Shadows of transformation: Inclusion and exclusion of academic staff at a university of technology

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Abstract
A study of academic staff at a South African university of technology used questionnaires and interviews to understand perceptions and experiences related to inclusion and exclusion. Taking critical race theory as the theoretical framework, the study revealed high levels of anger amongst staff of different racial identities. Expressions of alienation related to racism were particularly high from African staff members. The response rate by Indian men was particularly low. Indian and white women were more likely to report a sense of exclusion than men from these groups. While whites tended to feel included, there was some resentment over affirmative action. Issues of gender and class also arose but seldom separately from discussions of race. The prevailing neoliberal discourse of universities is seen as one factor that impedes transformation. Recommendations are made to assist the institution to become more genuinely inclusive.

INTRODUCTION
The vision of universities may be undermined by the ways in which power imbalances intersect with institutional culture (Thaver 2006). Years after the first democratic elections, South African universities are still challenged to address their histories of racial exclusion.

Our exploration of this process of transformation consists of a qualitative study of perceptions and experiences of academic staff undertaken in 2009 at the Durban University of Technology (DUT), an institution formed from the merger of two ‘technikons’ or polytechnics. Our intention was to contribute to the understanding of the issues reported by the South African Ministerial Committee on Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions (the Ministerial Committee). Its report (Department of Education 2008) presents ample
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evidence of how racism and sexism persist in higher education in South Africa. We sought to determine how discrimination affects academic staff at DUT.

This article works from the perspective of critical race theory (Lynn, Yosso, Solorzano and Parker 2002; Solorzano and Yosso 2002). Critical Race Theory (CRT) is described (Solorzano, Ceja and Yosso 2000, 63) as consisting of these elements: ‘(a) the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination, (b) the challenge to dominant ideology, (c) the commitment to social justice, (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (e) the transdisciplinary perspective’. Parker and Roberts (2005, 76) identify five implications for methodology, three of which are particularly relevant to this study: ‘(1) placing race and its intersectionality with other forms of subordination (e.g. gender, social class, etc.) at the centre of research . . . (3) connecting the research with social justice concerns and potential praxis with ongoing efforts in communities; (4) making experiential knowledge central to the study and linking this knowledge to other critical research and interpretive perspectives on race and racism.’

Of these implications (1) is particularly relevant to the findings of the Ministerial Report (Department of Education 2008), which examined both the centrality of race in the issue of transformation, and the need to go beyond race to explore other forms of discrimination. Item (3) is also relevant as our intention is to help inform the process of transformation at the institution surveyed. The need to privilege and surface experiential knowledge as in (4) led us to explore experience in greater depth through the methodology selected.

We used the terms ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’ to frame the data collection, and referred explicitly to social identities in the questions posed. This article will show how power inequalities related to social identity are sometimes starkly evident, sometimes absent, in the responses of staff and how these inequalities are communicated in relation to the particular institutional history and practices.

The research questions are these:

• What are the experiences and perceptions of inclusion or exclusion of academic staff at the Durban University of Technology?

• How can these findings inform initiatives that aim to create a more inclusive and equitable institutional culture?

The term ‘inclusion’ is usually taken as good and ‘exclusion’ as bad (Edwards, Armstrong and Miller 2001), an inadequate assumption. In their study of inclusion and exclusion in South African and Indian schooling, Sayed et al. (2007, 11) point out that ‘addressing education “inclusion” requires an interrogation of the terms and conditions of what is defined as normatively “inclusive”’.

Further, care to include some people may serve also to exclude others (Francis and Muthukrishna 2006). Thus Sayed et al. (2007, 11) caution against ‘the danger of treating “exclusion” and “inclusion” as binary categories, forming neat opposites’. It may be possible for people to be included in some ways (as a scholar, as a white person) but be excluded in others (e.g. as a woman, as a trouble-maker).
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Thaver (2006) works with the metaphor ‘at home’ to explore the methodological implications of work on institutional culture, in particular in relation to transformation within higher education (although this metaphor was not used in the data collection, it provides a useful tool for analysis). The metaphor captures the degree to which staff or students feel ‘at home’ in an institution. Is it for example possible to see an institution as one’s academic ‘home’ but not to feel at home when there, while one feels ‘at home’ in certain contexts even when away from home?

Richards (2010) distinguishes ‘transformation’ from ‘being critical’ with regard to two key elements. The first is the focus on a particular formation that is to be transformed, in this case the university. Transformation will involve addressing its structuring within the economic system as well as the rules of the game. The second is the need for a constructive programme. It is thus insufficient to identify the complex ways in which power relations construct the epistemological and institutional life of academic staff. We need to move to ways in which such research can assist staff in developing a different set of rules that will inform academic life.

How then has the ‘home’ that was the South African university has been transformed? Potentially, academic life is mediated by a cultural mode that is comfortable for those of some social identities and alienating for others. For us then, ‘transformation’ is a systematic programme to address the related attitudes, perceptions, practices and structures in ways that build a social cohesion established on equity as well as collegiality.

The implication for this study is that we listen to what staff articulate and how they articulate it, with more than a desire to see that everyone is comfortable. A key question would be whether the discomforts that are expressed indicate an opening up of new possibilities for the institution or an unhappy silencing.

Thus in this study we need to interrogate expressions of inclusion or exclusion in critical terms.

TRANSFORMATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

There has been major restructuring of universities in South Africa since democratic rule began in 1994, leading to a reduction in the number of institutions of higher education. This has been driven by the twin imperatives of racial transformation and pressures for efficiency (Ntshoe 2004). Jansen (2002, 9–10) points out that much of the support for mergers was related to the second of these rather than the former, though he also identifies as one indicator of success that such mergers would create ‘new institutions with new identities and cultures that transcend their past racial and ethnic institutional histories and contribute to their deracialisation’.

Literature on institutional mergers in South Africa indicates a high degree of stress among staff (Hay and Fourie 2002; Reddy 2007; De Lange and Olivier 2008; Van der Merwe 2007). Although these studies indicate some failure of management, not all stress is necessarily a failure of transformation; we need to know whether stress follows from a failure to attend to the needs of staff or from the unhappiness...
that comes with new learning and the sense of fear at new institutional possibilities. Much of the research that has been undertaken on these mergers address issues such as leadership, management and staff satisfaction or dissatisfaction, with little attention to the issues of racial, gender or class inclusion or exclusion.

The limitations of this selective attention became evident when in 2008 a racial incident at one university gave rise to soul-searching over the ability of the new universities to move beyond the racial histories of the original institutions. This incident led to the establishment of the Ministerial Committee.

INCLUSION, EXCLUSION AND STAFF

The Report of the Ministerial Committee (Department of Education 2008, 13) provides evidence on the ways in which discrimination within South African higher education institutions affects staff, in particular African staff members:

> It is clear from this overall assessment of the state of transformation in higher education, that discrimination, in particular with regard to racism and sexism, is pervasive in our institutions.

The Report details the lack of representation of African staff, the flight of African staff members from such institutions, the lack of follow through from development programmes for staff to actual posts, the lack of movement of white staff out of senior positions, exclusion by language, selective lack of respect from students for African staff, and so on. These conditions are impediments to the full participation of African staff in particular.

The relatively few studies that have explored issues of racism within South African universities have tended to focus more on students (Walker 2005). With regard to staff, there are studies that provide evidence consistent with findings in the Ministerial Report (Gwele 1998; Hemson et al. 2003; Thaver 2009). There is a larger body of literature on racial exclusion affecting staff on campuses in the United States (Anderson 1988; Stanley 2006), while a recent paper extends the discussion to the selective exclusion of black men on campuses (Smith, Yosso and Solorzano 2007).

While the bulk of this literature refers to racial exclusion, there is evidence of the exclusion of women academic staff, not only but in particular when women are not white (Fordham 1993; Jansen 2005; Jean-Marie, Williams and Sherman 2009; Lloyd-Jones 2009).

The implication of this literature is that academic staff are always subject to terms of inclusion, and that these terms of inclusion are mediated by race and gender, at least. ‘At least’ because we do not have sufficient evidence on the role of factors such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion and disability, while class and language are so closely caught up with race in the South African context that disentangling them from race is impossible without more focused studies.
There is evidence that awareness of exclusion is greatest amongst those who are least included and most excluded. Thus white academic staff tend to report racial relations in positive terms (Department of Education 2008, 59).

**METHODOLOGY**

Durban University of Technology, the research site, was formed from the merger of an Indian (ML Sultan Technikon) and a white technikon (Natal Technikon) in 2002 (Chalufu 2002). While the management of both technikons agreed to the merger, and the white technikon pushed strongly for it, as it was in financial difficulties, staff at ML Sultan resorted to law suits to attempt to block it. There were thus major tensions, with the potential for clash of institutional cultures, and since merger it has been affected by frequent disruptions and frequent changes in senior management. There are roughly 22 000 students at DUT and about 550 academic members of staff in six faculties. The racial composition of staff reflects the demographics of the original institutions; a strong representation of Indians and whites that follows closely on the patterns at ML Sultan and Natal respectively (Chalufu 2002), and a predominance of men.

**Table 1: Demographics of academic staff, EE report, DUT 2009**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African</th>
<th>Coloured</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>45.3%</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition there is a small number of foreign staff members, just over 1 per cent of the total. The demographics of staff at DUT are sharply at variance with the population of the province, in which the racial breakdown is roughly 85 per cent African, 1.5 per cent Coloured, 8.5 per cent Indian and 5 per cent white. Despite this discrepancy in terms of staff, a high proportion of students are African rural students.

The use of the typical South African racial categories in this study risks entrenching racial divisions. Not using them has other risks, specifically in not acknowledging patterns of experience related to race. The treatment of social identities here is consistent with critical race theory, which seeks to make the dynamics related to race and other social identities, and the intersections between them, more visible. While the questionnaire asked how respondents would ‘describe themselves in terms of their race’, and identified such areas as race, gender and class as potential areas of exclusion, none of the interview questions asked respondents to speak about race or other social identities.

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DATA COLLECTION

Our initial intention was to use a mixed-methods approach (Cresswell 2009) with both a questionnaire that would reach larger numbers of staff, enabling some quantification of findings, and open-ended interviews with a small proportion of those. We wanted to reach as many staff members as possible through a questionnaire circulated to 200 staff by email. As there is no email listing of academic staff, we used the telephone listing of departments to identify academic staff below the level of Dean, selected 200 randomly and sent the questionnaire to those, requesting a return by email if possible. The final question asked whether respondents were willing to supply their name and be interviewed.

Four questions invited comments and explanations. In the event, only 23 (11.5%) staff members responded to the questionnaire (see Table 2); while they provide insight into the individual cases, it is not possible to achieve any depth of statistical analysis.

Despite the poor response, a high proportion of these respondents (14 in all) were willing to be interviewed. After ten had been interviewed, because there was already a diverse representation in terms of race and gender, and because each additional interview was not changing the patterns emerging from the data, it was decided to stop at that point. The interview schedule included 24 open-ended questions, enabling fuller discussion if merited. These questions focused mainly on experiences and perceptions of staff, including their feelings about themselves in the institution. Note that we did not attempt to define for respondents ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’, but rather sought to get from them their own application of the terms.

Table 2: Respondents (questionnaires and interviews)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Questionnaires</th>
<th></th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that of the questionnaire respondents, 10 were whites, in an institution where 31.3 per cent of academic staff are white. Only six were Indians; Indians are 45.3 per cent of academic staff. Men and women were roughly even in numbers. Only one Indian man responded, despite the fact that Indian men constitute over one in four academic staff members. Of the faculties, Engineering was not represented at all in the questionnaire responses, and Accounting and Informatics by only one response. No African women, Indian men or Coloured women volunteered to be interviewed.

How do we understand the fact that there were few responses? Was it because only those angered by exclusion responded? This seems not to have been the case.
Of the 23 staff who sent in questionnaire responses, 13 felt generally excluded, and 10 generally included. Another possibility was that mentioned by a couple of staff to the one author, that there was no point in responding, as nothing would be done: ‘Nothing will change at DUT’. Potentially, staff could have used this as the opportunity to report positive experiences of actual inclusion, but very few did. It could be that this response indicates a high degree of staff apathy.

Respondents were assured that their names would be concealed and that data would not be used in a way that could identify individuals or departments. Ethical clearance was applied for and granted through the DUT structures. It was decided to name the institution in this article because the one reference used identifies it, and because this enables it to be used more effectively within the transformation processes of the institution.

To ensure trustworthiness, transcripts of interviews were sent to each respondent to enable them to check on accuracy or to indicate sections that they might want to remove.

To what extent did the social identities of the researchers – one of the researchers a white, middle-aged male, the other an Indian South African, middle-aged woman – influence the outcomes of the research? Our view is that they did not make a significant difference. The pattern of responses was similar in both questionnaires and interviews, despite the difference in personal interaction. Respondents volunteered for the interviews, knowing the names of the researchers, and often expressed themselves vehemently to a researcher from a background different to theirs.

One limitation of the study is the lack of generalisability to academic staff in this institution or beyond. We were though more concerned to understand the quality of experience and feelings from a diverse range of staff.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

Analysis took place through an iterative process where initial impressions from the interviews and questionnaires were checked against the data. These yielded further questions and suggestions that were again tested. The question ‘What is not being spoken about?’ was a useful question to explore.

This study focused on experiences, perceptions and feelings. As Jansen (2005, 308) notes, research on organisational change and educational reform increasingly recognises the need to acknowledge the significance of feelings. This gives the researcher access to the respondent’s sense of inclusion or exclusion. The danger for the researcher is in not recognising the inevitably selective nature of the perspective given by the respondent. This became particularly evident when it was realised that there had been conflict between specific respondents. Rather than attempting to make a judgement as to ‘truth’ we explore instead the nature of the experiences and feelings expressed.
FINDINGS

The emotional life of staff

It was notable, from the interviews in particular, that there was a prevalent sense of anger and sometimes fear. In one case, a relatively senior white academic who had chaired a disciplinary hearing, had been subjected to death threats after excluding two student leaders. The students were readmitted even though management had assured him of complete support and protection. In another case, a white lecturer who exposed corruption expressed anger at the failure of management to investigate the situation and to take action.

A more pervasive sense of anger characterised the responses of African staff, who identified lack of access to resources, social distance from other staff, and favouritism. Examples were the ways in which complaints about staff were handled by a head of department, or the difficulties in accessing funding.

When I wanted to attend a workshop, I would be sent from pillar to post, till the date is too close, then I am told that Finance cannot fund you because the date is too close, but other people will start the process the day before and they can go. (African man, interview)

He was not the only respondent who expressed anger over what he saw as the selective application of procedures. An Indian woman ascribed her experience to both gender and race:

[I disliked] . . . my experiences with my immediate line manager and his need to stifle staff and to use people for his own advancement . . . It seems to be an Indian thing – hold other Indian people down, they cannot see another Indian prosper. (Interview)

A white woman expressed anger over a series of situations that she considered to have been handled poorly by management:

We went through a year of pure hell and management did nothing. (Interview)

In contrast, a Coloured man expressed fear in his interview over the violence he had been exposed to when staff on strike had threatened others and damaged equipment:

I have seriously considered emigrating . . . the strike, the level of fear that was put into me as a person. With the strike comes the violence, the incitement, we had people banging on the doors, the gates, we had to switch off the lights and close the doors . . . One of the lecturers actually had a stick with him and he was taunting academics.

A recurrent comment from staff was the issue of corruption, favouritism and intimidation:

The viciousness of staff. And the corruption. Fraud, corruption. (White woman, interview)
The experiences with my immediate line manager and his need to stifle staff and to use people for his own advancement . . . The corruption that comes with his position as head. (Indian woman, interview)

A sense of isolation, even grief, emerges in the comments of an African woman:

I am not sure [on what basis I am being excluded] but it could be because I have been forgotten. (Questionnaire)

Positive elements
In contrast to these negative emotions, what then are the positive elements that staff articulate? It was notable that most respondents who were interviewed identified interactions with students in positive terms:

The only thing I have liked is getting on teaching and actually seeing students passing, and also helping those who have been struggling. (African man, interview)

If something really intelligent comes out from students, you can see where thinking happens . . . (White woman, interview)

I love teaching and the interaction with my students, and even my colleagues. It’s just the newness every time of those interactions; I think it is really the best part of the job. (Indian woman, interview)

Other positive elements identified by respondents are the good working conditions, and opportunities for further study and research.

What do these expressions of emotion tell us about inclusion and exclusion? Mostly, anger, fear and grief are purely exclusionary. In two cases staff members who expressed anger stated their intention to leave; others gave responses that indicated a degree of social and psychological withdrawal within the institution:

This is the kind of torture I have gone through in my life, day to day. (African man; interview)

What opportunities are there for learning from staff anger or enthusiasm? Are there processes that channel these towards ‘new modalities’? (Thaver 2006, 25). The one strong impression that we take from the responses of staff is that staff are not being sufficiently listened to and that their concerns are insufficiently engaged with.

Conflict and its management
Conflict is a fact of life in organisations, and a recently merged institution is likely to experience heightened conflict as different histories and practices are suddenly brought together. It would be remarkable if conflict did not emerge in the data; what interested us more was how it was handled and resolved, or not.

The respondents referred in fact to many conflicts, some of which were not acknowledged openly. All those interviewed had been caught up in conflicts,
most of which had a racial aspect even when it was not directly about race. The consistent impression from the interviews is that generally, conflicts were ignored by management or were resolved in arbitrary ways.

Unclear and erratic procedures were seen by several respondents as contributing to interpersonal conflicts that may develop a racial or gender dimension:

I think these things [the procedures] are wrong, and that is where you have to change things, not the personal problems, but the way things operate. These things aggravate the problems between individuals. (White woman, interview)

Social identities and exclusion

The questionnaire asked respondents if they felt excluded, both generally and on the basis of one or more stated identities, and if they felt that others were excluded on the basis of these identities. The identities most frequently identified as relevant to exclusion of the respondents were seniority, gender and then race. Race, then seniority and gender were identified as most relevant to exclusion of other staff.

Seniority

This was intended to refer to professional rather than social identity, unlike the other categories. This created some ambiguity, in that it might be understood to refer to age – and to respondents’ being included or excluded on the basis of age. Thus respondents interpreted it in very variable ways. In some cases the reason given for its use was that promotion had been blocked through changes in criteria, mainly related to qualifications. In other cases ‘seniority’ referred to senior management as being obstructive. In a third case, it was linked to class:

. . . the class that they [senior staff] come from they come mainly from the higher middle class. The class I am coming from is the lower, not middle class. The way they view things is totally different. (African man, interview)

Gender

Exclusion on grounds of gender was referred to relatively frequently in the questionnaires (five times) but comparatively little mentioned in the interviews. The Ministerial Report (2008, 46) states:

. . . the fact that it [sexism] was not raised as forcefully as were issues of racism does not mean that it does not exist.

Two questionnaire responses about gender being exclusionary of men came from white men; possibly this was because of the concerns over affirmative action. The other comments on gender came from women.

In this institution elderly white males are discriminated against unfairly (White male, questionnaire)
I am of the opinion that Indian males in particular feel threatened by strong females and therefore find the need to hold females back . . . with the fear that the females will present them with a challenge and show them up as being poor and inefficient managers (Indian woman, questionnaire).

Most comments about gender are linked to race, suggesting that racial oppression is differentially mediated by gender.

**Race**
The questionnaire responses relating to exclusion of the respondents are shown in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Highly included</th>
<th>Well included</th>
<th>Neither included nor excluded</th>
<th>Partially excluded</th>
<th>Very excluded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NR</td>
<td>Woman</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>NR</td>
<td>Man</td>
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</table>

The one notable pattern in these figures is that African people express consistently a sense of exclusion (respondent volunteered for an interview but did not send in a questionnaire response; he, an African man, felt ‘very excluded’). Compared to gender, race was named much more frequently in relation to inclusion and exclusion.

While Coloured and African respondents used such racial terms, five respondents used other terms to refer to themselves in response to the question on racial self-description. From other sources (such as referring to themselves as white elsewhere in the questionnaire or in an interview) most were categorised as white. The terms included ‘South African’ (two respondents), ‘Caucasian’, ‘unique and wild’, and ‘tiring, I came last’ (sic). While potentially a refusal to use racial terms opens up possibilities of moving beyond the distortions of race, most of these comment suggest rather a kind of ‘race blindness’, a term used by some authors about people who deny the significance of race while still making judgements on a racial basis (DeCuir and Dixson 2004).
Two responses related to change in the qualifications required in terms that are racialised:

As a white male there is no place for me at DUT especially now that qualifications are a determinant of competency. (White man, questionnaire) . . . a PhD is now needed. In the past it was Masters, which I have. So exclusion based on race has crippled my progress and I have now given up trying. (White woman, questionnaire)

Indians were the only racial group who were noticeably underrepresented in the responses, in relation to their share of the staff demographics. The only Indian man felt ‘highly included’. Do Indians feel that they are in a secure position within the institution, both because of historic predominance and of being relatively protected against action on affirmative action? The only comment regarding exclusion of Indians on a racial basis came from a white woman who referred to the pressure not to appoint more Indians, presumably to enable the greater recruitment of African staff.

Race was frequently volunteered in the interviews. Most respondents had specific comments about racialised interactions. Where conflicts amongst staff had one racial group on one side, and one on the other as often seemed to be the case, conflicts seemed intractable:

As my skin is white, the easiest way out for any person who has a black skin is to accuse me of “racism” – that always does the trick. (White woman, questionnaire)

African staff spoke of the power they felt was held by white staff in particular but also by Indians. This man contrasted a sense of being ‘at home’ with black people with the exclusion by whites and Indians:

Even some of my black colleagues, we disagree totally and we talk about it, we tear the issue apart. But with the other race, we find that there is still the sense of superiority . . . I am talking about white people and Indian people. And obviously because of the years that they have been here, they will be in senior positions. (African man, interview).

There were some references to overt racism, and to the failure of management to respond in ways that were in any way appropriate:

One student was called a kaffir and he reported the case but that matter was swept under the carpet and the student had to apologise, somehow he was told it would not be nice if you fight with your lecturer. (African man, interview).

The non-whites in our department are regularly subjected to verbal abuse because they feel that we are less than they are . . . At staff meetings, my white colleagues listen to me speak, then ignore me, as if I was not there and repeat everything I just said and our head, who is white, will engage in discussion with her . . . (Indian woman).
Some respondents perceived how racism operates in subtle ways:

And people make a conscious effort not to be racist, they try to be politically correct, but your students and others pick up on that when it is not a genuine thing. You hear comments like “they”, who are they? You get comments like “your students will not be able to cope . . .” (Indian woman, interview).

Disturbingly, in terms of the tendency to use terms like ‘preserving standards’, there is evidence that teaching becomes racialised in ways that assume African intellectual inferiority. One example is the practice of ‘scoping’, or giving students the questions to be asked in examinations, to help them:

. . . I had one group of students who said to me we can’t do that because it is too difficult. Why? Because we are black people who went to a public school? For a whole period I gave them a speech on self-fulfilling prophecies, we don’t challenge them to be independent, in a sense it is extremely racist . . . surprisingly you will find that it is predominantly among the Indian staff . . . my white colleagues push everyone hard and they are demanding and hard on anybody. (Indian woman, interview).

This academic was unusual amongst respondents in reporting ways in which she attempted to address issues of race in her teaching, by challenging racial and ethnic divisions within the class. She was also the one person who spoke in any depth about other forms of discrimination, such as against disabled, gay and lesbian people on campus.

Racism takes the form of discernible patterns of interactions and outcomes rather than overt statements; what black staff at DUT express is very similar to what was expressed by black staff in evidence to the Ministerial Committee Report (Soudien 2010, p. 890) and there are undoubted racialised patterns that Thaver (2009) reports how her white respondents (academic staff) tended to speak as if their university was culturally diverse. ‘By contrast, black respondents signal that there is a dominant, unspoken culture into which one needs to be assimilated – a white, male, middle-class, Eurocentric culture.’ The pattern of responses at DUT is consistent with this sense of exclusion from a dominant culture.

Racialised histories
One way in which the institutional culture is at times racialised is the use of the former technikons as reference points. None of the questions invited such comments, but they were made, frequently in terms of race or professional identity:

Before at ML Sultan there was no transformation, you could become a Dean only if you were voted in, and what you found was that Indians would vote only for Indians . . . (African man, interview).

Natal Technikon had a distinct culture of academic freedom . . . I found that in my department in particular, and my current head is also ex-NT, that culture has prevailed . . . (Indian woman, interview).
At ML Sultan there was this culture of sort of like, everything can happen, only if you talk to the right people and nobody seems to care about what were the policies, as long as you talk to the right people. (African man, interview).

We were a family at MLS but lost that at DUT. There is no unity at DUT. (Indian woman, interview).

While this study is not focused on the broader issues of institutional culture, it seems that the previous institutional histories persist as forces within DUT, almost as virtual institutions that continue to live below the horizon of formal awareness. These institutions provide the shadowy backdrop to transformation at DUT.

**Class**

Class was almost absent in comments, and strongly overlaid by issues of race:

... your views will not be listened to ... You know when different households come from different classes, the class that they [senior staff] come from they come mainly from the higher middle class. The class I am coming from is the lower, not middle class. The way they view things is totally different. (African man, interview).

[What do you not like?] The people – the racism, and the classism. Very subtle, there are nuances more than being overt. But of course intelligent people know how to be covert in their interactions with others. (Indian woman, interview).

**DISCUSSION**

What overall is the picture that emerges? The merger and strike disruptions may have been elements in the degree of unhappiness. However, what is notable is the consistency between these findings on exclusion by race and gender, and the findings of the Report of the Ministerial Committee (2009), including in institutions that had not experienced these factors, or had experienced them to lesser degree.

It is notable that race occupied so central a position in the responses of staff. There seemed to be little capacity for open discussions across racial divisions of the racial issues that are constantly spoken about. While there needed to be greater clarity on how overt racism would be handled in the disciplinary processes, it is evident that a more significant problem was the insufficient opportunity for African academics in particular to be heard.

The focus on race tends though to occur at the cost of limiting the exploration of other issues, such as class and gender. While race may serve as a window to our understanding of the operations of gender and class, it is a window that may also filter and obscure our scrutiny. Possibly the way ahead on this is to open discussions about experience in ways that do not always assume the primacy of race. Thaver (2009) refers to the challenge in these ways: ‘I wonder whether our efforts to change institutional cultures should be guided by postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha’s notion of the third space located between essentialized and nonessentialized identities’.
There is a need to balance an acknowledgement of race with a critical sense of its constructed nature. This points to a process approach to transformation, that works from the experiences and perceptions of staff (Moloi, Dzvimbo and Ngcobo 2008).

If we use the ‘at home’ metaphor (Thaver 2006), many respondents feel less than fully ‘at home’. The conditions of that exclusion are important to recognise. It is one thing to feel ‘not at home anymore’, as some respondents express, because the conditions for promotion have changed to require higher educational levels, or there is a strong move by management to increase the number of African staff in an institution with high numbers of African students. It is a different matter when being ‘not at home’ is linked to a sense of active exclusion or, perhaps worse, of being forgotten.

CRT aims to challenge the dominant ideology. These findings point not just to issues of white privilege, but also to the failure of the prevailing discourse at South African universities. Despite the acknowledgement of the need for racial transformation, this has tended to be limited to an emphasis on the numbers and race of staff, ignoring more fundamental questions of culture and epistemology. Otherwise the discourse of South African universities is no different from that across the world: ‘Universities are now run as corporations according to formulae, incentives, targets and plans . . . a growing apparatus of DVCs . . . executive deans, etc, with loyalty to the centre rather than to disciplines or faculties’ (Marginson, quoted in Olssen and Peters 2005). While exploration of this goes beyond the scope of this article, it suggests that there is an inherent failure of the discourse in addressing the same issues of social relationships and institutional culture that have carried over from apartheid.

The findings indicate that at DUT, when a difficult conflict arose that might well involve differences around race and gender -- or that concerned institutional breakdowns around corruption or favouritism -- some managers were unwilling to intervene. More generally, there seemed very little opportunity for staff to be heard and for them to be able to speak about difficult issues. Conflict was ignored or sidelined, with little opportunity for a resolution from which staff might develop new ways of proceeding.

**TRANSFORMATION AT DUT**

Within the process of transformation there will continue to be some ways in which staff will at times feel excluded. DUT will not be able to address its racial skewing without creating some specific opportunities for African staff in particular, that are not open to others. This creates an inevitable sense of exclusion amongst other groups, though it becomes evident from the study that this is in no way comparable to that experienced by African staff. Creating such opportunities for African staff will limit the possibilities for others to advance to management positions (heads of schools, deans, executive managers), but not to academic promotion, and not to valuable mentoring roles.
DUT has established a Transformation Oversight Committee, while the Council has assumed overall direction of the agenda of transformation. Part of this work entails identification of the challenges facing DUT, of which inclusion and exclusion of staff is but one. The challenge for DUT is both at a policy level – not so much changing its policies as implementing them in ways that are equitable and transparent – and at the level of the ‘rules of the game’ amongst staff, as well as between staff and students. One key initiative would be for faculty boards and Senate to open up discussion on the issues revealed in ways that weaken the opportunities for intimidation and silencing, and that enable the identification and eradication of misconceptions. Another would be attention to the physical spaces, and the opportunities they create or obstruct for communication, or to the possibilities for increased collaborative work amongst academics of the institution. Only then can there be a sense of staff in all their differences being ‘at home’ in ways that are consistent with the mission and vision of DUT.

REFERENCES


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