transformation a positive reality for students.

Sampling: rationale for the qualitative approach

The workshops were intended to elicit qualitative research data. They were semi-structured, but open-ended enough to get information from informants not necessarily asked for directly. The sample was purposive in order to learn something from a cross-section of students, without attempting to satisfy statistical requirements of randomness. Workshops were goal-directed, and allowed participants to focus on select topics (Maconachie & Van Zyl 1994:14). Our sampling accessed a wide range of perceptions on the institutional culture of UCT. However, in selecting certain quotes to illustrate a topic, many other voices that may have spoken on the same topic are excluded. Unless the number of people speaking on a topic is quantified for the reader, only people with access to all the primary data have an impression of the strength of the accumulated voices. We tried to reflect with integrity the tenor of the workshops.

Nineteen participatory workshops were conducted with groups of volunteers. The first five workshops comprised mixed groups to get a general overview. After that, focused sampling was applied in securing fourteen other workshops. The volunteers were recruited through various student organisations on campus and we aimed to distinguish groups by

- faculty: students from all the faculties were interviewed [specifically targeted in four groups]
- black students [targeted in seven groups]
- students from black residences [targeted in two groups]
- white mixed gender students [targeted in three groups]
- disabled students [targeted in one group]
- women students [targeted in one group]

- foreign African students [targeted in one group]
- lesbian and gay students [targeted in one group]
- mixed, non-purposive selection [targeted in five groups]

Since some categories overlapped, the totals above add up to more than nineteen workshops with a total sample of approximately 92* students.

Nine workshops were facilitated by trained student peer facilitators, the others by the principal researcher. Workshops were tape recorded and transcribed, and the transcriptions formed the database for analysis.

Definitions

Institutional culture

A large and complex environment such as UCT is of course heterogeneous. It is taken as understood that institutional culture is not homogenous, and will vary within different contexts and over time. For the purposes of this research, we defined the institutional culture as the prevailing ethos—the deep-rooted sets of norms, assumptions and values that predominate and pervade most of the environment on a day to day basis. These are the assumptions that form the reference points for value judgements about practices at the institution, and set the tone for interactions on campus.

Staff

Staff are categorised into academic staff comprising lecturers and tutors; administrative staff in the departments, and the university administration. Some students also referred to maintenance staff. Tutors are usually post-graduate or senior students, working at the interface between being students and staff. Of the senior students who were interviewed, some also happened to be tutors, and provided a valuable window into their expectations of the institution, both as students and as junior staff members.

Students

Students comprised people ranging from first-year to post-graduate level registered for a course of study at UCT, and included students who worked as tutors.

Racial categories

For the purposes of the study, terms such as *black, white, coloured, race*, are used to designate groupings that have come through similarly racialised historical experiences. This does not in any way imply a naïve realist acceptance of the ontological existence of racial groups.

* We did not have an exact tally of participants. For an explanation, see the discussion on the student sample in the section "Introducing the Students" later on in this chapter, page 14.

Methods and Research Tools

Desktop study

Policy documents, both published as well as in public circulation at the university, were consulted.

The Focus Groups

Participants were expected to fill in forms with some biographic details. The focus groups were conducted as fairly informal conversations, structured around several open-ended questions (see Appendix A). Students were able to contribute as often as they wished, although facilitators were instructed to try to ensure that everybody contributed in a fairly democratic manner.

Consent

Researchers explained to the groups what the purpose of the research was, and each informant was assured of anonymity. During the workshop, speakers were identified on the tape by numbers for the purposes of transcription.

Methodological Issues

Who speaks to whom about what

Many of the students seemed open about their perceptions and experiences, but it is impossible to gauge what was excluded. Fear of authority symbolised by a white head of department as interviewer, may have made them censor what they had to say. It was therefore felt that peer facilitation was appropriate—though no guarantee that students would speak more frankly, it was felt that in all likelihood they would have fewer inhibitions.

On the other hand, the danger with peer facilitation is that the task is not taken seriously, and the facilitator does not have the authority to keep the group disciplined and focused on the task. Other than the problem of non-completion of the biographical data forms, the researchers were not alerted to any overt problems.

The workshops were conducted according to criteria where the interview is not only a one-way process, (Oakley 1981:58) with the informant answering the research questions. The interviewer's position on wishing to support social transformation at UCT was openly acknowledged.

Mother-tongue / English

The workshops were all conducted in English, meaning that many students were speaking in a second or sometimes third language. Given the South African context, it was debated amongst the researchers whether English should be used for all the workshops. We concluded that it is common practice for universities worldwide to set competence in a certain language as a criterion for admission, and English is the stipulated *lingua franca* at UCT. In addition, the project had a

limited budget which was unable to accommodate the expense of interpretation and translation of all the various mother-tongue speakers. This is acknowledged as one of the entrenched elements of Eurocentrism at UCT. That this affects the information given, (Spender 1980) is certain, but it was not able to be measured. However, the students do discuss the issue of language in their workshops. In our use of quotes, we try to give the reader a feel for the students' use of dialect in English, especially from the workshops conducted by peer facilitators, where the more relaxed interactive style accentuated the dialect.

Selecting quotes

Inevitably the researchers needed to apply a filtering process when selecting (and excluding) quotes to illustrate their analysis. It was an extremely difficult task, as each workshop yielded a wealth of informed and constructive comments.

Research Ethics

Anonymity

Each group was fully informed about the purposes of the research, the composition of the research team, and the envisaged final product which was to be a report available to the university. They were given time to ask questions and make comments about the research project. Students were asked permission to tape-record the session, but assured of anonymity as their names were not recorded. Where necessary notes were taken in the workshops. The audiotapes are retained for confidentiality, and are available only to the researchers. The research reflects the opinions and feelings of the students interviewed relating to UCT's institutional culture. Every attempt has been made to reflect the students' views accurately and fairly, and the major part of the findings section presents their own words.

Editing

When spoken words are transcribed into text, an inevitable editing process is required. In quoting the words of participants we tried to balance their idiolect with a succinct edition of the points being made. We hoped that this would give the reader a richer sense of the voice.

Training of Peer facilitators

The peer facilitators were recruited through the transformation office, and took part in one training workshop. They were all senior students, known to the transformation officer by virtue of their active participation in student activities.

DATA ANALYSIS

We used the aims of the study to frame our analysis. The first aim sets the parameters for the study. Next the groups are described according to the students in the focus groups. (aim 3)

In order to get a profile of the students interviewed, a database was constructed in MS Access, reflecting the 'participants' details'. These were examined for clusters, spread and distribution. The data were taken from the 'participants' details', but some facilitators did not collect them, or did not use the standard forms. This left much of the information incomplete. There were no forms completed for focus groups 5, 6 and 16.

Then we address how these students "experienced the teaching and learning processes of studying, tutoring, curricula, supervision, interactions with academic staff, access to resources, examinations." (aim 2)

A two-tier schedule for a content analysis of the transcripts was constructed, based broadly on the aims of the research. Once all the interview material had been classified under the various themes, it was incorporated into a structured outline for the final report. (aim 5)

DESKTOP STUDY (aim 4)

Documentation relating to UCT was acquired from the transformation office, and student housing office. Relevant documents were consulted to contextualise and broaden our understanding of the findings from the workshops. See list of references.

WORKSHOPS (aims 2, 3, 5)

As soon as possible after a workshop had been conducted, the tape would be transcribed. Participants were asked to supply basic information regarding their student status and how they would identify themselves or how they would describe themselves culturally. We drew up a profile of participating students (aim 3) from the forms filled in (see Appendix B). Finally we categorised the workshop information under the following headings that arose during the process of discussion:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1. Analysis / definitions of 'culture' | 2. African tradition |
| 3. UCT culture | 4. Diversity |
| 5. African university | 6. Changes over time |
| 7. Policy | 8. Racism |
| 9. Gender | 10. Age |
| 11. Sexuality | 12. Religion |
| 13. Admin | 14. Food / residences |
| 15. Student culture | 16. Cliques |

- 17. Identification
- 19. Stereotyping
- 21. Language
- 23. Teaching / learning
- 25. Access to resources

- 18. Behaviour
- 20. Sense of humour
- 22. Staff
- 24. Course content
- 26. Small group work

Student Recommendations

The final question asked of the students in the workshops was to make recommendations for the future. These appear in chapter 5 of the report. Their contributions are classified under the heading *Student Suggestions*.

REPORT (aim 5)

All the interview material and workshop outcomes were classified under the various themes, and incorporated into the structured outline for the final report. Our review of documents provided a foundation for part II, chapter 3 'Diversity in Context'. The workshop material was incorporated mostly into parts II and III of the report, 'Students Speak Out' and 'Student Offer Suggestions'—chapters 4 and 5, where the voices of our informants are strongest. In the final chapter we offer some concluding comments and recommendations.

REFLECTION

The research process was uneven in terms of functional co-ordination, with a reliance on each research assistant to complete his or her own administrative work, like filling in and collecting participant information. The prepared participant forms were not completed for five groups, two of these groups recorded demographic information on blank sheets of paper.

Despite the briefing, people were not all experienced with the working of the tape recorders and some tapes were difficult to transcribe. Where the transcriptions were poor much interesting information became incoherent and could not be fully utilised. Participants did not always remember to identify themselves by number before each speaking turn for the transcriber to differentiate between them.

A future project will need a co-ordinator and administrator to dedicate the appropriate time and resources to the task as it progresses. The services of professional transcription services should be used.

INTRODUCING THE STUDENTS

THE STUDENT SAMPLE

A total of 78 'participant detail' forms were entered in a database, but much of the information was incomplete. There were no forms completed for focus groups 5, 6, and 16, and five forms did not reflect their focus group numbers. There was an average of 4.5 students in each group, so we extrapolated that the total number of our sample was approximately 92 students.

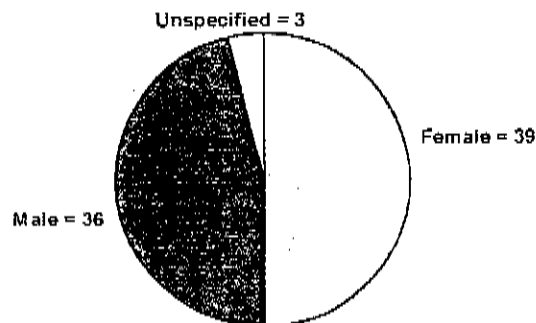
Though the details of participants in the three focus groups missing from the database have not been entered in the database, their perceptions and experiences are reflected in the findings. The absence of these details in the database would affect only the numerical information below.

Two of these groups were specifically with black students in under-graduate residences. It is therefore fairly certain that the proportions by race would be increased, and likely that the average age, the number of years at UCT, and the proportion of post-graduate students would all decrease if they had been included.

Sex

We recorded 39 women and 36 men, with three students not specifying their sex.

Figure 2.1: Profile of student sample by sex



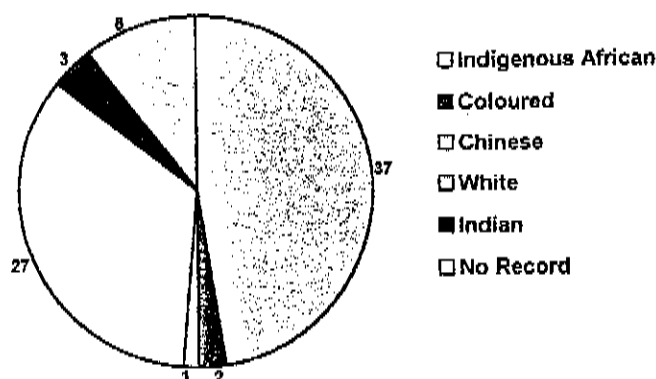
A higher proportion of female students was interviewed.

'Race'

According to the students' self-labels we recorded thirty-seven (37) black students (indigenous African), two coloured, one Chinese, three Indians, and twenty-seven (27) whites. Therefore there were 43 students from previously disadvantaged racial groups recorded in the database. Eight students did not use 'racial' classifications to identify themselves. Two purposive sampling focus

groups, each of approximately 6 participants, which concerned black students' perceptions and experiences are represented in the research findings, though their details are not entered in the database.

Figure 2.2: Profile of student sample by 'race'



Age

The average age for the students recorded in the database was 21½ years.

Post-graduate

Twenty students in the database were doing post-graduate studies. This is probably close to the number of post-graduate students interviewed, as two of the groups that were not included in the database were in under-graduate residences.

Time at UCT

The average number of years spent at UCT by the students was three years. This number would probably decrease with the inclusion of the missing groups.

At other tertiary institutions

Only twelve said they had been to other tertiary institutions, but many groups did not supply this information, therefore we cannot say that some of the others had NOT been, merely that these were the ones who said they had been.

Foreign nationalities

Of the records completed, nineteen showed that people had foreign nationalities.

Openness to change

Students were asked to say how they defined themselves culturally, or how they see their identities. Thirty-one students voluntarily made comments which reflected on their openness to other cultures, or their firm traditionalism. One could discern openness in comments like "all people's cultures need to be respected"; "fascinated by multi-culturalism"; "beauty in differences". Of these, there were more women than men. Some people from all racial groups demonstrated this openness.

Firm traditionalists, noticeably more men students than women, recorded comments like "conservative patriot"; "not prepared to give up culture"; and "culture before anything". Factors such as age, post-graduate, faculty, or foreigner appeared to bear no relation to traditionalism as the comments were spread across these categories.

Interestingly, all except one of these students marked their identities in terms of racial group.

CONCLUSION

The loss of some of the demographic information, while a pity, does not detract from the main thrust of the research, which was qualitative in intent. The actual figures would reflect a larger sample, with a greater ratio of black students to white students.

In the next chapter we sketch the institutional context of our participants.

CHAPTER 3 DIVERSITY IN CONTEXT

Part II locates the experiences and perceptions of our informants in their institutional and social context. In this chapter we discuss transformation at UCT.

BRIEF BACKGROUND TO EQUITY AT UCT

In this section we give a brief overview of some pertinent aspects of UCT's transformation.

No one needs reminding of the fact that South Africa has long been a radically divided society. Attempting to entrench the historical advantage people of European descent had attained through the dynamics of colonialism, the apartheid government tried stubbornly, against historical inevitability, to maintain the exclusionary privileges of a white minority. The consequences for the South African people was a society polarised along various differentials such as race, class, religion, gender, and political ideology—many inequities were enforced and maintained by law, others operated on more intangible processes of exclusion.

The education system, as the primary system responsible for cultural and ideological reproduction, (Freire 1972, Giroux 1992) is invariably implicated in the social ambitions of governments. For example, segregated education, with the express intention of preserving white social and political supremacy, was introduced to Cape Education by Langham Dale in 1893. The education of white youth was to be on a par with that of their peers in Europe, while Coloureds and Africans were to be educated for a subordinate position in society.

The apartheid government firmed up the white supremacist impetus in the education system with the introduction of Christian National Education, the principles of which were formulated in 1939. South African youth came through a strictly divided and fragmented education system, characterised by gross inequity in terms of investment per child, syllabi, resources, linguistic fit of tuition and every other aspect of education.

Throughout the apartheid period UCT took an anti-government stand. It opposed the Afrikaner vision of Christian National Education, and the worst manifestations of racial inequity perpetrated by the apartheid system, especially as these affected UCT's control over its own territory, which it defended fervently as a issue of academic freedom. To the extent that this opposition was principle driven, such resistance and the actions of many of UCT's academics who risked for their beliefs can, and must, be recognised. This oppositional role in relation to crude and blatant injustices was undoubtedly right and honourable. However, it

had the unintended consequence of protecting the university from examining its own roots in the inequitable colonial system, and from recognising the blind spots that accompany privilege and are manifested in more subtle forms of exclusion and discrimination. (Delgado & Stefancic 1997; Nakayama & Martin 1999)

The University's Employment Equity Plan 2000 – 2002 summarises the contradictions manifest in UCT's attitudes to race as follows:

UCT was founded as a liberal institution open to all, irrespective of 'race' colour or creed. But even as far back as 1915, UCT struggled with the contradictions between its beliefs and practice. In his book *The History of the South African College* (p.640) Prof Richie records: "At various times in the history of the College there has cropped up the difficulty of the colour question in connection with the admission of students. There can be no doubt that the College was open to all alike without distinction of colour or creed and this had been acknowledged by the College authorities on several occasions. Theory and practice, however, are not always easy to harmonise, and, in view of the strong prejudices which are held by many on this question, the cases where applications have been made for the admission of coloured students to the College or school have always been a source of considerable embarrassment to the Council."

Employment Equity Plan 2000 – 2002, June 2000

Reform

As the national liberation struggle escalated during the 1980s and spilt over onto white campuses, the inevitability of black advancement was generally recognised. Substantial resources were allocated to provide financial aid for study, and housing was provided for black students, who were admitted in increasing numbers. Alternative admissions policies were approved. The Academic Support Programme was established to help disadvantaged (usually black) students who were poorly prepared for university study. A University Transformation Forum was established in 1994, which was "the first attempt to develop a coherent, co-ordinated approach to change at UCT." (Lewin 2000) A working committee of the UCT Exco was appointed to concentrate on questions of Institutional Culture in 1995. All these measures demonstrate UCT's serious intention to open up educational opportunities to black South Africans.

In 1991 UCT had put onto paper its commitment to non-discrimination in the Equal Opportunity Employment Policy (later renamed Employment Equity Policy). By 1992 an Equal Opportunity Research Project [EORP] had been established, together with an officer and a secretary. The Ford Foundation funded an audit and investigation into employment policies at UCT, with a view to develop strategies for implementing equitable staffing. Three areas for change were identified: access, skills development and institutional culture.

In order to redress the imbalance, in 1998 UCT developed EE targets in relation to staffing where the long-term aim generally would be to reflect the economically active population of South Africa. (Slightly different targets were defined for academic and support staff, and in the medium and long-term).

To support and encourage compliance with the equity objectives, UCT established a Joint Consultative Forum on Employment Equity [JCREE], consisting of representatives from various staff associations, including the National Education Health and Allied Workers Union [NEHAWU] and management. Working in various areas, the JCREE undertook three studies (EE Plan Section 1:5) to assist in developing plans and ideas on how to achieve a change in the institution.

Deans and Heads of Departments were asked to hand in detailed plans—supported by workshops and consultations. These plans informed the University's EE plan which, as required by law, was submitted to the Director-General of Labour in 2000.

Conceptualising Transformation

The changes outlined above were, to a great extent, driven by the imminent and then actual change of government. The new constitution enshrines rights like equal access to equal education, and diversity is protected and supported. Subsequent to 1994, the new government had passed a series of laws such as the Higher Education Act of 1997, and the Employment Equity Act of 1998. These acts seek to integrate education, and create a more equitable and accessible education system for staff and students through addressing previously entrenched disparities.

The changes undertaken towards transformation reflect an understanding of transformation as being a process of "putting mechanisms in place to change the profile of staff and students at UCT." (Lewin 2000:7) Linked with technicist discourses of planning, (Lewin 2000) such notions of transformation have addressed the liberal rights aspects of change, but have not actually addressed the issue of inculcating values and culture that support, sustain, and promote equity. The consequence has been that even the programme of changing the liberal rights base of the university has been undermined. For example, the profile of staff is still significantly under-representative of 'race', gender and the prevalence of disability in the wider South African population. As noted in the EE Plan, these proportions reflect an underlying institutional ethos of racism, sexism and other inequities. The consequences of such a policy of exclusion are

- ...the failure to tap the potential reservoirs of talent and rich diversity of experience and perspective, which are available in South Africa.
- ...lack of positive role models for black students, women and students with disabilities.
- ...inconsistent with UCT's commitment to excellence.

EE Plan Section 1, 2000:2

Creating an institutional culture conducive to the happiness of a diverse population requires active attention to the human dimension of an institution. Given the power of establishment, and contrary to popular wisdom, such change

does not simply fall into place with time, but is best facilitated through processes of genuine dialogue and attention to issues of social justice.

Institutional culture is the 'sum total' effect of the values, attitudes, styles of interaction, collective memories—the 'way of life' of the university, known by those who work and study in the university environment, through their lived experience. One is therefore addressing many layers of practices, norms and attitudes, some of which are more tangible than others,

...like the use of English as the language of instruction, something that visibly draws more fully on some people's cultural norms and associations than it does on others', some much less visible, (like the semantic range of concepts such as "intelligent", "good", "successful", "responsible").

Rose 1995:5

The dominant, inherited institutional culture, which was shaped around, and arose out of, a specific cultural base, needs to be made visible to those that function within it. Unless this process of raising awareness is actively taken on, it remains as a taken-for-granted given, operating mostly at an unconscious level to determine 'the way things are'. For those whose cultural base forms the core of the institutional culture, the system works so seamlessly in most instances, that they are more than likely not aware of the fact that there is a specific cultural bias at work. It is just experienced as the 'normal' way to do things. Where a great deal of status and privilege attaches to the cultural positionality, the invisibility of the assumptions deepens into assumptions that these 'normal' ways of doing things are, in fact, appropriate for all people, and that they can, and even should, be universalised. Other ways are seen as deficient, as falling away from the norm, and therefore a problem, which needs to be fixed, altered, and educated away.

*For those who fall outside of the centred positionality, there is an acute sense that the system does not work for them, and that the assumptions of the normality of the centre act as unarticulated, but powerful barriers to success and comfort. In such an environment only those most adept at assimilation can succeed, and then at a price. For this reason, in education as in other social domains, the assimilation model is not regarded as supportive of developing, or drawing upon, the talent and abilities of a diverse population.*The 'problem' needs to be redefined as emanating from the centre, not the margins—not only as regards questions of race, but also gender and sexuality and other axes of discrimination. (Ferguson 1993; Wittig 1992)

The danger for UCT is that as long as the story of its opposition to gross human rights violation is the dominant narrative the university uses to make sense of its own role in the past, it diminishes the sense of urgency to undertake the task of genuine self-reflexivity, which should spur further transformation. The university's positioning within the heart of whiteness meant that whether it sought it or not, institutionalised racism, sexism and cultural chauvinism were structured into the systems and mindsets of the organisation. It has been noted elsewhere that since the demise of apartheid the university has kept memory alive of the anti-apartheid

strain of its history, while not fully acknowledging the extent of its collusion with the system of white privilege. (Lewin 2000) Certainly, of the myriad ways it inevitably benefited from and even subtly colluded with the systems of white advantage, little has been openly examined. This means in effect that the old centres of power (racial, cultural, gendered, sexual etc) are able to continue unproblematised into the present, and in all likelihood will continue to do so into the future unless the strategic silences are broken. This inertia forecloses the possibility of effecting a deeper layer of transformation, troubles UCT's attempts to create a more hospitable institutional culture, and interferes with its desire to situate itself on this continent, bringing reality to the African part of being "a world-class African university".

A key trope around which resistant discourses of transformation are clustered, is 'educational standards'. The meanings of terms like these are construed as immutable, even though meanings are embedded within complex discourses which derive their meanings historically—in this case over a century of describing the institution from a particular perspective. Despite attempts from various quarters to implement transformation in response to the democratisation of the country, these discourses still work to channel and maintain relations of power. They construct and organise definitions of transformation, and prescribe its norms. Different social subjects are located in relation to each other inside those discourses: some become centralised, and others marginalised.

The following section looks at changes in demographics at the university in recent years.

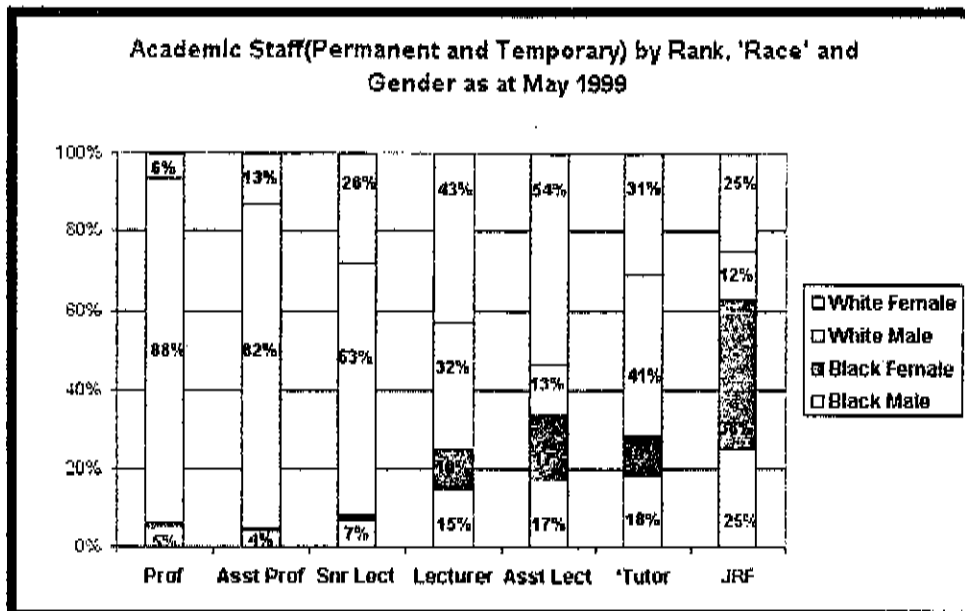
THE CHARACTER OF DIVERSITY AT UCT

In this section we note the composition of diversity at UCT.

Race

In Higher Education, as in the rest of the country's education system, formerly 'white' centres of learning have been working to change the demographics of their student intake. (Cooper 2000) Yet it is proving to be more difficult to redress imbalances in the staffing of UCT as the figures from May 1999 reflect.

Figure 3.1: Academic staff composition in 1999



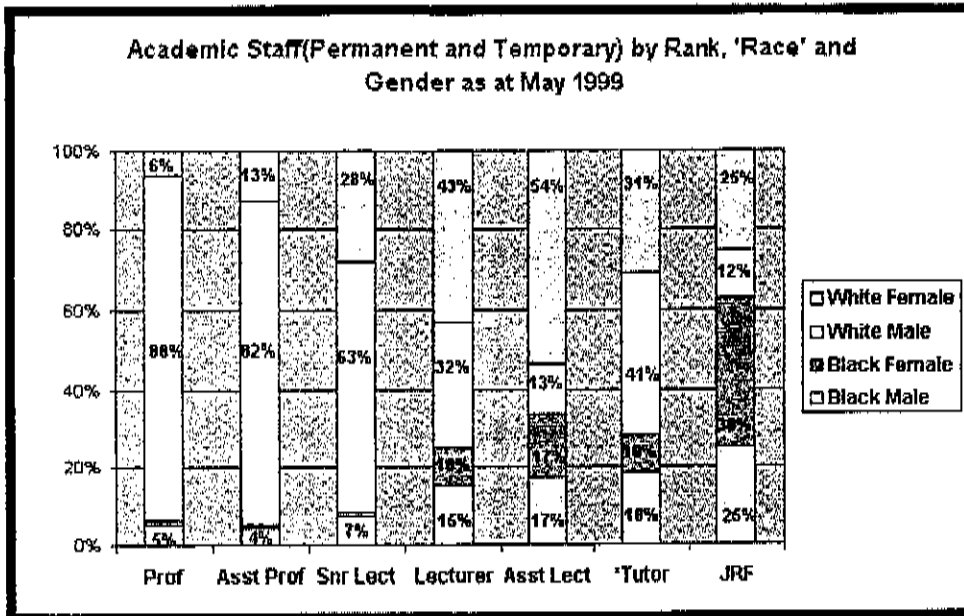
Ninety-four percent (94%) of Professors are white, of which 88% are white men. While black people are under-represented at all levels, women are over-represented at the Assistant Lecturer level and constitute 53% of Lecturers. However, the proportion of women at Senior Lecturer level drops to 30%. Only 14% of Associate Professors and 7% of Professors are women. Perhaps most surprising is the under-representation of black people in particular (28%) and to a lesser extent women (41%) amongst the Tutors.

EE Plan, Section 2:3

Amongst students, there has been a far greater shift in the demographics, though whites are still the majority group, and white men still the biggest proportion of the student body.

The total student number increased by almost 2000 from 14 472 in 1991 to 16 463 in 1999. From 1991, black students increased from 28% of the student body to 48% in 1999, while the number of women increased by 5%.

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Figure 3.2: Comparison of student body by 'race' in 1991 and 1999

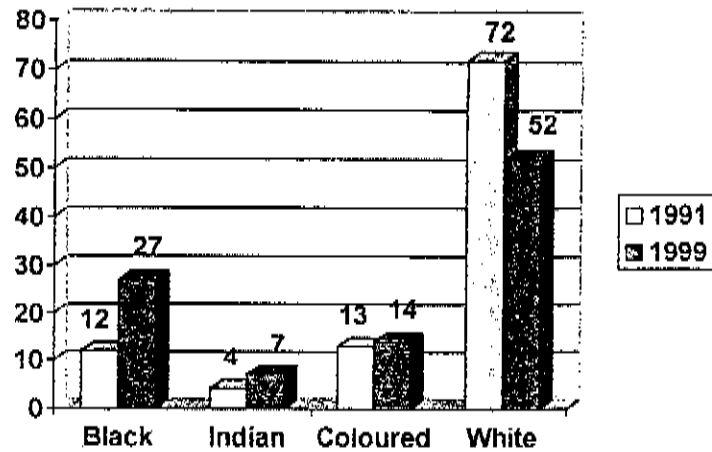
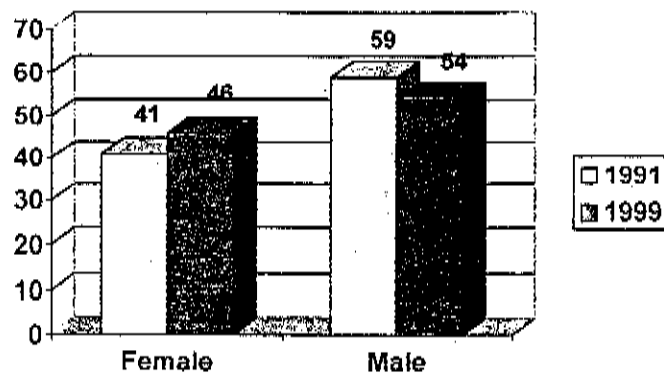


Figure 3.3: Comparison of student body by sex in 1991 and 1999



Tables 3.1 and 3.2 show a further detailed breakdown of students by race and sex for the years 1991 and 1999. Information supplied by the transformation office was aggregated to compile the tables.

Table 3.1#

1991: BREAKDOWN OF STUDENTS—'RACE', SEX								
R/S	BF	BM	IF	IM	CF	CM	WF	WM
NOS	573	1149	214	347	839	993	4296	6061
%	4%	8%	1%*	2%*	6%*	7%*	30%	42%
RACE	1722		561		1832		10 357	
%	12%		4%*		13%*			
Σ			4115				72%	
%			28%*					
SEX	FEMALE				MALE			
Σ	5922				8550			
%	41%				59%			

Table 3.2#

1999: BREAKDOWN OF STUDENTS—'RACE', SEX								
R/S	BF	BM	IF	IM	CF	CM	WF	WM
NOS	1808	2655	532	639	1271	955	4024	4569
%	11%	16%	3%	4%	8%	6%	24%	28%
RACE	4463		1171		2226		8593	
%	27%		7%		14%			
Σ			7860				52%	
%			48%					
SEX	FEMALE				MALE			
Σ	7635				8818			
%	46%				54%			

Information compiled from demographic tables supplied by Transformation Office

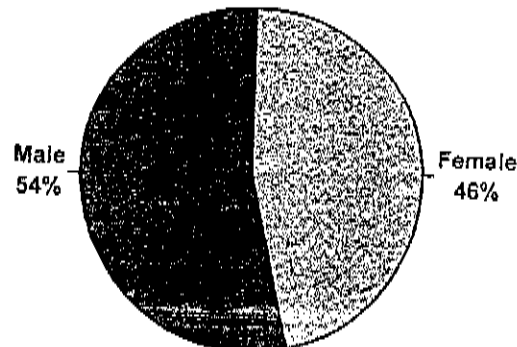
* Approximations to integers in the percentages account for the discrepancies in the sums of the percentages

Gender and Sexuality

Transformation in the areas of gender roles and attitudes towards sexuality is difficult and often the subject of heated emotion. As in the rest of the social sphere, exclusionary practices in relation to women at the university were originally rooted in biological concepts of masculinity and femininity, with reproduction as the *raison d'être* for marriage, and women positioned as perpetually bound to domesticity, and economically dependent on men. Marriage and the heterosexual nuclear family were the normalised social institutions to secure this ideology of women's dependence. However, a broad historical view of social stratification—systems of social control and authority—shows that these values of sexual asymmetry¹ in modern industrialised cultures are neither biologically determined, nor socially inevitable. (Bleier 1984:160) While the belief in biological determinism may not be as entrenched today, the pressures to retain social relations and identities along the established norms remain extremely powerful.

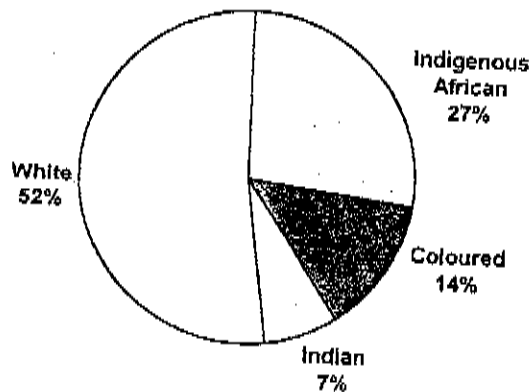
Recent years have seen an attempt to bring the student gender ratios more in line with the general population. (See figures above) However, the male is still centred, sometimes in quite subtle ways. The report by Rose (1995) lists some of the innumerable ways in which medical students at UCT are still conditioned into seeing white male bodies as the norm, and females as less significant. She identifies the assumption that the functioning of western male bodies adequately represents that of men from other societies who may have very different understandings of their bodies.

Figure 3.4: Breakdown of students by sex at UCT in 1999



1. The observation of physiological differences between males and females gives rise to biologically essentialist notions of causality, where sex role differentiation is apparently determined by sexual physiology.

Figure 3.5: Breakdown of students by 'race' at UCT in 1999



Physical Ability

In 1989 UCT founded a Disability Unit to help disabled students gain access to UCT. (UCT Employment Equity Plan, Section 1 2000:1) The Disability Unit helps students in matters such as parking access, and arranging exams or typing papers in braille. In 2000, 45 students were assisted by the Unit. (Personal Communication, Disability Unit)

Internationalism

Once normal, post-apartheid relations with the rest of the world could be established, UCT established the International Academic Program's Office (IAPO) to assist with opening up the university to the international community of scholars. It is an aim of the university to "ensure that UCT offers one of the most diverse campuses in the country", and "to continue to develop the teaching and learning environment to ensure that the confidence shown in UCT, by both local and international students, is well rewarded". (Vice-Chancellor's Report 1999)

In 1999, 1 857 international students from 73 different countries studied at UCT. Of these international students, 579 studied for postgraduate degrees. The policy of bringing in students from Africa is explicit. One thousand, two hundred and one (1 201) of the international students in 1999 were from countries in the Southern African Development Community and the USPHEPiA programme has successfully built links across the continent. More broadly, several Study Abroad programmes have been introduced. (Vice-Chancellor's Report 1999).

While orientation programmes have been introduced to assist foreign students with their entry into the university environment, the question of whether they find the environment supportive of their diverse identities and styles remains a crucial issue in determining whether the university achieves its goals in respect of providing an 'international' campus.

STRUGGLES FOR CONTROL

In this section we show how the struggles between past and future resist the definition of UCT as a 'world-class African' university.

Conceptual space

There are reams of policies and documentation to substantiate UCT's institutional commitment to transformation. But in the end, any policy is only as potent as people's will to implement it. Transformation of the university institutional culture is therefore uneven and patchy. There are many areas—ranging from individuals to groupings, certain departments, institutionalised forums—where change is felt and appreciated amongst staff and students alike. Similarly, there are bastions of resistance.

Apparently neutral terms, such as 'quality' and 'excellence', when juxtaposed with 'change' and 'transformation', reveal inherent cultural assumptions when they are used as though they are mutually exclusive. (EE Plan, Appx H 1998:3).

Other contradictions around equity implementation have led to bad feelings on all sides. Black people feel as though their contributions are not valued for their worth, and white people feel threatened. (EE Plan, Appx H 1998:10-12) For students, interacting with lecturers represents the most significant personification of the institutional culture. But all staff, because they represent the 'permanent' human face of the institution for students, set the tone of the institution's values and culture. Those who feel insecure and alienated communicate that to the rest of their working environment. A few critical negative spaces in the administration or one academic department in each faculty can soon influence the whole institution.

In the report on staff members' experience of the institutional culture at UCT, Salma Ismail (2000:13) says that while not always uniform,

The academic culture appears all-encompassing and staff often feel incapable of contesting or changing this culture. Exclusion is felt in terms of race, class, gender, age, language and culture. The alienating environment influences students and they learn to accept a cold academic culture as the norm.

Many staff felt that the employment practices that are in place are for 'window dressing'—they felt there was a lack of transparency and accountability to the policies. Others felt that restructuring had led to erosion of trust between colleagues, while some felt 'overburdened' by the changes. (EE Plan, Appx H 1998:26) In contrast to these views, the previous Vice-Chancellor regarded transformation as 'completed' in some faculties (Lewin 2000). The extent, and success of transformation is therefore contested, and interpretations are to a large extent a function of positionality within the university structure.

Physical spaces

The meanings attached to physical space, as with all meaning, is not self-evident, but can be a site of contestation. In respect to transformation, some members of the university community wish to see the retention of current names as reflecting a proud heritage, whereas others perceive this stance as reflecting intransigent colonial attitudes. They make the point that anyone looking at a map of the campus, could be excused if they presumed that the university was situated in Europe or North America.

Similarly, resources and facilities for sports favour rugby over soccer, reflecting the racial, class and gender bias of the university.

A very important facet of the physical environment is its location against the slopes of Devil's Peak, which makes it very difficult for people with physical disabilities to negotiate the campus.

CONCLUSION—DEVELOPING A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In this section we conclude that fostering mutually supportive relationships requires concerted and sustained effort.

White males at UCT are still dominant in a number of ways: staff ranking, tenure, numbers. Some are working very hard to try and bring about change, yet many of them feel beleaguered, knowing that transformation is about shifting their previously taken-for-granted power base. Others know that power shifts are inevitable, and their survival depends on their openness to change. However, there is still a critical mass of resistance to change at UCT, represented not only by the numbers of people with 'old guard' attitudes (from both sexes and all races), but also by the entrenched positions of control and decision-making which they occupy.

The sheer inertia of the past has a formidable force in resisting change, requiring so much more energy and commitment from those who are straining to transform the institutional culture, and take the institution into the future vision of a 'world-class African University'. As in so many South African organisations generally, there appears to be a disjuncture between the formal rhetoric and the underlying, privately held attitudes of a large percentage of those whose everyday choices, decisions and manner of operating serve to create the institutional culture. An example given in the Rose (1995) report, is of jokes that are funny only at some people's expense:

What is significant is that when these 'jokes' are recorded over a period of time, it becomes apparent that they are consistently at the expense of women, or homosexuals, or the disabled, or Africans (or Asians) or some other historically oppressed or disadvantaged group. Jokes contribute to the atmosphere of a class and therefore influence the institutional culture experienced by students, since [it] includes the 'atmosphere' of the institution.

Rose 1995:19

To transform a culture which sustains, and is sustained by, such seemingly innocuous, yet deeply discriminatory acts, requires a commitment to doing *business as abnormal*; a conscious, deliberate attempt to examine and question the 'normal'.

The next chapter reflects the voices of students who share thoughts, feelings and perceptions of studying at UCT. Their stories illuminate how what is taken-for-granted through the habit, custom, and tradition of centred groupings can be experienced by 'other' groups.

CHAPTER 4 STUDENTS SPEAK OUT

In the last chapter we gave a synoptic overview of some relevant historical and social issues affecting UCT. In this chapter we look at the milieu in which the students find themselves, and what they say about it. We try to let their own voices express what they perceive and experience. In their quotes, we give their group reference number.

Many students recount experiences of discrimination and exclusion. We show how they experience gaps between the institution's vision and UCT in everyday life.

'A WORLD-CLASS AFRICAN UNIVERSITY'

We discuss contradictions between the articulated vision of the World-class African University and how students perceive it. We organise this section in relation to some of the mechanisms at work that maintain the status quo.

The previous section has argued that in order for UCT to become the culturally diverse, non-sexist, non-racist African university it aspires to, the historical centre must move—what was previously taken for granted must be examined, appropriately reconfigured, and certain new values must be affirmed. The tremors have started, and the ground is shaking. Most of the students have an awareness of this shifting, and recognise that it requires a response from them. In an exchange on the topic, a white student comments:

Student A: I don't feel guilty for the privilege I've been born into, but I feel that it comes with a certain responsibility. I've worked hard, and I've got a lot of stuff from hard work but I've also got a lot of stuff purely nothing to do with me, that I've been handed. I feel that gives me a certain responsibility to others. I mean I do feel that I owe something ... just something that I feel I should put back, I really don't mind if other people get advancements on the basis of race or gender and I mean, no, there's no magical cure and it's not going to be one simple procedure but it's something that has to happen. It's not maybe going to work perfectly but ... (14)

Ironically, the vision of UCT as a world-class African university has ambivalent effects. On the one hand, it points in the direction of Africanising, and therefore developing a more heterogeneous culture. On the other hand, it inhibits any challenge of the way things have been done in the past. Maintaining a 'world-class' status is linked to Eurocentrism and used to bolster conservative discourses that generally resist change. Many students seem to be aware of the tug-of-war at play between these contradictory pressures, and generally align themselves on one side of the dichotomy or the other. The conversation listed above continued:

Students B: The only possible result of what you're proposing is that you will have worse scientists, worse businessmen, worse whatever.

Student A: We've had affirmative action for white men globally and it did not necessarily produce the best scientists. The fact is you won't sacrifice merit ... it's certainly not true to say that you're going to ... on the contrary, you're going to strengthen these things by drawing from the whole pool and not just one. (14)

Historical self-image

Underpinning the historical discourse of UCT as a university of world distinction, are deeply held beliefs that the existing institution represented the cream of society. That this is a fallacy is patent, since the formal and informal systems of exclusion operating allowed this 'cream' to be selected from a reduced and restricted group of people. In such a semantic field, notions such as 'academic excellence' and 'academic freedom' act as euphemisms for 'ethnocentrism' and 'exclusion'. True academic excellence and freedom in the context of 'world-class' can logically only become a reality when institutions of learning are representative of the widest possible range of thinking from the widest possible range of people.

Many students felt that the historical self-image of the university was so deeply entrenched that it made it untrue that UCT could be seen as an 'African' university and recognised potential to enhance excellence creatively through utilising UCT's intersectoral positioning.

It's not an African university. It is exceptionally Eurocentric. Western culture is valued and propagated. (11)

Several were excited by the prospect of the change in identity proposed by becoming a 'world-class African university'.

... world-class standards and methods, results that can be on a par with anything in the rest of the world that focuses specifically on the problems or things in Africa. (4)

Africanisation means that there are theories that come from the West and are written by Europeans or Americans and they are applicable to South Africa, but you have to teach people and show people how they are applicable. You have to teach people about the context to which they are going to be applied. You criticise those models from within a developing country context and we're in the context of Africa and that to me is what Africanisation is about. It's acknowledging that you take what is good from the West and you change it and combine it with things to make it applicable to the country. (12)

Ideological Underpinnings

Exclusion of women and black people from the university has relied on discourses of sexism and racism, constructing the 'other' as deviant, inferior, less significant, less entitled. It is perhaps true that overt racism and sexism may be less frequently encountered on campus than in some other contexts in the country. However, the social spaces opened up for those positioned advantageously by such discourses are still characterised by secure assumptions of entitlement.

[There is]...tension of racism, but it's just that it's not visible, but you can feel it.

As long as these discursive terrains remain in place, some people will wonder what the fuss is about, while others will feel that they are battling against odds.

The culture is very white, English, European. It doesn't bother me, but a lot of people seem quite alienated by this. It's not something that I—I mean I feel quite comfortable, but certainly

the content of the curricula and the contribution that makes to the culture is that it is still pretty European, English. (14)

Transforming the university requires deconstructing the ideological underpinnings that have rendered such social relations to be perceived as 'natural' and 'inevitable.'

I think what surprises me the most now is that I didn't even think about it then. I just kind of took it for granted. I didn't notice that all my lecturers were white male ... it just didn't strike me, or it didn't surprise me. I think that it's almost like kind of sad in a way that you just take it for granted that they are going to be white or they are going to be male and it just wasn't really an issue. (12)

Basically he said he was going to talk about the male anatomy and the male orgasm because a woman doesn't need to orgasm to get pregnant and basically chucked out the whole of female physiology in one sentence and no one thought anything of it, and went into glorious detail about the male orgasm. (9)

Assumptions, beliefs and values—the points of view which remain unexamined, free from scrutiny—need to be made more conscious:

At medical school, the tutor will explain how to speak to a black person to a group comprising everybody ... as if black people need to be explained. How to speak to a Muslim woman, how not to offend a Muslim woman and it's as if everyone else has to be explained, but white people are never explained. I will point it out, and some people will get it, and some people still won't get it. And they also ask black students "And what do YOU think about this", as if you are talking on behalf of all black people. Like they don't say, if you see a white woman, ask "Isn't it nice having a big pool and a big house?" (9)

It's time those who were previously advantaged get down from their high horses ... start meeting people and merging with people and learn about the rest of the country. (18)

'Tradition' has entrenched values which are presented as immutable—because of historical endurance, many people accept its values unquestioningly, reproducing the accepted centres with the force of 'normality' or 'appropriateness' and even 'morality.' Making space for 'others' is seen as requiring additional, exceptional actions, which can be contained in this peripheral relationship to the centre, while the centre itself remains intact.

The institution as a whole has this male centredness. Male presence in most of the high positions. I'm very aware of it ... well in terms of literature. Now we're going to look at women's literature, but it is a separate thing. Here we have our mainstream study of literature, and over there we'll have a course on women's literature that's separate. (11)

Previously marginalised cultures of course also have their centres and margins, and naturalised categories and hierarchies.

In our culture women are not supposed to wear trousers...we have often had this discussion with my friends ...we long to see women being dressed up in a skirt or a long dress...you look around here it is all jeans ... you would ask yourself whether they do it at home ...'cos I go home during the holidays and I still see plenty of people wearing dresses, nice dresses, beautiful dresses ...the whole notion of womanhood (3)

To grow an institution free of racism and sexism, requires overcoming all the various historical legacies of exclusion—even from quarters that themselves have been excluded. It is not a matter of replacing one set of repressions with another:

This is a very white male culture ... male, male, male culture. I don't know that an African university is going to redress the gender balance any more than a Western university is. I would enjoy it more if it were different, because then I feel it is something that is mine. (11)

Whilst people—women and black people included—continue to believe these 'naturalised' images of how society works, the existing hierarchies of normativisation and dominance will be perpetuated.

Stereotyping

Stereotyping has the effect of presenting foreclosed meanings of social groupings, usually based on superficiality and ignorance. Stereotypes are evaluative, and operate at a high level of generalisation. Where they refer to subordinate or deviant groups, they are usually pejorative. (Perkins 1979:145) Although they appear to be simple, they often conflate several traits of the group, making what might be characteristic coalesce with pejorative projections. Awareness of the prevalence of stereotyping was very prevalent amongst all the student groups interviewed, particularly the younger ones.

You're not an engineer, you're not a student, you're not a man, you're not anything else ... but gay. That's all they see of you. (9)

How many local blacks are there at this university? They all come from the United States of SOWETO. They ascribe to the notion of white ... why do they have to speak like an American? We are not in America. (16)

You actually judge somebody before you even talk to them. (17)

Strategies of containment

Centres of power seldom give up their power. While people may agree with discourses which promote values such as equity, democracy and empowerment, there is a perhaps understandable tendency to try to do damage control in terms of how it may actually impact upon their own power bases. There are many discursive mechanisms by which the centre can be re-secured, while yet accumulating the credit which goes with being aligned with 'progressive' discourses.

- *Lip service* is the manner in which institutions manage their historical inertia—a number of discourses 'packaged' in a variety of ways will work towards dragging the meanings back to the historical centre.
- *Incorporation* is a mechanism by which 'other' groups are seen to endorse the system's skewed values and their own subordinate positioning in the social structure. This ranges from collusion through recuperation to co-option.
- In *colluding* with the system, 'others' actively affirm the institutional values and deny that any inequities are present.
- *Recuperation* by the system involves acknowledging transformations, but will re-present them to reflect the old meanings.
- In this continuum, *co-option* is another process of maintaining the status quo, where challenges to transformation are incorporated in a modified form, in such a way that

any fundamental challenge is diluted and undermined, and control is reasserted within or close to the centre.

The levels of incorporation operate differently throughout the institution, depending on how powerful the challenge is in that particular context. The official discourses of non-racism and non-sexism may promise an environment free of discrimination, but people from marginalised positions often find that, once incorporated, they are labelled as 'trouble-makers' if they expect what has been promised.

They are very sexist—there are all these procedures where you are supposed to be able to challenge sexism, homophobia, racism and you find that if you do actually try and challenge it often you're directed further and further away. Like speak to the tutor, speak to the Head of Dept. I took on this one lecturer about his homophobic comments and he blamed the black students: 'Oh you know the black students can't cope with it'. Then he said okay he was wrong, he won't do it again, but the next day he was saying exactly the same thing. So ... this is what I am finding frustrating about UCT, there is no real way of actually tackling the problem. It is always shut off and shifted. They give you the impression it is being dealt with, but often people rather stick together with each other. (9)

The arguments that present UCT as a world-class African university, are both constructed and constructing—they act as imperatives which position the 'other' into falling in line, and prevent them from controlling and defining the transformation process which ought to benefit them. Working as they do within the economic, social and sexual context of modern South Africa, these processes uphold the 'old order', rather than engaging with an 'African' transformation.

I had a couple of female lecturers but as a general rule I think out of my whole UCT career I've only ever dealt with two women. Maybe it's Faculty-specific. I'm not sure but I've only ... as far as like role models, academic role models, and tutors and staff go, the majority of the lecturers are men. (12)

When I first arrived I never actually noticed it but only much later did I realise that all of my lecturers were male and even all of my tutors were men and not only that, they were all white men. I did not have a single Indian, Coloured, Black, nothing. (14)

As it stands, students find that these, and strategies similar to those identified above, put the onus on those who come into the institution to give up the parts of themselves that don't fit, and to become more like the centre.

Transformation is plastic, there is no change, instead, people, the whites are expecting us to change. (19)

However, until the underlying deeper transformation is brought about, students find that the prospect of entering the circle can turn out to be a mirage, as strategies can be brought to bear that keep reconfiguring the circumferences so that one remains marginalised.

A colleague of mine—from North America—who was tutoring in the History Dept was saying 'Blacks here are hopeless, but when I am talking to black people from other African countries those are better.' There is that attempt to differentiate between blacks from outside South Africa and blacks from South Africa. (10)

To fulfil the vision, what is needed is much more than realigning margins.

UCT should start building up a culture of heritage where we could be proud of being in Africa. This is what defines me, this is where I find identity. (10)

LIFE AS A STUDENT AT UCT

In this section we examine some dynamics affecting student life, including residence life.

Many students experienced an inevitable uncertainty and tension in the learning environment. It manifested in the way they perceived themselves and other students—and how they interpreted the meeting of their expectations by the institution. Consistently they refer to the teaching staff, taking their actions explicitly or implicitly as referents of the institutional ethos.

Segregation

An observation which repeated itself in almost every workshop, was that people often stuck to racially exclusive groups.

Some students rationalised the status quo.

There has been study after study to show that people, no matter how equitable, fair or non-biased they may be, they will naturally favour people who are similar to them. Not just race and gender, but their culture too. (14)

Separation occurs at the level of student interactions.

You see the whites there, the South African blacks speaking Xhosa there and blacks from other African countries ... (10)

It's not just that Blacks socialise together and the Whites socialise together, the Coloureds socialise together, or anything like that, it's also social groups. You'll see the rugby jocks might hang out together or the sort of preppy types will hang out together and the more nerdy groups will hang out together. Not necessarily, but people with sort of vague social groups do tend to stick together as well. First years sometimes, they're not quite as defined yet because people are clinging to whoever they know. (13)

When functions are organised you'll find out it will either be attended by white people only or black people only. (6)

... we just do a tut together, and it was so sobering, if you go according to table ... it was only black people there. We attend the same courses, and you look over there, there are black foreign students from Zim and in another section there was a group of white students, mostly Capetonians, and another group of coloured students who are also Capetonian. (7)

It also happens at the lecturer-student level.

We are all women tutors in that department but I'm the only black person and I've noticed that a whole lot of black students have been moving—they were assigned to other people's tut groups and they have been coming to my tut group. Particularly Indians, possibly because I am Indian. (12)

At the beginning of the year I started out with probably more men than women, by the end of the year, I had 23 girls and 3 guys and it seems that all the guys had gone to the male tutor and all the women had come to me. (14)

They did note that as the classes moved into senior years, there appeared to be more mixing.

'Disadvantage'

Students displayed sensitivity to the label 'disadvantaged.' They felt it is often being conflated with 'black person' in a vague category of 'not up to scratch.'

It doesn't mean because somebody is black in complexion that you are assisting a disadvantaged group. ... I think they are meeting the colour ratio, but I just hope they are doing it the right way. (16)

They pointed to the danger that the labels we use to redress inequities may simultaneously construct people as victims and perpetuate inferiority.

I'm identifying myself as disadvantaged (laughter) from a disadvantaged background, so it's obvious my identity will be that of being disadvantaged. Whenever I see some students there is that inferiority complex ... yabo, only G from Model C school can do that. (19)

If I can comment on the whole notion of being disadvantaged... every single black...when they look at you, you are disadvantaged one way or another. This lecturer said "you know you are doing fairly well compared to the others coming from a disadvantaged background ...". And it just struck me, he thinks that everybody is from a disadvantaged background. So I asked him again ... "what do you mean ... from a disadvantaged background?" He says "you know" (he was getting a bit conscious of it) and he said "you know South Africa has been through a lot and in the past people have been disadvantaged and I sense that people are not coping in class." I don't think he wanted to make reference to the whole notion of race and I could pick it up that he was going along that line ... that the black people in class were not coping ... and he was like picking me out of that class ... and said here is somebody who is black and who is doing much better than the rest...so that is quite problematic ... and I wonder if he picks up my true capability. (3)

This is clearly an extremely complex issue in a context where the university has to deal both with genuine educational disadvantage, and also with a history of deep-seated assumptions of superiority and inferiority—both of which divide along the racial fault line. Students commented on how *all* their difference was attributed to 'disadvantage', rather than to cultural difference, which it often was. This has a genuinely oppressive effect. One student pointed out that the operation of this normative whiteness may stymie even genuine efforts at rectifying the legacy of educational inequity, because it operates from a position of cultural myopia.

... the other thing I hate when I arrived here is this programme of the ADP. They make us look stupid. I won't say it's students who are coming previously from disadvantaged backgrounds, who are disadvantaged. (19)

Indigenous African students from countries elsewhere in Africa see the internalised after-effects of apartheid still reverberating.

South Africans actually now find it hard just to interact on a level with the white people I think, because of their own inferiority complex. (18)

Culture

Most of the students who discussed the issue of UCT's institutional culture, had a solid grasp of its relationship to institutional power—they could identify the centre, and the resultant tension for those on the margins. Several students were particularly articulate on this topic:

... I pick up some sense of ethnocentrism, some sense of somebody imposing his own views and attitudes on others. You actually notice that culture is very much about power—very much about which cultures must be looked down upon...as some people being more

cultured...some cultures are regarded as the norm. I think lecturers need to accommodate in the sense that nobody's culture is perfect and who is anybody to tell me 'look your culture is very awkward'. They don't tell you as straight as I am being...but you can pick it up. (3)

It's sad how black people always have to give in. We always have to end up giving in. We were talking about why don't white people also give in, because we've got a lot of culture that is good. (7)

I think with women especially, we sacrifice our own beliefs and cultures for the westerners, because we think ... we always want to settle for the pink soap. (7)

There is no doubt that students understand that the question of institutional culture is a site of contestation. For many white students, it was a shock that much of their 'taken-for-granted' dominant culture was being questioned.

For other white students the new positioning is exciting and challenging.

I feel predominantly I am an African. When I went to Europe these people were foreign—they were just different. Africa is like big, and wild and we have more cultural diversity in our country than you find in any of the countries that I went to. (14)

Black students expressed the sense that the 'cultural lenses' worn by the institution is out of focus with their lives. The effort to create mutual understanding is asymmetrical; the assumption is that white norm fits all. They also felt that many lecturers had very little grasp of their backgrounds.

Learning does not involve only coming to a lecture and listening to a lecturer speaking ... the way a lecturer expresses himself or herself in front of students. For instance, examples ... those examples do not have any bearing to us, yabona. If you are talking about the police in Constantia and myself coming from Khayelitsha, one policeman we can define differently—to me it is not someone who can protect my social welfare, but for someone who is in Constantia ... yabona. So when they are referring to it they will think that if they just use that example, all of us will catch that example. But we will need to—as inantsika (disadvantaged students)—first think about it and say "okay, let us try and understand this in the context of a white person. When you are analysing the police, let us adopt and wear the lenses of a white person". (19)

When differences in culture are not recognised, false attributions can be made on the basis of behaviour that is not understood. Students gave examples of experiences in lecture situations where their reluctance to contribute could be misconstrued. They felt that in such cases attributions were made that were disadvantageous to them.

It depends on what you are talking about ... in our culture there are certain things that you don't talk about with the elders and there are certain things that you talk about to peers ... the whole issue of homosexuality ... there are certain things that you can't talk to your lecturer about ... like homosexuality ... but it depends on what you are talking about ... (3)

Needless to say, questions of 'cultural relativity' can become extremely complex. An example is the selective way in which students appeal to cultural difference. A case in point is the appeal to tradition amongst black students who do not wish gender relations changed by cultural influence. The confusion, which accompanies living in a different context than one has known, is also evident. Questions of expectations, interpretations, cultural expressions clearly play a part in the difficulties some students experience.

Lifestyle relations to us are very different ... like sexual harassment, which in African culture doesn't apply. Maybe it came from Europe. You cannot apply it to us Africans. We don't know what to expect. The major problem lies in people understanding what sexual harassment is all about. (10)

For several students, there was a sense that it is difficult for them to recognise anything of themselves in the dominant institutional culture.

The culture of UCT is a liberal English culture. You have the rag, the Jammie steps competition... I really feel that I can't identify with it. (5)

... [W]hen you talk about africanisation ... I think we should reflect on the diversity of cultures in South Africa. I'll take the residence issue for example... when you look at the menu it should reflect that we are not only catering for whites, we are catering for a whole lot of people from different backgrounds... I long for pap ... for some it is like some sort of a staple food. What you actually eat should not only be what is valued by the western side... (3)

In such a complex, contested situation, students were able to discern that the same appeals that were intended to open up more democratic spaces could also be used in reactionary way, to further entrench their marginalisation.

If I can respond to that one ... you see ... this is all an ideology ... when we cannot find differences in colour people tend to find other differences ... to justify the stereotypes of one another ... to emphasise that we are different ... so in the new South Africa we cannot focus on race but we can focus on culture ... (3)

An encouraging development was that several students had come to a realisation about what their historically privileged position implied and developed an awareness of the dynamics of centres and margins.

Some students from other areas of South Africa or other countries said they felt that they had had to change. Then I realised that my identity fits in with UCT and the whole structure of UCT during the five years that I've been there. And, no, I didn't have to change and I thought it was really good to be exposed to a whole number of people who I might not have been exposed to normally. (15)

Similarly pleasing was the fact that some students were learning to recognise differences in cultural cues, and to work with them in a culturally contextual manner. This student, for example, commented on the different way some students use space and body language:

If you are sitting on a small bench another white person won't come and sit next to you unless they know you, or they're trying to hit on you. Often a black woman might come and sit down next to me, and I might feel very conscious that she's in my space but that's not something that's going to scar me for life. (15)

There were also students who felt that the discourses they had been exposed to at UCT had helped them to grow beyond narrownesses in their own cultural backgrounds.

My experience of UCT is actually quite good in terms of becoming aware at least of gender oppression. It is quite male dominated, and I don't think I was ever even aware of how subservient women were expected to be and were brought up to be in an Afrikaans society. My experience at UCT and the things that I was taught at UCT—that I was made to read, or encouraged to read, was good. (11)

In a nutshell, therefore, students had a range of responses to historical inequities, but on the whole they all recognised that the institution was dominated by a white

masculine ethos. Many black students expressed anger and bitterness towards the environment they inhabit, finding it hostile and alienating. Some white students attempted to defend it by lamenting a loss of standards, while others were open to, and excited by, the diversity of cultures they saw around them.

Language

Language is an important social organiser and cultural signifier, which positions speakers and listeners in certain relations of power.

The culture at UCT is definitely an all white culture and I just noticed that, especially through the use of English as the language, the assumptions that come with that and the historical conditions and what it means. (11)

Students showed a range of responses to the use of English as the language for learning. Some second-language learners recognised it as one of the important international languages and perceived learning it as a personal challenge.

We all use English so that we can communicate with one another. And that is a good thing...(6)

The language of the world is English ... and we need to up our levels of communication in terms of English and that would help a lot. (18)

There was a recognition that it is impossible to structure a world-class learning environment without a common language, but there was an appeal for more sensitivity from the lecturers to a multi-lingual student body.

...it is the same with languages...impossible to accommodate ...(3)

My first language is Afrikaans, and I don't want to be treated differently, I don't want that to be an issue at all. (11)

On the dark side of the language issue, though, proficiency in English became a focal point for racism and stereotyping, and a powerful gate-keeper to maintain the status quo.

When a person asks a third or fourth time, they start making you feel ... "I don't understand what you don't understand". And then in the next tutorial the person will be withdrawn. So I think tutors should make sure they are really patient. They are patient as it is now, but with this diversity thing coming into it ... (4)

Language can be a very insidious tool of intimidation, and students proved to be very quick at picking up when language was being employed to patronise or trivialise.

Our lecturer/tutor, she's got the habit of when black students say something ... sure they have an accent ... but I find that I can understand what they say ... after they say something, she'll stop and then she'll say "what you are trying to say is" and she will reshuffle everything that is said and sometimes she will not even say what exactly they said but she'll add her own thing on the side ... and they will always agree even if it is not what they wanted to say ... (5)

The use of language to mark those who fall outside the norm was not confined to the relationship of lecturer to student, where the power differential is clear-cut. Students recalled incidents where white students used English to sap the confidence of black lecturing staff.

She has a strong accent, the pronunciation of the words ... and even if it is difficult to understand what she says, but there was this girl behind me and she said something about the way she pronounces and I was very annoyed with it ... I find this very insulting. There was a black lecturer lecturing and she spelt a word wrong and they said "Oh my God, she can't even spell!" ... and that was disturbing. I mean we did all of us make a choice to come to UCT to study, so disrespect to someone who is trying to give us information is unacceptable (5)

It is very significant to note that students did not regard difficulties in handling diversity as only falling along expected lines of 'race.' There was a good deal of discussion about the differences within the black student body. Their conversations showed that a very important aspect of diversity developing at UCT is the growing rift between those black students who are able to display familiarity with the signifiers of the norm, and those who have not been exposed to white, English culture to the same extent. This rift between the more elite, Anglicised African students and those whose background is more in township or rural life was referred to in connection with many aspects of university life, and language was one of the most painful. There was some joking, but also strong emotion expressed around the notion of 'coconuts', who are perceived to be able to find their way through the system with much greater ease, and in a sense a 'divide and rule' type of dynamic is able to emerge around such markers. The sophisticated students are used to 'show up' those who are closer to African cultures and languages.

We're doing group work ... oral presentations soon. What happened was the black kids from white schools wouldn't want to find themselves in groups with kids from black schools, because I suppose they think they'd have to do most of the work. So they ended up grouping themselves with the white kids, so we have white groups with black kids—we term them 'coconut'. (7)

English is used as a medium of instruction, you'll find students who come from different backgrounds ... some whose parents can afford to send them to model C schools. You can hear that the English they speak with a kind of an American accent and those who attend government schools their English is not as good. Those who speak with an American accent they tend to identify with the whites... those whose English is not good they tend to stay together ... (5)

Similarly, divisions between African students from other countries on the continent and South Africa were also remarked upon, as well as the additional difficulties with which foreign black students have to contend.

... people from other countries ... probably their accent ... like Ghana. If you hear the way people speak English in Ghana, it's very, very different. They must really be willing to listen ... diversity is not only among black or white (4).

Unsurprisingly, therefore, such divisions are expressed not only through how English is used, but also through establishing hierarchies amongst African languages, and between those of South African nationality and other countries.

Amongst older blacks the Xhosas seem to be the ones who are very problematic because they don't care who you are, or where you come from, they will speak to you in Xhosa, even if they know you don't know Xhosa. (10)

Humour

Because humour is profoundly culture-specific, it can establish who is 'in' and who is 'out' in subtle but certain ways. The crucial question, always is "who's laughing?"

So, when this guy gets to make jokes with us, you just hear rolls of laughter from that group, and that group, and that group. And you look at the black people ... we are always puzzled. What kind of joke is he making? He makes jokes about insects, that isn't funny. (7)

It's easier to communicate with everybody in English, 'cos that's the one that unites us all. So, I'll be speaking English and then they expect me to understand their languages because, you know, I'm a couple of shades darker than most people. So, I found that, we can make these so-called white jokes ... because I was brought up in that kind of culture, so I'll be quoting my Shakespeare, making jokes and some people do understand, but some people don't and they get offended. Therefore I'm a coconut because I understand white humour. And that's the difference between being black and being a coconut, 'cos you can understand white humour. (7)

At the same time, students recognised the value of laughing together in creating bonds between people.

I think humour is an important part of the lecture ... what I found here is that very few lecturers make use of humour ... maybe the lecturers are careful about making jokes that would not be proper (2)

In class often the whites, the coloured and the black groups won't necessarily mix too much. I find that the whites and the coloureds will mix more easily than the whites and the blacks will mix. But what is interesting is that if you get somebody with a particular character—quite an outspoken character or one of the class clown types or whatever. Whatever culture they are they will stick out and socialise with everybody; so if you get the joker who is a black guy he will socialise with all races very easily, or the white joker he will socialise with the Indians, coloured, blacks as easily as with the whites. It's often that one or two people who will stand out like that. (13)

Symbols and Rituals

A theme that featured repeatedly in the students groups was the importance of a physical environment that reflects the culture of those who study at UCT. Students are sensitive to the meanings carried by the statues and names of buildings that reflect UCT's history—constant reminders of the selectivity and exclusions of its patriarchal, colonial past.

Like that statue at Jammie stairs. That represents white people ... also the names of the buildings like PD Hahn, Jameson Hall. There are no African names. (6)

It bothers me on so many different levels, from the fact that all of the buildings on campus are called after men. I mean the one exception is the Molly Blackburn, which is now pretty much destroyed. (laughter) (11)

I think that it should reflect—even the paintings and buildings on campus ... pictures on walls ... should reflect this diversity and less than what is from Europe ... let us focus on what is in South Africa ... to me that would mean Africanisation. (3)

Similarly, the university's rituals are perceived to have arisen out of particular historical contexts, and to reflect the mindsets and subconscious needs of the particular groups that maintained them. These were critiqued as bringing the blindnesses of the past into the present.

Rag assists whites to rid their consciences of what is happening. That's a short period they come to UCT—three to four years, they think they are community responsible ... they hear welfare, they get involved, they leave and that is where their community responsibility starts and ends. Put it on the CV, go to a nice company, get a nice job ... and RAG hasn't changed ... assuming that you come from a community of privilege and you are helping the disadvantaged but not recognising that the disadvantage is actually here, hungry on your own campus. (16)

Campus is white. The music they are playing at lunch time is white. Cafeteria ... they are selling everything white. Even in Tugwell everything is for the whites ... everything it's white. (19)

IDENTITIES

Here we describe how the UCT environment influences the identifications that students develop, along some of the major axes prevalent in the society.

Identities operate at the interface between the personal and social. Through effective interventions at these faultlines, a positive environment for supporting diverse identities can be created. One student expressed his understanding of this relationship:

When you get to university a lot of people are finding their identity and expressing themselves and that's why you find groups and it's also that particular age where people—it's like a mob psychology thing—people derive confidence and a sense of belonging from groups. (12)

If the environment in which students find themselves at UCT does not affirm their cultural and economic experiences, they will, to varying degrees, feel alienated.

Until I heard an African student this year talk very emotionally and heatedly about how she didn't feel that she fitted in, and that she really felt that she had to change in order to fit in ... I didn't realise that so many of these students feel very strongly about alienation, which hadn't been my experience. (15)

Time after time, students testified to the experience of having to distort, amputate, disguise, overlay aspects of their identities.

The only way to survive on a long-term basis was to become South African in some way, and she felt she lost a part of her identity which was being African and from another country, she felt that part of her life was shut down in a way by coming here. (10)

What shapes me is my cultural identity, and African norms in particular. If they are being looked at vis-à-vis the institutional culture, you find out that they are very much in contradiction, or conflictual in a way. (19)

Of course, some of this hybridity can be ascribed to the post-modern condition.

What I discovered here at UCT is that a lot of black students have adopted the Westernised black American culture, and they tend to find their identity through that culture. (10)

Look here, we're not over-sensitive. We're just being coloureds who like to bitch and moan. (15)

Resistance is also very much in evidence.

As far as black students are concerned, there is a very conscious ethnic identity being played out. (10)

Again not unsurprisingly, there is an awareness of how sensitivity, even some fragility, may arise in a context where identities may not feel affirmed, particularly given the historical process people have come through.

You have to be quite cautious about people and the way you approach them and what you say in front of people because the way they interpret what you are saying, is totally different. I found—okay, I'm from Zimbabwe and our country didn't really experience apartheid like South Africa did. There's a lot of paranoia and tension hovering around. Sometimes you can't approach certain people and sometimes you can't discuss certain things with other people, because you never know what it might spark. Back home, you can talk about anything, besides maybe about the President (laughter) (4)

Students gave examples that spoke to the fragility of identities that depend on keeping the 'other' at bay.

Because she can see that seat is close to a black, so she has a problem with that—she'd better sit on the floor. (19)

By contrast, it is again heartening to notice that despite the historical racial division among South Africans that continues to structure the thinking and actions of many students at UCT, some students are beginning to problematise some of the assumptions which have informed racially-structured identities.

The SA education system used to create an inferiority complex in people "You are not good enough" and there is that resistance, that fear, that embarrassment to discover that after all 'they' can be better than 'us', in spite of what we have been taught. (10)

Race

Consciously or unconsciously the dynamics of racism play themselves out.

... racial barriers of the past, there is still that culture here at UCT (19)

As has already been mentioned, these dynamics may even transgress traditional lines of authority, as when white students who presumably would not undermine a white lecturer, feel at liberty to engage in uncivil behaviour when the lecturer is a black person.

If you have a black lecturer, those white guys do not listen, and they make silly comments thinking that they cannot be taught by a black person. (6)

If a tutor doesn't get something right and he happens to be black, (they see him as) sort of 'stupid' and they make a racial slur out of it. (9)

If there are whites and there is an African tutor, they like to challenge. (19)

Interactions between students are often painful and embarrassing for those who are on the receiving end of assumptions of inferiority. One student recounted having to work in a racially mixed group for an assignment. He told the group how he was excluded from meetings, his suggestions ignored or talked down, less significant tasks were assigned to him. The words with which he summed up the experience were unforgettable: "It was the worst experience of my life." A number of such experiences were recounted. Black students are very aware of the pressure for such expectations to be self-fulfilling, and how threatening it is if they challenge such deep-seated assumptions of racial superiority.

You find people with fixed mindsets coming to a tutorial group and they don't want to mix with students because they are black. It doesn't matter how good those black students are, it doesn't matter how much they can contribute. Actually it comes as an embarrassment to see a black student say something that they can't say, or knowing something that they don't know. It's like you are exposing them, you are exposing that fallacy that blacks aren't good enough. (10)

Students articulated perceptions of 'ganging up,' suspicions of insincerity and window dressing, and concomitant racial distrust.

Sometimes they forget there are black students or black tutors .. they say anything, but once you come in and contribute, they become careful. We are actually there to counter what they are going to say. It is not very reassuring to think about what they will do left on their own. (10)

A number of examples were given of perceived double standards, of different interpretations being applied to the same behaviour, or different sets of procedures or expectations being applied. A case in point is the perception that standards in the residences apply differently to black and white, and only along black and white lines. Students are sensitive to what are perceived to be echoes of the past.

Kilindini guys were meant to have meals in Tugwell, and suddenly we are having to carry passes. We associated the green pass system to the pass laws of the earlier days. So this was like influx control. Apart from the Kilindini guys, there was Groote Schuur, and the same system was not being imposed on them. This shows me that the residential system itself is building the segregation. So it is entrenched, you know in phantom desegregation. (10)

It used to be purely white, then it became purely black, and now it's sort of mixed ... introduced white people, and on doing that conditions improved so much. They have revamped the place—now it's rather nice. (18)

Racially informed negative feelings are not seen to be limited to white students, either.

I have not experienced racism so acutely—to some extent I feel that the black guys here in SA are struggling with bitterness in their hearts. Because it's not all the white guys that are bad, some black guys are just as bad as well. (10)

It is also clear that in a culture of racial hierarchy, everyone is affected.

You're too black for the whites, and you're too white for the blacks ... you kind of feel like you're in the middle. The blacks think "sho's too white to be black" and the whites are thinking "you don't belong here, how come you're wanting to fit in here". You compromise a lot and unfortunately this is the reality—that's what my grandmother said when I got here—the first week I was so frustrated I cried. And when I called home, my grandmother told me that this is the world and this is the way things will be out there. This is what you will be confronted with, so you just have to deal with it. And there will be people who like you, there will be people who won't like you. And if a person doesn't like you because you're black, or she thinks you're too white to be black or too black to be white, that's your problem, as long as you're coping and you're doing the right things. (7)

Sex

The dynamics of sexism generate the same insecurities and lack of confidence that black students complain of in relation to race—these can easily be misinterpreted as a lack of ability.

We would know what to say but we'd just didn't feel comfortable enough saying it—and the men in that class would volunteer, and we know that they are talking absolute rubbish but we wouldn't counter it in any way. (12)

Sexism is also understood to be expressed in uncivil behaviour on the part of men students when the lecturers are women.

With female lecturers in class the women tend to gain confidence and power in the class and they participate more and the men participate less. Or sometimes the men, the male students, challenge the female lecturers. That's what I've noticed when a female lecturer is taking the class, the men feel very challenged and insecure, and they suddenly start—both black and white actually, I've noticed—they feel the need to assert themselves. Sometimes on very stupid issues (12)

Women students have difficulty challenging sexist behaviour when their lecturers are men.

The lecturer never really gave you a chance to explain your work, and he always called us by collective names, he would never refer to us as individuals ... the Zimbabwean woman this, the Zimbabwean woman that(17)

With male students you'd find that he was only too happy to encourage them and he seemed to have higher expectations from them, and for you he's already decided to close you off, and there was no way of getting further. (17)

Students reported incidents of intimidation through 'put-downs' when they do attempt to challenge sexism in academic staff.

One lecturer whom I work with ... whenever I take issue with him on gender questions, I'm a feminazi. Which I don't particularly appreciate. (11)

Sexual harassment occurs predominantly from men to women, but intersections with other social fault lines of power, can confuse or complicate the issue: such as a black man harassing a white woman, or a female lecturer harassing a male student. Many men treat the issue of sexual harassment as a joke. If it is not veiled in apparent flattery, it may be downright aggressive behaviour through bullying or insults.

There were some male lecturers who got a bit too sort of friendly with the female students and those people had a reputation for that. I think that some of them were dealt with [by] UCT disciplinary committee. (13)

As with race, sexism can be used to undermine the lines of authority between lecturers and students.

One of my students gave me a card that said: 'It's not just your body I'm after, but it will do for a start' which made me very, very angry, because in my opinion that's way over the line. (11)

The intersections of race and sex perpetuate particular dynamics of exclusion, and sites of contested meanings.

I don't experience the black male students the same way as I do the female students. I don't think the female students get away with so much—they're not as arrogant, so I think their experience is different. Just as I think a white female student's experience of varsity is really different to a black male student. (15)

As with other issues, it is not always easy (or expedient) for students to distinguish claims of cultural integrity and 'cultural' practices which have no place in a

democratic institution, diverse or otherwise. This student was grappling with intersections of culture and gender based violence.

Let's look at the issue of abuse, in African traditions women have accepted to be abused, but in these discussions people don't often acknowledge this ... they say "no this is not on, this is abuse". Lecturers are trying to promote a society where abuse does not see a future... because in South Africa abuse is mainly on women. Many lecturers do not acknowledge that abuse is part of some cultures. (3)

Once again the pattern emerges that those who are marginalised along the axis of gender have to develop ways of protecting themselves and rising above unequal processes. While some may well be successful, this burden entails additional energy, personal attrition, and a waste of creative energy.

As a black woman in this institution it's very difficult, and I had to overcome a lot of things and become a lot more aggressive and a lot more vocal in order to be heard and for people to treat me with respect. It was a real struggle. (17)

None of the students in the workshops mentioned sex issues in the residences.

Sexual orientation

The centring of masculinities at UCT is nowhere more apparent than the convergence of attitudes and behaviours towards people with a homosexual orientation.

A lot of work needs to be done at UCT, because it is a particular kind of identity that is constructed in such a way that you are a threat to them. (9)

To some men every female is like a potential sex partner, and then they have this trouble making the transition if you are never going to be their sex partner. (9)

Unlike the heterosexual students, gay students do not have the safety net of being regarded as 'normal' or 'just like the rest of us.'

With gay people, your community is not given until you are out. (9)

Students spoke with a great deal of emotion about feeling fear and alienation in a context where homophobic jokes, for example, are regarded as quite acceptable. Stereotypes of gay people tend to be vicious.

Anything about gay people's health ... there's the assumption that if you're gay you're riddled with sexually transmitted diseases and you're necessarily promiscuous. (9)

Because the 'normal' environment is experienced as hostile, coming out is not always regarded as an option. The problem is particularly acute in the residences, students reported.

I felt threatened. I felt I needed to get out of Smuts and be in a flat with accepting friends. It did a world of good. It was one of the best things I did. (9)

Homosexuals and lesbians often experience the brunt of homophobia through sexism and gender based violence. One lesbian lecturer was verbally assaulted by 'rape threats' from male students.

There have been an incredible number of guys who say ... "Oh, I know about you, and I want you, and I'll fuck you every day". She was at work—what does she say? (9)

Students are particularly vulnerable in the context of the lecturer-student relationship, where they have relatively little power to defend themselves.

For someone to be bringing you down with a fear you already have is very unfair, especially for a professional to be doing that, it's very unfair. (17)

This also applies to the curriculum, which exerts enormous power in an educational context. Visibility within the institution and more wide-spread acceptance are interconnected.

The last person to present the seminar was talking about his topic and so the lecturer said "well what area were you going to concentrate on" and he then responded that he was going to concentrate on student politics in the 1980s, and then he added the rider, sort of dropped it in very casually into the conversation, "ja, ... because my boyfriend was a student leader in the 1980s", and there was just a hush fell over the group ... we all talk pretty openly but he had never mentioned being gay before ... and suddenly in his own seminar he decided that he was sick of the fact that gay issues were never an issue ... put in a whole section on gay resistance and gay organisations. And you could see that for him it was an issue and that there had been no mention about gay or lesbian people in the rest of the course, and he felt that he needed to put it on the agenda. (12)

Solidarity from other students makes a difference.

The lecturer had started out explicitly homophobic ... not even a rational debate, like just rolling his eyes ... and it was nice that finally everyone was like we were all together. I thought it was going to be one of those things where I was going to take the issue up by myself, so it was quite nice. (9)

Most importantly, however, students expressed the need for strong institutional support to counter the dominant culture of intolerance and ignorance.

Need something like sexual harassment policy for gays and lesbians. You need to have somewhere to go and take a complaint, and an effective way of taking any issue up. Though the institutional culture to me is almost more a way of closing it than really taking it up. (9)

Because of the explicit focus on the body as subject matter, medical school is seen as one of the most important contexts in which subliminal issues of patriarchy and heterosexuality need to be addressed.

And there's this resistance of in vitro fertilisation and artificial insemination being offered to gay couples. It's almost as if they're cheating if they don't want to sleep with 'us'. There's resentment, you know, I don't know how to explain it. (9)

Nationality

UCT has expressed commitment to bringing in foreign students in order to increase its global participation. It is generally understood that part of UCT's future as an African university will lie in forging a common identity with other world-class universities in Africa. Sadly, xenophobia seems to be spreading fear and distrust

A friend said he was from Zimbabwe, and when he asked why someone else was from Zimbabwe he said, "There is a reputation here that you take our women, you take our jobs, you take all sorts of things, you bring crime, you bring AIDS". I think there is an element of xenophobia here which gives a twist to the perception of relationships. (10)

I stayed in two residences—they are both black residences. There is some form of segregation and they say if you put white students in a residence where they are few, they tend to move out. Basically they think about whites and black only. They forget that we are black Malawis, we are Xhosa South Africans, Sotho SA—what about us? We feel inferior because we don't speak the same languages, and many times we are feeling inferior. ... (Detailed description of negotiations around which television programmes should be watched in the residence)

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common rooms) ... So because of being divided into black and white, foreigners have been forgotten. (10)

The lack of a sense of belonging experienced by students from other African countries is clearly the result of a complex mix of dealing with xenophobia on the one hand and Eurocentrism on the other.

It was a place I had hoped would be another home for me. It was a place of total warfare where I had to defend my cultural values and yet go through without offending any person in the process. (10)

Physical Ability

The focus group that represented disabled students affirmed that the Disability Unit at UCT works hard to make the university accessible to disabled students. The need was expressed for the institution as a whole to back up the regulations that are introduced. It is not good enough, students felt, to have disabled parking bays when no one respects them—there needs to be adequate implementation of regulations.

My main fight has been having full access to exam venues and my parking bays. I have on many occasions had to stand up and say "Hi, you should not be parked there" even when they claim that they are only there for 5 minutes. It's you know, just not on. We've actually got the university to enforce the zero tolerance campaign towards the disabled bays and things along those lines. Especially during exam times, they make absolutely sure that where there are kids that are going into exams, there is a person from the Disability Unit at those exams making sure that it's accessible at the right times. (8)

Students felt that lecturers often gave up on students with disabilities before they had even started, which is very difficult when students are already having to contend with obstacles, not the least of which may be poor self-esteem.

There is a sense of inadequacy that the lecturers instil in them, and that is very debilitating. To know that they have a very low opinion of your own ability, and that's very demoralising. (8)

They experienced this to be especially true when lecturers knew getting them through the course would be more time-consuming. They attributed this to the highly competitive nature of the university, and the hierarchical attitudes which prevail.

There's a kind of intellectual hierarchy at this university ... students come at the bottom. For lecturers who are very high up the students are really not a priority, and they don't take an individual interest in students. Only students who are getting 70% or above have some special care. Those are really the only people who have any right to go and approach a lecturer for any kind of extra time. (8)

The by now familiar pattern is played out yet again: those who are not at the centre back down on themselves, and may retreat into behaviours which keep the vicious circle of advantage feeding on disadvantage spinning.

I used to just listen, listen, listen, and listen. In terms of asking questions I am feeling sceptical or afraid just to ask about the thing he or she was saying, so sometimes I abandon asking the question because of that. One lecturer ... I used to ask him questions after he had lectured, but he used to be negative to me so I just kept quiet. (8)

The pain in the following accusation needs no interpretation.

All I can suggest to my lecturers is to tolerate—I have not created myself like this, so when I don't understand something, it is a must that I ask a question from them. I think they are very selfish. They don't understand what they are really supposed to be doing here. They are supposed to be educating future leaders, business people, community workers, scientists, whatever ... this is such a major responsibility and they don't accept that. They have their own inadequacies and ignorance. It is not even discrimination, it is indifference and ignorance, and their awareness needs to be increased. It's a lack of humaneness. (8)

Religion

Where religion was mentioned, UCT was perceived as a liberal Christian environment where other religions were fairly invisible, and not afforded much respect. A simple indicator of this was food culture; again the residences were mentioned:

What clubs and societies dominate, in other words, what clubs and societies mostly do at lunch you would come to the conclusion that UCT is mainly a white, fundamentalist, Christian organisation. (14)

Take it in res, where they cater for you ... it's part of your res fees, but is there provision made for Halaal food? Is there provision made for the fact that Hindus don't eat beef or pork? Nothing. I don't think it costs much more to ensure that there's Halaal meat at the residence. ... We were stuck with eating cheese plates and fruit plates when other people were getting hot meals. (16)

Students from 'other' religions felt that the general institutional planning testified to an overall insensitivity to other belief systems and their expressions, such as religious holidays. Muslim students referred to difficulty in getting off for prayers on Friday afternoons, when lecturers seemed to have no awareness of their custom. A powerful example was of Eid coinciding with graduation ceremonies.

[UCT] probably never considered other cultures or religions because they don't think about these things overnight. They work 5 years ahead of time. They will probably justify it in some or other cost-effective management sort of way—latent discrimination. (16)

In one focus group Muslim women gave numerous examples of how they felt particularly stereotyped.

... in terms of being a woman, again I find that people see differences between religions ... people see the Muslim women as being at a disadvantage When I came here I found this girl asking me if I was Muslim as I do not wear the scarf ... and she told me "how come you are studying here" and she shocked me ... she thought that Muslim females stayed at home, cooked the food while waiting for their husbands to come ... a Muslim woman is seen as different, as a disadvantage. (5)

One woman explained that she had stopped wearing her scarf because she found people automatically assumed that she was 'fundamentalist', whereas it was just an ordinary expression of her background, as wearing a crucifix around her neck could be for a Christian. She was very angry at having to make this concession to what she experienced as simple ignorance.

I don't like it when people say she is wearing the scarf ... when you wear the scarf it doesn't mean that you are submissive. Religion is part of your life and the scarf doesn't say that you are a religious person, but I see a lot of girls when they come to UCT they leave the scarf behind because they don't want to be isolated from what is trendy, what is fashionable and the scarf is not trendy and fashionable. It is not actually an issue of religion but it is an issue

of fashion, fitting in and being a woman wanting to be in fashion. You don't have to be different ... that is why you change. (5)

In the same group, the Muslim women commented on finding white women students the most difficult group to deal with. An anecdote was told about a tutorial in which a video on Edward Said's *Orientalism* was shown. The white women students had a great deal to say about the oppression of (all) Muslim women. She and other Muslim students were supposedly part of the discussion, yet no one recognised that they were a cultural resource that could be consulted. They endured what they experienced as insufferable 'othering' in a class on a topic they knew well, yet the power of the norm was such that no one even recognised the dynamic as an example of *Orientalism*. She explained that the dilemma she and the other students experienced was if they spoke up in their defence, they would immediately be labelled as 'fundamentalist.' (An interesting discussion ensued about the way in which the Muslim women saw the white women on campus as trapped in patriarchy, which they cannot see). They felt that they, along with their faith, were lumped into a general, vague, and uninformed category of being 'backward'.

Class

Students expressed the conviction that a great source of division on campus had to do with money, and differences in economic means.

It's like you become ... discriminatory in a weird way because where previously it would have been race, I think, now it's class across the board. Especially in terms of the way students evaluate each other. It's clothes, fashion, trends and if you can afford to fit in ... Or if you can identify it and then merge. (12)

Who's going to America on that scholarship, he's not disadvantaged. We don't go on colour now, we are looking at the class level. That person has got a car, his or her parents are working. They are bosses, you see, but they are called disadvantaged. I believe that needs to also be transformed. (19)

They are really rich...and they wear really cool clothes...they have lots of money, they use their daddy's cellphone and mummy's car and they all stick together, and if you don't have bucks then you are just not part of the in-group. (5)

For those who saw beyond the obvious glamour and exhibitionism, the serious implications were lack of access to resources and materials for learning. For some, their ability to learn properly was undermined by lecturers who were insensitive to the range of economic backgrounds among the students, forgetting that many students struggle economically.

Money actually affects your academic performance ... and it's not a racial thing. What makes it sound racial is because of the history of our country ... but it's a more general student thing ... for some people it's more hectic than for others ... I have to work, so I don't have as much time to spend on my studies. It impacts on my performance to some extent. (18)

When projects are set and you're expected to travel ... all over Cape Town. Some people will hop in a car and go, and it'll be a difference between you hopping on several trains and walking around for hours in the sun, and at the end of the day, you will have less to show for it ... and you're exhausted and criticised, but the whole process should be recognised as

well. If the process is an issue, then they should set a project that doesn't require something or provide the transport. (17)

It costs so much money just to get through the course, to fork out additional funds on top of what you've paid, is tremendous and if you don't have those extra funds then it reflects badly on your work. The course should accommodate people from varying economic backgrounds as well. (17)

The new information technology and access to computers is a big issue among the students. It can tilt the balance between seeing yourself as a good student who is motivated to succeed, or giving in to financial obstacles which eventually have become too great a burden. While this remains unproblematised, the implicit message comes through that 'good' students are wealthy students, not necessarily hard-working ones.

Culturally, some people come from disadvantaged backgrounds—they can't afford computers and equipment which will help you to help your mind to develop ... the way that maybe the faculty wants you to. (4)

There are basic things in computers that you wouldn't know, they'd expect you to just go to the task. Do this and do this, and this is our first lesson and I don't know how to switch on a computer and I'm expected to know all these things because I'm supposed to—and I just hadn't—tough luck! (7)

Insensitivity to differences in social context can be simply crushing.

I submitted this handwritten essay, that I put my life and soul into researching ... The comment on the back of the essay was: Your essay should have been typed and a word count indicated. I don't have the resources of a computer or word-processor or even a typewriter. (16)

Conclusion

Interfacing childhood and adulthood, the university experience teaches, adjusts, and reinforces values that will ripple through the society as students take their places in future leadership positions. If the university environment gives positive and strong guidance in the values of diversity, and a respect for Africa and Africans, the students will reflect that later in their lives. It is sad that many students perceive it as a divided and alienating environment, where they scuttle into defensive groups, perpetuating apartheid values of exclusion, snobbery and 'snubbery'—values which can shape their identities in ways that do not help to heal our society.

Most people tend to remain isolated, purely from a cultural point of view. You can relate to people with a similar upbringing—it's not a matter of not accepting other cultural groups—but it's something, you've all got something in common. It's always interesting to meet people from a different background but it's more difficult to speak to them. (13)

For many students, the university also becomes a site of personal struggles—as their awareness became heightened to the social issues such as race and gender, they engaged with themselves to overcome the historic legacy that comes with their social positionalities. Some of these struggles indicate the healthy ways in which a diverse environment can challenge our student population in their personal growth.

UCT is a place where you're actually permitted to be yourself ... but I think it's highly permissive ... and yet you still sometimes ask yourself but I wouldn't be doing this at home ... it is just not on ... you see ... you would still look at people and think why are they doing it? But to some extent you actually see that they are actually permitted to do what they are doing... (3)

I never thought there was such ignorance, until you realise you know a little bit of stereotype but you actually know nothing. That these cultures are just incredibly intense and complex and very interesting. And it's also about respect, I now have—I had no idea that I could be so offensive to someone from another culture without even realising it—and now I can actually pay that person respect and hopefully have that respect paid to me in terms of my culture. I think that would be something that would enrich UCT, but how would they do that. It is surely up to the individual to find out for yourself. (15)

What UCT really doesn't need is that the manner in which diversity is (un)accommodated leaves students making statements such as this:

All I can say there are a lot of disillusion and disgruntlement ... people who basically feel their dreams are being shattered by the system. The institution should be a resource and centre of learning, and should make all who come here very comfortable. That desire and passion to study and learn something and achieve something should not at any stage be just extinguished by the system, because there are so many people out there—brilliant minds have just gone astray because of the damn system. It's sad. It is very sad, and it shouldn't be. That means the institution is not achieving its purpose. (16)

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

We examine more closely the interface between staff and students at UCT, and what students feel about it.

Staff-Student Divide

Perhaps unsurprisingly, a theme that emerged quite frequently as informing students' experiences of studying at UCT, is that students and staff at UCT are felt to be on the opposite ends of a divide. Students reported that they are not taken seriously, that their needs are trivialised, and that staff—academic, administrative and executive—are too busy to take a genuine interest in their needs.

I can't believe it, when I find someone who treats me with respect. (12)

From the students' accounts, the culture could probably best be described as one of benign neglect. Students report feeling that they are regarded as something of a nuisance in a context in which they are actually the central 'business'.

If we are asking the people at the top to change it for us, I don't think it is ever going to happen. And I don't think they are concerned, and they don't care really ... because students come and go. (18)

You've got lecturers that have the passion to change things, then you've got older lecturers who are more interested in networking and finding a place for themselves among the scholarly international circle, as opposed to teaching and being in the classrooms. (11)

Ja, I've found this a perennial problem at UCT, and even in groups that are supposed to be actively transforming things. There is such a propensity to sit and talk. And yes, there's a real need to clarify issues and find out what people really want, and not just to be gung ho and blaze ahead and impose everything on people. But you can have the greatest policy documents about important values at UCT and it is important, but as somebody who has spent the whole year talking, I desperately tried to prompt action and sometimes it has been

misguided, but you've got to be seen to be doing stuff—and that is just a huge problem at every level at UCT. The sort of let's form a sub-committee and report back next time and not actually take a bloody decision. (14)

Time and again, the students singled out as the most important issue around diversity at UCT to be the role models from the staff working in the institution, particularly the lecturers.

Lecturers should always remember that the fish stinks from the head. If they stink, their class is bound to stink as well, one way or the other. Therefore they should play a positive role in making sure that students do break the racial barriers because if they themselves are part of the game, it creates such a problem. This guy in Economics asked if the government runs out of money, why can't the government print more money, and the lecturer looked at this black guy and said 'Tell me, are you from Zimbabwe?' Everybody just packed up, and obviously they thought it was funny. It wasn't positive. What did it show us as students? They should play that role that brings about good change you know, to the students. (10)

Teaching Staff

Many students felt that teaching staff did not always show much interest in the teaching part of their job descriptions. They saw it as a question of how academics identify.

It's like, our lecturers, they need to understand, because there are those black guys from disadvantaged backgrounds, and the way they speak, they must try to make it clearer, at least for the first few weeks. They must try to teach—not like 'I'm a lecturer, I'm lecturing'. They must tell themselves that they are teachers. (7)

Certain faculties have a very odd attitude towards actually teaching the students. They felt it was the students' job to learn that they could go through the work, but they weren't actually prepared to explain what they had actually done. We've had the same material taught to us by engineers as it was taught to us by the maths people, and suddenly we've actually understood what these guys were on about. (8)

Some felt that difficulties they experienced in the classroom had to do not so much with lecturers' ability to handle difference, as with general teaching orientation and skills.

The main factor underlying the competency of lecturers is they are not trained to be lecturers. They are scientists or sort of English professors, or I don't know what else you would use as a different word for scientist. But they are academics, they are not trained to be lecturers. (13)

There are examples of lecturers that students perceive to be making genuine effort, and it is the effort which is appreciated, rather than never making mistakes.

You get the odd lecturer who is really good and who really goes out of their way to help students and stuff, but people don't seem to be that interested in their students. They seem to be very interested in their own academic work (12)

I found both those professors to be very good. In fact ... to even—many times to go out of their way to say things that would be inclusive—I understand what your background is, I understand your language—so I've seen an effort to be inclusive. (2)

Many lecturers were, however, perceived to have attitude problems—speaking and acting in ways that one does not expect from a mature person or a role model. The racism in the following example is really shocking.

Sometimes you ask something and she actually thinks this is quite pathetic. "How can you ask such a thing?", and she's like "You take this one and you add it to this one, my dear, do you understand *that*?" It makes you feel inadequate and they really don't have to do that. (7)
[This student demonstrated how the lecturer wrote 1+1=2 on the board in bold letters. He said he has subsequently NEVER asked a question in ANY lecture again, in his ENTIRE time at UCT]

In a relationship of unequal power, students have to be very grounded and confident not to internalise the put-downs, and to stand up for themselves.

"You're students and we're academics and you're still trying and we've already arrived", kind of thing, and "you're just not worthy to challenge us or to approach us with certain needs", or whatever. I think it's very very alienating. I think you really have to know what your rights are as a student and as a person at the university and those rights are often not conveyed by the academic staff—in fact they rarely are conveyed by anyone. It's only because I felt that I was involved in so many different things that I know what my rights are but many students don't. Particularly those coming from very small isolated backgrounds of a very different culture. They just get lost and minority groups, like people with disabilities, they are just squashed by the university. (12)

There seems to be little recourse for students, and complaints procedures were not seen to be effective, like chickens placing their trust in Nando's.

On a number of occasions we've complained to lecturers but then the problem with that is that they are the problem. (17)

At the same time, students are the first to acknowledge inspired teachers, and they know the influence can last a very long time.

... very interesting is the amount of people who say "this course was the only course ...", or "this lecture was the only lecture in my entire university career of 3 or 4 years that has actually made me think, or that actually stimulated me". I have experienced the exact same thing, and I think it's really quite sad that you can spend three years at a university and there's only one lecturer or two lecturers or even only one or two courses which you found challenged you and stimulated you, and were actually amazing. (14)

Course content

More than reflecting the values and attitudes of the people teaching a course, the course content also stands for institutional values. Course content can be taken as a type of formal statement on where the university positions itself.

I did my first three years in international politics. I did British and European history for A levels. I came here and did the politics of Europe and international politics, so it's as if there's no international politics in Africa. We don't learn these things. So the institution doesn't really help in trying to change people's minds. I wanted to do something on Africa. Apart from Mamdani's course that he was offering, I had to go to Stellenbosch of all places. I thought, eh, times are queer. (10)

Given the university's positioning of itself as a World-class African University, it is to be expected that there were frequent questions raised about course content related to contemporary Africa—from conflicting perspectives. A measure of polarisation between students from opposite ends of the historical societal fault lines was evident. Some black voices:

The Introduction to Africa course which was actually an insult to Africans ... very old textbooks written by European writers and there is no justification for somebody using a book published in 1967 when ideas over time in 1999 have changed. (10)

A lot of Einsteins in my class aren't even aware of half the issues as to why the Constitution came about, why certain rights are protected. They have no background as to that, so you can't really identify that and have some really good discussions. Many of them don't even know what apartheid looked like when it was formally implemented in South Africa, and many of them don't know about the struggle and the fact that in the 1980s there were two sets of emergencies that were passed. They know nothing. (12)

There was a white lecturer who was teaching such subjects about racism, apartheid, slavery ... from what I could view as an objective point of view, condemning slavery and racism and so forth. But white students complained. Some of them walked out of one of his lectures saying 'Why do you have to make us feel embarrassed by our background? Why are you actually insulting us?' They are not prepared to look at issues differently. (10)

Some white voices:

They would say it was a religious course ... I found that a lot of it was being shoved down your throat. I didn't register for a politics course but yet I got into the politics of South Africa big time, and it was really rather irritating having it force fed down, and the usual—you know, the struggle, the fight for freedom and rights. It's really such old news now that I just give up on it. (15)

Some students noticed positive attempts to Africanise.

... made a conscious effort to Africanise, I mean they compare it for instance like traditional praise—things like praise poetry, and there's the Xhosa tradition. I mean they've made a conscious effort to locate it in Africa. (14)

More frequently the refrain was, from all faculties, that Africa did not really have traditions or knowledge that was worthy of study ...

We learn nothing about African businesses. (18)

I found in philosophy they used to have a course on African philosophy which was absolutely squashed by the university, and now we do purely Greek, European, English. (14)

You'd think there had been no architecture in Africa at all, ... making space which is Afrocentric, you can't tell someone to refer to Le Corbusier. (18)

Teaching practice

Diversity was not seen to be a value in either teaching methods or teaching practices. Black students were aware of the lack of inclusivity of different cultural values.

There are distinct needs in terms of language issues, but not only language. Once in a practical exam, the student had to ask his age from a gentleman who was there acting as model, and she as a 21-year old asking a 26 year old black male was completely unacceptable. She could have failed. (11)

They need to go back to the drawing boards and reconsider their methods of evaluation of students, as well as curricula ... and don't produce products that are obsolete. That's basically what I think of some of the graduates that get out of this institution. (18)

Many students also felt that the additional barriers in language, culture or educational background should be considered in teaching practice. Poor instructions, feedback, evaluation criteria etc, or lecture room acoustics, affect such students much more critically than students who had the advantage of being able to depend on their cultural context.

It's difficult to know what is expected of you ... you never know how they gauge those marks, there's no sort of marking scale they have. You don't get feed-back for why you got this mark, you just get a mark. (17)

... getting essays back. We've had weeks and weeks—I mean, we waited months and months to get our essays back. I mean the admin is pretty grim. (14)

In a racially charged atmosphere the request for additional care is of necessity contested. A measure of white 'backlash' emerged in some responses.

We all have to work and why does he just get pushed through because of his skin colour. I think it's a slight problem on campus as well. Is that the pushing through, who's right and what's wrong, or politically correct and, you know. (15)

Resistance to accommodating other languages and cultures sometimes reaches self-defeating proportions, as is shown in this example of clinical practice.

The student speaks English very well, but then there's a Xhosa-speaking client, and they don't accommodate the client's needs. It's not seen as a problem. It goes for Afrikaans as well. The system doesn't accommodate that. They will as a favour in our department, but they are ill-equipped to deal with that. (11)

The incident described above, as well as the insight below point to the necessity for taking into account the social context of the teaching environment. In order to do justice to the education of individual students, they cannot be separated from the social context that shapes them. This is a basic requirement for an educational institution in a multi-cultural context.

Teaching means being on a level with your students. It means understanding what the context of student life is all about and changing the way you teach according to that, and then hopefully affecting curricula and incorporating African into that. (11)

Dealing with the Administration

In any environment housework needs to be done—at the university the administration is responsible for the day to day running of the institution. The administrative staff invariably have more influence on the learning environment than they are credited with.

If you have got to deal with Admin ... basic stuff like finding out factual details, it's a real mission at UCT. Always like missioning from one office to the other and nobody knows what's going on half the time. Maybe it's partly because it's the Faculty—I am in Humanities and things are really in a state of flux and nobody seems to know what the hell is going on. So it's kind of frustrating on that level—on a practical level—and if you don't know how to work the system, it's very difficult and I think people can easily get lost on the wayside if you don't know the right people to talk to. Not particularly supportive in that sense as an institution. (12)

There is no overriding culture and the problems that people have in our focus group are not to do with those cultures, but to do with administrative and bureaucratic procedures. (14)

You get treated so badly, or you walk into a Faculty Office—you walk into Commerce and there's no specific person at Reception ... there's supposed to be but there's hardly ever anybody there or even into the Sports Centre and into the Sports Administration. You walk in and somebody's on the phone or if somebody's like eating their lunch or talking to another secretary, they won't even look up, they'll just carry on talking, they'll ignore you. And then eventually they do come and ask you if you need anything and they've got this terrible attitude and I think there's a very negative kind of feeling. (12)

Some apparently trivial administrative issues can have lasting consequences for individuals—like being paid on time, or getting a bursary for study. These issues have an impact on the 'goodwill' people feel towards an institution.

The basic problem is that there are so many steps to getting paid and once the process has been started it is difficult to divert it or change it or find out what's happening. Personally whoever is authorising the payment has to find out all these things, and those have to be sent down to Bremner, and then Bremner has three or four processing phases and if it's running, it can work smoothly, but I've found that in a large number of cases, you can end up with people being paid three or four months late. (14)

She wasn't even told that she had won this bursary though her department was informed. They were told you have a student in this subject and she has qualified for this bursary. There was a letter for her that they were supposed to give her. She had been dealing with the department for at least 3 or 4 months, going in every day, registering, asking for help, picking up essays, or dropping off all sorts of things. Basically the secretaries knew who she was. There was a letter sitting there for her, which had been put in some mailbox somewhere. She'd never received it, and she was about to lose a lot of money and she couldn't afford to lose that money. (14)

There is, of course, always the other side, which also needs to be acknowledged.

On the other hand, I feel sympathy for the administrative staff at the university because a lot of students do have really bad attitudes, and they expect to be served pronto and they treat people badly, because there are a lot of students like that, so I sympathise. But there also isn't a culture of good service. (12)

TRANSFORMATION—ENTERING A DISCOMFORT ZONE

It requires intelligence, imagination and courage—all ingredients for inspired thinking—to view the world from a different perspective to the one that makes you feel most comfortable. For an educational institution to neglect to incorporate this capacity represents a blight on its pedagogical mission, and may even be viewed as a form of abuse.

If you are a black student then you have to work three times as hard as a white student in order to get through. (18)

UCT still very much represents the past ... they still have people in pigeonholes (18)

I think part of being educated at a university, you want to be educated about the rest of your country. I think the white people are leaving university and still not being at all educated in what the majority of people know about—white people don't know about. (15)

In terms of disability, and in particular, race, especially the whole issue of foreigners at the university, people have a lot of prejudices but they do keep them to themselves. They won't interact with people who they consider to be 'the other', but they won't come out directly and be up front about how they feel. My feeling is that people who come from different cultural backgrounds, particularly disadvantaged areas, disadvantaged educational backgrounds, economic backgrounds, people who speak a different language, I think those people are the most alienated. (8)

The students look to the university authorities for guidance, whether they admit it or not.

If the university actually wants to get involved in creating some kind of consciousness I really believe they should set an example. Recently where the university has set probably the worst example I have ever seen is that recently they decided to out-source work, without it,

seemingly to me, consulting with the staff. The Senate seemed to decide this on its own. And then they decided that people—for example, in our department I met one person who's been working there for 40 years, something like that. Suddenly this person had to decide, no there's nothing he can do, he has to go, wasn't offered a job. Only later on was there information that the out-sourcing company might offer these people jobs. How was this setting an example for the students and the people who are working there? This is not how you deal with people. This is not how you deal with social issues. These people really deserve more respect than that and this is what the university is doing. If this was where I am getting my examples from—uh-uhn, that's not healthy, I'm sorry. That was really terrible. (14)

A view was articulated that students look forward to a university which has a more inclusive mindset.

It should be a culture which accommodates diverse and complex cultures, like for instance we are coming from different backgrounds so really we cannot say we want to come and exercise our different cultures here at UCT to their fullest capacity, but institutional culture, there should be a culture of learning where all cultures will be accommodated so that all of us can feel comfortable. (19)

It would also require addressing the institutionalised asymmetry which students perceive.

... we joined Street Law, and they sent us into white schools. We decided to take UCT's Street Law to black schools, but no support from anyone in the department. No white administrator in that year attended any workshop at a Cape Flats school except for a white foreigner. (16)

Real inclusivity in classes would involve making speaking spaces for every student, and attempts to create mutual understanding about cultures so stereotypes can be overcome. Students felt that such learning would best occur through personal interaction.

Most of the lecturers are white and there is probably a way of thinking. ... you could never understand because he can only connect in the way white people think. If lecturers interacted more with the black students and just try and understand where they are coming from, try to figure out what they are saying. (18)

Students are able to identify learning experiences where they have been challenged to recognise the systems of exclusion that need to be addressed.

There are obviously a lot more white lecturers than black lecturers, and I remember on the odd occasion I was lectured by black lecturers, I did actually sit up and notice. I think again purely because for me in high school I had never been lectured by any black teachers and as a result it was like "Wow I'm being lectured by a black lecturer". But after the initial "Oh OK this is a novel concept" it didn't make any difference to my response to the lecturers or how I looked at them after the first few seconds "Oh gee, they're not white" kind of thing. You just get used to it. (13)

Crucial to this process of achieving a more balanced, culturally diverse environment is addressing the staff-student cultural imbalance, and bringing in a more representative academic staff.

I've had largely white male lecturers and you know, as well-intentioned they may be, and often they are not particularly aware, no one's going to get any real experience of diversity. You can talk about it endlessly but you have to have it demonstrated. (14)

When asked, students seemed to think that the challenges the university faces can be met, provided they are properly and openly acknowledged, and honestly addressed.

There's always numerous sectors and numerous groups and the university is very fragmented. That's why I think within a particular group you have a certain learning culture, a certain social culture which is usually very different from another group. I think there are similarities but I think that we definitely have a—the word multi—you know, multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-attitudinal university. (12)

It's a long-term process, and it won't happen maybe when we're here, but I think that all bodies from the SRC down should start having training for transformation. It begins at small levels, the little things, people pulling together. You know, little by little. (18)

CONCLUSION

Transformation requires effort. Previously taken-for-granted cultural signifiers such as language and jokes now need work. It can no longer be assumed that people understand the words that are used, let alone cultural nuances or a sense of humour. Meanings and intentions have become a potential quagmire. No wonder many students seek security in sticking with the familiar in their 'own' groups.

We do draw identity boundaries for ourselves; we notice similarity and difference; we look for role models. In a balanced, culturally diverse environment, these processes are not a source of pain for some, and unreflecting ease for others; it is not a climate which buoys up some and shrivels up others. Many of the concerns and issues raised by the students echo those that were mentioned in the staff workshops (Ismail, 2000). This means there appears to be a broad consensus amongst people invested in transformation about what to tackle.

In the next chapter we look at the suggestions from students on how to help the transformation of UCT's institutional culture.

CHAPTER 5 STUDENTS OFFER SUGGESTIONS

In this chapter we complete the issues that were raised in the focus groups by listing suggestions made by the respondents in the workshops.

As the preceding chapter has shown, many students were well able to identify in which ways the management of diversity at UCT was not working for them. The inevitable question which arises is what is to be done to create a more equitable environment for the diverse student population. Each focus group was asked, as a concluding question, what advice / suggestions they had for dealing with the problems they had raised, particularly in terms of their relationships with lecturing staff. This section gives an account of those comments.

STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The students in each workshop discussed their recommendations. These are presented below.

Group 1 emphasised one of the frustrations that is often present in a diverse environment—power discrepancies. For students, one of the major ways in which the institutional culture 'pinches' is that they feel trivialised within the system. They would like to have more access to people with decision-making power.

Group 2 perceived the culture at UCT to be very Eurocentric. They thought efforts could be made to bring people together during classes, even though some classes are very big. They wanted to see more social events organised, especially for students who were not local. They felt the social clubs and activities were too exclusive. They also thought that people should learn an indigenous African language.

It takes a great deal of work. Even in a conversation I had, and it's been really rich and rewarding, talking to one guy who's doing this language, and his background is in maths. We should all have to learn an African language, but it takes some work. Just because understanding... you don't have a common background—you have to ask them to explain things, because you don't know—and it takes more work.

In **Group 3** an interesting discussion regarding cultural values took place. It centred on the definitions of woman abuse, and how 'disadvantaged' was seen to be synonymous with being black and inadequate. Other stereotypes noted were seeing black people who were quiet as having language inabilities. They recommended that people should be made more aware of the need to examine accepted meanings in a diverse environment.

Group 4 focused on the advantages of being taught in smaller groups. They believed that diversity could be addressed more constructively through various techniques such as peer teaching. They also felt that there was a better opportunity for the lecturers to know the students, for the students to get to know each other, as well as providing a safer space for shy students to speak up.

I can't see how they could be sensitive to diversity when there's a class of 200 you know. Because some classes are really big. But when it comes to smaller groups, that's when someone should actually be behind, just looking at people and look at the individual and where they're coming from. It's easier with a smaller group.

Group 5 felt that change needed to be accelerated, while patience and sensitivity to language and culture should be nurtured. They regarded UCT as having a culture which rewarded wealth, and were aware of how gender structured women's oppression. They recommended that some way should be sought to make sure that in-groups get dispersed.

In **Group 6** students were very aware of the race and gender distribution among lecturers, and felt it should change. They also felt that 'streaming' was only intended for black students. They felt that ways should be sought to prevent special educational needs from becoming divisive.

Group 7 focused on differences: between school and university; between first and second / third language speakers. They noted how people played differences to their advantage—black students take advantage of some lecturers' naïveté, languages were used to some people's disadvantage, and poor handling of diversity led to a silencing of certain groups. They also drew attention to the divisions within the black African student body. They argued for a more nuanced understanding of diversity on campus.

In **Group 8** the students focused on disability. They used special parking bays as an example of how regulations need to be enforced if they are to be meaningful. They found that lecturers were indifferent to teaching and lacking in tolerance where special needs were concerned. They felt that lecturers need to understand service orientation as part of their profession.

Group 9 believed the institutional culture presented role models that were teaching homophobia.

Sometimes I fight every point, and sometimes I just don't have the energy any more and I just leave it, I find it actually makes a difference if you take the issue up, 'cause if you leave it, people think 'this is the way it is'.

They wanted a sexual harassment policy for gays and lesbians, and in particular felt that much education was needed around gay / lesbian health issues in Health Sciences faculty. They felt that the institution supports a 'rape ideology' continuum, by allowing lecturers to get away with extreme homophobia, and that this needed to be addressed.

They suggested that the integration of groups was a positive way to come to terms with difference.

One of our lecturers in first year did a great "meet the class" sort of thing. He would purposefully integrate groups to get a totally balanced racial and gender mix. Which was great because you were forced to do projects with people that you ordinarily would not have done with them of free choice.

Group 10 drew attention to the way in which differences were drawn between 'locals' versus 'foreigners'. They noted that lecturers should set the example for non-discriminatory behaviour. They emphasised the necessity for UCT to become more consciously Africa-centred.

This lecturer (I think he was Nigerian) asked simple questions about other African countries and people just didn't know anything. It was a third year course, and I really think something needs to be done about the curriculum. There is a need for us to know about things that are happening in Africa, and we just don't get that in any course. It's either Europe or America.

This group also felt that transformation could not occur unless there was a more pervasive commitment to change on the part of all staff. They felt that large portions of the staff did not have their hearts in it, and directly or indirectly sabotaged genuine change.

Senior management are talking about changing UCT when everybody else is not doing anything about it. They are actually blocking a process of change. They are not helping the situation by maintaining their thinking as they do now. (10)

They emphasised the need to recruit staff from Africa.

The staffing situation has to change, because UCT is able to change that. I understand that it is difficult to change the mindset of people. Someone who is a very old lecturer ... can't change. But the best way is to increase the number of black lecturers, but blacks from other countries if there is a skill requirement in that department. I think they need to get expertise from where it is needed and from the right areas, because I think location governs one's knowledge as well. (10)

The women making up **Group 11** focused on sexual harassment, second language policies, and inappropriate course content. They felt the university was extremely male-centred. They did not, however, believe that Africanisation would necessarily improve the prevalent sexism. They felt that a great deal more needed to be done to expose how pervasive patriarchy is in the university system.

In **Group 12** the students noted the extent of male white domination in the staff, and how it affects teaching attitudes and practices. They believed there was a need for a contract between staff and students to ensure a more student-centred approach.

It would be quite useful to have a code of conduct, or almost a contract. Honours students are always complaining about their supervisors not having enough time for them, so the idea of a contract which you sign so you actually say that this is what your responsibilities and rights are. Something like that would be quite useful, so obviously you have to follow instructions as a student and try to get things in on time, and then your lecturer has a responsibility at the same time to assist you with queries, get your stuff back in the same semester, marked—those kinds of rights and responsibilities clarify things like that.

Like the other groups, they suggested that staff should be required to be more competent in dealing with diversity. They were adamant that this is in the interests of the future.

Communication and organisation. Communication and an open mind and tolerance. Trying to understand where different people are coming from—an attitude. I think that this is a problem with most lecturers is that they are not aware of the awesome responsibility they have in developing future leaders and of developing people who are going to go out into the country or into the world. And if they had that kind of sense of that responsibility they won't be so blasé, so cynical, so limited in what they give. (12)

In **Group 13** some people felt that things will change of their own accord.

Let it be. Things will come right.

Others stressed that they wanted to see the fulfilment of an African world-class university, with the emphasis on becoming 'world-class' through fully claiming an African identity.

If I go overseas to another university, I would like to say, ja, I'm from Africa, I'm from an African university ... just from the patriotism side more than anything else. In the same way that Americans will come over and they are so proud that they are from America. It's nice to think that if you come from UCT, you're proud you're from Africa.

They also spoke about fostering respect between staff and students.

Like the previous group, **Group 14** thought that getting used to diversity will take time. They were critical of an institutional culture that did not take students seriously as adults capable of critical thinking.

UCT essentially has a schoolroom atmosphere still. I mean all the information is one way, all the authority is one way. It is a top-down institution and the question of student autonomy, like students actually thinking for themselves and arranging things ahead of time, these are important issues that need to be addressed.

They felt that the orientation courses were too short to have an impact on students, and recommended that more group work interaction be encouraged.

People come to the university thinking in a specific way and are intolerant and not open-minded and are completely narrow-minded or set in their ways. I don't think that a one-week orientation programme is going to change anything or be of any kind of permanent lasting

If you go away on a workshop and you start socialising with people, that's when opinions can change and people do kind of open up a bit more. Once you start interacting with people.

They supported the vision of creating a world-class African university, but emphasised that this is less likely to be achieved as long as the university models itself and its curricula on universities that do not share an African cultural base.

You need to have options to study issues that are topical in Africa. In five years time there will have been a major transformation of the demographics and the employment at UCT, possibly of the demographics of the people they are taking in because hopefully then the output from schools will be more equitable.

Guard against UCT becoming a clone of some overseas university. Basically a small part of America in Africa.

They recognised the importance of symbolism for creating a new image of UCT.

I just think formally they haven't quite given up their old persona even in terms of things that might be fairly superficial, but I think quite important—like symbolism. I mean the statues ... still around—Rhodes at the rugby field. In that way the outward image is that it's actually not given up the old cultures.

One student found information regarding courses important for making decisions about a career.

I was very relieved to find that someone had arranged a guideline of things I should do in order to become a computer engineer, and it's not cast in stone because there are electives that you can choose. Basically I was able to choose the things that I would like to do, while still going in the general direction where I would hope to eventually become qualified for something.

In **Group 15** they commented on how they perceived the values represented by institutional rituals such as Rag. In becoming self-reflective and self-critical, university should, they believed, be able to transform such rituals, and develop greater sensitivity and inclusivity.

This group also felt that students should have more recourse within the university structures.

You can actually speak to [lecturers]—communicate in some way. The average student won't actually be able to speak to the policy makers at UCT. And for student input to reach policy level, it's gone through a whole lot of different committees, a whole lot of different decision-making bodies, and by the time it reaches the top, there's nothing left of what was wanted. (15)

The students in **Group 16** were concerned with the racial polarisation into black versus white, leaving coloured students in a marginalised position. They expressed concern that these processes of centring and marginalisation that happen at UCT then continue into the world outside. They also emphasised that the institution needs to take cognisance of disruptions which are symptomatic of deeper troubles.

Things are going to blow up at UCT because they have projected this image to the outside world that it's a hunky-dory place. As soon as something happens like a march on Jameson steps, it's always swept under the covers—the outside world mustn't know about that. If UCT wants to reform they must take into account people's honest views, and if it means you have to swear to express yourself, then so be it ... they have to do a job and transformation must occur.

People in **Group 17** expressed concern that when students experienced problems with their lecturers there was nowhere to turn. They suggested somebody, probably like a public protector, who could take up issues on their behalf.

It happened that there was another lecturer who actually took my side during one particular incident ... so if there can be a person who can address problems, just in general, who could chase up on them, that would be a plus point.

They felt that not enough awareness existed among teaching staff of how evaluation systems have their own underlying assumptions. They felt that when people come from different places and different cultures, it is important that the

criteria for evaluation are preferably negotiated, but certainly clearly expressed, so that no one is disadvantaged by a lack of taken-for-granted contextual knowledge.

When you're tackling any problem, it's putting down your intentions, so that at the end of the day you have something to judge your progress against. It should be a collaboration between staff and students. Obviously the staff will have the benefit of experience behind them, and so they'll have something to put on the table, and students will have the benefit of actually having to go through the process, so they'll have something to put on the table. Those things should be married to a system that works for both.

The students in **Group 18** had a great deal to say about the way forward. They expressed the need for 'third culture building' that contains elements from all diverse groupings, so that everybody recognises something of themselves. Once again, the need for educating lecturers to become more grounded in Africa was highlighted.

A black guy comes into this institution of learning, and they walk into a place where ... as though they were in private schools. There's a different culture of learning in those schools. There's a culture gap, and we need to build a bridge between the two, so we have some kind of culture which can be all-embracing.

If you are not educated about other people's cultures ... which most of these lecturers don't know about. They pretend they know, but they don't ... how long have they been in this country? They have never learned Xhosa, Zulu, stuff like that.

They emphasised that world-class did not have to be synonymous with Eurocentric.

Learning which need not be Eurocentric. We want to be learning in a way with the rest of the world, like taking into account technology, and ways of learning the truth. We can encompass African culture like that.

They felt that the university, as a leading tertiary institution, should be able to manage skills of living and working with diversity in a way that is exemplary.

... about reconciliation and people reuniting and everything, but if we, at this level—at university level—can't even do that, how do you expect someone from the *platteland* to come together and see themselves as one ... belonging to the same nation. It should start here ... the basics of me sitting with you and talking and understanding each other.

If you can articulate yourself, it is assumed that therefore you understand. The majority of black students that attend the School actually come from fairly privileged backgrounds and they have a private school education ... because you are confident and can bring yourself across well in English, that helps a lot.

In **Group 19** the students were articulate about the 'whitism' they experienced.

The group felt that the symbolic and public domains of the university reflected a mono-cultural mindset. They recommended that the food, media, music, names, institutional symbols etc should be more representative.

The media that we have on campus should try to reflect the true population at institutional level. For instance using Afrikaans, using isiXhosa. For instance there are people around Mowbray who are staying there—they like to hear Xhosa on UCT radio.

We need to make iUCT be accountable to iineeds ze-society where it's situated. And iUCT, instead of addressing those things, will tell you like iphepha layo iVarsity, will tell you e-

California, three students consumed liquor in California. What about uMaxhwele who was excluded here at UCT?

Like many of the students in other groups, they believed that the institutional culture would really only change if the white section of the university made a conscious effort to open up to learning, rather than assuming that the 'others' were the only ones in deficit.

As a gesture of commitment to changing the institutional culture, say that they learn one African language.

CONCLUSION

All the groups, with varying urgency, generally felt that efforts in transformation needed more dedicated commitment and attention. Some expressed appreciation for the existing efforts, but urged the university to go further. Many recognised that transformation takes time, but others were more adamant that change had to accelerate dramatically.

They focused on how diversity needed to be characterised and integrated in a more nuanced way, to avoid the establishment of 'new' centres and margins of exclusion. They thought the staff and student profiles should change to be more representative of the society. It was suggested that everybody needed to learn how to cope practically with diversity.

Predictably, several groups focused on teaching and teaching methods: encourage teaching in small groups so that people can interact on a more personal level. Change the curriculum to be more inclusive, especially of Africa.

Overall they wanted an environment where respect for difference was practised widely—where people were regarded as adults and treated with dignity.

In the final chapter, we draw conclusions and make some recommendations. These are based on the trends and patterns implicit in the student perceptions reported in the preceding chapters, and informed by critical reflection on implications of these for transformation of the university.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We conclude the report by identifying some patterns and trends in students' experiences and perceptions of transformation at UCT.

As has been mentioned, it is necessary to recognise that institutional culture is not homogenous, and that students have different experiences within different faculties, departments, and with different members of staff. Nevertheless, trends are discernible, and these conclusions attempt to identify some of these patterns.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Levels of awareness into the impact of diversity are unequal.

As has been found to be the case elsewhere in the world, it is clear from the student focus groups that those groups whose social positionality is more vulnerable, are acutely aware of how the dominant institutional norms impact upon them. By contrast, those in more powerful and privileged positions tend to be less aware of the impact that institutional culture has on everybody, including themselves. They perceive their relative success to be the consequence of their inherent worth, rather than the 'leg-up' which a well-tuned institutional culture provides them. Their greater ease in negotiating the system is experienced as normal, the to-be-expected. Vulnerable groups at UCT recognise inherent biases in the institutional culture, and are more conscious of other possibilities of articulating both material and symbolic resources. By the same token, students are much more conscious of how the lack of attention to diversity within the student body impacts upon them and their studies than staff tend to be.

2. Issues of diversity require a different paradigm than 'disadvantage'.

It is clear that it is a mistake to conceive of diversity at UCT in single, polarised ways. Although questions of educational backlog still need to be addressed in an ongoing manner, the paradigm of 'difference' which has informed a great deal of this work is no longer sufficient, or even advisable to meet the needs of the university as it goes into the future. The paradigm does not confirm the many ways in which students from, for example, African backgrounds bring valuable cultural resources to the institution. This emphasis is likely to become increasingly inflammatory as students from various backgrounds come into the institution in greater numbers and with a better developed sense of self worth.

With the changing demographics in the student body, as well as changing levels of consciousness towards questions of diversity in general, the university could find itself increasingly out of step with how students see the institutional culture

unless a more complex view of diversity is inculcated. Moreover, the single focus on 'race' as the 'issue' tends to obscure the many other dimensions of diversity that intersect 'race' and bring particular issues that also need to be addressed more boldly.

3. 'Whiteness' characterises the institutional culture.

Student testimonies reflect that the university unquestionably subscribes to the ideology of whiteness. The perceived lack of attention paid to institutional culture in general, and to ensuring a diversity-friendly campus in particular, is experienced as both a symptom and a consequence of this culture of whiteness.

Within the context of aspirations of being a world-class African university, the tropes which legitimise whiteness are 'educational standards' and 'internationalism'. In effect, these act as appeals to the traditional culture of the dominant group, a culture which is deeply implicated in the university's colonial and white South African past. The fact that tropes such as these are effective in frustrating development towards Africanisation, shows that the racism which underpins whiteness is still operative at a subliminal level in the environment. A concomitant of this is that 'African' becomes blurred with 'disadvantaged' and even 'less capable'.

The student focus groups find the 'African' part of the UCT vision poorly understood, neglected, and even regarded as an unacknowledged embarrassment to the university's established institutional culture. The experiences which students recount point to the conclusion that the Africanness of UCT is, at this stage, the object of energetic strategies of containment. It is clear from student comments that in the light of the dominant culture, Africanisation is still seen to be a cynical exercise. They highlight the extent to which the values, practices, and approaches that have informed the past still operate often invisibly, and largely unchallenged. They are simply accepted as the normal, appropriate way of doing academic education. The confidence which accompanies this position is, in the final analysis, underwritten by the assumption that the white way is still the right way, that Africa is, at base, a 'basket case' with which it is best not to be too closely identified.

By contrast, a substantial view exists within the student body that Africanisation is not in any way contradictory with 'world-class-ness'. These students were more likely to feel that the university will achieve more internationally if it were to embrace fully the advantages of its positioning on the African continent, and to be Africa-focused. This approach is not seen to compromise internationalism, or standards, but rather to enhance these.

4. Establishing a more inclusive institutional culture for the future requires a more inclusive account of the past.

Part of UCT's presentation of itself is its unambivalent opposition to apartheid, which is then allowed to slip into meaning an unambivalent opposition to racism. Many students had other points of view about UCT's history, which they felt has in some measure participated in the denigration of Africa. The view includes a perception that UCT is Eurocentric in tradition and practice, where many students have difficulty in feeling that they belong. When the institution acknowledges and addresses these alternative points of view, it will go some way in the task of becoming inclusive, as students will begin to find that the culture also confirms their reality.

5. Students find UCT's culture *de facto* still reflects segregationist tendencies. *

Students commented on the tendency for students to stick to their own groups. They observed that groups still largely interact on stereotypical assumptions of 'other' groups. While acknowledging sincere attempts to be inclusive, student on the whole felt that lecturing techniques, staff attitudes and university practices did little to create a more integrative culture. A repeated observation from the students is that staff do not have the appropriate skills or inclination for handling diverse student classes.

6. There is a shifting of centres and margins within racial groups.

While undoubtedly the major fault line in constructing difference remains 'race', the study shows that divisions within the racial groups at UCT are becoming increasingly salient, as new race / class groupings emerge. Amongst black students, the divisions between those who have attended private, or previously white, model C schools, and those who come from township or rural schools are becoming a source of tension. This is exacerbated by the fact that the students who attend privileged schools are able to fit in with the 'whiteness' of the university, and are thus seen to provide backing for the institutional culture. This makes it more difficult for those who are less privileged to argue for their needs. Similarly, there is a division between African students from elsewhere on the continent, and local students.

Amongst white students (on the issue of institutional culture) a division seems to be developing more along ideological lines, between those who are more open to understanding 'others' ' experiences, and therefore to interrogating the university culture, and those who 'don't see any problems'.

7. Issues of diversity on campus are multi-faceted.

There can be no doubt that it would be a mistake to confine the understanding of diversity on campus to 'race' or even 'culture'. For those who are affected by other axes of difference, these can be experienced as just as limiting and

frustrating. It is clear that women students, gays and lesbians, disabled people and foreign students all have legitimate issues in relation to institutional culture. Sometimes there are intersections of several axes, such as gender, sexuality and race, leading to examples of 'double (or triple) jeopardy'—for example black lesbians. Generally, there seems to be little understanding of the impact that social context has within the student body.

8. Students experience the institutional culture as largely indifferent to them.

There was a strong message in the study that many staff members are not service oriented in the way they deliver education. Many of the students who were interviewed voiced their impressions about a lack of tolerance shown by the staff at the university. Students ascribe this to a highly competitive, individualistic orientation within the institutional culture. In a context where such a culture prevails, the 'fittest' survives. In effect, more often than not, this means those who are most centred along the various axes of social structuring. There is also a sense that because the student population, by definition, is characterised by 'turnover', they may be disregarded as individuals. Students spoke about feeling trivialised, and not taken seriously.

9. Students ascribe some of their problems to the composition of the academic staff.

It is clear that students find the maleness and whiteness of the lecturing staff to be a causal factor in creating many of the problems they experience with the institutional culture. There is a perception that the issue of the staff profile has not been tackled with a genuine will, but that attempts to change the staff composition have rather been silently subverted by a large block of resistance. There is a general sense that the will to transform is very uneven within the university, and that rhetoric does not necessarily get translated into action. Moreover, the people who are most closely responsible for the students' progress are often experienced as the least equipped to understand the demands of a diverse classroom.

10. The university's attitude towards knowledge, language, as well as other symbolic resources, is regarded as ethnocentric by many students.

While students do not question the value of English in their education, nor the importance of a shared language for the functioning of the university, they do find the Anglocentric mindset of the university a problem, perceiving it to impact on UCT in a variety of ways:

- alienating speakers of English as a foreign language
- perpetuating division through the creation of 'in' groups / 'out' groups with jargon
- not valuing people who can speak many languages

- not understanding and appreciating the cultural diversity on campus— language is one of the best tools for starting to understand another culture
- depriving English speakers of access to cultural diversity
- producing graduates that are less able to contribute to South Africa's reconstruction and healing.

This ethnocentricity is similarly identified in the curricula, as well as in other symbolic markers, such as names of buildings, choice of music and university rituals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on reflection of the students' comments. They do not take into account other considerations which the university clearly also has to bear in mind. Nevertheless, they are offered as pointers which can be taken into account in the formulation of policy as the university continues along the path of transformation.

1. Ambivalence towards transformation needs to be addressed

A deep-seated ambivalence towards transformation in the university can affect the credibility of the university and the morale of many of the students. This creates a space in which 'dragging heels' has the effect of perpetuating negative legacies, and reproducing relationships that the university is attempting to transform.

2. Debate around diversity should be encouraged

The liberal philosophical tradition of the university, while undoubtedly effective in opposing apartheid, does not necessarily equip the university well for addressing current issues of diversity, which require greater cognisance of social context. It would be very useful if more debate could be opened up on campus about approaches to diversity, so that the university community can grapple more deliberately with the issues, and break the silence around questions of institutional culture. Such a debate should not shy away from really tough questions, such as the implied assumption that only historically black universities carry baggage from the apartheid era. The baggage of whiteness is carried in hidden assumptions such as that an institution like UCT has always delivered 'normal' education, despite operating as a privileged institution within a greatly unequal society.

3. Transformation should be a mainstream issue

The question of institutional culture is central to transformation of the university. The report of the previous Transformation Officer recommends that transformation should be mainstreamed within the university structures. It is

imperative that the task of addressing issues that arise in relation to institutional culture should be a central part of this portfolio.

4. The 'problem' must be correctly identified and understood

The diversity 'problem' needs to be understood differently, since focusing on, and concentrating the efforts of transformation at the margins, can be a subtle and extended form of 'blaming the victim'. The analytical gaze remains deflected away from the origins of the problems. Any interventions and programmes of transformation therefore must clearly identify the root causes of exclusion, intolerance, prejudice, stereotyping and harassment. By addressing only the consequences which are borne by those who are marginalised or excluded, at best dilutes efforts at transformation, and at worst leaves the origins of the problems intact.

5. The 'African' aspect of the university's vision should be fully embraced

Although there has been debate around the vision of the World-class African University, it is clear that a good deal of cynicism is mobilised around this concept. The university needs to pursue an energetic process around embracing the 'African' part of this vision, if it is to take full advantage of the opportunity to provide leadership in higher education on the African continent. An institutional culture that is perceived to be inhospitable to students from other African countries, and which is seen to be essentially Eurocentric in ethos, will hamper the university's stature and attractiveness (ironically even to students from Europe and the United States).

Students may well be right in suggesting that we are unlikely to outclass Euro-America at trying to recreate their systems and ethos. Indigenous knowledge systems and solutions can be mobilised creatively to address issues that are uniquely African. Bringing to the fore what is unique about our positioning in Africa could provide a leading edge to excel by introducing new synergies to the international academic community. This ambition should be an aspect of institutional culture that will ground our students and our teaching more firmly in this country's future.

6. Creative integration of the values document ought to be sought

The values document that was produced by the Institutional Culture Working Group provides a good framework for shaping the university culture. Concerted efforts should be made to find ways of integrating these values into the procedures and processes of the university, so that the document is not seen to become just another piece of paper which elicits little more than mere lip service.

7. Changing the staff profile should continue to be a key aspect in transformation

The programme of action to change the staff profile needs to remain at the centre of transformation at the university. Ways to speed up this change in staff

composition should be sought. In this respect, the promised easing of the regulation on immigration by government should make it possible to employ more black African, and particularly African women, into academic posts.

8. Training programmes should be set in place to assist the university community in adjusting to change

Awareness needs to be raised within the university as a whole into the need to change attitudes which do not respect difference and diversity. Workshops on appreciation of diversity should be included, or expanded, in the orientation experience of students. In addition to more visible publicity of anti-racism and anti-sexism policies, active publicity campaigns should be considered, aimed at challenging stereotypes, and crucially, also xenophobia and homophobia. Codes of conduct should be clearly articulated. People in senior positions, particularly, need to be self-aware, as they have more influence to promote, or retard, good practice at the university.

9. Staff development in managing diversity should be introduced

A serious attempt should be made to enhance the levels of competence amongst staff in dealing with diversity amongst students. Lecturers should be assisted with developing more 'diversity-friendly' teaching practices. There are many methods which ensure inclusivity and participation in learning environments. This does NOT mean merely putting students into diverse teams and allowing the social dynamics which plague an unequal society to be acted out in the groups, willy-nilly. It does mean consciously and constructively facilitating team-work and a sense of common purpose, and teaching democratic styles of interaction. A more collaborative approach to education between staff and students should be fostered. Such training should form a kernel part of any staff development initiatives which the university puts in place.

10. Students should be enskilled to function in contexts characterised by diversity

Given that the ability to work in diverse teams is now considered an important aspect of 'graduateness', the development of attitudes, attributes and skills for functioning in diverse work environments should be seen to be an essential part of every student's university education, and not a nice-to-have add-on. Students are becoming increasingly aware that the university lets them down in a critical area of 'graduateness' if it does not openly, and unambiguously, promote such a culture. The inculcation of such approaches, which are deeply respectful of difference and the rights of others, requires that these values should infuse the institutional culture, and be seen to be a university priority.

11. A more inclusive representation of UCT's past should be developed

Ghosts from history will continue to haunt UCT, and more open discussion about the past should be invited. The university community needs to be receptive to different experiences of the university in the past by people who were positioned differently in the struggle, and to develop a more comprehensive understanding of its past encompassing perspectives previously excluded from the institution's official self-narratives. Space should be made for visible representations of these 'other' experiences and perspectives. The history of the university should also not only be represented as having happened 'from above'—an ideological approach towards history which of necessity privileges white men. Honouring, in prominent places, the memory of the first black (and women, and disabled etc) students to graduate, or of students leaders who made a difference for specific groups, for example, would be the right kind of gesture.

12. Each faculty and department should consider initiating their own contextually appropriate focus on diversity

Some diversity issues become more salient in different contexts. Each faculty, for example, should reflect on the issues which are most likely to be operative in their context. An example is that of the centring of heterosexuality, which is of particular importance in the health sciences.

13. Some of the student recommendations given in the report should be seriously considered

Some of the suggestions offered by the students in Chapter 5 should be considered. For example, it may well be a good idea to appoint some kind of ombudsman to whom students can appeal in a case where they feel they have been unfairly treated by a staff member. Students need structures to which they can take issues of inequity with positive results—confident that the power relations will not automatically operate against them. This would enhance the sense of accountability from the university to students regarding diversity issues, especially between students and teaching staff.

14. Current processes of transformation should be continued

Questions of languages and curricula need to be debated and adjusted in an ongoing manner. Respect for other languages and cultures is crucial, and more ways of integrating these into campus activities should be sought. Curricula should reflect a greater appreciation of the importance of inclusiveness, and of the university's location in Africa.

CONCLUSION

Transformation cannot simply be proclaimed. It is a difficult and ongoing process which looks towards something as yet unattained. It will be effected by engaging with the difficult moral and ethical questions around our historical identity, by building trust through structures and practices of accountability, and by setting a firm foundation for respecting human rights, understanding the impact of social context, and appreciating diversity. By doing so UCT stands to enhance its institutional culture to the changed social context. It will build on its commitment to provide a stimulating and challenging academic environment where true academic freedom can thrive, and excellence can be the entitlement of all its students, irrespective of race, gender, class, culture, ability, or sexual orientation.