She broke my identity into invisible pieces: **transformation and black students**

in higher education.

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Abstract

Transformation and the race- based admissions policy are presently some of the key issues in higher education. The aim of this study was to explore how Black students interpret transformation, reconstruct or maintain their identities and cope within this context. Using a qualitative approach with a focus group discussion, written narratives and participation in a Photovoice project, six participants shared their experiences of being Black at UCT, a historically white university undergoing transformation in post –colonial, post- apartheid South Africa. A post-colonial theoretical framework was used to analyse the data and provide a deeper understanding of the experiences of the participants. Themes surrounding privilege, integration and the role of the university surfaced from a thematic analysis of the data and show how participants position themselves within the context of transformation. It is suggested that the university has a more significant role to play; one that involves not only amending administrative processes but one instrumental in creating the platform for mindsets that are conducive to dismantling oppressive structures.

Keywords: transformation, race-based admissions policy, double consciousness, Photovoice

Transformation in Higher Education continues to be a highly contested issue in South Africa (Erasmus, 2010). Its continued relevance, its methodology and its efficacy continue to be the focus of many discussions and forums. In post-apartheid South African universities change and transformation form part of larger redress processes making South African universities closely interwoven with the progression of socio-economic restoration (Hall 2007). Hence, the relevance of a transforming university and its ability to reassess its identity and function within a dynamic society is integral to societal reparation (Hall, 2007). Higher education institutions attempt to meet their challenges by restructuring their processes through recruitment and enrolment practices with the aim of ensuring equal chances for graduation and erasing advantages previously gained by class, race or gender. However, almost two decades after the first democratic election, South Africa's institutions of higher education are still under the spotlight for inefficient and contentious transformation procedures (Badroodien, 2010; Erasmus, 2010; Ncayiyana, 2012; Newling, 2012).

The findings of The Ministerial Report in relation to 'Institutional Interpretations of Discrimination' showed that even though considerable strides have been made towards effective transformation with respect to the increasing numbers of black students admitted into universities, "transformation is about more than just numbers" (Department of Education, 2008, p.40). The Ministerial Report, commissioned by the Minister of Education to evaluate transformation policies in Higher Education institutions, found that there is still conspicuous inequality in success rates and postgraduate programme accessibility for black students (Department of Education, 2008). The drop-out rate for black students is significantly higher than white students while white students have a graduation rate of double that of African black students (Department of Education, 2008).

The extended curriculum and foundation programmes implemented by universities to assist with overcoming hurdles incurred by disadvantaged backgrounds have been received with ambivalence by those it intends to help. Allocation to these programmes has been deemed prejudicial by some students on the basis of race and accused of creating further marginalisation (Department of Education, 2008).

The race based admissions policy has been another transformation process that has been met with contention. Use the categorical marker of race as a necessary facilitator of affirmative action and transformative policies (Soudien, 2010), has been controversial. Many view it as entrenching apartheid classifications as normal. Some feel that academic achievement should be the only entrance criterion (Erasmus, 2010). Race-based admission policies have been referred to as 'positive discrimination' with the criticism that black

students are accepted into university comparatively lower marks than white students. Consequently, critics have argued that this leads to the exclusion of superior performing white students and directed the focus onto the inability of many students coming from less privileged backgrounds to perform optimally at the level of higher education (Newling, 2012).

Race and identity

The necessity of transformation in higher education and the justifiability of transformation policies like the race-based admissions policy are not the issues at stake in this discussion, but rather the concern that conceptualisations of race during this process of reparation may be complicit in reproducing images of black students in ways that impact on achievement and self-concept negatively.

Racial identities are constructed against each other. Whiteness embodies cultural and social superiority and blackness constructed against this superiority becomes negative or inferior (Pattman, 2007). Portrayals of black students that are so closely interweaved with race can potentially conflict with the identity and sense of self of the student (Howarth, 2006). Literature shows that transformation procedures like race-based admissions and extended degree programmes stigmatise black students by portraying them as undeserving of places in universities (Badroodien, 2010) and as intellectually inferior to white students (Waghid, 2010). These representations perpetuate "blatant forms of discrimination" (Waghid, 2010, p. 374). In a study analysing the discourse on race during the merging of a historically black university and a historically white university, themes of 'white excellence' over 'black failure' emerged (Robus & MacLeod, 2006). The 'white institution' was portrayed as saving the 'black one'. The alignment of historically white universities with the theme of excellence show that race and academic excellence still carry perceptions reminiscent of a colonial and apartheid era. These discourses generated within a context of transformation show racialising themes that can impact on the identity and self-esteem of black students (Howarth, 2006). This can lead to situations of anxiety and tension where students are faced with the challenges of struggling against these representations while negotiating their identities (Howarth, 2006).

Representations and the stereotype

Social psychological research on racial representations of black students excluded from schools showed that when race was a conspicuous factor in educational institutions it impacted on the experiences of pupils (Howarth, 2004). Howarth's study (2004) found that students behaved in ways that avoided undue attention as a way of protecting themselves

against racist stereotypes, consequently hindering their academic achievement possibilities and perpetuating further racial marginalisation. The stereotype is defined as "a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated…" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 66).

In order to avoid the stereotype associated with Black male pupils being rude and aggressive, male students at the school deliberately remained quieter and inconspicuous thereby perpetuating further stereotypes associated with black students being disinterested in education.

The institutional practices that promulgate the repetition and confirmation of the stereotype can alienate students from their potential achievements by fostering anxiety that impacts negatively on academic achievement when associated with negative connotations (Steele, 1997).

Research carried out by sociology students at the University of Kwazulu-Natal revealed that when students mixed with other students from different race groups in a formal manner it promoted stereotypical notions rather than deconstructed them (Pattman, 2007).

Perspectives of black students

The representations of black students communicated within the context of higher education impact on the identities and perceptions of black students. Moscovici (1988) argues that we learn more through knowledge that is already in the world and is communicated to us through mediums like the media, than through the knowledge we derive from personal experiences and interaction. This suggests that social representations have a great impact on how selves are shaped. How individuals learn to see themselves is an important facet of their identities. Relevant literature searches indicate that there is presently inadequate knowledge regarding how black students negotiate their identities through representations within the institutes of higher education.

In redressing imbalances, affirmative action remedies that attempt to address social imbalances with insufficient attention to the structures that created and perpetuated these imbalances (Fraser, 1997) can create further stigmatisation, accentuate group differences and perpetuate inaccurate representations of those towards whom it is geared to help (Cross, 2004). Transformative remedies, on the other hand, target underlying structures with the aim of building new frameworks that reflect the academic and student bodies more accurately. For transformation in higher education to effectively address socio-political challenges and to provide institutes of higher learning that effectively welcome diversity (Cross, 2004), the perspectives of the marginalised within these structures are relevant.

How black students make sense of their experiences within the 'contact zone' of spaces where cultural diversity is negotiated against a backdrop of unequal power imbalances reminiscent of cultural hegemony (Pratt, 1991), impact on their aspirations and shape their realities. The negotiation within this contextual space of the university is integral to students' goals and ambitions and should be recognized within debates and discussions surrounding affirmative action (Badroodien, 2010). The subjective experiences of black students within the representation of "beneficiaries of affirmative action" (Badroodien, 2010, p. 347), how these experiences impact on their identities, and how this affects their responses to transformation procedures are areas that require exploration in order to inform transformation debates and discussions and to construct new identities that challenge old representations (Haste, 2004).

Research Aims

The intention of the study is to contribute to knowledge around transformation in higher education in the following ways. Firstly, the intention is to contribute to the knowledge of the experiences and perspectives of black students on transformation policies in higher education which have been given inadequate attention. Secondly, it is hoped that the knowledge gained can inform transformation policy guidelines and implementation. Thirdly, there is also a dire need to understand how students construct, maintain or readjust their identities within contexts of change and transformation and whether these adaptation skills are aligned with the aims of dismantling oppressive structures and creating empowerment which form the integral part of transformation procedures. Through the qualitative research method, based on Participatory Action Research, a deeper understanding into the lived realities of Black students in higher education was obtained.

Theoretical Framework

This study is positioned within a postcolonial psychology framework. Postcolonial psychology looks at how present power relations can be understood against the backdrop of a colonial historical context (Bhabha, 1994). The many approaches within the postcolonial theoretical framework show how institutions and their underlying structures are complicit in the continuation of cultural dominance and the maintenance of those outside the dominant culture as inferior and as the 'other' (Phoenix, 2009). This approach is relevant to contexts like South African universities where differences pertaining to race and class exist but are depicted as illusions to the structured reality. The inheritance of historical imbalances of the past exist in the present space where the past is actively rejected (MacLeod & Bhatia, 2008),

creating spaces that are potentially fraught with discrepancies between lived realities and expected realities. The postcolonial approach recognises the power imbalance that exists within these spaces (Subedi & Daza, 2008).

South Africa has been described as a "colonial society of a special type" with its history of colonialism and "internal colonialism" of apartheid (Wolpe, 1975, as cited in Hook, 2004, p.88). Higher education institutions were created by white men for white men (Collins & Millard, 2013) within a Western-oriented framework, meaning that the black student is at an added disadvantage through exclusion from the dominant cultural framework (Hook, 2004). Transformation in higher educational institutions in South Africa are a reminder that, like in other parts of the world, learning institutions are closely associated with the fight for democracy and equal rights (Subedi & Daza, 2008). Postcolonial theories highlight power imbalances enacted through educational curricula that support cultural superiority and difference, the representation of race, difference and white privilege (Subedi & Daza, 2008).

The research aims in postcolonial psychology include firstly, a change in how the 'other' is represented in psychological research. This study aims to give a voice to black students within the context of removing the invisibility that colonialist history and psychology have inflicted on the colonized subject (Macleod & Bhatia, 2008). Secondly, there is a drive to understand the individual psyche within the relevant political ramifications and to motivate studies that provide a deeper understanding of the connection between "the personal and the political" (Macleod & Bhatia, 2008, p.581). The perspectives of black students and how these perspectives shape how they see themselves provides insight into how the "personal and the political" (Macleod & Bhatia, 2008, p.581) become located within the psyche.

Frantz Fanon's, a psychoanalyst who has analysed the psychology of the postcolonial, offers concepts that aid understanding of how how the psychological and the political become so intimately intertwined (Hook, 2005). Integral to Fanon's psychopolitics is the acknowledgement that it is not only the political that impacts upon the psychological but that the psychological, through internalisation, repeats and perpetuates oppressive systems (Hook, 2004).

The impact of the political on the psychological has resulted in subjects oppressed by racism taking on the values of the dominant culture at the loss of their own cultural value systems. The oppressed begin to know themselves and form their identities through the value system of the oppressive culture. Racist objectification, to those living in racist cultures,

means that as a black person one is always 'overdetermined from without' (Fanon, 1986, p. 16); one is always subject to one's race and that one's blackness can never be escaped. The inescapability from one's race and the internalisation of values of the oppressive culture leads to a state of alienation from how one perceives oneself and results in a double consciousness; "the two-ness..two warring ideals in one dark body" (Du Bois, 1897, p2; Hook, 2005). One becomes caught between two internalised value systems. This disruption to the coherency of the identity, splinted through a state of double consciousness, results in a state of mental anxiety (Hook, 2005). The internalisation of centuries of representations engendered by racial oppression results in an inferiority complex that has become part of the subjective reality of the black student (Biko, 1978). In present day South Africa, issues of race and racism remain relevant to constructing and defining social relationships (Hook, 2004).

Methodology

Research Design

As there is little known about the experiences of black students and transformation in higher education, exploratory research was conducted through qualitative research methodologies in order to reveal the content and meaning of these experiences.

Participatory Action Research. Participatory Action Research is an approach that generates knowledge production while enacting social change (Brydon-Miller, 1997).This approach is usually used in communities and contexts with a history of exploitation, marginalisation and oppression. The experiences shared and the knowledge produced in these contexts can create a critical awareness amongst those affected of the factors contributing to their social realities. This awareness is be integral to positive transformation and allows the Participatory Action Research approach congruency with its fundamental goal of conducting research relevant to knowledge growth while showing recognition of the social plight of the researched. In this research process both the researcher and participants are viewed as equal contributors in the knowledge making process (Brydon-Miller, 1997) thus keeping in line with the aims of postcolonial psychology that challenges traditional ways of looking at the researched (Macleod & Bhatia, 2008).

The three influences on Participatory Action Research have been conscientisation, the people-centred developmental approach and the challenge to traditional scientific paradigms and methods (Vlaenderen & Neves, 2004). The people-centred approach takes cognisance of the fact that it is the people themselves who have the capacity and right to decide what developments are beneficial or necessary. Conscientisation, inspired by Freire, a Brazilian

intellectual, is based on the process whereby people are enable to enact personal transformation in a context of critical reflection and identification of the oppressive problems in the socio-political and economic environments. As a challenge to traditional science, researchers and participants work together in the process of improving social conditions (Vlaenderen & Neves, 2004).

In this study, this approach was integral to the aim of providing a space for participants to enact collective transformation through the process of being critical of their environment. Both the researcher and participants contributed to knowledge production; the researcher through facilitation of the research process and the participants through their reflections, stories and visual images.

Photovoice Methodology. Photovoice is a flexible methodology used within participatory action research that allows participants, through the creation of photo stories, to identify and share their experiences and knowledge (Wang & Burris, 1997). An awareness of how we represent our experiences and the meanings we attach to them allows us to understand our own identities (Hall, 1997), thereby opening up a space for critical reflection and personal transformation. Photovoice was the chosen methodology for this project since it centres on participation and has the potential to provide participants with autonomy in their representations of themselves and their environments.

Sample

This study, which forms part of a bigger project, was carried out from April to October 2013 at UCT. Purposive sampling was used where a sample was chosen relevant to the research question (Wilson & Maclean, 2011). In view of the aims of the project, black South African students (referring collectively to African, Coloured and Indian students) registered full- time at UCT, were recruited to participate through the Department of Psychology SRPP programme. It proved difficult to get interested participants. This may have been due to the length of time and effort required since it was a project requiring participation on three levels.

Six female participants, two of whom are Coloured and four black African students began the project. Five of the participants completed all the phases of the project. The participants were from different areas of the country. This contributed to them all having had different inter-racial experiences prior to coming to UCT. Five of the participants went to 'ex-model C schools' while one participant was from rural Limpopo and went to a state school. It is noteworthy that five participants had had racially heterogenous schooling while

the sixth participant from rural Limpopo had had very minimal interaction with white people prior to coming to UCT.

Data Collection

The data was collected through one focus group discussion, a written narrative from each of the participants relating their experiences around transformation at UCT, and photo stories. It is hoped that the different levels of data collection served to increase reflective awareness, enabling participants to provide deeper and more personally meaningful accounts. In this way, data was collected that may arguably be said to reflect how students really made sense of their experiences as opposed to perceptions that they believed they should hold surrounding the issue of transformation policies.

Phase 1- Focus groups.

Focus groups were conducted to give participants the opportunity to begin exploring and expressing their experiences on transformation and as black students in a higher education institution. Through discussion and interaction within the context of a group, participants were able to share with others who were potentially having similar experiences. Focus groups also provide opportunities to explore many differing perspectives and this can allow for the production of material that offers new and unexplored views (Banister, et al., 2011, p.79). The focus group discussions encouraged participants to speak about issues that were possibly of a personally sensitive nature. This in itself could be said to contribute to a therapeutic outcome for the participants. The focus group comprised six participants. The researcher was looking for between five to eight participants and managed to successfully recruit six participants for the focus group. This size was sufficient to allow all participants to feel like they could adequately share and express themselves. However, one participant was noticeably quieter than the rest. This may have been because her views and experiences were not matched with the rest of the participants causing her to feel intimidated.

A semi-structured approach was followed with the focus on transformation within the university with l emphasis on the race-based admissions policy. The discussion was guided along the aims of eliciting a sharing of experiences and interpretations regarding transformation and how participants felt it affected them personally (see Appendix A).

The discussion was recorded and then transcribed. Transcription was kept as close as possible to the original utterances without compromising intended meanings. An elimination of utterances signifying hesitation like 'uhm' and 'er', along with the redundant use of the word 'like', were removed from the transcription in order to create a more coherent and comprehensive transcript.

Phase 2-Story-telling. Participants submitted a written story (500 words maximum) about their experiences at UCT. This enabled participants to reflect more deeply on their experiences regarding transformation at UCT and how it has impacted on their sense of self. Stories are good tools to understand the self and have the ability to portray how this self is shaped and understood in a particular time and space (Banister, et al., 2011). Narratives provide the opportunity to make sense of a lived reality and to enable this reality to be viewed within a social and cultural context potentially fraught with discrepancies between lived realities and expected realities. The process of a narrative or the telling of a story entails choosing what is important and relevant to the self, thus enabling the active construction of identity. This suggests personal autonomy, thus encouraging empowerment through the awareness and rejection of oppressive and discriminatory positions (Hiles & Cermak, 2008).

Phase 3-Photovoice. A basic photography workshop was held where participants were shown how to use a camera and employ basic technical and creative skills to enhance photo taking. Following the workshop was a discussion regarding themes that were relevant to the experiences of the participants. This provided a collective contribution of meaningful ideas that effectively guided the production process. Participants were provided with cameras and a clear focus on how to portray their experiences through photos, both through the technical and creative skills learnt in the training.

Participants were given two weeks to compile their photographic stories. Photos were edited, printed and prepared for presentation at an exhibition held in October as part of the bigger research project that this study falls under. In choosing images that represented their contexts and themselves, participants were provided with the potential to challenge representations that have been imposed on them through the media or academic and policy reports. The photovoice project and exhibition allowed the students to provide alternative representations other than the representations fostered by those traditionally in power (Wang & Burris, 1997).

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used as the basis for the data analysis procedure to pick out patterns representing relevant themes (Wilson & Maclean, 2011). The flexibility of thematic analysis allowed it to be used within the chosen theoretical framework, and within the different types of data that were collected. Data was coded and grouped into themes. Themes chosen as prominent were those that featured strongly through the various types of data and those relevant to the theoretical framework.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for the research project was granted by the Department of Psychology Ethic Committee, University of Cape Town.

Informed Consent

Participants signed consent forms granting permission to partake in the research study (Appendix B). Specific permission was granted from participants for participation in the focus group and for audio-recording of the discussion. The signing of consent forms included agreement to have their digital stories exhibited and used along with the narratives in research presentations.

Confidentiality

Participants' confidentiality has been maintained through the use of pseudonyms. At the Photovoice exhibition participants were given recognition by a display of their names, while a level of confidentiality was maintained by displaying the photo stories anonymously.

Reflexivity

Being an Indian South African falling under the apartheid classification of black and a race-based admissions candidate, it is hoped that my presence as a researcher gave the participants the freedom to express their opinions without inhibition. However, it is difficult to tell how much they really felt they could identify with me, since I am Indian and the participants were African and Coloured.

My experiences and positioning within a historically white university impacted the way I was able to carry out the study. My ability to explore, investigate and bring about richer data by encouraging participants to delve more into their levels of anxiety was both positively informed by my own experiences but also confounded by my own experience of being black at UCT.

My ability to identify with the participants resulted in me fostering my own expectations of their experiences and perspectives. However, there were also differences between us. Not having gone to ex- model C schools like the majority of the participants, I did not identify with their state of privilege. Their state of privilege brought up an interesting dimension that was I did not expect. Hence, my own experiences were relevant to this study. I was a silent voice during the focus group, uncertain, just like I was about my place at the university. Listening to other students made me aware of the different experiences of being black at UCT.

Analysis and Discussion

The analysis revealed contradictions in the perceptions of the participants towards transformation at the university, especially in relation to the race-based admissions policy. Analysis of the focus group showed that the students were in support of the race-based admissions policy while distancing themselves as beneficiaries of it or as having needed it. Three key themes that came up in the focus group will be discussed here. These themes are chosen because I believe they are relevant to the participants' maintenance of their identities and their feelings of full acceptance within the university. The themes are privilege, integration and the role of the university.

Privilege

Privilege was a theme that featured strongly in the following ways; in relation to white students, as characterised by having white friends and as a justification for exclusion as beneficiaries of the race based admissions policy.

White students and privilege White students were associated with privilege and were perceived as having greater access to technology in the form of laptops and ipads.

.. have you seen most people who sit with laptops and ipads in the lectures are White people (laughter and agreement). (Charlene)

As I walk through the malls of UCT I see a world of people who are privileged. ..However, it seems to me that majority of them are more of the white people than black people. I feel I need to join the rest that is to say if I want to send an email I have to go to the computer lab rather than sit in the cafeteria with my laptop. I believe that race comes with its own advantage.(Zanele)

This participant feels that white people have more access to privilege and that this creates fewer limitations for them. In this photo story the participant captures the visible association between privilege and race that she perceives.

Privilege and white friends In a few instances participants showed an association between privilege and having white friends.

> ..when you also come from a privileged background as a black person you have white friends. (Sindi)

> ..and then you forget when you're from a privileged perspective and background, you forget that you are the minority. ..I'm part of the black privileged and I went to school with white friends, whatever, and you forget there's , that you're the 10% possibly and the 90% of other black people don't have your resources, don't have the stuff that you have. So we have to be more or less considerate. So I think their perspective and their background just blinds them to the truth. (Sindi)

The participant identifies with being part of the group of black privileged and links this with having white friends. In response to a comment from another participant regarding the unsympathetic nature of white students towards affirmative and transformative policies, Sindi acknowledges that her privilege made her unsympathetic too. She is asking for more consideration of the white perspective, showing internalisation of white values through her level of identification. It seems as though privilege affords these participants access to identify with whiteness and internalise white values.

Privilege and the admissions policy Some participants, who identified with being privileged, used this state of privilege to exclude themselves from having been accepted into UCT on the basis of race.

> .. am I at UCT because of a good mark or because **I'm** Coloured and that fitted me into the racial so **I** could get into UCT ...in schools there's a lot of racial imbalances, .., especially when it comes to race, I mean most poor schools are Coloured and Black and so obviously **they** didn't maybe have the higher educational opportunities that **we** had who went to these model ex-model C schools and stuff like that. So on **their** marks alone **they** wouldn't be able to get into UCT. (Charlene)

At first the above participant doubts her acceptance into UCT as based on her academic achievement. She then distances herself from this by explaining how the race-based admissions policy applies to less privileged black students. The shift in pronoun usage from *I* and *we,* to *them* and *their* strongly indicates a distancing from those considered beneficiaries of the policy. Participants who saw themselves as privileged had attended better schools than

those who were not privileged. The better schooling thus meant that they had gotten into UCT based on their academic achievement and not on their race. The race-based admissions policy is then seen as being applicable to black students who are less privileged.

The following participant feels that race based-admissions should not apply to privileged black students as this makes it unfair to white students who are not accepted into UCT. She says it should be addressed to *people who really do need it.* It is possible that because she has internalised white values and identifies herself with whiteness, she may experience internal conflict for being a beneficiary of the admissions policy as a black student. Her use of the word 'fair' suggests possible feelings of guilt.

you feel that they're from privileged backgrounds even though they are black. So maybe if they address it to people who really do need it, for example, people from..that are at schools that are less privileged than other schools then maybe it would be seen as fair. But the problem comes in when you see a white person and they're like, "oh no,   I   didn't get into UCT" (Sindi)

Slindile identifies herself as being privileged and distances herself from underprivileged students. Underprivileged students are described as not being accustomed to having resources that help them cope and hence will be more likely to perform poorly academically. In this manner Slindile distances her academic performance from those who are underprivileged. The following statement was in response to a comment in the newspaper article written made by Dan Newling (2012) stating that Black students are struggling academically.

when you are, let's say in the more privileged side you..you dealt with. You can speak about your emotions. You can cry or talk to a psychiatrist or psychologist or whatever……..like for me it's like the people underprivileged, you know in communities they don't know that when they come to varsity and they're not coping with certain things they will, it's more likely they will just keep it in. You know they won't just go speak to somebody about it. (Slindile)

Analysing how the participants spoke about privilege began to reveal that privilege was used to dissociate their selves from the possibility of having been accepted into UCT on the basis of race. Five of the six participants, all of whom had been to racially mixed schools, distanced themselves from race based admissions mostly through the use of words like '*they*' and '*them*' in reference to other black students who may have been accepted on the basis of their race. However, they were in full support of the policy and its continuation.

I'm sorry but redressing will have to go on for a whole couple of years (loud agreement). ..it's only fair because I mean you can't suppress a nation, a culture mentally, economically, physically and then expect them to jump back in nineteen years. (Tanya)

The analysis revealed ambivalence by the participants towards the admissions policy. On a rational level the participants were in support of the policy, but on a more personal level they distanced themselves from it. They appear to be caught between two opposing internalised value systems in keeping with Du Bois' (1989) concept of double-consciousness.

This distancing may be to avoid possible stigma and shame associated with being beneficiaries of the race-based admissions policy. The portrayal in the media and representation of black students as undeserving of their acceptance may be undermining and devaluing to the participants' concept of self.

The ambivalence towards the policy may exist as a consequence of internalisation of white values. They speak of the policy as unfair to white students who get the same or better marks than black students who have been accepted. By speaking in this manner they are saying that black students are undeserving and white students who work hard deserve to be accepted. This resonates with the discourse of 'a just world'. A 'just world' is one in which it is believed that everyone gets what they deserve while ignoring that some may experience greater physical and social limitations. Furnham's study (1985) showed that believers in a just world tend to show less sympathy to those who have suffered social injustices. By seeing the policy as unfair it is possible that the participants had internalised white values of a 'just world'. However, because they are aware of the history of the country and the imbalances it has brought about they support the policy. To protect their identities and selves from the threatening internal belief that they are undeserving of acceptance if it is based merely on race and not achievement, they dissociate themselves as being recipients of the policy.

Another reason that participants may be dissociating from the policy could be due to their lack of identification with the black racial identity that is associated with the policy. Racial categories are perceived as static and unchanging. However, these identities are constantly being challenged and constructed (Erasmus, 2010). Erasmus argues that "what it means to be black is contested, not given" (2010, p. 390). In present day South Africa, black identity of students is challenged by issues of class and racially diverse schooling. Poverty and blackness have a strong association (Biko, 1978) and Fanon speaks of an association with whiteness and wealth; "You are white because you are rich" (31). By escaping poverty one may be said to be escaping blackness. The positioning of race and class make wealthier black

South Africans "culturally white" and remove the definitions of race outside of visible boundaries (Erasmus, 2010). Thus, racial categories used in the admissions policy may be too constricting and make it difficult for participants to identify and relate.

Interestingly, the only participant who did not distance herself from the policy (and who spoke very little) came from a rural town with no white people. All the other participants had had contact and friendships with white people. In line with what Erasmus says, it is possible that the participants are seeing themselves as culturally white and hence do not see themselves as having benefited from, or in need of the admissions policy. The admissions policy could be potentially challenging or threatening to their sense of selves and identities as culturally white. A study carried out in Massuchusetts investigating attitudes of African American students to affirmative action, it was found that the more students identified positively with being black, the greater was their positive regard for affirmative action (Schermund, et al., 2001). This suggests that the ability of the participants to identify with the policy may be related to their level of identification with being black.

In ongoing research carried out by Soudien (2010) on racial integration in schools he speaks of a 'newly emerging elite', a class that is a bit more privileged and who struggle to reconcile their identities with respect to poorer blacks and white people. He describes this space as one with 'turbulence' and 'ambiguity' (365). The participants' desire to separate themselves from the race-based admissions policy through identifying with privilege can be what Soudien describes as "fleeing from those things that join them to their raced and classed pasts" (365). Soudien states that it is important to note this ambiguous space within the context of school policy making and this present study argues that it may be important within the context of higher education and transformation as well.

Integration

In Freire's words, "To be human is to engage in relationships with others and with the world" (2005, p 3).Unsurprisingly then, integration within the institution and with other students was the most prominent theme for the participants and appeared strongly in the focus group, the narratives and the photo stories. This theme was organised into sub-themes reflecting the various aspects that affect and are affected by integration; interaction of students across racial borders, acceptance into the university, and language as a facilitator of assimilation into the institution.

Integration across racial borders Integration was seen as important to transformation at UCT, and the lack thereof was conspicuous to the participants.

I feel for change and transformation we should at this level be more integrated as people rather than sitting together on the basis of culture and race. (Tanya)

Has UCT made progress in achieving the constitutional initiative?Breaking the chains of historical oppression to create a democratic environment in terms of education?...This photograph of students taking a break on Jammie stairs shows apparent transformation with regard to the presence of black students.. However, it also depicts a degree of **segregation**. *My reason for feeling 'BLACK' for the first time at UCT.* (Tanya)

In the above photo story the participant aims to depict the presence of black students into the university while showing segregation. This implies that even though black students are being accepted into the university the visible segragation denotes a lack of full acceptance and integration. Integration of students across racial borders is portrayed as integral to visible transformation and that merely increasing the quota of black students into the university is an insufficient marker of transformation .

UCT itself is an institution of transformation, bringing together people from different racial, cultural and social backgrounds. Everyday we learn, work and exchange ideas together. The cross racial and cultural interaction not only allows for greater understanding and tolerance but it also serves to enrich our UCT experience. (Charlene)

In this photo story, the participant acknowledges transformation and integration amongst students and views it as crucial to a richer learning environment.

For some participants, being in an environment with different race groups means having to change themselves in some way. This shows a preconceived difference between people of different races and the sense of inferiority shown in the participants taking for granted that they have to do the changing or adapting. Only one participant had not been accustomed to interacting with White people.

Ok, where I'm from there aren't any people who are white so I come here in the big city and I find all these people are white and I have to learn to adapt and to learn in the same environment with them so I'm transforming in that way. (Zanele)

Participants pointed out that they were accustomed to integrating across racial boundaries. They found the lack of integration at UCT surprising and contradictory to their expectations of the university and their social aspirations. When asked what was expected from UCT in relation to transformation, one participant responded as follows:

… I'm also expecting along a social level where it must be ok to mingle with the other people… for black people to mingle with white people… It mustn't just be like that cos it's also when you also come from a privileged background as a black person you have white friends. For me I have white friends. It's just nice to be in their company. Then I came here. It was difficult to make friends with the white people cos there was like boundaries. I wasn't aware there was such, and then we should be free to

mingle with everybody and   they shouldn't maybe like look down on us and say and they only got in cos   they   black   or   whatever, so socially there should be more..(Slindile)

The participant perceives boundaries and holds the notion that these may be constructed from stereotypical notions associated with black students' acceptance into UCT. The words '*they only got in cos they black'* show the participant's awareness that white students may feel that black students are accepted solely on the basis of race and may question the academic abilities of black students.. This impacts her identity and is evidenced in how she positions herself in relation to white students, leading her to feel it is not acceptable for her as a black student to befriend white students. The power imbalance here is noticeable. Her expectation of the university is to create an environment where it becomes acceptable for her to make white friends, an environment where white students would be welcoming to friendships with black students. A noteworthy point is that the participant may feel that white students may be avoiding friendships with black students due to resentment of the acceptance of black students into the university based on the race-based admissions policy. The participants did show surprise that it was easier making friends with white students in high school than at UCT. The experience of the participants is akin to Fanon's experience who speaks of "the real white man waiting" for him (Haddour, 2006, p. 88). The participants are realising that at UCT their privileged status and attendance of good schools and having white friends is insufficient for complete assimilation. Their race preceded them and their defied expectations are coupled with a sense of betrayal (Haddour, 2006). A point to consider is whether the race-based admissions policy threatens the prestige of UCT as a historically white institution and the identities of white students who may identify with that prestige. This is captured in the photo-story below.

The fact that the subject is out of focus and what should not have as much focus on it i.e. the building is the part of the image which is instead in focus has important suggestions being made concerning transformation at UCT. As a new comer at UCT it seems as though it feels as though it is the image of UCT (top achieving institution on the continent) which is privileged over the students themselves. This then makes the student feel almost as insignificant and "out of focus" which is evident in the photograph. (Shannon)

Language as a barrier to integration within the university Not having English as a first language was seen as a potential barrier to performing well academically.

I mean there's a language transition as well and I feel a lot of first year students battle if they're not , if their first language isn't English and a lot of kids at school who get really good results in matric suffer… (Tanya)

Participants noted that most of the lecturers were white. However, it was observed that the few black African lecturers present at the university were not received openly by white students because of their accents. Participants were also aware of a non-favourable and impatient attitude towards lecturers with African accents and the association of African accents with 'stupidity'.

Like I did Politics last year. ….and we had a, I think he was Ugandan, the lecturer. But because I think you could hear what he was saying, but maybe because of his accent sometimes you couldn't hear what he said. ……Then I also found that white people tended to complain a lot more when he came in and started lecturing… And maybe it was just a frustration that they're being exposed to something that they're not used to cos I'm sure from their old schools they never had any black teachers. (Shannon)

English as the official language increases the sense of belonging and advancement for white students within the institution (Gibson, 2002). Gibson points out, "The black who speaks English is still deprived of recognition" (p 31). The standard of measure to assess correctness is still the standard set by whiteness. Thus, an accent that is seen as lacking can make colour difference visible and create 'Othering'. This could further enhance feelings of alienation for the participants.

Integration into the university: Acceptance and belonging A few participants gave the impression that they felt that 'anyone' was being accepted, even though they were strongly in favour of the policy as a means to redress imbalances regarding the disparity in education levels in the country.

> *Cos now they just letting anyone in terms of race you know. But then it's going back to the school system in terms of that in the schools there's a lot of racial imbalances, you know, especially when it comes to race, (Charlene)*

To one participant acceptance into the university through the admissions policy was significant both for her and the community she comes from.

> *cos I think it has to go on because then ok fine. Like in a town where I come from, if you ask people why are you at UCT, they'll tell you that we are the first people to be at university. So they have to like continue doing it cos then people are getting more information; 'Ok fine we need to go to university'. It's not about, like you end up being like in a FET college or something. You need to go further than that. (Zanele)*

Participants questioned their own acceptance into the university and did not sound convinced that they were fully deserving of the acceptance.

> *..and UCT is offering me this opportunity (Slindile)*

> *I sometimes wonder am I at UCT because I got good grades, or they thought that I could work or because I'm Coloured. So I mean you do question like your self-worth, your intelligence even. But I understand why they do it.*

Participants did not feel a real sense of belonging at the university. This was evident in how they interpreted the behaviour of white students. White students were described as behaving more freely. This shows that participants lack the freedom to express and be themselves.

> *there are stuff that he does that we don't like but we don't complain as much as the white people and they are not afraid to voice their complaints (agreement),(Slindile)*

> *Isolation is the last theme captured in these images as it is also an important part of transformation experienced at UCT. The fact that this male student is*

> *alone and almost blurred shows the possible disillusionment this isolation*
> *sometimes results in. (Shannon)*

In the above photo story and accompanying caption the participant is showing the association she makes between 'isolation' and 'transformation'. The possible perception is that transformation is happening at a cost to the black student. The loneliness, the lack of belonging and the feeling of not being fully accepted is defying the expectations of what transformation may mean for many black students.

> *It was difficult to make friends with the white people cos there was like boundaries. I*
> *wasn't aware there was such, you know, and then we should be   free to you know*
> *mingle with everybody and they shouldn't maybe like look down on us and say and*
> *they only got in cos they black or whatever,.(Slindile*

In response to comments regarding the role of the university in fostering integration, Shannon's response shows rejection anxiety (Finchilescu, 2007). She is afraid that if white students are forced to integrate with black students it may further increase their resentment of black students.

> *Cos another thing I'm thinking, people could become quite hostile and against the*
> *idea if they feel almost like the varsity is forcing them to integrate and stuff like that*
> *would worsen the situation instead of making it better. So I also feel that it is up to the*
> *students themselves to make this effort and, I don't know, join societies. (laughter)*
> *(Shannon)*

The following lines by Fanon explain better the importance of acceptance and approval from white students to her: "When the Negro makes contact with the white world a certain sensitising action takes place. If his psychic structure is weak, one observes a collapse of the ego. The black man stops behaving as an actional person. The goal of his behaviour will be The Other (in the guise of the white man), for The Other alone can give him worth. That is on the ethical level: self esteem." (Haddour, 2006).

Race divides students in UCT'S lecture rooms. No matter where I am, if the person does not match identity I still find it hard to identify with them. Sometimes it [fills] like my colour [Is] being overshadowed and I totally feel like I do not have knowledge of some sort..However, I will always be a black student who sees colour and I'm sorry I cannot renounce. (Zanele)

From then on I found myself only gravitating towards black people and so as a result a majority of my friends are black. (Shannon)

For some participants, the visible lack of racial integration made the presence of race more visible. This led to greater awareness and identification with their own racial identities.

Integration was a crucial theme for the participants. I speculate that it is this lack of integration that makes the participants feel that even though they have been accepted, they are not fully accepted at the university causing them to feel alienated. Their answers in response to their expectations of the university were focussed on integration. They may be interpreting the lack of integration as a response by white students to their being beneficiaries of the admissions policy. They may be hoping that if the university is able to change the mindsets of white students, then white students may become friendlier to those outside their race group, and enhance their feelings of acceptance. This may also help relieve any guilt they may feel towards the enactment of the policy. (It was described as 'unfair' a few times).

In post apartheid South Africa the lack of racial integration can be disconcerting as it alludes to an absence of transformation and coming together of people of various races (Finchilescu, et al., 2007). Allport (1954 in Finchilescu, et al., 2007) says that for prejudice to decrease the different groups need to be brought together under conditions of equality in standing and positionality, an absence of competition and supportive institutional values. The possible stigma and internal conflict associated with being accepted into UCT on the basis of

race evidenced through the distancing of participants from the policy, show that the different race groups do not hold equal status. The prestige surrounding UCT makes acceptance highly competitive. Therefore, Allport's conditions for decreasing prejudice are not reflected in the environment of the institution, diminishing a potential space for integration.

Transformation as a responsibility of the university

Transformation was seen as an important function of the university in redressing the imbalances left over from apartheid.

> *Transformation has to happen like in a larger scale and immediately on a place as influential as tertiary education in South Africa cos basically it's gona shape a huge part of our future. (Charlene)*

Some participants felt that it was the role of the university to change the mindsets of those unsympathetic to redressing imbalances. The following statement was in response to a question asking what was expected of the university in relation to transformation.

> *...another role that university has to play is to guide people into thinking a certain way. So people can understand why it is like that. (Sindiswa)*

It was felt that while first year black students possessed a sense of inferiority, white students maintained a sense of superiority and that a part of the university's role and function in transformation was changing these mind sets.

> *Make the black first year student not only comfortable enough to attempt to have relationships with other races but find themselves worthy and the white students respect other races and not over power with an aura of superiority even if its unintentional. Change th~~i~~ ~~r min~~sets and reflect this unto society (Sindiswa)*

In a paper that Biko's delivered to the Bailey Institute for Inter-racial studies he speaks of "a hastily organised integrated circle carrying with them the seeds of destruction of that circle-their inferiority and superiority complexes" (1978, p 70). The above photo story shows the participant's awareness that the positioning of race groups as inferior and superior can be undermining the outcomes of transformation. This realisation and the call to the institution to enact change on deeper levels can be seen as the beginning of an active response to oppressive systems rather than passivity (Biko, 1978). It encourages the institution to shift the focus from the 'Other' to the 'Self'; looking critically at the history and maintenance of this 'Self' into the present. An awareness of how the history of dominance has a hold on the present is integral to redressing imbalances (Erasmus, 2010).

Limitations

The requirements when recruiting participants were broad with the only specifications being race and registration as full time students at UCT. Being an exploratory study, there was no anticipation of what the findings would reveal. Most of the participants in the study considered themselves as privileged and had attended racially mixed schools. These characteristics proved to have a considerable effect on the findings. One participant did not identify with the other participants with regards to these characteristics. This resulted in the participant being 'othered' through the discussion. The dominant perspective silenced her viewpoints and perspective, limiting the potential for differing perspectives. A follow up interview would this participant would have been but the limits of time impeded this.

Discussion

It cannot be asserted on the basis of these findings, that all black students respond in the same manner to transformation and its policies. However, the majority of participants in this study distanced themselves from the admissions policy while being fully supportive of its necessity and its continuation. Noteworthy, is that these participants consider integration across racial borders important for transformation and an aim that should be part of the functional responsibility of the university.

Findings show that participants saw themselves positioned at the lower end of the power balance in relation to white students. This was evident in their apprehension to initiate friendship with white students. This power imbalance was felt to be the result of possible

resentment by white students towards black students due to the relationship between black students' acceptance into university and their race. Interesting, while these participants may be feeling 'othered' by white students because of transformation policies, they are also 'othering' other black students within the same context using their state of privilege. Participants saw the admissions policy as necessary for disadvantaged black students and not themselves. Their privilege translated into resources that made it unnecessary for them to benefit from the policy.

The findings also suggest that privilege may be a tool that these participants use to decrease their identification with blackness while affording access to white values. The analysis suggests that black identity is not necessarily static and uniform across all it bearers, and that this becomes evident in contexts like transformation where race becomes crucially relevant.

The participants' positioning in relation to the institution is one needing support and cooperation. While acceptance into UCT is a crucial aspect of transformation, participants were still not feeling fully accepted and believe that the institution can paly a greater role in this regard by influencing the mindsets of white students that perpetuate dominance and superiority. The internalisation of white values, probably enhanced by attendance to racially mixed schools, and the resulting double consciousness create an identity struggle for the participants that render them caught between a historical racial identity and an identity transforming to post apartheid South Africa.

Summary and Conclusion

An exploration into the experiences and perspectives of six Black students showed a sense of not feeling fully accepted into the university. This is despite transformation policies like the race based admissions policy which seek to be more inclusive of those who would otherwise not be accepted into the university. While these participants may feel they are being 'othered' by white students through the admissions policy, they maintain their identities by 'othering' black students that they perceive to be less privileged. For the participants, transformation it translates into alienation from white students, a sense of not belonging, and the need to justify their admission into the university. The experiences that contribute to this perspective are a conspicuous lack of integration between the different race groups, the power imbalance in favour of white students evidenced in their strong sense of belonging and the need by black students to either justify their acceptance or distance themselves as being accepted through the admissions policy.

This study explored the experiences and perspectives of black students who were predominantly in positions of privilege. Further study exploring the perceptions of black students who do not consider themselves in positions of privilege is recommended. A further recommendation is made to investigate the perceptions of black students towards transformation in relation to their perceptions of, and identification with their racial identity.

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