STEERING EPISTEMIC ACCESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Institutional Dilemmas

Michael Cross

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INSTITUTIONAL DILEMMAS

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CLACSO
Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales - Conselho Latino-americano de Ciências Sociais
Estados Unidos 1168 | C1023AAB Ciudad de Buenos Aires | Argentina
Tel [54 11] 4304 9145 | Fax [54 11] 4305 0875 | <clacso@clacsoinst.edu.ar> | <www.clacso.org>

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The highest-ranked universities are the ones that make significant contributions to the advancement of knowledge through research, teach with the most innovative curricula and pedagogical methods under the most conducive circumstances, make research an integral component of undergraduate teaching, and produce graduates who stand out because of their success in intensely competitive arenas during their education and (more important) after graduation.
(J Salmi: The Challenge of Establishing World-Class Universities; The World Bank, 2009)

BACKGROUND

Together with the universities of Cape Town, Natal and Rhodes, the University of the Witwatersrand committed itself to the liberal ideals of the so-called "Open Universities" as outlined in their manifesto issued in 1954 (The Open Universities in SA, 1957). The core feature of these ideals was the rejection of any external interference designed to diminish their freedom to attain their goals, particularly apartheid State interference in university affairs. While this commitment represented a significant expression of the crisis of apartheid institutions, it seems to have had negative effects upon the university management, which tended to assume a somewhat uncritical position towards its own institutional practices, by virtue of its claims to being an "open" and non-racial university. In practice, this "common purpose" as described by Munro (quoted by Johnson, 1988) was never translated into any significant changes in staff and student composition in terms of race, gender and ethnicity. It remained a highly contested, predominantly White-male dominated institution (a so-called "old boys network") until the late 1980s (for details see *Perspectives of Wits*, 1986).

It was not until the late 1980s, and more significantly in the 1990s with the provision of financial aid that the student composition changed considerably and began to pose new challenges to the faculty

and university management. This despite the overall decline in student numbers. In the last two decades, Wits has gone through significant social change that cannot be underestimated for its consequences. The number of students enrolled at Wits declined from 18,477 in 1992 to 17,884 in 1994 and remained relatively static throughout the 1990s, followed by a considerable increase thereafter. The White student majority declined gradually from 13,276 in 1992 to 9,155 in 1997. However, an important number of Black students came from middle class backgrounds and possessed the necessary social and cultural capital to meet the challenges of the typically elitist academic and institutional culture at Wits. The number of students with working class backgrounds began to increase in the early 1990s and radically reversed the position from the late 2000s. More flexible admissions and selection criteria and the availability of financial aid led to increasing enrolments of so-called "non-traditional" or "underprepared" students, i.e. Black students from diverse social and educational backgrounds (*Report of the Working Group in Retention and Throughput: Executive Summary,* Wits, 2003). While rates vary across faculties, on average less than 50 percent of students who begin an undergraduate degree end up graduating and less than 45 percent graduate in the minimum time. Black students are consistently less likely to graduate than White students and male students have usually taken longer to graduate than their female counterparts. Furthermore, many degrees can be found to exclude more than 20 percent of students for academic or financial reasons (Wits, 2003 19).

It must be emphasised that a changing student demography of this nature poses serious challenges. For one thing, the university now has a majority Black student population and comprises a relatively balanced representative demographic of the various official race categories: African, Coloured, Indian, and White. In 2003, Wits had a total of 24,116 students, of whom 15,588 were Black (11,363 African, 6,625 Indian and 600 Coloured) and only 8,520 were White. Then in addition, the end of apartheid has opened new opportunities that have resulted in an increasing influx of international students from both developed and developing countries, particularly the Southern African Development Community (SADC). From 1997 to 2003, the number of international students increased from 701 to 1,293. This inflow of students has added another dimension to an already complex institutional life at the university: that of a student body that is highly diverse in social, educational, linguistic and political terms. As a result, institutional practice and student life are now inevitably mediated by a complex interplay of phenomena that are reflected in the burgeoning diversity of the student population.

Not surprisingly, the question of throughput, retention, and success has become a major concern across all faculties and schools. Several studies have been undertaken by various faculty and senate committees to address this challenge.

This book utilises a broadly critical cultural approach to explain access and retention. In recent years, the use of cultural approaches has made a significant contribution to how we understand societies and particularly social institutions undergoing transition. The impact of these approaches is evident in the social sciences and in interdisciplinary fields such as education, where different dimensions and perspectives within respective cultural approaches have been applied to a variety of topics.

MY STORY AND ITS MOTIVES

This book is guided by a desire to address the following questions that arise from the circumstances described above. How do students negotiate epistemic access within a higher performance university environment such as Wits University? What individual or collective resources (cultural and/or material) do they resort to in the process? And, how does the university mediate this process? The discussion to follow in the oncoming chapters will carefully explore the following three aspects of institutional cultural web in order to answer these pressing questions. Firstly, it will look at the institutional memory (histories, legacies, traditions, values and ethos) that the dominant culture tends to privilege—discourses and assumptions as well as related institutional policies and practices that form the basis of routine processes of the university's academic and student practices. It will then address the ways in which these influence student academic performance and development. Finally, it will delve into students' diverse university experiences of, on the one hand, racism, cultural isolation, sexual harassment, and violence, and on the other, their generally positive academic interactions and fruitful scholarly engagement.

The book rests on three epistemological and methodological foundations. Firstly, it brings Morrow's concern with epistemological access to the centre of the education debate on higher education access in South Africa. Secondly, it is a quest to come to grips with student social and learning experiences on campus from a culturalist angle that accounts for experience, agency, and meaning in a specific and complex context. Thirdly, it strongly reasserts the significance of introspective institutional research within the higher education system as a basis for tackling the intricate and increasingly elusive problems facing this system.

My entire professional career has been dedicated to academic life, which is the thing I appear to know the best. This closeness to the subject of analysis can be a source of insight, but likewise a source of oversight. I have found over the years that colleagues at the university were also fascinated by the practices taking place in other institutions including those that were lower ranked compared to my own university. Our own initiatives tended to be always barraged with negativity and scepticism. In my own humble ways I turned negativity into a Descartean methodic doubt, always questioning our own beliefs and doings, which rendered me a more productive positionality towards our work and the institution. The book is not only about my professional reflection in this regard but also about the site of its location, my own university. In undertaking such a subject, there are always epistemological and theoretical difficulties. As Bourdieu correctly noted, a person who chooses to study his own world in its nearest and most familiar aspects runs the risk of "domesticating the exotic" or "exoticising the domestic", "through a break with his initial relation of intimacy with modes of life and thought which remain opaque to him, because they are too familiar" (Bourdieu, 1988 xi). Conscious of this difficulty, the project offers a unique opportunity for introspection and self-analysis, which, with the necessary precautions, affords the possibility of a detached scrutiny of my familiar world. This reappropriation of the self is only possible through the objectification of my own familiarity with this world, an epistemological privilege that requires a great deal of analytical vigilance. I have applied myself to this task to the best of my abilities.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL ACCESS AT THE CENTRE OF HIGHER EDUCATION DEBATE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Since the demise of apartheid, South African higher education institutions have undergone considerable changes in the profile of staff and students within their institutional environments. While these changes have entailed unprecedented formal access of students to higher education, particularly those from historically disadvantaged backgrounds, a major challenge remains the question of epistemic access, which has an impact on issues of throughput, retention, and success. Low graduation rates, high drop-out rates and general academic underperformance are central problems facing all South African universities. From this angle, the book recaptures Morrow's (2009) distinction between formal and epistemological access. It focuses on the institutional culture of the university in order to identify those practices, norms and values that constrain, along with those that enable epistemological access or successful participation for an increasingly diverse student body.

There are two contrasting concepts that underpin the argument as set forth here—those of formal access and epistemic access. It is commonly known that to be admitted as a student at a university is what is termed 'formal access.' It implies merely the literal level of entry into the university system. It is a process driven by policy (e.g. where entry requirements or other such criteria are met), or by some agency other than the 'self', taking into consideration issues of entitlement, equity and equality of opportunity. 'Epistemological access', a term coined by Morrow (2009 78), refers to the process of "learning how to become a successful participant in the academic practice" of a tertiary institution. It requires an understanding by students of how the institution operates or 'thinks'. It thus requires the use of their own initiative and individual responsibility to enable them to gain entry into the 'rules of the trade' of academic practice—the practice of searching for and working with knowledge. In this perspective, the 'self' or the individual student remains the main agent for the acquisition of epistemological access. This is not to downplay the role of institutional mediation (through academic support and availability of resources and facilities) and institutional responsibility in the process. Indeed, using the notion of pedagogic distance, Jansen (2001 3-4) places emphasis on the institutional role as central to a challenge that he perceives in terms of an abdication of institutional responsibility when it comes to addressing the question of epistemic access.

While there is plenty of evidence to support both Morrow and Jansen's approaches to epistemic access, it is taken here that there is a 'dynamic interplay' between student responsibility (which requires active engagement in time and effort), the quality of institutional mediation in student learning, and the teaching and learning contexts, or the 'way an institution organises learning opportunities and services' (Chen *et al.*, 2008 340). Currently in South Africa, the question of formal access has hitherto been substantially addressed; it is the question of epistemic access that requires more attention—a need upon which this book is premised.

MY APPROACH AND KEY CONCEPTS

This book is also an expression of concern over an unresolved paradigmatic battle in higher education in South Africa and the rest of the continent, between two competing traditions. The first is upheld by those who tend to reduce access research to a pure 'number-crunching' exercise whilst at the same time reducing the question of the higher education access problem to the ability of higher education institutions to meet the demand for higher education. This is well illustrated in Chapter Two. The second is held by those who go beyond

this narrow approach to link higher education to what happens to university students within higher education institutions, their experiences, their learning chances and personal development, as well as more particularly, whether they gain epistemological access in real terms. Such approach has been referred to as culturalist approach in that it strives to explain how students relate to each other and to the surrounding academic and social environment as they negotiate their student identities.

As the South African Council on Higher Education (CHE, 2005) correctly put it "there is little understanding of why large numbers of students are dropping out of higher education institutions" within existing paradigms; "current quantitative approaches to understanding throughput in terms of systemic inefficiencies rarely address questions about the multiple ways in which the academic experience affects student performance and retention." Institutional research in South African universities is not an exception in this regard. At Wits University for example, the only Senate-driven investigation on throughput and retention has fallen within this paradigm, and has added very little to our understanding of the roots of the low throughput rate and the problems of the impeded academic success of a considerable number of students.

As this book sets out to show, addressing throughput and student performance in terms of systemic inefficiencies is limited, both in clarifying *why* there is a problem with student academic success in South African universities, and in engaging with some of the central ideas that currently dominate debates about the burning issue of throughput. Unlike many previous studies on access and retention in South African higher education, which tend to emphasise the measurable dimensions of the problem (enrolments, failure and drop-out rates, etc.), this study follows, broadly speaking, a critical *cultural approach*. The rationale for such approach has already been demonstrated in recent literature. As Kuh and Whitt (1998 iii) have indicated, "Cultural perspectives encourage coherent interpretations of what seem, in isolation, to be atomistic events." Cultural perspectives are—importantly—interdisciplinary; they draw on such disciplines as psychology, sociology, anthropology, and organisational theory, which remind us that there are many ways to view experience and cultural phenomena (Kuh, 1993 13-14; see also Manning, and Eaton, 1993). When considered one at a time, student enrolments, drop-out rates, failure rates, throughput rates, resource allocation, and institutional renewal strategies, can appear trivial or their meaning may seem difficult to establish. Culturalist perspectives seek to understand students' experiences in terms of the crosscutting issues that may include class,

race, gender, language, or physical disability, within a framework that does not separate out the cultural from the material contexts of higher education.

Methodologically, culturalist approaches group the meanings and interpretations made by individuals into "student culture", "the culture of the academic profession", "the institutional culture", "the culture of the national system of higher education" and "the culture of individual disciplines" (Kuh and Whitt, 1998 12-13). According to Manning (1993), meanings and interpretations can be found in a diverse array of cultural artifacts that may include memorials and buildings (physical artefacts); stories, myths, campus language (verbal artefacts); and shared rules and norms, social conventions and organisational principles (beliefs). Such a perspective has the power of accounting for meanings and therefore enables us to construct coherent interpretations of what "seem, in isolation, to be atomistic events" (Kuh and Whitt, 1998 iii). But at this point we might ask what exactly *is* university culture? What is it that we are referring to when we use the term institutional culture?

In a tertiary education setting, institutional culture refers to the values, philosophies and ideologies that characterise the institution and its practices—that is, what people value, believe in, and consider admirable in the institution, and how they translate these into their everyday institutional life. Institutional culture also refers to the formal and informal environment in which we learn, teach, work, and live. It is the glue that binds together the diverse constituencies and members of the institution: students, faculty, managers, and support staff. Institutional culture set the boundaries about *what*, *how*, *by whom* and *for whom* teaching and academic practice occurs and in *what environment*. For an institution to reach its highest potential, it is necessary to know the environmental factors or conditions that contribute or detract from its institutional mission. Campus environments that produce feelings of alienation, hostility, social isolation, and invisibility can impair the recruitment of new students, retention of current students, academic adjustment, social adjustment, satisfaction, and graduation rates. To borrow from Morrow (1993/94), once students have gained access to the institution and campus, the challenge is to ensure that the campus environment assists them in achieving epistemological access. For faculty, staff, and administrators, this type of environment can work to impair the productivity and/or enthusiasm for teaching or working. The concept of diversity is closely linked to the nature of institutional cultures.

Analytical expectations in this regard include:

- To gauge the extent to which the universities are preparing students for careers in a changing and increasingly globalised and multicultural world.
- To trigger conversations that will serve to strengthen and improve institutional culture at the university.
- To highlight the areas where institutional culture may be having a positive effect.
- To contribute to an understanding of the institutional culture by the university community to help in their efforts to embrace diversity and establish a socially and academically friendly environment.
- To begin the on-going process of self-assessment, critical evaluation and self-reflection in order to continue to improve institutional cultures.
- To establish a baseline and develop a new and suitable epistemological and methodological base to inform future institutional culture studies.

Another important concept which requires clarification is the concept of diversity. Students enrolling at university come from a diverse background, which makes diversity an important factor that mediates all domains of academic and institutional life. How we interpret diversity is critical to the mode and content of our practice in dealing with epistemic access issues, equity and social justice on campus. How we set up the terms for discussing diversity shapes our perceptions and responses to these issues. At the institutional level, the meanings the university attaches to the word "diversity" informs how it accommodates and becomes responsive to the wider social context, the social diversity and differences which characterise the university community. As such the intellectual discourses and practices in the domain of institutional culture cannot for a moment be separated from prevailing understandings we have about the meaning of diversity.

While there seems to be consensus on what individual or social characteristics should be taken into account in defining diversity, currently in South African higher education very little institutional agreement has been achieved in respect to the actual meaning of diversity, which, in our opinion is not a bad thing. As a dynamic concept and, given the past, a highly contested concept, diversity has been negotiated and renegotiated. For this study, it will suffice to probe the different understandings key role players have about the meaning of diversity and how these are translated into institutional policies, strategies and practices. Diversity has been traditionally associated with race, gender, and culture.

Recent literature on diversity has widened the scope of diversity to embrace various characteristics such as age and physical traits, sexual orientation, ethnic and religious background, socio-economic status, place of origin, social and political affiliations, seniority and experience, education and training and so forth. As such, diversity represents a mix of characteristics that makes each person or group unique or gives them particular identities. These identities that students lend to the campus environment are also negotiated and renegotiated as they strive for membership within the institution and the university community. In this sense, diversity initiatives can be conceptualised as activities and practices aimed at *embracing*, or *accommodating* or *engaging* differences and as such they form an important dimension of institutional culture. Schneider (1997 128) suggests that besides diversity as new curricular content, developing capacities for 'engaging difference' is essential to the success of a diverse democracy.

It should be stressed, however, that generally the term "diversity" has been an object of intense contestation. This is partly because diversity, particularly cultural diversity, has connotations and historical associations with the apartheid legacy, an aspect which cannot be ignored (Harper, 1996). By emphasising cultural, linguistic, race, and social diversity as justification to its racially exclusionist policies, the apartheid regime left a negative connotation to diversity and difference. As Harper (1996 16) has indicated: "There is an emergent realisation that, if we are to embark upon an organised national campus diversity strategy, we will need to rework, rediscover, redefine and hopefully find sufficient consensus on what we understand by diversity and diversity initiatives within our own South African context".

I also refer to the experience of campus life by students as *campus membership*, which in my view entails much more than mere physical presence of individuals within a university space (the "campus lodge" approach). *Campus membership* is a result of individual and collective struggles. It entails a sense of belonging to and being accepted by a particular group or community, within specific social boundaries, occupying a shared space, regulated by specific norms, rules and ethos. It also entails making particular choices and compromises, which ultimately may result in the development of a sense of identity and participation in a particular community of practice. In this sense, students could study on campus or even live on campus without gaining full membership, i.e. remain on the margins at the risk of compromising their academic achievement and success. Those who have gained membership and have developed this sense of identity very often set

boundaries from the outside world with a sense of pride: "this is how we do things here" or, in reaction to what is perceived as unacceptable by their standards, "certainly not at this university!"

Three important dimensions can be considered on the complex ways students engage with and negotiate campus membership: (i) the *background or biography* of students who enter campus environment: (ii) the formal and informal *normative framework* regulating campus life; and (iii) the *institutional provision* on campus life. Background is a concept that is usually taken for granted. I would not do justice to the role of agency if I did not take into consideration how students themselves respond to these three forms of mediation. I use the concept *positionality* to map out the dialectic between individual agencies on the one hand and institutional and external pressures (e.g. local and global cultures) as students negotiate campus membership. Background (past experience or biography), the normative framework (policies, strategies, rules, and guidelines), institutional provision (services and support), and positionality (agency) together with external mediators such as *global culture* and *local popular culture*, provide the key theoretical foundations of my analytical framework.

My definition of background draws on, though it is not restricted to, the meaning and interpretations provided by Searle (1995) and a recent article by Broekman and Pendlebury (2002). Background (that is, different ways of being in the world) consists of "skills, abilities, pre-intentional assumptions, attitudes, practices, capacities, stances, perceptions and actions" (Broekman and Pendlebury, 2002 291) that we carry from one to another milieu. Among the functions assigned to background by Searle (1995 136), I would like to highlight two. First, background facilitates certain kinds of readiness. Second, background disposes one to certain sorts of behaviour. In this perspective, background enables and constraints both what we intend or set ourselves to do, how we interpret our actions and the world around us, and how we are interpreted or socially constructed by and in our interaction with other people.

The concept of background is at the heart of a major contention in this book, that is that students from different social *backgrounds* (race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, etc) contribute to and experience campus life/institutional culture differently. Within a university campus, where students from different backgrounds are brought together with an assumed common purpose, the challenge is to recognise difference and consider its consequences for accomplishing their common purpose. This may require understanding "the educative value of understanding different constructions of social reality and the possibilities of establishing new, shared meanings and practices"

(Broekman and Pendlebury, 2002 291). The implication of this assumption for my argument lies in the nature of institutional expectations the university has for its clients, the students, the nature of what Searle refers to as *institutional facts* and constitutive *rules*.

Through institutional facts I refer to those aspects of institutional life against which we conduct our daily lives on campus; we collectively agree on their use, even if we do not think about them (e.g. using the library as an aspect of academic life; keeping silence in the library; attending seminars or lectures, even if they are not compulsory, etc.). As Broekman and Pendlebury (2002 289) put it, "institutional facts assume collective agreement on function, status and meaning". *Constitutive rules* refer to a normative framework, not always explicit, that creates the very possibility of a particular form of practice (what students at varsity should do, how they should spend their leisure time, etc.) and related institutional facts (visiting the library, developing the habit of reading and debating, etc.). Whether and how students interpret or attach meaning to these facts and rules depends on their past experience, biographies or background of capacities, know-how and dispositions, i.e. a sort of pre-intentional knowledge about how the institution works; a set of abilities for coping in and with the institution. Briefly, *background* frames the pace and the mode in which students *gain campus membership* by developing an awareness or understanding of what constitutes *institutional facts* and what *constitutive rules* can be used as guiding and warning signs.

Unlike firms and many other institutions in society, universities have a very peculiar history of resilience. In moments of crisis, instability or rapid change, firms opt for available forms of adaptation to retain the margins of profit. They can amalgamate, close down and be reconverted into new and completely different lines of investment. Put differently, when they are no longer effective, they may choose a change of identity by entering a new line of production through amalgamation or may just sell their assets and disappear. Universities experiment adaptive strategies as well, which may involve for example institutional reorganisation, mergers, adoption of more socially responsive policies and practices, and alliances with new stakeholders (business, communities, etc.). What they do not do is let their adaptive efforts compromise their "core business", that is the advancement of knowledge and learning and the critical role assigned to them by society, though these may take new forms and emphases (e.g. applied knowledge, developmental research, etc.). Their success in surviving all threats in almost all societies has led Guy Neave (2002) to refer to them as institutions that should be more adequately described as "establishments".

Students reinvent themselves with reference to their past experience and memories, perceptions about institutional dominant discourse, including values and practices (institutional culture). Their *positionality* in relation to the three dimensions (i.e. openness to challenge and self-confidence to challenge or defend their views) has some bearing on the possibility of success or failure in the process. The challenge for the university is to enable students to live on campus within the constitutive rules of an academic environment which is socially and culturally responsive. I certainly agree with Broekman and Pendlebury (2002 293) that "impossible though it seems to make the rules explicit, it may be worth the attempt because the very exercise of trying to specify institutional facts and their constitutive rules" may help the institution to 'decentre' and so come to reflect on and refine institutional rules and procedures.

Global culture with its assumptions of a mass audience brought together by the reality or illusion of common ground opens spaces for inclusive dialogues around leisure concerns (dialogues around DVDs, iPods, music-playing and camera cell-phones, "Nikes", internet and celebrity news and scores of TV channels, etc.). This is generally in conflict with the monologues emanating out of difference, diversity and identity which tend to find their homes in popular cultures and tend to gain expression in social events associated with one's appreciation of *kwaito*, *mapantsula*, *gumba*, *rotis*, *samousas*, *boerewors*, etc. In both domains, critical spaces are essential for building bridges and holding student communities towards a common social and institutional purpose. It is our concern to explore the role of these external forms of mediation in student social and institutional life.

Here is my main claim running through the chapters: universities in South Africa cannot adequately create an enabling institutional culture and provide epistemic access to their students by merely providing services to remedy student deficits (academic support programmes, mentoring, and academic enrichment workshops, etc.). These positive efforts must be combined with institutional mechanisms that enable interaction between students to facilitate negotiation of shared meaning, codes, norms, and values. Comprehensive institutional culture change is required for addressing the needs of a diverse student population. Recent research in the USA and India underscores the significance of focusing institutional changes on institutional culture, more specifically on climate, curriculum, student involvement, the quality of faculty and peer interactions, and the diversity of students and staff (see for example Cross *et al.*, 1999 and Beckam *et al.*, 1999).

RESPONDING TO POLICY AND PRACTICAL IMPERATIVES

The three agencies that have supported the preparation of this book in its different phases—The South African Council on Higher Education, The African Higher Education Collaborative/Council for International Exchange of Scholars, and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA)—all placed emphasis on the practical and policy implications of the study. From a practical point of view, the book aims to provide the knowledge for understanding an increasingly complex and highly contested higher education environment. In this perspective, the book highlights both the enabling as well as the constraining conditions for achieving the university's strategic goals for its students—those of formal and epistemic access, throughput, and retention. Furthermore, understanding how students shape institutional cultures, and in the process assert or reconstitute their identities, is critical for understanding student achievement. As already indicated, institutional cultures that produce feelings of alienation, hostility, social isolation, and invisibility necessarily impede all of the following aspects of institutional culture and university life: the recruitment of new students; the throughput and retention of current students; academic adjustment; social adjustment; student satisfaction; and graduation rates. For faculty and administrators as well, this type of institutional culture can work to impair the productivity and/or enthusiasm for teaching and working. This is of significance here due to the fact that to a large extent, these members of staff influence who chooses to visit or to join the institution. The book addresses these concerns without compromising its scholarly commitments.

THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

The empirical data for this study was based on interviews with undergraduate in the faculties of Humanities, Science and Engineering and the Built Environment (EBE) at the universities of the Witwatersrand and KwaZulu-Natal. These faculties were selected because they have the lowest throughput rates across the country. In examining institutional rules and policies, the focus was on those implemented by the universities in the past five years. Curriculum and pedagogical issues generally dominate a significant part of student experience and concerns, particularly under current student protests; addressing them directly would indeed have made the study too large. These issues are dealt with only to the extent that students raise them as a critical part of their experiences. Targets were set in terms of race, gender and place of residence, with the notable exception of White students, who were underrepresented across all faculties in all institutions. In this study, race is described as either White or Black, with Black being

further subdivided into Coloured, Indian and African. While not ideal, these categories are in accordance with the reporting of access and equity statistics across the universities in South Africa. The first round of interviews took place in 2006, a process that led to several journal articles and a contribution to a book published by the South African Council on Higher Education (CHE). I am deeply indebted by the support provided by my research team, namely Professor Yael Shalem and my doctoral students, namely Judy Backhouse, Fatima Adam, and Hlengani Baloyi. The second round was a lonely process sponsored under the African Higher Education Collaborative, also with a contribution to book chapter. The third round was made possible under the sponsorship of the Association of African Universities and the South African National Research foundation, which allowed me to revitalise the project with my students Basha Motskhumo, Bernard Akala, Elizabeth Ndofirepi, and the late Samuel Fenyane. The last round was made possible by the generous grant provided by CODESRIA, which allowed me to review, update the data, and prepare the manuscript for this publication.

In surveying literature I looked at various theoretical studies and empirical studies on culture, university culture, and epistemic access. I investigated national and international studies on student throughput, retention, and success, and I also conducted an overview of national and international studies on higher education transformation and institutional studies on institutional culture. A wide ranging collection of documents were collated and analysed, including: statistics on student throughput in the three faculties; mission, strategy, policy, and procedure documents at institutional, faculty, and school level; and initiatives taken at institution, faculty, and school level to improve or understand throughput issues.

GROWTH IN INTAKE AND RE-COMPOSITION OF THE STUDENT POPULATION: THE PHENOMENON OF "NON-TRADITIONALITY"

Together with the University of Cape Town, the University of Natal and Rhodes University, the University of the Witwatersrand was prominent in displaying a liberal ideal of becoming an "open university", a sentiment that was expressed in their manifesto of 1950. In adopting this stance, Wits minimised external interference, particularly from apartheid-induced policies originated by the government. However, until the end of 1980s there was no substantial change in the composition of its staff and students with regard to race or gender. It was not before the end of the 1980s, and in a more significant manner in the wake of the 1990s that, due to the advent of important student financial support, the composition of students at Wits changed

considerably and began to bring new challenges to the university management. An exception occurred during this time, when the number of registered students decreased from 18,477 in 1992 to 17,884 in 1994, the year of the first democratic elections. This number, however, subsequently remained relatively stable during the 1990s.

In other words, the change was more marked in the composition of the student body than in the number of enrolled students. The university maintained a majority of White students notwithstanding the decline, and their numbers decreased from 13,276 in 1992 to 9,155 in 1997. It is important to stress that the number of students from underprivileged backgrounds remained marginal nevertheless. Black students that attended the university came mostly from middle class families and thus possessed sufficient social and cultural capital that would enable them to face the challenges inflicted upon them by a typically elitist institutional culture that characterised Wits as a university. This inheritance was, however, subject to a radical change since the end of 1990s, with a growing enrolment of students with "non-traditional" or "poorly prepared" profile, i.e. Black students from diverse social milieus, were admitted according to a more relaxed selection procedure. The number of students grew from 17,884 in 1994 to 23,232 in 2005, which was a sharp increase, given that student numbers had remained relatively static during most of the 1990s. In 2005, Wits had a total of 23,232 students, of whom 14,960 were Black (10,884 African, 3,455 Indian, and 621 Coloured) and only 8,269 were White. In addition to this, the end of apartheid also led to an influx of international students, particularly from the Southern African Development Community (SADC). From 1997 to 2005, the number of international students increased from 701 to 2,072.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

The book opens up with the theoretical perspective pursued in this study in Chapter Two—*Explaining higher education access in South Africa: towards a conceptual framework*. The purpose is to provide a theoretical basis that accounts for the complex ways through which the intersections and interactions (sometimes productive, sometimes not) among various role players—academic staff, students, and administrators in the university mediate or influence the quality of exposure of students, and ultimately the positioning of these as active agents of change. It does so drawing on three main conceptual domains, informed by Bernstein's (1990, 2000) analysis of "intellectual fields" and "pedagogical identities." The first intellectual field is the official field, which includes aspects that have some bearing on the shaping or reproduction of the dominant institutional culture of the university

(e.g., institutional vision or mission, policies, rules, and guidelines that regulate academic and social life on campus). The second is the pedagogic field, which entails discourses, strategies, inputs, and processes connected to the university's curriculum, teaching, and learning activities (i.e., academic culture and practices). The third is the social field or the domain of everyday life on campus. It is with reference to these conceptual lenses that the interface of global and local contexts that student experience is examined in the context of epistemic access.

Chapter Three- —*Student access and academic achievement in higher education in South Africa: emerging discourses* —maps out the emerging discourses on higher education access and the converging influences from international debates. It contextualises the concepts of "student access" and "success" with reference to the processes of restructuring and transformation in higher education. Initial debates focused on formal access in terms of inclusion and exclusion are increasingly being replaced by analyses that account for student experience on campus with focus on the institutional and pedagogical factors that affect successful achievement in higher education as well as individual and collective resources that impact on this process.

Chapter Four- —*Revisiting the pedagogy of academic and normative induction in high performance universities in South Africa* —is dedicated to the processes of mediation through which students are introduced to social and academic life within a university environment.

The first of the fields is examined in Chapter Five—*The Official Field: Negotiating a moral code* —the main domain in which students negotiate key constitutive rules that regulate social and academic behaviour within the university. This chapter explores student perceptions and experiences of the official domain in terms of how it does or does not enable a culture of access and success. It engages with what students know about the official domain of the university and how they perceive this domain in the context of creating an institutional culture that ensures student success. Clearly institutional culture has many dimensions and as Manning (1993) suggests it comprises physical (e.g. publications, memorials, buildings), verbal (e.g. stories, myths, campus language), behavioural (e.g. rituals, rites of passage, cultural performances and traditions), perspectives (e.g. shared rules and norms, social conventions and organisational principles), values and assumptions made by the different actors in the institution. While this chapter deals with those cultural artefacts that are related to the behavioural (e.g. rituals, rites of passage, cultural performances and traditions) and perspectives (e.g. shared rules and norms, social conventions and organisational principles), the official domain represents one perspective through which institutional culture could be viewed.

Chapter Six—*The pedagogic field: positioning oneself within a high performance pedagogical environment*—looks at students' perceived understanding of the academic and pedagogic practices of the university with regard to their learning experiences, their accounts of their relation to the academic authority and more broadly their sense of development as students. It focuses on the values and assumptions that students express on the idea of learning at a university, their expectations from themselves and from their lecturers, and the rules and academic conventions that they attribute to the social space of learning at a high performance institution.

Chapter Seven—*The pedagogic field: Positioning oneself within a high performance pedagogical environment from a condition of marginalisation*—is an extension of the issues discussed in Chapter Six with focus on students from historically disadvantaged and very often perceived as underprepared students. Challenging prevailing conceptions of high-risk students, the chapter shows how some of these students derive attitudes and strategies from their experience of marginalisation that enable them to succeed within the university environment. It offers a valuable qualification of Bourdieu's theory of social and cultural capital and *habitus* by showing how disadvantaged students acquire alternative forms of capital and dispositions that help them to navigate the challenging environment of the university. These include cognitive processes—forms of adaptive learning—referred to as the 'pedagogy of the marginalised'. In recognising this dynamic, the chapter works to challenge the misrepresentation, and attendant marginalisation of disadvantaged groups.

The analysis in Chapter Eight— *The social field: negotiating shared space and shared meaning*—comprises three focal areas. The first focal area deals specifically with how students experience institutional efforts towards promoting a healthy and dynamic student and social life on campus, more specifically institutional efforts to alter the institutional environment, the culture and ethos, so as to better accommodate an increasingly diverse cohort of students into an increasingly cohesive and interconnected community. The second focal area deals with student perceptions of campus social interaction, their interpretation and understandings of institutional practices, and how these affect their social and academic experience. The third focal area concerns student forms of participation and engagement in these processes as well as in shaping campus environment and their social life on campus. The main purpose is to highlight aspects and patterns of student agency in their efforts towards negotiating a campus environment, social interaction and campus life conducive to social intellectual and academic enrichment and improved student satisfaction.

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CHAPTER TWO
EXPLAINING HIGHER EDUCATION ACCESS IN SOUTH AFRICA: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

The conceptual perspective of this study uses the interpretive framework of culture in Higher Education (HE) offered by Kuh and Whitt (1998) and Manning (1993). Kuh and Whitt define culture in HE as "the collective, mutually shaping patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs and assumptions that guide the behaviour of individuals and groups in an institute of higher education and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off campus" (Manning, 1993 12-13). Methodologically, the meanings and interpretations made by individuals can be grouped into: student culture, the culture of the academic profession, the institutional culture, the culture of the national system of higher education and the culture of individual disciplines (Kuh and Whitt, 1998 12-13). According to Manning (1993) meanings and interpretations can be found in cultural artefacts including in memorials and buildings (physical artefacts); stories, myths, campus language (verbal artefacts); and shared rules and norms, social conventions and organisational principles (beliefs). The main point of conducting a study of meanings is therefore to construct coherent interpretations of what "seem, in isolation, to be atomistic events" (Kuh and Whitt, 1998 iii). From a policy point of view, this could prevent a narrow technical and administrative

approach to matters such as student enrolments, drop-out rates, failure rates and throughput rates.

Culture is historical and specific, it is both a product and a process and it reflects the way social groups are organised in society. As Cross (1992, 1993, 2002) has shown in several studies, although culture can be conceived as a uniting force binding social groups together, it is also a divisive factor reflecting the complexity of social formations generally constituted by various subgroups and subcultures in a struggle with the dominant culture. The struggle over culture is very often expressed in the justifications of certain forms of behaviour in terms of "this is the way things are in my culture", and in the anger and even resistance expressed by groups who experience domination. Thus an institution simultaneously exerts an influence on the behaviour of social agents (e.g. students, faculty, and staff) while these same persons influence and define the institution's culture (Kuh, 1993 3). This means that culture is not an unchangeable text but a complex, contradictory and uneven process (Cross 1993 377). Ignoring this fundamental aspect leads to the reification of culture.

DOMAINS OF INSTITUTIONAL AND SOCIAL MEDIATION OF STUDENT EXPERIENCE

One of the main goals of culturalist perspectives is to understand the meanings individuals, particularly students, give to events in their particular academic setting, taking into account crosscutting factors such as class, race, gender, language, physical disability as well as the internal and external environments that affect their university experience. In order to attend to these three levels of analysis (external environment, the institution, and the individual), we draw on Bernstein's work on the construction of the pedagogic field, which provides useful conceptual distinctions. Exploring the intellectual context that regulates the production and distribution of meanings and thus the dominant social order in education, Bernstein (1990, 2000) draws a distinction between the *"official recontextualising field"* (ORF) and the *"pedagogic recontextualising field"* (PRF). According to Bernstein (2000 53-54) these intellectual fields regulate the production and distribution of meanings and thus the dominant social order in education. This distinction helps to locate sets of claims about and expectations from higher education, that are current in academic debates on higher education and in official documents and which attempt to respond to local and international developments in higher education.

In our own interpretation of Bernstein's theory, the *official recontextualising field* encompasses aspects such as institutional vision or mission, policies, rules and guidelines that regulate academic and

social life on campus. Organisationally, it is shaped and driven externally by specialised State agencies such the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the Council on Higher Education (CHE), the National Research Foundation (NRF) and internally by the university administration. It is through the directives and expectations of these structures that the university and, in particular, student life are regulated, steered or controlled. The main function of the ORF is thus to produce external modes of regulation, with which the State exercises control over the educational system. Modes of regulation are not technical: they are constructed discursively and they provide sets of meanings with which the university administration and the academics in particular, located in the PRF, translate government laws and regulations and general expectations into sets of practices and modes of interactions that define what is legitimate and what is not within the university. Analytically, the ORF represents an important area for understanding the impact of policies, norms, standards, rules and regulations, principles and values, on student experience with reference to access and success.

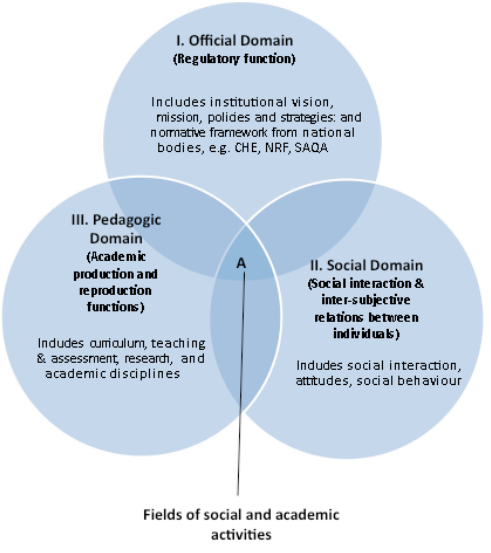
The *pedagogic recontextualising field* produces specialised modes of communication and interaction between knowledge communities, lecturers and students, lecturers and managers/administrators, according to seniority and experience. Organisationally, it is shaped and driven by specialised academic disciplines, publishing houses, research foundations, academic and professional journals, faculties and departments. In pedagogical terms, it refers to curriculum, teaching, and assessment—what Bernstein refers to as the three main message systems of the pedagogical process. Its main function is academic production and reproduction.

For matters of convenience, we refer to the two fields as the *official domain* (OD) and the *pedagogic domain* (PD) as represented in the following diagram.

Official Domain (OD) Government Labour market National bodies with advice, funding and regulative functions (CHE, NRF, etc.) Institutional normative provision: vision, mission, policies, standards, norms and rules produced and managed by university administration Main function: regulation	Pedagogical Domain (PD) Academic disciplines National knowledge production and distribution agencies (publishing networks, research foundations, etc.) Institutional curriculum and pedagogical provision: curriculum, teaching and assessment located in academic faculties, departments, courses, etc. Main function: academic production and reproduction

Besides the OD and the PD, another important domain concerns student social life that we refer to as the *social domain* (SD), or the domain of everyday life on campus, which entails social interactions, intersubjective relations, attitudes and behaviour with and among students. It represents the social space in which university life occurs, the significance of which has been largely neglected and unexplored in higher education studies. It is the dialectic between local and global contextual factors in these domains that shapes student experiences at a university. The three domains offer a useful framework for mapping out the context of practice where the interplay of mediating factors in student experience takes place. We illustrate this aspect in the following diagram:

Figure 1: Factors Shaping Student Experience in South African Universities



The interaction between these three domains (OD, PD and SD) produces what Searle (1995; in Broekman and Pendlebury, 2002) calls *institutional facts* and *constitutive rules*. By *institutional facts* we refer to those aspects of institutional life against which we conduct our daily lives on campus, and whose use we collectively agree on—even if we do not think about them (e.g. graduation ceremonies, graduation

uniforms, rites of initiation, etc.). *Constitutive rules* refer to a normative framework, not always explicit, that creates the very possibility of a particular form of practice (what students at university should do—e.g. using the library as an aspect of academic life; keeping silence in the library; attending seminars or lectures, even if they are not compulsory as well as how one should produce an assignment or spend one's leisure time on campus. Searle sees "rules" primarily through a normative framework.

Whether and how students interpret or attach meaning to these facts and rules depends on their background of capacities, know-how and dispositions—in other words, a sort of pre-intentional knowledge about how the institution works, and a set of abilities for coping in and with the institution. Nonetheless, we are reminded by Bernstein's notion of recontextualisation (1990 184) that the practices in each of the domains are socially produced and thus are guided by specific interests and power relations. For example, in the PD, academics select from the primary site of production (the knowledge of physics, the knowledge of the humanities, and the knowledge of government). These sites, by means of State and private funding, produce specialised knowledge (construction, transport atom, literary texts, etc.) in a variety of textual forms (books, journals, etc.). Academics write and research, primarily, in relation to this field but when they design their curriculum, teach and assess their students, they select and pace textual knowledge, primarily according to criteria specific to the field of transmission (what Shulman calls "pedagogical content knowledge").

EXTERNAL REGULATION THROUGH THE OFFICIAL DOMAIN

The report of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) released in September 1996, the White Paper on Higher Education (1997), and the Higher Education Act (1997) set out the national vision for higher education in SA. Three main imperatives underpin this vision: (i) increased participation, (ii) greater responsiveness and (iii) increased cooperation and partnerships (NCHE, 1996; Cloete, 1997; Cross and Harper, 1999). Of importance to this study are the first two. These imperatives are rooted in the mass democratic movement, in the struggle against apartheid, mirroring the seven pillars of the National Constitution, namely: democracy, responsibility, equality, freedom, respect, reconciliation, and diversity. In broad terms, these imperatives represent a progressive perspective with an emphasis on social justice and democracy, which as discussed above, were translated, quite soon after liberation, into the opening of the university to a diverse student population, including students from historically disadvantaged background, officially referred to as "non-traditional" students.

In education terms, this progressive perspective was associated with the idea of "knowledge equivalence" and had a strong developmental agenda of equity redress, human rights and citizenship as outlined in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). In terms of access to HE, it propagated the idea of a hierarchy of qualifications and unit standards devoid of curriculum content, which meant that individuals "could be evaluated against... outcomes for skills and competencies that they had obtained in the course of life, and would consequently be able to enrol for educational programmes that had previously closed their doors to them" (Allais, 2006). Yet as time went on and other (mainly economic) imperatives came into the picture, as well as pressure on efficient implementation and access to quality education, this vision of participation and responsiveness was to be managed alongside tough regulatory measures of quality assurance and tight fiscal policies.

In the higher education sector, these pressures were managed through a mixed approach that combined contradictory ideals: on the one hand, the radical populist view promoted ideas of increased participation through expansion of student enrolments, and increased responsiveness through diverse programme offerings and through intensive academic support to cater for the many different South African demographic realities (NCHE, 1996 6-7). On the other hand, the more traditional liberal view promoted formal learning opportunities, diversity of higher education institutions, academic selection and standards of performance. This view was propagated alongside the introduction of the neoliberal macroeconomic policy framework—GEAR (Growth, Expansion and Redistribution).

Key in this neoliberal policy were "efficiency" and "managerialism", which became part of the national vision for higher education. This is implicitly articulated in the main implementation documents (Department of Education, 2001; Department of Education, 2002; CHE, 2001). Efficiency and managerialism feed off the imperative of globalisation (Van Wyk, 2005; Johnson, 2004, Favish, 2005; Cross and Johnson, 2004). They position higher education institutions as key agents in the development of graduates with the expertise to operate in the global environment. In universities, efficiency and managerialism have been translated into the use of the norms of the free market and business to organise the social and academic life at the university, including the conduct expected of individuals (Strathern, 2000 61).

Managerialism has been at the centre of the academic debates and dominates institutional practices in almost all institutions of higher education in South Africa. Johnson (2004 5) defines 'Managerialism' as "the tendency to appropriate private or corporate sector

processes, practices and organisational forms and implement them in public sector type organisations such as universities". This translates into the dominance in power and authority of managers over academics or a top-down style of management that privileges economic rationalism above all other concerns, including academic leadership. The protagonists of managerialism believe that the voice of command that has brought so much success to the capitalist production in industry is the answer. Cross and Johnson (2004) argue that in recent years and under the pressures of globalisation, managerialism has been embraced as an alternative to collegiality, which has come to be seen as an archaeological archetype too outdated and old-fashioned to deal with the pressures of the knowledge economy and global competitiveness. Central to managerialism is the emphasis on performativity, the emerging concept of universities as "businesses", the resurgence of an "audit culture" with its "rituals of verification" and technologies of control. With these emerged a whole new set of meanings that have become dominant in university circles: "outsourcing", "core business", "scenarios", "business units", "cost centres", "value for money", "best practice", "performance appraisal", "quality assurance", "quality control", "accreditation", "accountability", "strategic plans", "benchmarking", "peer-review", "external verification", "stakeholder", etc. We refer to this view as the liberal-globalisation view of higher education.

Critics of the discourse of globalisation in education argue that the emphasis on performativity, which is encouraged by national education policy in South Africa, has overtaken the discourses of equity and accessibility (the discourse of social justice) and will have a negative impact on transformation (Van Wyk, 2005; Soludo, 2001). Strathern (2000 63) alludes to the emergence of new categories of "managerial professionals", which have resulted in a loss of collegiality and new power hierarchies (e.g. executive deans, well known as "super-deans"). Others (Moja and Cloete, 2001; Muller, 2000) argue that together with the knowledge challenge, the challenge of human resources calls for substantially increased participation rates, albeit of students that will be developed into "self-programmable" labour. Muller (2000 35) suggests that a principled decision is required of shifting the national goal from "high participation to high performance". He says: "This ethos will clearly take a long time to build on the rubble of our thoroughly discredited system, but only when such an ethos takes hold will we be able, without political repercussions, to build the 'talent highways' that are so necessary for the education system as a whole to develop quality and high performance (King, 1993) and for the innovation economy to be adequately served."

HIGH PARTICIPATION OR HIGH PERFORMANCE

Corresponding to the radical and liberal-globalisation views of access to higher education, two very different kinds of pedagogic views dominate the pedagogical domain in South African higher education to date. The first is the working-class driven view of integration promoted by the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). This view can be found in the NCHE (1996 4; in Moll 2004 12) in its call for:

> A shift from closed knowledge systems (controlled and driven by canonical norms of traditional disciplines and by collegially recognised authority) to more open knowledge systems (in dynamic interaction with external social interests, "consumer" or "client" demand), and other processes of knowledge generation.

At the centre of this view are ideas such as the belief that all knowledge is basically the same, and thus education and training, formal and non-formal knowledge can be integrated. On this view, educational distinctions are flattened and administrative arrangements are made flexible. Through integration of the local and the informal (community, indigenous) into the academic curriculum or even through more radical attempts such as the Africanisation of the discipline (for example, Bodibe, 1992; in Moll, 2004), a claim is made that in the right institutional culture all students will develop their competence. In cultural terms, this is a view that is at pains to recognise different kinds of learners—the traditional academic, lifelong learner, the mid-career professional, and the trainee who is interested in retooling and updating (Moja, 2004 34). In curriculum terms, to be culturally responsive means that:

> It is incumbent on the university to bring its own particular culture, which consists in the practices that are necessary to generate and reproduce critical, transformative and useful knowledge, into concert with the cultural depth and diversity of the various practices of society at large. This means both *acting to change* social practices, through research and teaching, and *acting to change itself* and its priorities in response to the social imperatives that press themselves upon it. (Moll, 2004 12, our emphasis)

The pedagogic mode which follows this view, foregrounds a progressivist ethos, demonstrated in the institution via its attempts to promote flexible thinking, local knowledge, diversity of criteria, process over product, multiple entry and exit points, alternative pathways, learner centred pedagogy and learner support, and views of empowerment of generic competence. Bernstein (2000 46) refers to this view as the "*competence model of pedagogy*". Internationally, this view is supported by studies that show that isolation—including self-isolation (Jones, 2004;

McInnes and James, 1995 quoted in Peat *et al.*, 2000), lack of interest in their studies, and not making a successful transition to university (Peat *et al.*, 2000) are some of the obstacles to successful performance (see also Schuetz, 2005; and Graham-Smith and Lafayette, 2004).

In contrast to the view of "high participation", the liberal-globalisation discourse projects a new identity of "high performance". The main elements which are fused in this view are: knowledge capacity, throughput, minimum support, specialised career, partnerships and connectivity, cost effectiveness, efficiency and management of quality. "Performance-based accountability" (Fuhrman, 1999, 2003) or new managerialism are the tag names associated with this view, which puts the competitive demands for high performance (both in research output and throughput) at the top of the university's priorities. This view foregrounds "performance" or "management" and "assessment" according to the specialised standards of the discipline and in lieu of market demands. Bernstein refers to this view as the "*performance model of pedagogy*."

The ways in which a university as an institution for higher learning, manages a balance between these two views will determine how it negotiates (inter alia) its entry requirements, manages its courses into programs, maintains quality, promotes academic excellence, regulates the entrepreneurial competitive culture of higher education, provides support programs, and regulates portability of credits and student choices of courses. The balance of these views will also affect the university's choices of specialised versus equivalent learning pathways, discipline-based versus inter-disciplinary programs and modules, pure versus strategic research, depending (inter alia) on its academic history, clientele, financial position, and relations to the market. It also has implications for decisions on matters such as what kind of research is valued, how much time of the various aspects of academic work should be counted as valid (workload models), what kind of support students should be getting, by which means formal access should be regulated, etc. This also influences the relations between academics (e.g. collegiality) and between academics and the university administration.

Global and National discourses	Pedagogical discourses
1. Liberal-globalisation (performativity)	1a. Management and assessment ("Performance" model of pedagogy)
2. The radical view (institution-based transformation)	2a. "Progressive" pedagogy (competence model of pedagogy)

It is possible that within the management and the academic groups of the OD and the PD, respectively, individuals are split between the two authoritative voices. However, through various modes of coordination

and government steering (e.g. rolling plans and subsidy formula), the State seems to be pushing towards performativity. The Council on Higher Education (CHE) *appears* to give voice for both. This is shown particularly in the Higher Education Quality Committee's approach to program and institutional audits, which in its criteria includes an emphasis on management of output but also on practices that are aimed at empowerment and support of the non-traditional student.

Research on how students negotiate their access and success within a university environment needs to locate their background, and their academic and social experiences against the specific permutations that develop in a specific university environment in a specific historical context. Here are some possibilities:

Scenario 1: Wits academic staff supports competence/progressive pedagogy in the main, and resists (in different forms) pressures towards performativity that conflict with the official commitment for inclusion and diversity. Students' background is diverse and many students experience social and academic gap; they acknowledge the support they receive from individual lecturers, their care and encouragement. They also appreciate the diverse social experiences on campus. The social relation between staff and students is open, grading is under-emphasised, and instead, recognition of development and actualisation of one's competence (i.e. potential) appears to be at the forefront. Besides being a very expensive model, the unintended price of this scenario is that as long as the grading criteria are not made explicit, and yet specialisation of knowledge remains the aim, many students, particularly those who carry gaps of knowledge from school, fall behind into mediocre performance.

Scenario 2: Wits academic staff espouses performance management and performance models of pedagogy. Discourses of equity and access create tension and conflicts in their perceptions and in their pedagogical practices. Students' background is diverse; many experience social and academic gap. Historically disadvantaged students yearn for support and for recognition. Since grading is emphasised and specialisation of academic knowledge is highly valued, some staff puts an effort in their teaching to make criteria and expectations explicit and to work with students continuously on what these criteria mean. These efforts are not consistent as academics have to calculate their personal investment (in pastoral care and in time consuming forms of alternative assessment) against the pressure to publish and contribute to the research culture of the university. The students that succeed are treated as exemplars of well socialised students. Students' experience of collective resources is fragmented and many experience isolation and alienation. When they feel unsupported, they interpret

it through discourses of inequality. Those that make it are admired by their communities, others seek an alternative solution in another academic institution where there is far less pressure to succeed.

Scenario 3: Wits academics espouse a mix of performance and competence models of pedagogy. Discourses of performance management compete with discourses of equity and access. Academic staff demonstrates inconsistencies in their perceptions and in their pedagogical practices. Many are frustrated, feeling caught between "support" and "throughput and performance." Some academics resolve to invest in the individual students who are better prepared for academic study, and in those that prove that they are personally committed to work very hard. In some places staff is hired specifically to work with the historically disadvantaged and to help closing the gap. Some staff members feel frustrated as they pay a price with their academic careers. There is tension and conflict between staff in view of the competition on resources. Students' background is diverse; they yearn for support and for recognition. In times of financial constraints, and in view of the performance standards by which the institution is judged locally and internationally, by private consumers, the labour market and by its auditors, the institution opts for a mix bag of: high selection and sporadic interventions. Neither choice is made consistently. The students that understand that their academic performance depends on hard work, personal effort and compliance with rules, and have managed to get hold of some or other help, thrive. Those who are not actively guided into criteria are frustrated. Their experience of collective resources is uneven: where some experience isolation, some do not have expectations for social life at all and others enjoy community memberships.

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CHAPTER 3

STUDENT ACCESS AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA: EMERGING DISCOURSES

INTRODUCTION

The new political dispensation in 1994 demanded a serious overhaul, restructuring and transformation of higher education in order to redress the injustices of the past. The first obvious way in which transformation was to be demonstrated when it came to the university was in creating formal access to higher education for historically disadvantaged students. Currently, one could say that this goal has been achieved with some success, particularly in terms of race and gender redress: the ratio of Black students rose to 40% of the total student body in 1999, to 61% in 2004 and to 72% in 2005 (Pandor, 2005). Yet, in sharp contrast to an increase in enrolment, there has been a decrease in throughput. According to a study conducted by the HSRC (2006), out of the 120,000 first year students in higher education institutions in 2000, 36,000 students (30% of the entire enrolled students) dropped out in their first year of study, with the further 24,000 dropping out in their second year of study. Of the 120,000 first year students, only 26,500, or 22%, managed to graduate. In racial terms, White students seem to do better and they see throughput rates of 84%, in comparison to 70% of the African student population (DOE, 2004). These figures seem to be consistent with the retention and throughput rate at Wits University. In 2005, the dropout rate stood at 50% of the total national

student enrolment. At Wits, the Campus Times (2006) reported that 33% of undergraduate students are dropping out of Wits University within five years of enrolling as first year students. Institutional studies confirm this problem.

The differences in academic success across race and gender and the high drop-out rate, nationally, suggest a discrepancy between formal and epistemological access (Morrow, 1992), which clearly requires further investigation. Recent studies undertaken at Wits University (Van Zyl *et al.*, 2003a, 2003b) show that instances of racism and sexism, racial imbalance in staff appointments, poor service from support staff, inappropriate methods of teaching and assessing, perceived lack of relevance of the curriculum as well as students' social and academic experiences of alienation, may indeed have an effect on students' performance. The Working Group Report (S2003/2183 1) mentions "diminished learning culture", "outdated teaching and assessment practices", and "attitude of academic staff" as some of the reasons for the poor results. The report suggests that "Wits needs to balance access with success, and explore institutional responses to improving both" (S2003/2183 5). It acknowledges that student success is a multifaceted phenomenon, and the interplay of causative dimensions is subtle and resistant to "'quick fix/quick wins' solutions" (S2003/2183 59). The report calls for a study of the relationship between students' prior learning and their attitude and expectations, and the academic demands of a university.

The broad aim of this chapter is to provide an analysis of the theoretical complexities that the concepts of "student access" and "success" pose in the context of the restructuring and transformation underway in higher education. It explores key historical moments in the South African theoretical debates on the question of access and student performance to higher education. The purpose of this is to backtrack these particular moments, review key perspectives that dominated the debates as well as the underlying assumptions and discourses, in order to intelligently reconceptualise our current theoretical and methodological approaches. As such, the chapter goes beyond the particular theoretical lenses adopted in the individual case studies presented in this book, though each of these has certainly drawn on a selected set of concepts and reflects some of the considerations scrutinised in the chapter.

This chapter thus presents an in-depth analytical survey that underpins the issues raised throughout this study, beginning with a short periodisation of the literature and debates on student access and academic performance since the 1970s, in order to contextualise the general conceptual direction and the theoretical issues explored in

the rest of the chapter. It reviews key arguments on the institutional and pedagogical factors that affect successful achievement in higher education. It then follows with an examination of the ways in which students' collective resources or social life at the university mediate their academic experiences. With reference to institutional mediation, the chapter unpacks the main intellectual discourses that underpin institutional pedagogic and social practices and the modes of academic practice they tend to privilege as well as their significance to academic achievement. The chapter shows how the changing perspectives on student access and performance are strictly bound up with the shifting systemic and institutional higher education landscape; in other words, how the analytical discourses of access reflect, or are informed by, the changing political economy of South African higher education. It points to the need for a paradigm shift to an analytical framework that accounts for both the movement of students and their social and academic experience.

THE ACCESS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE DEBATE IN SOUTH AFRICA: BRIEF PERIODISATION

The question of successful participation in formal institutions of learning is not new in research in South Africa. It has undergone different metamorphoses in its problematic, in the concerns it has raised and how it has been approached as the context of higher education changed. One can identify three main generations. The first generation includes studies of contestation or resistance to the apartheid barriers that were set up to deny formal access to higher education in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The second generation responds to the re-composition of the student body in terms of race, gender and other forms of identity throughout the late 1980s and the early 1990s, which resulted in the increase of the so-called "non-traditional" students or students from historically disadvantaged groups. The last generation is bound up with the massive expansion of the student population throughout the late 1990s into the present millennium. All three phases are unique in their dynamics.

FIRST GENERATION, 1970S TO MID-1980S: DOWNFALL OF APARTHEID AS PRE-CONDITION FOR ACCESS

Most studies in this period assumed the form of liberal or radical critique of the higher education system and the apartheid barriers to access as articulated in the demands of student, staff and civic organisations (e.g. The Open Universities in South Africa, 1957; Kallaway, 1984; Molobi, 1987; Nkomo, 1984; Solomons, 1989; Nkomo, 1990; Webster *et al.*, 1986). Liberal educationists, amongst whom might be

counted the reformist wing of the Botha government, which took over much of the 1960s liberal discourse in its De Lange Report, expressed the ever strident view that lack of educational reform was having a damaging effect on economic growth; the resolution of South Africa's problems required paying greater attention to the issue of access to education as part of "manpower planning" (De Lange, 1981). Radical and neo-Marxist critique was articulated locally in the journals *Perspectives in Education* and *Africa Perspective*, followed by *Transformation* and *Social Dynamics* since the early 1980s. Its theoretical foundations found expression in 1984 in Kallaway's collection, *Apartheid and Education*, which brought the political economy perspective to the domain of education analysis.

In line with the radical discourse, access in higher education could not be fully achieved through liberal reform. It necessitated fundamental social and economic changes in South African society (for a comprehensive review see Cross, 1986; Cross, 1991; Cross and Bemath, 1991; NECC, 1992; Cross, 1993). The bulk of the literature on higher education focused on youth and student movements, particularly youth culture, politics and resistance to apartheid education (Brooks and Brickhill, 1980; Kane-Berman, 1978; Molteno, 1979; Molteno, 1976; Molteno, 1983; Bandy, 1986; Bandy, 1987; Gwala, 1988). Nonetheless, the question of access remained largely a matter of admission to the university, or formal access. Debates among students raised a range of issues from the ethnic organisation of universities, the oppressive physical atmosphere and student non-participation in university governance structures, to curriculum transformation and the meanings, definition and functions of a university education. Overall, one can distinguish between different strands in the broad literature on access in this period ranging from scholarly published literature, policy-related studies, and student debates about the meanings of access within the student movement. With relative exception of student debates about access (Khoapa, 1972; Ndebele and Moodley, 1975), the general emphasis remained upon physical access to the university space (or formal admission).

SECOND GENERATION, LATE-1980S THROUGHOUT 1990S: DEALING WITH "EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE"

As far as student enrolment is concerned, this period is characterised not by a massive expansion of the student body but by its recomposition. The new dispensation in 1994 demanded a serious overhaul, restructuring and transformation of higher education in order to redress the injustices of the past. The first obvious way in which transformation was to be demonstrated was formal access to higher

education for historically disadvantaged students. Indeed, one could say that this goal was achieved with some success. While the student population only rose from 482,000 in 1993 to 510,000 in 2002, the number of Black (African) students increased from 191,000 to 404,000 in the same period, which resulted in an increase of the pool of the so-called "non-traditional" or "underprepared" students. This led to greater heterogeneity in the student population, with students displaying a greater diversity of skills, knowledge, and resources (Peat *et al.*, 2000). In response, a new generation of studies emerged, which placed the idea of "educational disadvantage" on the agenda (Badat *et al.*, 1994; Craig, 1989). So it was that Morrow (1992) coined the term 'epistemological access', which he believed was underestimated in the sea of research on formal access.

In his article "Entitlement and Achievement in Education", Morrow (1994) elaborates on the notion of epistemological access. According to him "... mere formal (physical) access to institutions which distribute knowledge is different from, and not sufficient condition for, epistemological access" (Morrow, 1994 40). Epistemological access, he argues, is about learning the standards of practice or "learning how to become a participant in academic practice" (Morrow, 1994 40), a process that, though mediated by the instructor, depends largely upon the person to whom educational achievement can be ascribed, or upon the student. Once personal dispositions exist in the students, the challenge is to ensure that the campus environment assists them in achieving epistemic access. In contrast to Morrow, who attributes to students a major responsibility in accessing academic practice, Jansen (2001 3-4) sees institutions as central in facilitating epistemological access. For him the politics of knowledge is critical in this process: "how it is organised, its value basis, its politics, and its power" (Jansen, 2001 2-3; see also Ensor, 1998). We also saw in this period a proliferation of studies on academic development and support teasing out varied strategies to meet the needs of the so-called "non-traditional students" (Stanton, 1987; Mammen and Imenda, 1994; Moll and Slonimsky, 1989; Hartman, 1989; Hunter, 1989; Mitchell, Haupt and Stephenson, 1994; Van Rooyen, 2001; Crous, 2004; Imenda, 1995).

Lastly, crosscutting these developments are efforts aimed at revisiting earlier performance discourses and academic support strategies. For example, King dismissed academic development programmes in universities as a legitimating form of entitlement and claims that such programmes demonstrate the thinking that "it is the lecturer, the curriculum and the university that need to change, not the student" (King, 1993 200). Elaborating on the difficulties involved in epistemic access of this category of students, Slonimsky (1994) argued that as a con-

sequence of specific learning histories, which are very different from the epistemic culture of learning and teaching in schools, some learners experience educational alienation. In an attempt to explain the specialisation of an epistemic culture at university level, Craig (2001) examined the idea of "academic form", the ways it specialises knowledge and the implications of different permutations of form and content relations for academic learning. Craig argues that students who have met the formal requirements for access to university study, but are products of authoritarian schooling, may have a far steeper learning curve than their fellow students. More recently, following Bernstein's ideas of knowledge structures (1999, 2000), Muller examined (2004) the importance of sequence and progression in curriculum design, and the implications this has for performance as well as for research productivity. In view of examining curriculum responsiveness of under-prepared students, Slonimsky and Shalem (2004) continued to examine "educational disadvantage" by foregrounding key strands of academic practice (distantiation, articulation, research) towards which students require a careful and structured socialisation.

THIRD GENERATION, INTO 2000S: THE ADVENT OF "THROUGHPUT AND RETENTION" DEBATES

Since the late 1990s we have seen a considerable increase in student enrolment. The ratio of Black students rose to 40% of the total student body in 1999, to 61% in 2004 and to 72% in 2005 (Pandor, 2005). Yet, in sharp contrast to an increase in enrolment, there has been a decrease in throughput. In 2005 the dropout rate stood at 50% of the total national enrolled students. According to a study conducted by the HSRC (2006), out of the 120,000 first year students in higher education institutions in 2000, 36,000 students (30% of the entire enrolled students) dropped out in their first year of study, with the further 24,000 dropping out in their second year of study. Of the 120,000 first year students, only 26,500, i.e. 22%, managed to graduate. In racial terms, White students seem to do better and their throughput rate comes to 84% in comparison of 70% of the African student population (DOE, 2004). The debate shifted from "educational disadvantage" to the question of "throughput and retention" determined by both accountability and costs factors. Depending on the underlying approach, several trends can be identified in this regard.

The first trend includes studies attempting to measure student success or failure via input and output indicators (throughput rates, graduation rates, dropout rates, cohort analysis, etc.) and assess the "efficiency of the system" through key variables with some bearing on academic performance such as funding, programme profile and

outputs (for reference see Dobson, 1999; Dobson and Sharma, 1995). The National Plan (2001, Section 2.1.3) set the scene by casting issues of student performance in South African higher education institutions in terms of systemic inefficiencies, which it describes in terms of low graduation rates, a mismatch between the total number of graduates and the total number of enrolments in any one year; high failure and dropout rates, with clear differences across fields and levels of study and across institutions; and a systemic "wastage" of financial and "human" resources. Following from this, the National Plan (Section 2.3.1) establishes the following short-term (low) national benchmarks for graduation rates: between 20% and 25% for undergraduate degrees, 60% for honours degrees, and 33% and 20% for masters and doctoral degrees, respectively. It suggests increasing throughput by improving the "efficiency of the system" through linking institutional funding and programme profiles to graduate outputs, and by supporting academic development programmes, various curriculum changes (e.g. extended curricula in certain subjects and foundation courses) and loan-based financial aid interventions.

The most recent national survey with relevance to the question of throughput is the national cohort study (DoE, 2006) that tracked the academic progression of students who entered South African public higher education institutions in 2000. The national picture for the proportion of the 2000 cohort that graduated by 2004 ranged from 9%—total distance education: University of South Africa (UNISA) and Technikon South Africa (TSA) to 68% for the University of Potchefstroom. The corresponding graduation figures for the 2000 cohort in all other public higher education institutions lie between these two extremities. The study found that by 2004, of the 1979 first time entering UWC cohort of 2000, 36% had graduated and another 48% dropped out. In the case of Wits, 47% of the 2000 first time entering cohort graduated by 2004 and 33% had dropped out, and for the University of Pretoria 60% graduated and 26% dropped out by 2004. This represents 9% of the 37,798 first time entry cohort of 2000 for UNISA and TSA combined, and 68% of the 1,718 first time entry 2000 cohort for Potchefstroom who graduated by 2004. The drop-out figures include students who changed to other institutions and students who dropped out for various financial or personal reasons with the intention of returning to complete their degrees at some future date. These figures clearly indicate a problem with successful student throughput in the higher education system, and in that sense they are useful tools for approximating and monitoring academic performance. They are however less helpful when it comes to explaining why this problem exists across South African universities.

The second trend involves studies attempting to locate the concept of epistemic access within the general normative paradigm of social justice underpinned by the values and principles of democracy, access, equality, equity, and human rights (Cloete *et al.*, 2002; Moll, 2004; Smith and Tactics, 2003; University of the Free State, 1997) drawing on identity or culturalist perspectives. It is in this context that Morrow (2002; see also Gamede, 2005) recaptured the idea of epistemic access, inspired as it is by human rights ideology, and warned of the danger of promoting a culture of entitlement that may cause students to neglect their learning responsibilities. It is possible to discern a renewed attention being given to the material and cultural contexts of higher education transformation from 2001, evident in journal articles, PhD dissertations, NRF funded projects, research groups and institutionally-supported research, focusing on student and staff experiences of campus "cultures", "climates" and learning experiences. This is linked to a return to some of the central questions asked before the policy preoccupation with OBE in schools and programmes, modules and "mode 2 knowledge" in higher education that ran from the mid-1990s to about 2001/2. In other words, there was renewed attention to the nature of the higher education space that shapes the quality of access.

Access to higher education came to be seen as being both about the increased participation of students from historically excluded groups and about the nature of the higher education space which shapes the quality of the academic experience (see Cross *et al.*, 1999; Cross *et al.*, 1999a; Cloete *et al.*, 2002; Gamede, 2005; Nkoli, 2003; Nolutshungu, 1999; Kotta, 2006; Rollnick and Tresman, 2004; Coughlan, 2006; Paola, Lemmer and Van Wyk, 2004; Howell and Lazarus, 2003; Van den Berg, 2006; De Beer, 2006). The advantage of some of these studies is that in their interest for systemic improvement they developed a multilayered conceptual approach. Based on comparative studies of enrolment, their conceptual framework straddles both a micro and a macro level of analysis. For example, for Cloete *et al.* (2002), the set of factors that shape the enrolment systems in higher education must be divided into 3 groups: (i) government policy; (ii) the culture and capacity of institutions; and (iii) the market and other societal influences.

In contrast to the 1970s and 1980s, currently there are fewer studies focusing on "student culture" and "youth culture". Several factors have contributed to this decline. Firstly, the surprisingly few student protests in recent years around enrolment capping, fee hikes, financial exclusions, the dominance of loan-based financial aid, and the definition of what counts as adequate and effective academic support. Then there has also been a general decline since the late-1990s in the frequency of open campus debates, in the links with surrounding

communities and schools, and in open forums about course content, general campus conditions, the throughput of students and the work prospects (and eventual work destinations) of graduates. In addition, there has been a change in the role of student organisations from resistance and protest to participation in institutional governance structures. Finally, there has been rather a marked change in the nature of student culture itself, one that sees a shift from student political activism to religious engagement and the enjoyment of entertainment and beauty pageants (see Cele, 2005; Cele, Koen and Mabizela, 2002; Cele and Koen, 2001; King, 2001; Koen and Roux, 1995; Sakarai, 1997; Badat, 1999; Maseko, 1994; Reddy 2003; Jansen, 2004; Cross *et al.*, 2003). Prior to the early 1990s, student culture generally included strong links with civil society organisations and trade unions, student-led community based projects, political education classes, solidarity boycotts, and frequent debates about the nature and direction of broad social and educational change.

It appears however that these silent years were nurturing a new generation of students (the so-called 'the born-free generation'), which would explore in the last decade disillusioned by the lack of change in higher education and its increasing almost unaffordable cots. The political sentiments that mobilised this generation of students are well captured in the slogans "Fees must fall", "Rhodes must fall" and "Outsourcing must go". This has triggered a new generation of literature not included in this manuscript.

The third trend includes an unprecedented proliferation of introspective institutional research on academic performance officially undertaken by the institutions, driven by Senate, Academic Planning Units or higher education centres, established to operate as think-tanks for institutional policy development. These include institutional climate and culture surveys and studies on different aspects of institutional transformation (Cross *et al.*, 2003; Wits, 2006; UCT, 2003; Steyn and Orr, 2003; Mabokang and Drieke, 2006; Potgieter, 2002; Lewins, 2006; Louw and Finchilescu, 2003), throughput and retention studies (Steyn and van Zyl, 2001; Van Zyl and Koen, 2001; Cranfield, 2002; Subotzky, 1997; UCT, 1999; Van Zyl, Steyn and Orr, 2003; Alence, 2007). Running through these studies are concerns with the residual discourses of Whiteness, typified by Eurocentrism, liberalism and legacies of prejudice and discrimination—racism, sexism and lack of transparency—reflected in recruitment, appointments, salaries, benefits and retirement of staff (Van Zyl, Steyn and Orr, 2003 x). There are also concerns with poor service from support staff, relevance of the curriculum and methods of teaching and assessing, assumptions and attitudes on the part of academics and alienating student experiences.

Centred on throughput and retention is the *Report of the Working Group in Retention and Throughput: Executive Summary* (Wits, S2003/2183), which indicates that "for most undergraduate degrees there are statistically significant differences between the success achieved by different genders and different race groups" with "Black students doing worse than White students and women faring better than men." The Report goes on to stress that the university is facing real pressure to demonstrate meaningful engagement around issues of equity, redress and transformation at the level of higher education, specifically within the undergraduate student population. It suggests that, to align the university with national priorities, "Wits needs to balance access with success, and explore institutional responses to improve both" (S2003/2183 5). Specific strategies are called for to cater for the needs of students perceived "at risk of failure" and incapable of achieving their potential for success either because they are academically "under prepared" or "historically disadvantaged" (for reasons of educational, social or linguistic background). The Report also points out the need to "gather reliable data" and develop a university culture "where retention issues can be discussed honestly without the fear of blame" to promote positive teaching and learning practices (S2003/2183 60-61).

UWC's recent Institutional Operating Plan (2004 36) expresses concern with the "low throughput, prolonged time-to-degree and high attrition rates" of undergraduate and postgraduate students. This has also been the subject of an extensive body of qualitative research at the institution: from the success rates of postgraduate students (Koen, 2001; Cranfield, 2002; Subotzky, 1997), part-time and adult students (University Mission on Lifelong Learning, 1997 and 1998); Division of Lifelong Learning, 1999 and 2004 (Thaver, Naidoo and Breier, 2002); Senate Discretion students (Koen, 2003); students with disabilities (Blaatjies, 2003; Howell and Lazarus, 2003), undergraduate students across different faculties, departments and years of study (Radcliffe, 1997; Barnes, 2004; Ludwig, 2004; Lever, 1999; Cornell and Witz, 1994; Lalu and Cornell, 1996; Liebowitz and Witz, 1995; Crossman and Devisch, 1999) to academic development and academic planning (Tucker, 1988; Switzer, 1994; Liebowitz, 1996; Chaka, 1997; Flockman, 1997; Baijnath, 1997; Anderson, 2002). The factors that impact on students' success rates range from administrative inefficiencies and academic factors to economic, health, social and personal factors. Many studies support "integrated approaches" (see Ludwig; in Barnes, 2004) that consider redistribution (e.g. patterns of access, poverty alleviation, upgrading infrastructure, a range of financial aid options) and recognition (e.g. patterns of success, increased academic

support, creating a culture of respect and critical scholarly engagement, alternative "inside-out" pedagogies, etc.). In addition, another set of studies has looked at the academic culture at UWC as a subset of institutional culture (see Mabokela, 2003, 2004; Hames, 2003; Mama, 2003; Barnes, 2004; Thaver, 2004; Portnoi, 2005; Subotzky, 1997; Cooper, 1997). These predominantly qualitative studies are good examples of institutional research designed to strengthen reflective practices at institutions and enhance student politics by involving student organisations in the design and analysis of institutional practices.

THEORIES AND METHOD: COMPETING APPROACHES

Overall, the analytical history of academic performance in South Africa has been a history of contention between two competing theoretical and methodological traditions. The first tradition consists of quantitative studies concerned with measuring academic performance through suitable input and output indicators. These indicators are used to monitor and compare trends in student success rates across institutions, as well as within institutions over time. They include national and institutional surveys on student enrolment and progression, student and staff surveys on campus climate, campus diversity, institutional culture and university internationalisation, etc. (e.g. CHE, 2004; Bunting and Cloete, 2000; DoE, 2006; Cross and Harper, 2000; Cross *et al.*, 2003; Cross *et al.*, 2004; Sunday Times Panel, 2002; Sehoole, 2006; Charlotte, 2006).

The second tradition emphasises explanation over measurement. Within this tradition, it is possible to identify different threads. There are those who seek to explain academic performance in terms of some attribute of the individual student such as motivation, cognitive ability, personality, aptitude, time management, reading or writing skills (e.g. Stanton, 1987; Mammen and Imenda, 1994; Moll and Slonimsky, 1989; Hartman, 1989; Hunter, 1989; Mitchell, Haupt and Stephenson, 1994; Van Rooyen, 2001; Crous, 2004; Imenda, 1995). There are those who do so by focusing on the individual student as a member of a certain (assumedly stable and culturally defined) group defined in terms of class, race, or gender. The educational and socio-economic backgrounds of students are seen to be important factors in understanding and explaining patterns in student performance (e.g. Broekman and Pendlebury, 2002; Cele, 2005; Cele, Koen and Mabizela, 2002; Cele and Koen, 2001; King, 2001; Koen and Roux, 1995; Jansen, 2004; Cross *et al.*, 2003). There are also those who tie their explanations to the institutional factors that influence student performance and throughput. These focus on students' experiences in particular institutional contexts and argue that opening access to higher education to students

from historically excluded groups often requires more fundamental changes, beyond the simple increase in numbers (e.g. Makgoba, 1997; Seepe, 2000).

A further distinction is based on the extent to which studies on academic performance consider issues of power and account for individual and group identities—as either ascribed biologically, or as socially constructed in networks of power (Jansen, 1998; Ravjee, 1999; Odora Hoppers, 2001; Seepe, 2000; Gibbon and Kabaki, 2002). Among these, liberal multicultural approaches tend to view access in terms of the inclusion, integration or assimilation of students from historically excluded groups into existing institutional structures and cultures. These approaches generally adopt an uncritical stance towards 'diversity' and 'culture' and therefore do not question the ways in which curricula and everyday institutional practices are shaped by dominant cultural constructs such as colonial racial categories and heteropatriarchal norms.

In contrast, critical cultural approaches seek to transform different aspects of institutions into which access is sought, tend to destabilise group identities, and do not separate out the material from the cultural contexts of access to higher education. They account for the cultural politics of universities, i.e. the ways in which dominant ideas, ways of thinking, meanings, policies, structures, norms and rules, pedagogies, curricula, and everyday practices in teaching and research can function to exclude. They emphasise the need for deconstructing not only the inherited apartheid classifications, but also other homogenising categories such as "the disadvantaged student" (see Ravjee, 1998). They view educational institutions as sites of contestation and struggle. Conceptually they are therefore more useful in addressing issues of retention and success, as well as institutionalised forms of domination and exclusion such as racism. In other words, one can broadly think of cultural approaches as falling within a continuum of mainstream multicultural approaches: between those that, on the one hand, view access in terms of the inclusion and assimilation of historically excluded groups into existing institutions generally adopt an uncritical stance towards 'diversity' and 'culture', and those critical multicultural approaches on the other hand that seek to transform different aspects of institutions and destabilise group identities themselves.

CONCEPT AND CONCEPTIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

Culture is historical and specific; it is both a product and a process and it reflects the way social groups are organised in society. As has been shown in several of my studies (Cross, 1992, 1993, 2002), although

culture can be conceived as a uniting force binding social groups together, it is also a divisive factor reflecting the complexity of social formations generally constituted by various subgroups and subcultures in a struggle with the dominant culture. The struggle over culture is very often expressed in the justifications of certain forms of behaviour—"this is the way things are in my culture"—and in the anger and even resistance expressed by groups who experience domination. Thus an institution simultaneously exerts an influence on the behaviour of social agents (e.g. students, faculty and staff), while at the same time, these same persons influence and define the institution's culture (Kuh, 1993 3). This means that culture is not an unchangeable text but a complex, contradictory and uneven process (Cross, 1993 377). Ignoring this fundamental aspect leads to the reification of culture.

The question of whether universities can be seen to have "a culture", or even whether the notion of institutional culture is a useful analytical construct is contested in the higher education literature. Kuh and Whitt (1988 12-13) define culture in higher education as "the collective, mutually shaping patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs and assumptions that guide the behaviour of individuals and groups in an institution of higher education and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off campus". "Institutional culture" is thus something that is shared (e.g. ways of thinking, or acting, or shared norms). Methodologically, it can serve multiple analytical purposes. It can explain why individual members of the university community do what they do and the way they do it, it can clarify what drives and motivates them in the process and vice versa, and it can also highlight how they approach problem solving and situations of crisis within the institution.

Higgins (2005 14-25) suggests that the term "institutional culture" is used in three ways in South Africa, each representing different perspectives on higher education transformation. It is used as a descriptive term to capture the differences in administrative and management styles between the historically White, English medium universities (described in terms of academic freedom, institutional autonomy, distance from the State, liberal, less authoritarian, etc.) and Afrikaans medium universities (described in terms of centralised authority, anti-democracy, close relation with the State, authoritarian, etc.). It is also used as a "site of conflict" between two visions of higher education—represented, on the one side, by academics, and on the other, by the administrative forces of new managerialism in higher education (notable in the discourse of cost effectiveness and the imposition of programmes). Further, it is used in the identification of problems with the "overwhelming Whiteness of academic cultures" that is

often experienced as alienating. In this regard, efforts have been made to reconceptualise institutional culture in the context of Africanisation and African renaissance discourses (see for example Makgoba, 1997; Seepe, 2000; UKZN, the Africa Commission Report, 2006). Generally, we could add that, like other institutions, South African universities also use cultural means to communicate their differing values and what they believe is important to them. Institutional symbols, rituals, heroes, special mottos, ceremonies, and visual images on campus serve to communicate institutional beliefs (Manning, 2000).

Many studies tend to collapse the treatment of "institutional culture" into "organisational culture" or "institutional climate" and tend to use them interchangeably—interestingly, both terms are rooted in the organisational theory literature widely used in the US education industry since the 1980s (see Portnoi, 2005 133). Some reject the notion of organisational culture as being irrelevant to understanding educational institutions (Silver, 2003; Reddy, 2003), while others treat "institutional culture" as a "keyword, an item of contested vocabulary in a conflictual and disputed social process. ... [and not] as an assured or given concept, one with a definite set of identifiable contents" (Higgins, 2005). Alternatively, as we do in the case studies, it appears wise not to settle on a fixed meaning, but to use the term to capture the effects of everyday practices (see Higgins, 2005; Thaver, 2005; Barnes, 2005).

INSTITUTIONAL AND PEDAGOGICAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

In this section of the chapter we provide a short review of the arguments on the institutional and pedagogical factors that affect successful achievement in higher education. We then follow with examination of the ways in which students' collective resources or social lives at the university mediate their academic experiences.

Five types of explanations emerge from the review of the literature. First, the transition between school and university is not an easy one for any learner (Thomas, Bol and Warkentin, 1991) and is often associated with stress, anxiety, and tension which, in many cases, lead to students failing or withdrawing from university regardless of their race, gender, background or class (Darlinton-Jones *et al.*, 2003). Students at Wits are not spared these circumstances. There are many complex combinations of idiosyncratic variables that impact on university performance and success that is mentioned in literature relating to underpreparedness. Some of these include: student age, maturity and life experience (Clark and Ramsey, 1990; Long *et al.*, 1995; Shah and Burke, 1996; West *et al.*, 1986); institutional cultural differ-

ences between the school and the university (Abbott-Chapman *et al.*, 1992; Bourke *et al.*, 1996; Dobson and Sharma, 1995; Long *et al.*, 1995; McClelland and Krueger, 1989); gender differences (Scott *et al.*, 1996); socioeconomic status (Western *et al.*, 1998); previous school performance (McInnis *et al.*, 2000); long term goals (Abbott-Chapman *et al.*, 1992; Elsworth and Day, 1983; West *et al.*, 1986); mode of entry into the university institution (McClelland and Kruger, 1993); and institutional forms of mediation or more specifically institutional responsiveness and the notion of pedagogical distance. At Wits, all of these issues come to bear.

Transition assistance and support is required in order to assist in an acculturation process for students entering a system of higher education for the first time, particularly for those whose previous school performance was poor (McInnis *et al.*, 2000). Tinto proposes a combined approach to transition programmes into university life that recognises the role of high schools, family, and peers as well as the university (Tinto, 1987, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 2000; Tinto and Goodsell-Love, 1993; Tinto and Russo, 1993; Tinto, Goodsell-Love and Russo, 1993). Tinto suggests that there is an integral institutional need within universities to integrate orientation programmes that introduce students to university life in an atmosphere of fun and support, as opposed to one that provokes stress and anxiety. Finally, current research on the phenomenon of underpreparedness at the University of the Witwatersrand suggests that the term is evolutionary in nature and that it has widened to include student ability at different levels of university study. The term is also currently being used to refer to staff, who due to increasing pressure to perform across different work-related contexts and teach an increasingly diverse student population, find themselves *underprepared* for the tasks they are expected to perform in dealing with the so-called 'non-traditional' or underprepared students (Inglis, 2005).

Second, institutional factors such as the size of an institution, the size of specific classes, student-teacher ratios and the type and nature of a particular course may also have a significant influence on students' performance (Tinto, 1993). The impact of the campus environment has been examined by Schuetz (2005) from an ecological perspective looking at how relationships, activities and environment have an impact on student success. Graham-Smith and Lafayette (2004), in studying the experiences of disabled students, found that caring staff was the single most important factor in student's positive experiences on campus. Another example is offered by the University of Sydney, who experimented with a one-day workshop to assist students in forming strong social and study-related networks, and subsequently

found that students who attended the workshops enjoyed stronger peer relationships and self-motivation (Peat *et al.,* 2000).

Third, the needs of specific student 'groups' and the difficulties they might encounter as a result of their academic, social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, their individual personality characteristics, and financial difficulties have also received attention (West, 1985; West *et al.*, 1986; Abbott-Chapman *et al.*, 1992; McJamerson, 1992; Terenzini *et al.*, 1994; Lewis, 1994; Long, 1994; Shields, 1995; Scott, Burns and Cooney, 1996; Western, McMillan and Durrington, 1998; Dobson, 1999; Strage, 2000; McInnis, James and Hartley, 2000). These also include student age, maturity and life experience (Clark and Ramsey, 1990; Long *et al.*, 1995; Shah and Burke, 1996; West *et al.*, 1986). Studies of students' expectations (Ochse, 2003, 2005) and evaluation of their own ability found that Black students consistently overestimated their success, White males were accurate in their estimations and White females underestimated their abilities.

Fourth, following Bernstein's ideas of knowledge structures (1999, 2000), Muller (2006) examines the importance of sequence and progression in curriculum design, and the implications this has for performance and for research productivity. Further, the size of an institution, the size of specific classes, student-teacher ratios and the type and nature of a particular course, may also have a significant influence on whether or not a student succeeds at university level (Tinto, 1993).

In addition, a recent case study of pedagogical responsiveness (Griesel, 2004) has provided useful explanations on the importance of feedback, pedagogical engagement with learners' thinking, and systematic socialisation of underprepared students into academic practice. In that case study, Moll (2004 4) also shows how, through curriculum responsiveness, the idea of equity and access is tied up with the assumptions and values that underpin the university curriculum. He distinguishes four main forms of curriculum responsiveness: (i) *economic responsiveness*, which denotes the extent to which the teaching and learning meet the changing needs of employers by producing graduates who are innovative, skilful and competitive, and who are able to increase the economic competitiveness of their employers or more generally to "facilitate greater responsiveness between higher education and industry"; (ii) *cultural responsiveness*, that reflects how the curriculum accommodates diversity of sociocultural realities of students by developing a wider variety of instructional strategies and learning pathways; (iii) *responsiveness of the curriculum to the learner*, which involves teaching and assessing students in ways that are accessible to them; and (iv) r*esponsiveness of the curriculum to its knowledge*

discipline, that entails a systematic enquiry according to the principles and procedures dictated by the underlying knowledge discipline and an immersion in complex theoretical developments. From the teaching side, this requires socialisation into academic enquiry of specialised knowledge. It includes making available what is valued about the underlying discipline, how it is assessed, and which evaluative criteria are of significance, but also adjusting the teaching to the rhythms, and the tensions and emotions of learning.

Amongst those fundamental discourses that come to bear on epistemic access in higher education there is an increasing significance in the South African context of 'the theory of pedagogical distance'. This theory brings together several dimensions of lecturer-student interaction useful for understanding the nature of mediation in teaching and learning processes. The first is the notion of 'transactional distance', which shows that physical and pedagogical distance have an effect on the teaching-learning connection in the classroom (Moore, 1991; Shin, 2003). According to Jansen (1998) 'transactional distance' is "made up of understandings and interpretations between the teacher and students" (Jensen, 1998). Reducing this distance has certainly had positive effects on the pedagogical dimension of this relationship. The second is the notion of 'social presence' (Richardson and Swan, 2003), defined as "the degree to which a person is perceived as a 'real person' in mediated communication" (Gunawardena, 1995 151), which enhances student perceptions and feelings of connectedness to the lecturer (Hostetter and Busch, 2006). The third is 'teacher immediacy' defined as "the act of reducing the physical and/or psychological distance between people" (Love, 2004 3) through touch, direct body orientation, eye contact, gestures and positive head nods and related body language (Witt *et al.*, 2004). The promise of this theoretical framework is that the theory of pedagogic distance would cast some light upon the intricacies of pedagogical mediation in several domains of lecturer-student interaction: that of the emotional, the political, the pedagogical, the linguistic, and the physical.

STUDENT'S AGENCY-SOCIAL RESOURCES AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

A university campus represents a peculiar location in social life where individuals experience ideological upheavals regarding place, location, identity and desire. For academics, this experience is articulated through debates on academic freedom, individual autonomy, collegial governance and truth seeking. The debates on these matters produce assumptions about what is worth knowing and how knowledge is created, about tasks to be performed and standards of performance, as

well as about patterns of professional interaction. Students negotiate their needs and aspirations; they interpret policies, rules and guidelines and they respond to institutional administrative and academic provision. Students do so in view of the specific ways in which individual academics and administrators interact with them. Nevertheless, their power to negotiate their needs (or their agency) is overdetermined by their social background, availability of social resources/organisations on campus, and external pressures. It is through becoming *member* of the campus community, or in other words, through *collective membership,* that the university campus impacts on individual student lives. What does the concept of membership mean?

The notion of membership is less explored in the literature on institutional culture. Used in relation to access, membership refers to the mastery of a particular institutional language. As Coulon put it:

> Becoming member is to gain affiliation to a group, an institution, which requires progressive *mastery of the common institutional language*. This affiliation depends on each one's particularity, the individual manner each one encounters the world, on being in the world in social institutions of everyday life. Once affiliated, members do not need to interrogate themselves about what they do. They know what is implicit in their behaviour and they accept their routinised social practices. A member is not therefore a person who just breathes and thinks. It is a person blessed with a range of procedures, methods, activities, know-how, which make them capable of inventing means of adaptation to give meaning to the surrounding world [an approximated translation from French] (Coulon, 1987 44-45, our emphasis).

The mastery of the institutional language presupposes a sort of "cognitive consensus" about the normative paradigm of the institution (norms, rules, values and beliefs) or the dominant set of values, rules and norms that must be internalised or learnt with reference to which agreement is reached about the meaning of social situations and campus social practice (Coulon, 1993 28). Different factors influence how students may or may not be empowered in this process.

The first and most important factor in a student's agency is his or her background. According to Searle (1995; in Broekman and Pendlebury, 2002) "background" refers to different ways of being in the world. It includes "skills, abilities, pre-intentional assumptions, attitudes, practices, capacities, stances, perceptions and actions" (Broekman and Pendlebury, 2002 291) that we carry from one milieu to another. Of the functions assigned to background by Searle, we would like to highlight two. First, background facilitates certain kinds of readiness (Searle, 1995 136). This is well illustrated in the case of the students from historically marginalised groups discussed in Chapter 7. Second, background disposes one to certain sorts of behaviour. In this sense,

background enables and constrains what we intend, how we interpret our actions and the world around us, and how we are interpreted or socially constructed by and within our interactions with other people. Background may be an asset or resource that is individually produced or owned, but it may also be a product of social interaction. It can also be a liability. Importantly then, students from different social *backgrounds* (race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, etc.) experience, and negotiate membership of campus life, differently. This is worth taking particular note of in a post-apartheid environment. How do we account for the significantly different and often contrasting background of our students?

According to Schneider and Stevenson (1999 142-147), strong family ties represent an important source of agency. Such benefits may include material and non-material resources such as social obligations to be met, "rules of the game" to be adhered to, symbolic exchanges to be decoded and understood, trust to be enacted, and norms and information channels to be followed (see Bourdieu and Coleman in Dika and Singh, 2002; Dyk and Wilson, 1999; Hofferth *et al.*, 1998). Furthermore, when parents advise their children about their career and study-plans and assist them to strategically choose a particular course of study or arrange for them to participate in a work placement or internship (Schneider and Stevenson, 1999 141-169), they empower them. In such cases, it is more likely that there will necessarily be a better match between the student's desired educational and occupational aspirations and her or his ability to devise suitable strategies to achieve them—in other words, *an aligned ambition*. In addition, students whose academic background in school prepares them better for the academic environment of a university inevitably internalise the messages of the culture of the university with more ease. They benefit from "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures" (Bordieu, 1977 72) that act as conductors of action in new environments, i.e. habitus. Bourdieu elaborates thus:

> When *habitus* encounters a social world of which it is a product, it finds itself 'as fish in water', it does not feel the weight of the water and takes the world about itself for granted. (1989 43)

Habitus ensures the active presence of past experiences in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action, and tends to guarantee the correctness of practices and their constancy over time. In our view, habitus minimises social displacement. The institutional environment matches their habits, their unthinkingness in actions, their dispositions and predispositions (Grenfell and James, 1998 14).

Gansemer-Topf (2005 1) refers to this alignment as the phenomenon of *institutional fit*, i.e. "the match between an individual student's interests, abilities, and expectations and the larger institutional culture." In her view, institutional fit is directly related to student satisfaction, performance and ultimately, retention and graduation. In contrast, when graduates from rural and township schools come to campus, one would expect that their habitus encounters a social world which does not match their learning experience; they encounter an environment which has little meaning and value to them. It is likely that they may feel socially displaced.

The second empowering or disempowering factor for student agency is campus social life or collective resources. Tierney (1993) refers to *communities of difference*—the range of campus organisations, forums and social groups through which students find spaces for mutual engagement, joint enterprise, construction and expression of group identity, affirmation of difference, and the development of awareness and learning. Communities of difference represent constellations of competing—and in some cases, conflicting—student interests, values and social traditions, drawn from the cultural background of students. They include student political organisations, social, academic, and religious organisations.

As networks of civic engagement, student organisations do serve several useful purposes. They foster study norms of mutual trust and generalised reciprocity within the group or organisation. They facilitate coordination and communication, and amplify information about the trustworthiness of individual members. Networks of civic engagement embody past success at collaboration, which can serve as a cultural template for future collaboration. As such, student organisations do promote the sharing of social capital as a vital ingredient in meeting the challenges of campus life. They lower transaction costs and speed up information transfer and innovation. Student organisations form a parameter for "understanding the 'other' in the midst of and across multiple socially-constructed realities" (Rowe, 2003). According to Woolcock and Narayan (2002 230), this is created in a number of ways. One of these ways is "bonding", or building connections to people who are "like you" (e.g. Independent Students' Association, Muslim Students' Association, Ballroom Dancing Club). Another is "bridging", or building connections to people "not like you." A third is "linking" or building connections to people in positions of power, who provide access to resources (e.g. tying students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds to people with historically advantaged backgrounds).

The study on Campus Climate undertaken at Wits (Cross *et al.*, 2003) points to highly diverse collective resources, formed around

different interests and socio-cultural activities, leisure and recreation activities and sports. The study points to three important patterns in student behaviour. First, there has been a shift from traditional student politics (the dominance of student affiliation to political organisations) to a preference for social, cultural, academic and religious organisations. Second, interest in academic organisations has also gained significance, particularly among medical and engineering students. Third, in terms of religious organisations, students from minority denominations have expressed sentiments of being discriminated against on religious grounds.

External pressures constitute the third empowering or disempowering factor for student agency. The changing forms of popular culture, as expressed in new recreation patterns (eg. leisure time spent at malls); music (e.g. *kwaito*—a South African music style); social functions (e.g. festivals and the *gumba*—a party with loud music, also known as a "bash"); and hobbies (e.g. sports or social media) mediate campus experiences in complex ways. An encounter with the pressures of global culture through student mobility and the mass media, as expressed in consumerism, fast food, body politics (shaping up with aerobics or at the gymnasium), television, music, dress and so on, also forms part of the social medium in which students negotiate "a home" on campus (Cross *et al.*, 2003).

In summary, the literature suggests that factors leading to success or failure in academic study include student 'underpreparedness', curriculum relevance or responsiveness, integrated institutional environments, and collective resources. They also show the usefulness of a qualitative approach that is able to construct arguments on the basis of a close account of social or academic processes and practices that affect academic achievement. What is fundamentally missing from the studies reviewed above is a clear conceptual framework that can integrate macro and micro levels of analysis and show the ways in which these mediate students' experiences and in turn, their academic achievement. With a view to widening our approaches to student access and performance, the following two sections explore broader perspectives for studying the interface between students' background and their aspirations, and their social and academic experience, as they are situated in the material conditions of the university at macro and micro levels. It must be noted that these two sections are uniquely important to this literature review, in that they were instrumental in providing the conceptual framework to the Wits case study. As already indicated, other case studies have pursued different conceptual lenses.

THE UNHOLY TRINITY: DISCOURSES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE, DISCOURSES OF GLOBALISATION AND DISCOURSES OF AFRICANISATION

In this section we examine current discourses in the student access and success debates in higher education in South Africa—the main battles being fought in this regard as well as the victories and the losses. We do so with reference to the national vision on higher education in South Africa and the assumptions that underpin issues of student access and performance, as well as the ongoing process of transformation and restructuring within institutions of higher education. Three key highly-contested discourses can be identified in current debates, all of them with different nuances: the discourse of social justice, the discourse of globalisation and the discourse of Africanisation.

DISCOURSES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

The *discourse of social justice* foregrounds the need to create an equitable society based on democratic values that are rooted in the understanding of South African and African historical and contextual peculiarities. It emphasises high participation and inclusion, particularly of those previously excluded. It assumes different nuances, depending on whether it is driven by radical ideologies or the ideologies of liberal democracy. While the South African vision for higher education is clearly rooted in the discourses of social justice as proclaimed in the ANC's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), its translation into higher education policy and its implementation have been constrained by the increasing dominance of neo-liberal ideology, articulated by the Growth Expansion and Redistribution (GEAR) macro-economic policy framework. The NCHE report released in September 1996, the White Paper on Higher Education (1997) and the Higher Education Act (1997), set out the national vision. Three main imperatives underpin this vision: (i) *increased participation*, (ii) *greater responsiveness* and (iii) increased *cooperation* and *partnerships* (NCHE, 1996 6-7; Department of Education, 1997 8-10; Cloete, 1998; Cross and Harper, 1999).

Of importance to the question of student access and success are the first two factors mentioned above, which echo the ideals of the mass democratic movement and mirror the seven pillars of the National Constitution, namely: democracy, responsibility, equality, freedom, respect, reconciliation and diversity. This progressive perspective was to be implemented and managed alongside GEAR under tough efficiency-driven regulatory measures and tight fiscal policies. Below, I discuss some of its defining features:

High or increased participation. A key feature of this approach is a policy of growth, this is, an expansion of student enrolments, feeder

constituencies and programme offerings. The principles of equity and redress as well as the realities of demography and development require an expansion of participation. Greater numbers of students must be given access to higher education, recruited from a broader distribution of social groups and classes for the visible lineaments of apartheid to be erased. This necessitates radical changes in the ways institutions and the system are structured, funded, planned, and governed in order to eradicate the inequities, ineffectiveness and inefficiencies of the past. Greater numbers mean greater expenditure. In a situation of financial constraints, suitable measures should be devised to make wider participation affordable and financially sustainable. Greater numbers also affect standards. To combat the potentially adverse effects of rising enrolment on educational and academic standards, effective quality assurance is advocated and institutions must be held accountable through the monitoring of performance indicators (NCHE, 1996 6).

Greater responsiveness. This points to a heightened responsiveness to societal interests and needs. In essence, increased responsiveness expresses the greater impact of the market and civil society on higher education and the consequent need for appropriate forms of regulation. More specifically, this means the following:

At social level, higher education should engage with the problems and challenges of its social context. In South Africa, this context is that of a developing and modernising African country in a period of transition from racial discrimination and oppression towards a democratic polity with constitutional provisions for justice and equal opportunity. Aspects of this context must be reflected in the content, focus, and delivery modes of higher education programmes and in institutional missions and policies. Governance structures should provide for stakeholder consultation and participation in decision-making processes so that needs are identified and met.

At an epistemological level, responsiveness entails a shift from closed knowledge systems (controlled and driven by canonical norms of traditional disciplines and by collegially-recognised authority) to more open knowledge systems (in dynamic interaction with external social interests, 'consumer' or 'client' demand, and other processes of knowledge generation), (NCHE, 1996 4; Moll, 2004 12). Such interaction would lead to the incorporation of the perspectives and values of previously silenced groups into the educational and cognitive culture of institutions.

In curriculum and cultural terms, responsiveness means that institutions must be seen to be both *acting to change* student practices, through research and teaching, and *acting to change themselves*

and their priorities in response to the social imperatives that press themselves upon them, such as catering for the needs of increasingly diverse students (Moll, 2004 12, emphasis added). This is a view of curriculum that "capitalises on learners' cultural backgrounds rather than attempting to override or negate them" (Moja, 2004 25).

Increased cooperation and partnerships. Academic insularity and institutional self-reliance should make way for recognition of the functional interdependence between multiple actors and interests with a stake in higher education through cooperation and partnerships. In terms of student access and performance, this view builds on the assumption that the optimal use of human and infrastructural resources; linkages and partnerships between higher education institutions and commercial enterprises; parastatals; research bodies and NGOs, nationally and regionally; cooperation among a broader range of constituencies; the establishment of participatory, responsible and accountable structures and procedures—all working in conjunction with an appropriate steering and coordinating role of the State—would certainly maximise high participation (NCHE, 1996 76-80).

Competence-driven pedagogic practices. A progressive pedagogical view is favoured that emphasises promotion of flexible learning and thinking, local knowledge, diversity of criteria, the privileging of process issues over product, multiple entry and exit points, alternative pathways to access, learner-centred pedagogies, sustained and systematic learner support and academic development and strategies of empowerment of generic competencies. The reference to this view is borrowed from Bernstein's concept of "*competence model of pedagogy*" (2000 46). Internationally, it is supported by studies that show that isolation, including self-isolation (Jones, 2004; McInnes and James, 1995 quoted in Peat *et al.*, 2000), lack of interest in studies, and difficulties in making the transition from school to the university (Peat *et al.*, 2000) are major obstacles to successful performance (see also Schuetz, 2005; and Graham-Smith and Lafayette, 2004). Through integration of the local and the informal (e.g. indigenous knowledge and experience) into the academic curriculum or even through more radical curriculum approaches (e.g. Africanisation of the discipline—see for example Bodibe, 1992 in Moll, 2004), a claim is made that within the right institutional culture, students would develop their competences.

DISCOURSES OF GLOBALISATION

The discourse of globalisation positions higher education institutions as key agents in the development of graduates with the expertise and high-level skills for a high growth path of economic development and

global competitiveness. The key challenge for higher education is to build 'talent highways', which focus academic socialisation on learning-codified generalisable knowledge, which in Muller's view (2000 35) requires a principled decision of shifting the national goal from "high participation to high performance." In South African higher education, efficiency and managerialism feed off the imperative of globalisation (Van Wyk, 2005; Johnson, 2004, Favish, 2005; Cross and Johnson, 2004) and have gained policy legitimation in GEAR and several higher education implementation documents (CHE, 2000; CHE, 2000a; Department of Education, 2001; Department of Education, 2002; and National Working Committee, 2001). As Jackson and Carter (1998, quoted in Carpenter, 2002 41) put it, "The production of management knowledge is not informed by a sense of how work needs to be done and what resources are available to do it, nor by a sense of efficiency as a means to an end, but by the assumption that efficiency is an end in itself." Arguably the restructuring and rationalisation strategies in higher education reflect GEAR's perspective on efficiency, cost saving and fiscal discipline, which have led to the emphasis on managerialism, the emerging concept of universities as "businesses", the resurgence of an "audit culture" with its "rituals of verification" and technologies of control as well as the use of the norms of the free market and business as the organising principles of campus social and academic life, including the conduct expected of individuals (Strathern, 2000 61). Below I summarise the main themes in the globalisation debate.

Managerialism. Johnson (2004 5) defines 'Managerialism' as "the tendency to appropriate private or corporate sector processes, practices and organisational forms and implement them in public sector type organisations such as universities." This has been translated into the dominance of managers in power and authority over academics and a top-down style of management that privileges economic rationalism above all other concerns, including academic leadership. Protagonists of managerialism believe that the *voice of command* that has brought so much success to the capitalist production in industry is the answer within the academy. It is *desirable* ("it would certainly give us a competitive edge"), *inevitable* ("we do not have much choice under the present economic circumstances"), and *necessary* ("the only way we can get out of this financial mess"). Central to managerialism is the emphasis on performativity, efficiency, separation of academic from administrative functions, executivism in university management that imposes a *panopticon* of control, surveillance and compliance, overestimation of outputs *vis-à-vis* process, tight fiscal controls matched with income generation—leading to increasing commodification/marketisation

of knowledge and university services. It has led to a whole new set of words and phrases with new meanings consistent with a liberal-globalisation view of higher education: 'outsourcing', 'core business', 'scenarios', 'business units', 'cost centres', 'value for money', 'best practice', 'performance appraisal', 'quality assurance', 'quality control', 'accreditation', 'accountability', 'strategic plans', 'benchmarking', 'peer-review', 'external verification', 'stakeholders', etc.—in short, a sort of academic 'execu-speak'.

Low participation. In contrast to the view of 'high participation', the liberal-globalisation discourse projects a new identity of 'high performance'. It is an economic model that strives for increasing output with minimum investment and costs, by drawing on students from high income or upper class social elites through selection criteria based on meritocratic ideology. It means fewer opportunities for students from under-represented groups, particularly low socio-economic groups, to participate successfully in higher education.

Performance-driven pedagogic strategies and practices. The main elements which are fused in this view are: knowledge capacity, throughput, minimum support, specialised career, partnerships and connectivity, cost effectiveness, efficiency and tight management of quality. "Performance-based accountability" (Fuhrman, 1999, 2003) or 'new managerialism' are the tag names associated with this view, which puts the competitive demands for high performance (both in research output and throughput) at the top of the university's list of priorities. This view foregrounds 'performance' or 'management' and 'assessment' according to the specialised standards of the discipline, and in lieu of market demands. Again drawing on Bernstein (2000 46) we refer to this view as the *"performance model of pedagogy*."

Critics of globalisation in education argue that the emphasis on performativity, which is encouraged by GEAR in South Africa, has overtaken the commitment to equity and accessibility (the discourse of social justice) and will have a negative impact on transformation (Van Wyk, 2005; Soludo, 2001). Strathern (2000 63) alludes to the emergence of new categories of 'managerial professionals', which have resulted in a loss of collegiality, and new power hierarchies (e.g. executive deans, colloquially referred to as "super-deans", and heads of schools appointed more on managerial than academic grounds). Cross and Johnson (2004) argue that in recent years and under the pressures of globalisation, managerialism has been embraced as an alternative to collegiality, which has come to be seen as an archaeological archetype too outdated and old-fashioned to deal with the pressures of the knowledge economy and global competitiveness.

DISCOURSES OF AFRICANISATION

Highly contested at present is the *discourse of Africanisation*. While Africanisation has dominated South African Black politics from the days of Africanism in the 1950s and early 1960s, and under the Black Consciousness movement from the late 1960s, only in the post-1994 period did it become a legitimate theme in higher education debates (Cross, 1999 223-258). According to Mseleku (2004 2), one can currently distinguish three major sets of literature in this regard: literature that emphasises curriculum responsiveness, that stresses an epistemological redirection or that advocates an identity recreation of the South African university (e.g. Makgoba, 1995; Makgoba, 1999; Jeevanantham, 1999).

Africanisation as curriculum responsiveness. This set of literature has undergone several metamorphoses from earlier concerns with the integration of 'African studies' dimensions in the university curriculum to current concerns with more fundamental issues such as the Africanisation of the curriculum knowledge basis. For example, for Moll, Africanisation as responsiveness to the African context entails approaching "labour market supply, cultural diversity, disciplinary knowledge, and academic learning from the perspective that university curricula must be engaged with the problems and issues of Africa" (Moll, 2004 15). Bodibe (1992 in Moll, 2004) calls for the Africanisation of the discipline through integration of the local and the informal (community, indigenous knowledge) into the academic curriculum.

Africanisation as an epistemological challenge. This is a reaction to the realisation that the Africanisation of African universities has left the debate on models and the content of curricula and structures intact (Crossman and Devisch, 2002). This literature locates the main reasons at philosophical and ideological level. Fundamental changes should start at knowledge production level by shifting from "the monochrome logic of Western epistemology" and "bring indigenous knowledge systems into the formal realm." This should impact on the transformation of knowledge-generating bodies such as science councils and higher education institutions (Hoppers, 2002 vii) (e.g. Hoppers, 2002; Ntuli, 2002; Crossman and Picket, 2002; Crossman and Devish, 2002; Majeke, 2002). Yet, as clearly shown by Moll (2004 14), there is no single voice amongst African scholars about what a new epistemology would be like. Some argue for indigenisation of the Western idea of rationality in African spiritual wisdoms. Others argue for a socially relevant research and teaching, which focus on the most pressing issues in Africa such as rural poverty and under-development, illiteracy and cultural domination.

Africanisation as an identity recreation. Seepe and Makgoba, who call for radical overhauling of the culture of the university, including its administrative, academic and pedagogic practices, lead this debate. For Seepe (1999 1; see also Seepe, 2004), "The African identity of the institution should be located in the treatment of African issues not as a by-product but by moving African issues in the academic, social, political and economic milieu from the periphery to the centre." This is reiterated by Jeevanantham (1999 54-76), who highlights the need for moving subjugated discourse from the periphery to the centre. Makgoba (1996 177) accounts this as follows:

> Africanisation is the *process or vehicle* for defining, interpreting, promoting, and transmitting African thought, philosophy, identity, and culture. It encompasses an African mind-set or mind-set shift from the European to an African paradigm. Through Africanisation we *affirm* and *identify* ourselves in the world community. Africanisation involves incorporating, adapting, integrating other cultures into and through *African visions and interpretations* to provide the dynamism, evolution and adaptation that is so essential for survival and success of peoples of African origin in the global village. It is a logic and a way of life for Africans. By *inclusivity*, Africanisation is non-racial. It is enriched through the African Diaspora. Africanisation has evolved over time from the narrow nationalistic intolerant to a global tolerant form. Africanisation continues to challenge the thinking, the identity, the philosophy, the culture and simply being African in the modern world.

Therefore, as Mseleku (2004 2) has rightly pointed out, if an institution in its mission statement claims to be a truly African university, "this should be reflected in its institutional culture, its curriculum and its library holdings" and practices.

POINTS OF CONTENTION

In a recent literature review, Van Wyk illustrates how these different discourses have gained expression within institutions. Van Wyk (2005) identifies four 'constitutive meanings' in the discourses: "(i) emphasis on equity and redress (gender and racial equality); (ii) concerns with critical inquiry (e.g. knowledge production, rethinking, abandoning old ways of doing, fundamental change, transmutation, controversy); (iii) attention to communicative praxis (e.g. effective communication, participation); and (iv) concerns with citizenship (cultural change)" (van Wyk, 2005 6). While many HEIs have adopted new 'core values', these are often not translated into practice (Favish, 2005). He indicates that institutional plans are couched in terms of 'performativity' with concerns with performance indicators, which may result in 'thin' transformation. Concerns with perfomativity, he argues, have overtaken concerns with equity and accessibility, which will have a

negative impact on transformation. He does concede however that performativity is an important element in addressing past inequities, provided there is room for creativity. A focus on indicators leads to working towards meeting the targets rather than addressing complex issues of excellence in teaching and research which cannot be easily measured by indicators.

The question of the relationship between the discourses of globalisation and Africanisation has also been debated. Some argue that South African intellectuals have to resist the encroachment of globalisation (Soludo, 2001). Others (Moja and Cloete, 2001, Moya, 2004) argue that it is wrong to view these as competing discourses. Moya for example stresses that "higher education reforms in South Africa have to integrate both Africanisation and globalisation issues" and to conceptualise institutional responsiveness to educational disadvantage in view of both discursive imperatives—equity and excellence. She defines this mix as 'glocalisation', whereby 'participation' is equally driven by the two imperatives of equity and performance, and thus will be manifested in a differentiated way through the higher education sector. In contrast to Moja and Cloete (2001), who contrast globalisation with Africanisation, some see social justice as more appropriate. As *Europeanisation* in Europe, Africanisation is increasingly seen as embracing globalisation connotations.

Under considerable attack is the ideology of performativity. Critics are divided on this matter. Some reiterate the NCHE call for increased participation in higher education and argue that together with the knowledge challenge, the challenge of human resources necessitates substantially increased participation rates (Moja and Cloete, 2001). Other critics have manifested some scepticism towards this approach. For example, Muller (2000 35) suggests that a principled decision is required for shifting the national goal from "high participation to high performance." Moja and Cloete argue that the "knowledge challenge" might create differentiation within the higher education sector both in terms of the knowledge profile of academics and in terms of criteria for successful participation.

SOME IMPLICATIONS

The ways in which a university strikes a balance between the choices grounded in these discourses determines how it negotiates decisions on a multitude of issues such as entry requirements, manages its courses into programs, maintains quality, promotes academic excellence, regulates the entrepreneurial competitive culture of higher education, provides support programmes, and how it regulates portability of credits and student choices of courses. It further affects university's

choices of specialised versus equivalent learning pathways, discipline-based versus inter-disciplinary programmes and modules, pure versus strategic research, depending on its academic history, clientele, financial position, and relations to society and the market. It also has implications for decisions on matters such as what kind of research is valued, how much time of the various aspects of academic work should be counted as valid (workload models), what kind of support students should be getting, by which means formal access should be regulated, etc. This then all comes to bear upon the relations between academics, such as their relative collegiality, and between academics and the broader university administration.

CONCLUSION

We have shown in this review that there has been a relatively direct correlation between the "biography of access" (a term we borrow from Gamede, 2006) and the evolution of academic scholarship on the matter, more specifically mainstream studies and educational literature on student access and academic performance. We have seen recently a renewed effort to explore new paradigms, new concepts and frameworks for dealing with issues of academic performance. This is partly due to the failure of the orthodox quantitative analyses to come to grips with the complexity of the throughput and retention phenomenon under present circumstances.

From this general overview, it has become clear that student access and academic performance have become one of the most controversial fields in studies of higher education in South Africa. Today almost all issues concerned with academic performance seem to have fallen into deep polemic, both at theory, methodology and policy levels, and both nationally and institutionally. As has been demonstrated in this chapter, theoretical and policy debate on academic performance can progress more productively and creatively only with concrete empirical analytical work that accounts for the complex contextual conditions of South Africa. In this regard, educational research has been left behind the other domains of social sciences in the last two decades. Nonetheless, the general direction taken during recent years, with massive proliferation of institutional research, postgraduate research, national projects and targeted funding to promote research on academic performance, has been highly encouraging. In all, the issues with which we are grappling with in the field of access and performance are ideologically problematic, conceptually complex and deeply embedded in the struggle for social justice and global competitiveness. For these reasons they will probably dominate educational debates for some time in the future.

CHAPTER 4

REVISITING THE PEDAGOGY OF ACADEMIC AND NORMATIVE INDUCTION IN HIGH PERFORMANCE UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Historically, many students have entered university with little appreciation of what university life and work will be like and today, in addition to this, more and more students are entering Higher Education with a range of different educational and social backgrounds. Inevitably some of these students will need more time to adjust and fully engage themselves in the independent learning environment of university. Until this happens they are at a higher risk of not completing their course of study (McLaughlin and Sutton, 2006 19-20).

INTRODUCTION

Like many other South African higher education institutions, the University of the Witwatersrand has gone a long way in putting into place impressive policy instruments and a code of rules and procedures conducive to a healthy and productive campus and academic environment. The challenge however rests on the approach and method through which these policies and codes are used to induct and socialise students into the desired environment or, in other words, the normative framework—and its role in the process of student socialisation into the Wits institutional culture. In dealing with this particular dimension, this paper recaptures the two conditions for epistemic access discussed earlier, namely Morrow's concept of *student engagement* and Jansen's notion of *institutional responsibility*, to explore their interplay within the official or normative domain of institutional life. I refer to the cognitive and experiential aspects of this interplay as the *pedagogy of academic and normative induction*. This is not always taken seriously within the university context in South Africa, where policies, rules and procedures are very often developed, printed, and indiscriminantly circulated or displayed online. Many students are only made aware of them when they the face compliance issues, when

they have infringed a particular rule or find themselves in trouble, having contravened a specific institutional norm.

Insights into where the university is leading its students can be gained from scrutinising substantive institutional products such as policy statements and the code of rules and procedures embedded in them, as well as on standard operating procedures. Kuh and Whitt, 1988 23) correctly point out that statements of institutional philosophy, mission and purpose may communicate important messages to faculty, students, and others about what is valued in the institution. These documents serve a fundamental normative or moral value through the principles and values they consciously and explicitly articulate, though most institutional values such as academic freedom and collegiality are unconsciously expressed. For this purpose, I begin here by identifying the defining aspects of the Wits normative framework and the different spheres of institutional life where students encounter, experience, or are confronted with it. More specifically, I examine the strategic direction adopted by Wits in the post-1994 elections period, the question of the medium of instruction, policy on access and admissions, the internationalisation strategy and general measures concerning approaches to curriculum practice, teaching and learning issues, including induction strategies used at different levels of academic and social life on campus.

Also of importance are real or perceived aspects of institutional identity, history, traditions, values, ecological context that Whitt and Kuh describe as "the invisible tapestry or cultural web" of the institution. These can be physical (e.g. official institutional publications, web site, memorials, architecture or buildings and their names, signs and symbols); verbal (e.g. privileged stories in vehicles of communication such as the student newspaper *Wits News* and student periodicals like the *Wits Student* or *Vuvuzela*), myths, official messages, speeches and campus language; behavioural (e.g. rituals such as graduation ceremonies, rites of initiation such as inaugurals, cultural performances and traditions), codes of rules and procedures (e.g. established rules and norms, social conventions and organisational principles); or values and assumptions expressed by the different institutional managers or leaders in the name of the institution, used as guiding or warning signs (Manning, 1993).

THE ARGUMENT

The argument pursued in this paper posits two important claims. First, that there is a general tendency to privilege a narrow conception of *institutional responsibility* at the normative level, which consists in generating and displaying or disseminating impressive policy

frameworks in a somewhat symbolic manner. Discussing this tendency within government, Jansen referred to it as the phase of "policy frameworks." Second, there is also a tendency to discard the critical role of *student engagement* in the negotiation of these frameworks, and student appropriation of their formative and constitutive values and principles. In this regard, this paper suggests that more explicit rules and more openness to negotiation drawing on the rich agency, displayed by students and their organisational bodies, would certainly position the university towards more effective socialisation and socially and intellectually enriching institutional environment in times of rapid change such as we have been experiencing over the last two decades. Such an approach is referred to by Sharp (2005) as the student/institution negotiation model, which necessitates interaction between students, and between students and university staff.

In line with this argument, I find useful the idea of a pedagogy of academic and normative induction rooted in Bordieu's concept of 'strategy'. Beyond a narrow framework dictated by norms, standards, rules and procedures, the concept of strategy articulated by Bourdieu appears more adequate in that it is a model of social practice in which what to do or not to do, everyday life on campus, is bound up with the generation and pursuit of strategies within an organising framework of cultural dispositions. In such a context, actors are not just 'rule followers' or 'norm obeyers'—open to an archaic or monastic *conversation morum* ('conversion of manners'), logic but strategic improvisers who respond dispositionally to the opportunities and constraints offered by various situations created by the institution, with their active participation. In such circumstances, socialisation into institutional life takes into account the habitus, that is:

> ... the strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations ... a system of lasting and transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions, and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks. (Bourdieu, 1977 72, 95)

In this perspective, the concept of strategy allows us to think about a new induction pedagogy, which does not only consider the complexities of transmission of rules and procedures, and the meanings and purposes attached to them; but it draws attention to the intricacies of acquisition as an active process that may expand the range of their meanings, or limit, constrain or distort their messages. My reasoning here lays the foundations for the concept of *institutional mediation*—a term for shared space and meaning of campus experiences.

THE CONCEPT OF STUDENT INDUCTION REVISITED

I use the concept of pedagogy and student induction to highlight the nature of the instruments (policies and the code of rules and procedures) and complex processes (induction) through which these are used to socialise students into the Wits community in the different spheres of academic and social life on campus. Whether students find it easy or difficult to adjust their habitus to the institution, in Bourdieu's terms, depends largely on individual pre-dispositions and on the pedagogy of induction. The term pedagogy is used in its broader sense, not simply as a descriptor of the core practices within the pedagogic domain (teaching and learning styles), but as an indicator of how those practices connect in mode and style to the wider university processes, social structures, cultural shifts and intellectual conditions. It is only fair to make such a connection taking into account that the university is, by definition as it were, the uppermost institution of learning in society. As in a classroom situation, the pedagogy of normative induction metaphorically involves 'transmitters' and 'acquirers'. University officials as transmitters of the moral code or rulers of consciousness adopt different strategies (conscious and unconscious, verbal and non-verbal, symbolic or actual) to achieve the effective transmission of content and meaning of institutional norms and rules. Depending on their biographies, acquirers also adopt different strategies to gain access to recognition rules (constitutive rules and institutional facts), and attach acceptable meanings to them. Being an essentially dialogic space, the university may be open to a mix of managerial, emancipatory and pedagogic strategies in the induction processes (see Guyver, 2009). It is getting the mix right that matters. Emancipatory and pedagogic strategies are more likely to ensure that "dialogue is experienced as a lenient and permissive space, in which it becomes genuinely possible to "play" (Haynes, 2009 1) with ideas, critical forstudent and institutional enrichment.

Generally, induction refers to the initial experience or exposure to something previously mysterious or unknown. Two competing and sometimes complementary kinds of induction can be identified in higher education in South Africa. The first is about "those events that occur immediately on the arrival of a new student" (Cook, 2006 7 and Hassanien and Barber, 2007 35). They are commonly known as Open Day, Orientation Week in South Africa, Freshers Week in the USA and Orientation, Welcome Week or Early Induction in the UK. The second type is an 'extended induction' that Cook (2006 7) describes as "a longer-term assimilation of new students into the ways in which the institution operates, particularly as it relates to its teaching and learning methods." I take induction here not as an event—as in the welcome

speech by the VC, dean, head of school or programme coordinator during orientation days/week; but as a process which accounts for all transition arrangements (academic, social, cultural, welfare and personal support issues) for all students. As Lowe and Cook (2003 75) put it, "Induction should be seen as a process instead of as an event and should be designed to promote peer group and staff/student interaction as well as academic preparation"; and thus promote social and academic integration (Lang *et al.*, 2005 245).

Nonetheless, the importance of initial induction events should not be underestimated, as when this induction experience is poor or weak, the negative feelings and impression are more likely to last for a very long time with negative effects on student attitude. Currant and Keenan (2009 3) argue that this "negative feeling is also very powerful and can sometimes override any positive feelings that the student may have about the university or course and lead to a withdrawal from study." For many students, the initial induction represents their first week at a university away from home and the first time "they have to fend for themselves in a strange town" (Cook *et al.*, 2006 9). In the context of Wits, it offers an opportunity to tackle aspects of student life such as the question of independent learning; the balancing of study, work and social life on campus; course structure, process, assessment techniques including plagiarism, the importance of academic writing and IT skills. The question of student life in a big city such as Johannesburg is also of primary significance for students coming from rural areas and the rest of Africa. It is not, however, the best time in a student's development to compress a great volume of critical information (Cook *et al.*, 2006 9).

The prominence of initial induction events has certainly mystified the overall concept of induction in South African higher education and does little to embrace the vision of induction as helping candidates to become students and gain membership within the university student community (Cross and Carpentier, 2009). Becoming a student at a university entails numerous challenges and pressures, such as knowing what to expect from your first year; getting to know staff and peers; team-building; knowing where to find advice on academic, welfare and social issues. In this perspective, induction can be conceptualised as a longitudinal process (Maguire, 2006 13). As Thomas *et al* (2005) have hinted, "academic induction should be an extended process, with information and activities spread forward through at least the first term to allow students to keep pace with the flow of information and back prior to entry to ensure that students are well prepared." It could spread through the first three years. There are two sides to this process. On the one hand, it requires adequate guidance during

orientation days and on-site tours, suitable handbooks that spell out expectations, requirements, rules and procedures, as well as students' academic responsibilities and the obligations of the staff to the students in user-friendly and explicit manner, be easy to read and manageable in its scope (Schofield, 2005). On the other, it entails the more complex processes of academic enculturation, which is social, cognitive and experiential, and which is harder to measure. The responsibility here spreads through all the key actors within the university's organisational life: academic staff, support staff, and administrators.

RECOGNITION AND REALISATION RULES: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Central to this paper are key institutional efforts to alter the institutional environment; the culture and ethos, so as to better accommodate an increasingly diverse cohort of students into an increasingly cohesive and interconnected community. In this regard, I recapture Searle's notion of *institutional facts* and *constitutive rules*. *Institutional facts* can be defined as aspects of institutional life against which we conduct our daily lives on campus, and whose applicability we collectively agree upon—even if we do not think about their meanings and impact on social life. Examples of this may include graduation ceremonies, the graduation uniforms used at these ceremonies, or particular rites of initiation. I referred to *constitutive rules* as constituting a normative framework, not always explicit, which creates the very possibility of a particular form of practice. This may include how to behave in the library, the value accorded to attending seminars or lectures, even if they are not compulsory, as well as how one should produce an assignment, or even spend one's leisure time on campus. As with the general institutional policies and procedures, as well as norms and standards, the degree to which both institutional facts and constitutive rules are made explicit or remain implicit, are explained and interpreted correctly or just assumed, has a lot to do with the ways students respond to them. *Explicit and implicit rules* are connected to the ways in which students get to understand how the normative framework (institutional facts and constitutive rules) works within a university learning environment. In addition, I try and connect these facts and rules with the imagery embedded in key institutional symbols, images, rituals and metaphors in and expressive of the Wits institutional culture.

It is worth noting however, that these three aspects (institutional facts, constitutive rules and institutional symbols, rituals, images and metaphors) represent a perspective through which the university portrays and asserts its institutional culture and identity. For students,

an understanding of these three dimensions is of significant importance for negotiating enabling moral codes and has some bearing on their practices, behaviour and lifestyle. By codes I mean forms of the symbolic—the images, texts and contexts—that constitute a means of control through selection and integration of relevant meanings into the rules and procedures through which the university life is shaped. That is to say, they regulate what can be said, done or meant and in this sense they distribute and privilege certain texts and messages, and position voices over others, which makes them generative in regard to meaning, but constitutive of human subjectivity. In line with Bersntein (1996 31-32), these provide students/acquirers with the necessary rules of recognition that enable me to identify the specificity of the context that they are in, the power relations that are involved and their position within them and to put together 'appropriate realisations'. Realisation rules enable them to produce the legitimate and acceptable meanings.

SCHOOLS VIS-À-VIS THE UNIVERSITY: DISTINCTIVE NORMATIVE ENVIRONMENTS CALLING FOR DIFFERENT INDUCTION AND SOCIALISATION STRATEGIES

The increasing gap between secondary education and higher education in the face of the on-going school crisis in South Africa calls for a carefully thought through, smooth induction and transition that enables students to know about what is expected, in order to prepare themselves for academic success. Social life and learning practices in schools where learners graduate before entering the university necessarily follow a much different logic to that of the social life and academic practices at play in higher education. When students join the university, they encounter a different normative environment that necessitates unique approaches to induction issues. It is different from the regimented school environment. With minor variations, expectations in schools are based on a set of maximum-based, explicit criteria, rules and procedures, which must be followed or complied with almost literally. Recognition rules through which learners get to know how the institution operates and constitutive rules through which they get to know what forms of behaviour are tolerated are clearly spelt out and explained: "no long hair"; "no music"; "no chewing gum"; "smoking on the school premises leads to detention", etc. Grades are, similarly, given out based on a set of maximum-based criteria. Learning takes place through strongly-framed teaching and learning strategies. The curriculum is narrower and more strongly classified, i.e. delivered through distinctive subject-specific components; and though integrated studies with considerable horizontal integration are being tested

out, this is not with significant success in South African schools. The delivery method is based on relatively small class sizes, smaller teacher to learner ratios. Writing and numeracy skills, critical thinking skills, and independent study skills are minimal, a situation made worse by the outcomes-based curriculum. Generally, institutional responsibility is considerably high and learner individual responsibility minimal.

In contrast, expectations at university are based on a set of minimum based criteria, rules and procedures. Compliance with these depends largely on individual student responsibility. I refer to this as an environment that *appears to be open*. Qualifications are awarded based on a set of minimum based criteria. Independent learning with little support occupies the centre stage: "at Wits you learn to be an individual." Curriculum broadens with more hierarchical forms and more horizontally stretched forms of knowledge—the current trend is to privilege open knowledge systems. Large classes prevail particularly at undergraduate level. Good academic writing, literacy and numeracy skills, and adequate study skills are critical for student achievement. Key fundamental differences dictate that through tailored induction strategies, students understand, for example that the role of peers is more important and students must make some effort to meet and get to know their peers as senior students that can play an important role as advisers or mentors of newcomers. Further, the styles of learning and teaching are different as compared with that of their previous experience and it is the responsibility of the institution to help them come to terms with them. One of the major struggles is that students tend to find differences in the way in which the time is organised and structured—for example, there is difference in the structuring of private study and much of it is independent from lecturer's control—it is largely controlled by the students themselves; neither attendance nor absence is monitored in any systematic manner in classes (Bradbeer, 1999 7-10). As much as these aspects must be explained to students, they must also be learned by experience and engagement.

Against this background, students at the university and within Wits' institutional ethos in particular need to develop skills of self-regulation, self-motivation and self-management, which place at their centre the idea of individual freedom, independence and autonomy, high performance and individual competitiveness. It is individual responsibility that, through the enculturation of the mind, gives rise to the widening of opportunities for self-development, self-enrichment and self-fulfilment. Content knowledge and specific pedagogical approaches very often associated with learner-centeredness and critical thinking, are privileged as instrumental for the achievement of such an ideal. To meet such expectations, students have to make adjustments

in terms of self-identity and self-reliance (Currant and Keenan, 2009 2). Induction opens up a space where students can consider these possibilities.

The peculiar nature of the academic logic of action at the university warrants distinctive induction and socialisation strategies. First of all, these strategies must take into account the key reasons that may hinder student adjustment to the university environment or their withdrawal. These may include the following examples taken from Yorke (1999), Tinto (1988) and Cook *et al* (2006a). Students may experience instances of academic under-preparedness or the poor quality of past student experience. There are also possibilities of weak institutional or degree match in student choices, which may result in a poor fit into the academic environment or lack of interest and commitment. There may be an inability to cope with the demands of the programme, unhappiness with the university social environment or a challenge in fitting into a new and diverse social environment. Matters related to financial need may certainly hinder a student unduly. Then, there may be dissatisfaction with aspects of institutional provision. Finally, there may be constraining personal circumstances for the student. Of primary importance in this regard are the various ways in which students may be accommodated by the university in pre-entry information, preparation and admission processes; rules, procedures and requirements regulating the learning, teaching, assessment and curriculum issues; student support, including financial guidance or pastoral services, as well as social life on campus.

However, academic induction as a process, or more appropriately, a transition management process, rests on two main foundations: an understanding of the needs and expectations of the students; and a strategy that inducts the students into the needs and expectations of the university. A mismatch in expectations and lack of preparation or support may mean that many prospective students may find the transition from secondary school to university difficult, in that they neither have the skills necessary to become independent learners, nor the means of acquiring these skills (Laing, Robinson and Johnston, 2005 244; Lowe and Cook, 2003). It necessitates that student engagement—the foundation for successful study in later years—is acknowledged as a fundamental strategy for improving student retention, success and outcomes (Crossling and Heagney, 2009 10; see also McInnes and James, 1995; Horstmanshof and Zimitat, 2007; Chen *et al.*, 2008). Student engagement is an expression for student's academic commitment and application, which in Morrow's (2009 78) perspective is essential for students to gain epistemic access.

STUDENT THROUGHPUT, RETENTION AND SUCCESS: DISCOURSES, IMPLICATIONS AND CHALLENGES

There is currently a general acknowledgement that throughput and retention has become a major challenge facing Wits. All faculties are involved in identifying and investigating 'bottlenecks' in the curriculum and pedagogy that may contribute to throughput problems. In 2003, the Working Group on Retention and Throughput investigated throughput rates of all faculties (Wits, 2003 18) and found that faculty responses depended largely on their specific diagnosis of the nature of the problem, and that the diagnosis depended in turn on the academic discourses underpinning academic practices within the faculty and among individual faculty members. Humanities cited student under-preparedness, poor curriculum counselling which prevents informed student choice. Many students also treat the Bachelor of Arts as a 'foundation year' in an attempt to get into commerce and law degrees and there is a dearth of a detailed analysis of how many are lost due to transferring into other degrees. The faculty offers a number of foundation courses that students may be required to take, based on selection tests. Students may also be required to take the course over an additional year if the student has 'suffered a disadvantage for one or more reasons...'. According to the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment (EBE), the relatively high drop-out rates for student in built environment courses relate to students not understanding the nature of the courses and not being prepared for the heavy workloads. Issues raised around exclusions include under-preparedness, poor time management, financial problems and a lack of suitable nearby accommodation. EBE suggested that poor schooling made it difficult for students to "keep up with the mathematics and science requirements", while heavy workloads and financial problems also lead to students dropping out. Science faculty pointed to poor preparation in school mathematics and students having opted for the B.Sc. after having been refused entry to health sciences or EBE.

Generally, current institutional research points to a variety of factors relating to students, staff and other systemic factors (Van Zyl, *et al.*, 2002; Wits, 2003a; Wits, 2003b; Wits, 2003c; Wits, 2003d; Cross *et al.*, 2003; Cross *et al.*, 2004; Wits, 2004a; Wits, 2004b; Wits, 2004c; Wits, 2007; Alence, 2007). Related to students, these include 'under preparedness' or students that are not academically 'strong enough'; issues around the student's prior learning and language skills; inadequate approach and attitude to academic learning or low expectations; a diminished learning culture or students taking less responsibility for their learning; and issues around the student's life and other pressures such as personal, social, financial or family matters. Issues of concern

with respect to staff include outdated or simply differing approaches to pedagogy; the general attitudes of academic staff (which may be less than desirable); the skills of academic staff in teaching and assessment practices (also referred to as staff 'under preparedness'); pressures on the time and energy of academic staff and staff being demotivated by changes in the university. Systemic concerns include the inherent difficulty of some course content; increasing student numbers; resource constraints; too little support for students making the transition from school; a lack of coordination and systematic assessment of various 'solutions' that have been attempted, and a lack of recognition for teaching and academic development work that discourages academic staff from putting energy into their teaching duties.

The report of the Working Group on Throughput and Access argues that:

> Managing under-preparedness takes time and resources. Some would argue that this is the function of the school system... but... the tertiary sector simply has no other immediate choice than to take on the work with enthusiasm and commitment if equity and redress are priorities. Universities can and should assist under-prepared students, but cannot be expected to independently redress many years of inadequate education at school. (Wits S2003/1797 42)

It goes on to point out that the new funding formula that penalises universities where students take longer to complete leaves the sector in a double bind. There are also constraints from the university's side, which are largely determined by the legacies confronting the university. Since the first infusion of a significant pool of students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds—"non-traditional" students—Wits has operated in a somewhat reactive manner to the challenge of addressing the needs of these students, through foundation courses in some faculties, academic support programmes, tutorials, etc., without integrating these activities into a strategy informed by its institutional identity. The general assumption was that students who registered at Wits were already independent learners, possessed the necessary primary knowledge, and had developed the necessary coping strategies "to learn by discovery and error" to use Cook's words (2006a 7). "Non-traditional" students are now part of the mainstream Wits student population and the university has to manage the transition of these students to the desirable academic attitude and behaviour. Efforts in this direction have however been set in motion by new policy documents such as "Shaping the Future: The University to Call Our Own" and the Academic Plan 2010 to 2014 that will see brief discussion in the following section. Against this background, the scenario calls for

systematic management of the transition from school to university, with appropriate and context-sensitive induction strategies.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES: THE STRATEGY AND THE INSTRUMENTS

In response, Wits has undertaken profound structural changes in accordance with its own institutional identity and processes, which brought about new developments in campus services. Residence life, libraries, food facilities, sports and recreation services etc., have all been the object of improvements to increase life satisfaction. Considerable structural and service delivery changes have been undertaken to enhance campus life. These include, for example, student representation at all levels of university governance and privileged role of students in the University Forum, the restructuring of student services (e.g. admissions and careers and counselling services, and the International Office) and residence life to make them more responsive to student needs, and an improved provision of campus services (e.g. a complex for food, banking and shopping) (see Cross, 2008). The institution has also developed a wide range of policies and strategies to support this transformation, including Wits 2010, the new admissions policy, the Employment equity plan, the language policy, the policy on sexual and racial discrimination, the policy on disability and HIV/AIDS, as well as a wide range of structures and programmes which includes the throughput committee and the transformation task team. Let's look in more detail into the following policy instruments: first, the redefinition of institutional vision, goals and strategies; second, the introduction of a new language policy for Wits; third, the introduction of relevant policies on student access, admissions, and student satisfaction; fourth, the development of a Wits internationalisation strategy; fifth, a revised teaching and learning strategy with emphasis on curriculum and enhanced delivery mechanisms; sixth, revitalisation of student academic and social support structures. I will look at these in more detail in the following sections.

VISION AND KEY STRATEGIC GOALS

An analysis of institutional policies and strategies points to the university's commitment to changing the institutional culture in order to ensure that it accommodates diversity, respects differences and creates an environment in which all staff and students can succeed. Key policy documents acknowledge the history of privilege and lack of diversity that underpinned the institutional culture in the past and indicates the importance of transforming the culture of the institution. Wits mission statement strongly advocates social inclusion, anti-

racism, anti-sexism; supports tolerance and diversity to ensure active participation of students and staff in all aspects of the institution, as well as to create an enabling environment through the provision of well resourced, well-maintained and friendly campuses. It goes further to acknowledge that the institution has not in fact represented a home for many communities who felt marginalised at Wits. This is reflected in several institutional culture surveys which the institution commissioned to assist in developing effective strategies of dealing with these issues (Van Zyl *et al.*, 2002). Wits consequently outlines its commitment to changing the institutional culture, and sets out key priorities in this regard. The aim is to ensure that all students and staff have a sense of belonging and that this provides an environment in which they can excel. The cultural project is focused on celebrating diversity through promoting a one campus, many cultures campaign and focusing on the educational value of diversity.

During the first half of 2005, the University Senate approved a document known as 'Wits 2010', which lays out the strategic direction for the university. The document positions Wits as a research university with a focus on improving research productivity and increasing the number of students enrolled in research degrees. This focus does not, however, compromise commitment to the teaching project, particularly at the undergraduate level. On the contrary, having high quality undergraduate programmes is seen as important for the "supply of adequately prepared postgraduate students." Key strategic principles in Wits 2010 are a commitment to developing high-level and scarce skills with a particular emphasis on increasing the number of Black and women graduates in under-represented areas; a priority on the quality of the teaching and learning experience with a view to improving success and retention rates; and a commitment to facilitating intellectual achievement of both students and staff. Underpinning Wits 2010 is also a commitment to a "representative staff and student demography", to being "innovative in curriculum development and pedagogy" and to "increase the rate and proportion of graduations relative to registrations, decrease the performance gaps between groups... and ensure that our administration and management are effective and efficient." The notion of belonging is embraced and, accordingly, Wits strives to be an institution "to which all staff and students feel a sense of belonging", a "Wits to Call our Own."

The document poses serious challenges to faculties with professional degrees or limited research orientation that may have to rethink their approaches to academic research, postgraduate training, and by implication, their undergraduate programmes. One of the most significant factors addressed in the document is that of language.

LANGUAGE DISCOURSE

English is the medium of instruction at Wits. When I joined this university in the early 1980s, it was a norm to use English as the only means of communication inside and outside the classroom, a situation that has changed considerably from the 1990s, with the recognition of the eleven national languages. While students can communicate freely in their mother tongue in their daily lives on campus, the dominance of English has not changed. In response to the Minister of Education's *Language Policy for Higher Education*, Wits adopted its language policy in March 2003. Three important dimensions define Wits language policy. First, it acknowledges that Wits is already a highly multilingual environment where students and staff interact in multiple languages and this situation will continue and be encouraged. Second, it rejects dual medium and parallel medium models of instruction in favour of bilingual instruction. In this regard, it provides for the development of Sesotho—the main regional language—as a language of instruction at Wits, along with English, and makes provision for developing linguistic abilities of staff and students in these languages. The policy is to be implemented in four phases. Phase 1 will focus on developing materials for teaching Sesotho and supporting staff to improve their language skills. Planned to start in 2011, Phase 2 will concentrate on developing the linguistic skills of staff and students by requiring competent communication in English and Sesotho and adding credit bearing courses in these languages to all courses. Phase 3 will focus on the development of Sesotho as a language of instruction. Phase 4 will introduce bilingual instruction in Sesotho and English.

It appears, however, that the chances of the language policy being implemented within this timeframe are slim. Many of these changes have not yet commenced. The 2005 Annual Report indicates that the lack of funds and interest from donors in the project "will make implementation of the Language Policy largely impossible."

To understand how language and linguistic practices affect students I draw on Bourdieu's (1994) theory of language as an instrument of power in action. Bourdieu (1994 37) argues that, although it is legitimate to treat social relations as relations of communication implying cognition and recognition, relations of communication including linguistic exchanges are also relations of symbolic power in which the power relations between speakers or their respective groups are actualised. Bourdieu expands this aspect as follows:

> On the one hand, there are the socially constructed dispositions of the linguistic habitus, which imply a certain propensity to speak and to say determinate things (the expressive interest) and a certain capacity to speak, which involves both the linguistics capacity to generate an infinite number

> of grammatically correct discourses, and the social capacity to use this competence adequately in a determinate situation. On the other hand, there are the structures of the linguistic market, which impose themselves as a system of specific sanctions and censorships. (1994 37)

Students fear a deviation from what they perceive as the linguistic norm—common medium—which gives the Wits assumed discourse its distinctive attributes, a sort of linguistic community: for them there are specific ways of saying and distinctive manners of speaking. Students very often differentiate themselves with reference to this linguistic norm by referring to those whose linguistic habitus is close to the norm as "ama Model C" (those from Model C), referring to graduates from historically White schools (classified as Model C). The term is richer than mere linguistics, evoking everything about a culture that is White, English and middle-class. For these students, the choice of the habitus is without consciousness and constraint by virtue of the social and linguistic dispositions acquired in these schools. In this sense, language is code or a system of norms regulating linguistic practices (Bourdieu, 1994 45). Those coming from rural or township schools, whose habitus does not conform to the Wits environment, suffer intimidation in the form of symbolic violence, i.e. intimidation that does not imply an act of intimidation; intimidation that can only be exerted on individuals predisposed in their habitus to feel it (Bourdieu, 1994 51). Dispossessed of their own language, they are left speechless or at loss of words in classroom and daily interactions.

Language and its uses on campus exert considerable influence on the ways students negotiate their membership or affiliation to the university community. The use of language, the accent, the selection of words, their connotations, their substance or lack of substance, etc., reflect the class and social position of the student, which governs the access they can have to the language of the institution—the official, orthodox and legitimate form of speech. According to Bourdieu, "It is the access to the legitimate instruments of expression, and therefore the participation in the authority of the institution, which makes all the difference", in which case language reflects degrees of authorisation and of authority within the institution (Bourdieu, 1994 109). It follows thus that one of the difficulties that undergraduate students, particularly those from historically disadvantaged backgrounds as well as English second-language speakers, is the recognition of what constitutes legitimate language and language discourse on campus.

ACCESS, ADMISSIONS AND STUDENT SATISFACTION

The Higher Education Act (no. 101 of 1997) requires the Council of each university to establish and publish an admissions policy. This

policy must provide "appropriate measures for the redress of past inequalities and may not unfairly discriminate in any way." In response, Wits committed itself to admissions practices that are fair and transparent; to at least maintain "the current demographic profile of its students (68% of whom are Black and 50% of whom are women), through the adoption and maintenance of an admissions policy that seeks to identify and admit students with potential to succeed at the university to "appropriate qualifications", and seeks increasingly to reflect the economically active demographic profile of the Gauteng province. It has also accepted the responsibility to create an enabling environment that provides the best possible opportunity for success of all admitted students. It has committed itself to a teaching and learning environment that is conducive to success and which actively targets students who may previously not have been admitted as a result of any form of deprivation or prejudice, but who have the potential to succeed at university. It endorses self-assessment and reporting, which ensures accountability in terms of the consequences of admissions and teaching and learning practices. Improvements have been made in the provision of university services, and in the Division of Student Affairs, which provides services such as student accommodation, sports, student wellness, counselling and career development, student governance, and support for students living with disabilities.

The Council approved the Admissions Policy of the University in November 2003. Senate subsequently approved amendments to its standing orders on undergraduate admissions to align them with the revised policy. There are three documents on this matter. The first outlines the principles and rationale for an admissions policy. The second is the proposed policy. The third is a set of standing orders based on this policy. The new policy envisages addressing equality and access (e.g. under-representation of Black and women students in certain disciplines)—not only by engaging with entrance requirements, setting explicit targets and monitoring processes but also in systematically supporting students who are admitted to succeed. It also aims to establish the use of recognition of prior learning (RPL) for mature learners and to appropriately maintain academic standards. Meanwhile, it seeks to "Africanise" the institution. On Africanisation, it quotes Makobela (1998) who views this, first, as a "way of changing the student, academic, and administrator bodies; second, a means of changing the syllabus so that teaching and learning are not dominated by ... northern hemisphere cultures [and] third, changing the curriculum and the whole way in which teaching and learning are done; and fourth, changing criteria that determine research excellence."

INTERNATIONALISATION POLICY

Wits has succeeded in consciously institutionalising a comprehensive internationalisation strategy, to steer and regulate the process in all domains of its institutional life (Cross, Mhlanga and Ojo, 2009). The process involved two main stages. The 1999 *Wits Policy on Internationalisation* expressed Wits' commitment to bringing itself in line with other major universities around the world through the internationalisation of its staff, students and curricula (Wits, 1999). In this perspective, Wits sets out to extend its strong research and academic tradition to other parts of the world, particularly in the Anglophone community. It also attempted to draw on the opportunity provided by Wits' operations in the economic hub of Southern Africa to attract students from wider spheres. Then, it sought to review its curricula so as to eliminate parochialism and thus offer students the opportunity of developing international perspectives in appropriate disciplines. It further sought to develop rich, university-wide, departmental and faculty-based partnerships, exchange agreements with institutions in each of the following areas: SADC, Africa (north of SADC), Europe, America, Asia, Australia and South America. Finally, it strove to network, improve academic contact, develop marketing and gain general international exposure through memberships of higher educational associations such as the AAU, the World League of Universities, the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU and IEASA).

The 2005-7 Internationalisation Plan consolidated these measures. Wits now has an internationalisation policy endorsed in its revised mission statement and strategic plan. Accordingly, Wits committed itself to expand academic activities with selected universities in Africa while positioning itself as a world-class institution in its activities and values. Along with this it has promised to attract a diverse mix of staff and students, while fostering mobility of its students and staff to other countries and to increase the enrolment of international students to 10% of registration numbers. The university of course recognises the academic and monetary value of this strategy (Wits, 1999, 2005b).

In terms of its plan, the focus is placed on three main dimensions. First, it emphasises the need to internationalise research and curricula to ensure that the knowledge, programmes and courses allow for international perspectives to be reflected in intellectual traditions, methods and delivery modes. Second, it draws attention to the value of extending these perspectives to all university students—domestic and international—while concentrating on attracting students and staff from other parts of Africa and the rest of the world. Third, it makes provision for bringing international services such as the International Office into the main stream of university services. The *Academic Plan*

2010-2014 states clearly that "Wits is ambitious about its internationalisation plan to increase the number and range of our international academic staff, international students (particularly postgraduates) and to offer curricula that strongly exposes our students to the international context of their areas of study." In line with this strategy, by 2014, international students should make up 20% of Wits enrolment, with 70% of these students registered in postgraduate programmes. The Plan (Wits, 2010 16) emphasises that:

> International students add significantly to the diversity and excitement of the intellectual culture at our university. Their presence helps to defend our teaching, research and engagement activities against the purely local and narrow and allows us to best express the character of the world of ideas that we wish to occupy as a university. This is particularly true for the effect of the international student cohort of our postgraduate activities, where students engage at the high level of intellectual development. Such students also influence the process of renewing the range and content of our teaching and research programmes. Of particular interest in this chapter are however the discourses of internationalisation that mediate this policy strategy. A study conducted in 2005 highlights these discourses, which largely reflect concerns with past historical distortions and peculiar institutional displacement both in South Africa and the continent.

Meanwhile, on the other hand, there is the perception still reminiscent in some schools that "if we develop internationalisation that is more Africa-related... it would be perceived as lowering standards", the majority of staff advocate internationalisation in a number of interesting ways. First, there are those who conceptualise internationalisation as a process of *relocalisation*, very well captured by the phrase from a head of school who emphasised the idea that internationalisation does not mean abandoning the local, given the legacy of isolation from Africa (but not necessarily from Western academic traditions): "Think locally first as to gain internationality." In line with this account, other interviewees suggested that "It is by becoming an expert in the local that a department or faculty will enjoy international esteem"; "Good local study will draw appreciation from abroad"; "This is a country of strangers, most of my faculty have no clue of what it's like growing up in a township; they haven't been to a township." Likewise, when teaching disciplinary knowledge there is no reason why this cannot be presented using the local context. There are those who regard internationalisation as an academic practice rooted in the university's comparative advantage, that is, internationalisation as Africanisation. Highly emphasised in the study was the direction they believe the university in Africa should encourage in shaping its unique identity around the concept of internationalisation. There are also those who

think of internationalisation as diversification of students, staff, and social and academic experience to avoid working in isolation, to gain understanding beyond one's immediate arena, to expose students and staff to international perspectives and to enable them to acquire experience and prepare them to work locally and elsewhere.

Central to the current debate is the new concept of internationalisation defined by focus on the experience that institutions provide to all their graduates irrespective of origin, race, ethnicity, religion, citizenship, or other forms of diversity and difference; a multidimensional implementation strategy, that synchronises cross-cultural understanding, enhances services, management and governance structures, and improves academic and pedagogical practices; the integration of internationalisation activities into the curriculum, research, and campus environments (ethos and social relations); the promotion of cross-cultural understanding as a key strategic goal in research, teaching and learning, and campus life; a synergy between internationalisation practices and institutional policy; and an extension of international services to make them available to all university constituencies—not just international students and faculty.

GENERAL CURRICULUM VISION AND SOME CONTESTATIONS

In terms of overall curriculum perspective, two important aspects must be highlighted. First, the university's vision has recently shifted from its traditional 'hardcore' theoretical emphasis to a balanced approach between theory and practice and, more specifically, between the academic and professional dimensions of its programmes at all levels (Wits, 2003b). Furthermore, the university has made it explicit that the domain of pedagogical practice must be informed by on-going research to improve teaching and enable and support learning. In this regard, the rich diversity and knowledge that students bring must be utilised to enrich and enhance the learning environment. Its strategy includes devolving teaching and learning coordinators to the faculties to support innovative ways of teaching and offering training and support to staff through the Centre for Learning and Teaching Development (CLTD) to ensure that they are able to deal with the changing environment.

An important part of curriculum reform is however the university's engagement with Africa, which in the view of several university officials should constitute the basis for asserting its comparative advantage internationally—its strategic location in Johannesburg as a city, within Gauteng as a province, within Sub-Saharan Africa as a region, and within Africa as a continent. The university's engagement with Africa is object of different interpretations—as taking Africa as

the primary object of knowledge production, alternatively as privileging indigenous knowledge in teaching and learning, or as having significant representation of African students and academic staff. This is very often placed within the discourse of "Africanisation," a very familiar though highly contested concept. What is then Africanisation in the context of Wits? As one interviewee put it: "If Wits University is a world class university, it should be the best place to study African issues, and not Oxford or Harvard." This is reiterated by another head of school, who was passionate about the idea:

> The university as it is thought of is an African university cut off historically from the continent. If it is a national institution, it is going to respond to what the priorities of the government and the nation are ... it must engage with the rest of Africa. Secondly, if it is going to have the pretension ... that it is a world-class university, it is not going to be a world-class university by trying to replicate ... Harvard or Oxford or the orientation northward ... The way this University will be a world-class university is if it's perceived by the rest of the world as the place to go to for expertise. On what? "Africa" ... If it's going to be competitive in the student market ... The only reason why stress Africanisation or African focus is because that's where I think Wits has comparative advantages. That's where 80% of our graduate students and our foreign students come from. That's the neighbourhood we live in and that's where the national interest can be ... So Wits has the position to start as an African asset. All tertiary universities in this country have to rethink their role as African assets because the continent is demanding it.

Uncertainty still prevails concerning Wits' comparative advantage as an urban, Johannesburg-based university and the possibilities that this could open up for strengthening South-South partnerships.

STUDENT ACADEMIC SUPPORT, INDUCTION AND WELFARE PRACTICES

Currently, a variety of student support strategies exist to address the throughput and retention problem at Wits, including central institutional interventions, as well as staff and student development programmes. I consider here only those activities that are designed to support students in addition to normal curricular interventions. The Working Group on Retention and Throughput provides the following typology:

- **Sorting strategies**: Best fit recruiting; entry assessment and placement; academic advising; early warning alerts.
- **Student support strategies**: Child care; financial aid; wellness; security; personal counselling; housing; work study.

- **Connecting strategies**: Student activities; peer programs for learning and mentoring; orientation; faculty/student events; faculty advisors.
- **Teaching and learning improvement strategies**: Learning skills; tutoring; remedial education; skill-based curricula; formative assessments; incentives for completion.
- **Institutional transformation strategies**: Building community/institutional culture; policy changes; curriculum changes; faculty development; incentives for schools to improve graduation rates and sanctions if they fail.

These strategies assume different modalities and mixes within the faculties and schools. For example, the Faculty of Humanities undertakes regular reviews of each school and the Faculty Teaching and Learning committee works with schools to address student throughput. Teaching and learning specialists provide support for identified students and offer curriculum counselling at registration. Courses in which the pass rate differs significantly from the norm are monitored. In some cases, lower pass rates are defensible, but where they can be attributed to excessive curricula, inappropriate or limited teaching methodologies, and mismatches between course expectations and means of assessment, schools are expected to take steps to address them. The faculty expects evidence of quality teaching for confirmation and promotion of staff with explicit guidelines for teaching having been provided since 2004.

EBE introduced a successful Pre-Bursary Scheme in which students completed a year of study prior to enrolling and students who completed this program showed significantly higher graduation rates; but the program was closed due to a lack of funds. For learners with potential who do not meet the entrance requirements, the faculty runs academic development programmes in each school in the built environment section and two academic development programmes (Special Programme, SP, and Extended Engineering Curriculum, EEC) in the engineering branch. The SP identifies weak students in their first quarter (with marks around 40-49%) and offers them extra tuition starting from the second quarter. The EEC program is for very weak students (with marks around 30-39%) and extends the curriculum over an additional year. The Academic Development Programme in the faculty underwent a council review during 2005. The review interrogated the relevance and impact of the existing academic development activities in the faculty on student performance and suggested fundamental change such as their integration into the mainstream course.

The Faculty of Science views the primary reason for poor results as poor school teaching and poor school results in mathematics. Another factor (confirmed by a telephonic survey of dropouts) is that many students register for a B.Sc. after being refused entry to another professional degree, but lose interest or become demotivated. It has regularly carried out studies and other initiatives focused on throughput. Most of the science staff interviewed produced statistics and graphs showing how they monitor throughput in their courses. They have examined the correlation of success with matriculation marks; they are involved in projects to upgrade science and mathematics teachers in Gauteng; they have implemented initiatives to develop writing skills; they train senior students as teachers and have a teaching and learning advisor to advise upon and develop staff in relation to teaching and learning issues.

The College of Science has been running the extended curriculum for over a decade with more participative teaching methods and extensive support on 'soft issues'. The College has recently been restructured and reduced with a view to greater integration within the mainstream programs. From 2007, the College of Science model (two years of supported teaching in the College, followed by integration into the second year of mainstream teaching) makes way for the 4 year extended curriculum (first year of supported teaching, followed by integration into the first year of mainstream teaching). As a prelude to this change, the emphasis on acquisition of skills has been accommodated in some schools. Laboratory classes have been amalgamated or eliminated to make time for tutorials and exercises on time-management, note taking, graphing skills, scientific report writing, paragraph writing, and study skills. Some of these exercises were based on a Skills Manual which staff of the College of Science produced, and involved some College staff in a proportion of the tutorials. The Faculty of Science has an active Teaching and Learning Committee and several innovations have been undertaken to support student learning.

What we have currently at Wits is a varied, multi-layered and hierarchical inductive pedagogical strategy strong in their menu offerings but weak in synergy and integration with its strategic vision and goals. The strategies vary across faculties and academic units depending on the professional identities of individual faculty members, course structures, and across time depending on the changing cohorts of students. In other words, they work in the departments in which they have been implemented by the particular members of staff who implemented them, and with the particular students who participated. They are multi-layered in that they vary in type and scope from first year undergraduate studies to the highest levels of postgraduate

studies. They are hierarchical in that the general trend is that more academic-orientated activities are concentrated at the postgraduate level and more social and administrative activities at the undergraduate level, except for the tutorials that represent a common strategy at all levels. This general trend includes current approaches in support structures such as writing centres. A shift towards paying more attention to undergraduate students can be found however in recently established student support units in some faculties.

ARTEFACTS, CEREMONIALS, RITES, RITUALS AND NARRATIVES AS INDUCTIVE PEDAGOGIC DEVICES

My own first encounter with the academic staff at the Faculty of Education of this university as a prospective student in the early 1980s left me with a sense of shock and disbelief. In my naïve understanding of institutional ethos, I used some of my meagre savings to purchase what appeared to be an impressive navy blue suit—the colour mattered—which I wore during my visit to the faculty. A postgraduate student, I was directed to the staff 'common room' during tea where I was introduced to the staff. I was puzzled by the laughter and whispering that followed my introduction by a faculty member, who showed interest in my academic potential. I must stress that I found the whole incident unsettling and discouraging, given my perception of Wits at the time as an almost exclusively White institution. Only months later, I was told that the incident was caused by my wearing of a "fancy" suit, which was found strange in the context of Wits ethos. "Don't you have blue jeans?", I was asked in a somewhat suggestive tone. Only many years later I discovered that universities are social communities that have a form of life of their own, an institutional ethos and a culture, which embraces "the notions of a shared way of thinking and a collective way of behaving" (Bechner, 1984 166). It is with reference to this aspect that one can understand why faculty and students think and behave the way they do and, in doing so, as insiders are able to differentiate themselves from the outsiders: "it is just that a suit does not quite fit into the way we dress at Wits", I was told.

I share with Kuh and Whitt (1988 12) the definition of culture in higher education as "the collective, mutually shaping patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that guide the behaviour of individuals and groups in an institute of higher education and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off campus." It operates at three levels: artefacts, values, basic assumptions and beliefs (Kuh and Whitt, 1988 16). This is expressed not through dress style, but through institutional artefacts—including architecture and the organisation of

the physical space, ceremonials, rites, rituals and the narratives that university actors privilege when they refer to these aspects. We have dealt in the previous sections with the code of rules and procedures, and principles and values in the context of the existing policy and normative framework. In this section, I will concentrate on cultural artefacts, stories and narratives, and myths in the context of induction.

Artefacts are material objects or observable manifestations of values and beliefs such as university architecture (buildings and their names), and ceremonials, rites and rituals, produced by people to facilitate culturally expressive activities, which, as symbols of culture, represent a multitude of meanings and emotions (e.g. the much celebrated Wits Great Hall). Artefacts, as representations, are undergirded by assumptions and beliefs that exert considerable influence on "what people think about, what they perceive to be important, how they feel about things, and what they do" (Kuh and Whitt, 1988 26) as well as the way reality is perceived. Two important conceptual insights are suggested by Schein (1985 133) on how to deal with artefacts. The first is that it is difficult to establish how the nested patterns of assumptions and beliefs—often unstated—are embedded in artefacts influence behaviour of individuals and groups across time. The second is that linking or contrasting artefacts with the values used in decision-making can minimise this particular difficult.

Architecture is one of the most distinctive aspects of the university physical environment in all countries. It is the habitation in which the purpose—the soul—or the institutional self resides, and repositories of memory, often with visible texts that can be read like books. It plays an important role in our lives and our social identities, regardless of whether we take it seriously or not. An oft-cited expression is very revealing in this regard: "if we are going to set high standards, then our architecture should reflect those standards." While such an assumption has been celebrated throughout the world, its interpretation has been a contested issue in the context of the ex-colonies such as South Africa, where the university and its architecture has been modelled on the European or Western world in its forms, content, expression and symbols. It has been established and remained "monumental" and "historic" in its colonial sense and as an embodiment of Western values and ideals.

Rituals comprise a range of activities such as convocations, graduation ceremonies, presidential inaugurations, inaugural lectures, or as celebration by the university of the accomplishments of its members. They serve two purposes. They communicate meaning within the university community by drawing attention to and transmitting important values, initiating or welcoming new members. They also

help create, maintain, and invent "patterns of collective action and social structure" (Burns quoted by Kuh and Whitt, 1988 17), by making statements about the norms and standards against which members are invited to modify their behaviour, values and attitudes. They are part of what we have referred to as institutional facts. They are made up of discrete rites such as the faculty procession, the formation of candidates for degrees into one or more lines, the singing of the Alma Mater, the conferral of the various degrees during a graduation ceremony, the hooding of the graduates, and the alumni's association welcome to the new graduates during the graduation ceremony.

Whether during the orientation or the post-orientation programme, the induction process may entail *narratives and stories* told by university administrators, faculty, senior students or members of the alumni to the newcomers. They communicate critical aspects of institutional life such as roles, responsibilities, status and expectations for student and faculty behaviour (Kuh and Whitt, 1988 67). This has become an established practice at Wits—indeed, I invoke it here through my own anecdotal input. It is interesting to ask what purposes such stories or narratives serve. I am also drawing on (Kuh and Whitt, 1988 21) to address this question with reference to the Wits context. There are at least five main functions related to stories or narratives. They provide information about the code of rules and procedures at different levels of institutional life. They translate the beliefs that faculty, students, and alumni have about past events, thereby shaping the institutional memory. They promote commitment and loyalty to the institution. I have, for example, accumulated many stories about how Wits graduates engage and dominate discussions in conferences while graduates from other institutions occupy themselves taking notes, stories which could often be revealing, entertaining and perplexing in equal measure. When conveying such stories, they reinforce other artefacts of culture. A significant example at Wits may be the story of the Jan Smuts library, which used to be linked to the "interesting collection" on Jan Smuts himself, very often portrayed as a national hero—much to the dismay of those who still resent the colonial and apartheid experience he helped to shape. It is in such a way that stories can come to inhabit the university, connecting current faculty and students to the institution's past and present.

For Kuh and Whitt (1988 22), *myths* are fictional narratives of events, usually expressed in symbolic terms and often endowed "with an almost sacred quality." They also serve different purposes. First, they legitimise and rationalise intended or completed actions or consequences and mediate between political interests and competing values, while dealing "with turbulence in the external environment

through rationalisation." For example, for several decades, Wits survived criticism and legitimised its role in South African society under apartheid under the umbrella of the "open university" that challenged any form of discrimination. Liberal ideals were claimed to legitimise the myth. Like many other forms of mythology or symbolism, myths can enrich the life of the institution or university community.

The particular nature of Wits cultural artefacts, ceremonies and rituals leaves the university in dilemma with profound pedagogical implications. First, rooted in a colonial legacy or driven by globalising Western academic influences, dominant discourses emphasise claims to universality around architectural features and standard rituals as defining features of a university. The question that remains unanswered is: What is to be monumental and historic in the African and South African contexts? Second, the only changes that have been undertaken have not escaped the *cut-and-paste logic* (e.g. the re-naming of current buildings with new names that celebrate South African heroes or express new narratives linked to the South African history) or the *ad-on-logic,* with an insertion of enclaves of buildings with more African flavour, or the recent introduction of some African ceremonial music during the graduation procession, in addition to the traditional *Alma Mater* and *Gaudeamus*, let alone the short-lived experience of the African Praise singer. *Re-symbolising the symbolic* is the overall approach, which means adding new layers of text with new and conflicting meanings in an already confused situation. I took certain interest in listening to a university official trying to motivate the selection of names from buildings on my campus (Bohlaleng), going through the new narratives represented by these names, but unable to make the connection with the activities taking place in these buildings, which remained far removed from the new meanings. From a pedagogical angle, this trend complicates the induction of students, who end up with mixed messages or find themselves unable to decode the hidden messages that the structures and ceremonies are intended to symbolise. It could certainly create a more productive environment if appropriate induction based on a generative pedagogy re-codifies the old—established as the norm—by critically legitimising the new changes.

THE ACADEMIC PLAN 2010-2014 AND A REVISED STRATEGY: A DIALOGUE WITH BORDIEU

The Academic Plan 2010-2014 is, without possibility of overstatement, the most ambitious plan in the history of higher education in South Africa. The academic plan as a whole is made up of the Academic Aims and Values statement; Principles of Teaching and Learning; Admissions Policy; Student Access Principles; the Research Plan and the

Teaching and Learning Plan; which contain a strategy and a range of activities that would allegedly enable Wits to achieve by 2022 its goal of becoming one of the Top 100 world class universities—when the institution will be 100 years old. The Plan places emphasis not on the expansion of overall student enrolment but on the quality and profile of its graduates, particularly at the postgraduate level. To this end, it re-conceptualises the notion of 'graduatedness' at Wits to mean research-readiness as students enter postgraduate studies; workplace-readiness as they enter the world of work; and an increased positivity as they express their citizenship as individuals and communities and deal with matters of social exclusion and diversity such as race, class and gender. It sets out to improve the quality of educational experience for students. It embraces firstly the idea that teaching, learning and research are integrally connected and mutually supportive of the Wits intention to become a world-class university, alongside retaining its commitment to offer both general, formative degrees as well as professional degrees, and then to remain a primarily campus-based university where the dominant pedagogical approach is in tutorial and contact-based teaching and learning. The Plan includes the following strategies:

- *Admission of the highest calibre of undergraduate and postgraduate students*. This is to be achieved through a suitable admissions policy without compromising diversity in terms of race, class, gender and nationality. Given the crisis in the school system, this may entail identifying talent among marginalised learners and nurturing them through adequate intervention strategies for improving their preparedness.
- *A 'Wits Scholars' Programme*. To be established in the Faculties of Science and Humanities, the programme is aimed at "identifying, supporting and developing academically talented students, to be known as 'Wits Scholars'" (Wits, 2010 13). These will be encouraged into masters and doctoral study programmes.
- *Transformation of current teaching and learning practices*. These are designed to improve the curriculum structure and support pedagogical approaches used in the programme through a systematic review of the relevance of the content, the coherence of competency development and the appropriateness of the teaching and assessment methods. Suggested activities in this area include developing the competence of knowledge and skills expected from students, and the level of effort and commitment that they must bring to their studies; establishment of undergraduate foundation programmes for bridging purposes;

internationalisation of the student profile; a more developmental approach to the teaching competence of academic staff through exposure to best teaching practices and integration of innovative pedagogies; improving supervision of research students; ICT and e-Learning support for students; support to faculty-level teaching and learning.

- *Restructuring of residences*. The strategy aims to provide first and second-year students with preferential access to university residence accommodation, where they would find focused attention in developing their learning competence through interaction with senior students who would be trained to act as guides and mentors. For this purpose, residence management staff should develop active relationships with appropriate clusters of academic staff to keep informed of learning development needs and to monitor the success of residence learning development initiatives, and to introduce regular research-based guest lectures at the residences, presented at the appropriate level, as a part of the strategy to raise the general level of intellectual engagement in residence life.

Critics remain very sceptical about Wits commitment to becoming one of the top 100 universities in the world under current financial circumstances and considering the increasing loss of its top qualified staff and students in competition with other institutions. A senior staff member from another university put it loudly: "Wits should just drop the idea." In terms of the argument pursued in this paper, the strategy will certainly require a comprehensive induction programme supported by a suitable pedagogy.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PEDAGOGY OF INDUCTON

Pedagogy of academic and normative induction as context-bound strategy. As already alluded to, there are different kinds of adjustments that undergraduate students have to undergo in their integration into a university environment. Firstly, from an academic environment to what are more independent and demanding learning and assessment structures. Next, the geographic adjustment to a larger campus, new travel and accommodation arrangements. Then, there is administrative adjustment to dealing with registration, finance and welfare or assistance issues. Finally, personal adjustment to a diverse social environment and changing social networks (Sharp, 2005 5-6). All these processes and the actors involved differ from institution to institution. As Kuh and Whitt (1988 95) have correctly indicated "Behaviour that seems effective in one institution may or may not be effective

in another; what appear to be similar actions and events will mean different things in different settings." An important consideration in this regard is the Wits institutional ethos that privileges academic practices associated with learner-centeredness, critical thinking, independent thought, autonomous behaviour and responsible citizenship (Wits, 2010).

Balancing institutional responsibility with student engagement as key foundation for a strong pedagogy. Bourdieu's concept of 'strategy' has two major implications for the pedagogy of induction. First, it is important to avoid the temptation of content-driven style that replicates the traditional transmission model of face-to-face delivery. Watling (2009) correctly suggests that rather than passive absorption of text-based resources, a more interactive environment is desirable, one which is supported by a constructivist approach where students could engage in meaningful learning experiences and encourage independent thought. Vigotsky's notion of scaffolding, consisting of timely support through appropriate resource materials, focusing on grounding elements of academic study which may include academic thinking, writing, reading and note-taking beyond relevant social issues. The benefits of such an approach include the chances of reducing the scope of failure in the task the learner is attempting, the enabling of learners to accomplish a task they would not be able to achieve on their own, moving learners to a new and improved state of understanding, and bringing learners closer to a state of independent competence (McLaughlin, 2002 155). The second implication is the value of matching cognitive and experiential dimensions for maximising understanding in the induction process through suitable range of activities. We have discussed elsewhere the value of "lived *experience*", in the mediation of unlearning student habitus (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), and in learning and relearning the "truth about reality", or the truth about others (Cross and Naidoo, 2010).

Balancing cognition with lived experience. Briefly, 'lived experience' in induction pedagogies is essential for triggering the necessary disequilibrium for reviewing habitus, formed by past learning experiences, and for creating the conditions for a transformation of one's whole vision of learning in an academic environment. In an experiential learning cycle key steps entail active experimentation—wanting to do something and setting it in motion; concrete experience—doing something and receiving actual experience as a continuous flow of sensations; reflective observation—to capture the different forms of feedback they provide; abstract conceptualisation or making sense of the experience (Bradber, 1999 23). Kolb argues that the best learning experience is obtained when this cycle is completed.

Re-contextualising the past and re-symbolising the symbolic. In times of rapid social change it is important to deconstruct the assumptions, values and beliefs embedded in the policies, code of rules and procedures and institutional cultural artefacts (physical structures, rituals, rites, narratives and stories) of the university. The architecture, the different kinds of ceremonies promoted and unproblematically reproduced, the texts privileged in the narratives of university leaders, etc. should not be taken for granted. They must be constantly interrogated and critically nurtured when they fit the institution's vision, mission and identity, and discarded when they become a stumbling block. Only then will we be able to reinvent the institution without compromising its established and unique role in society.

Negotiating shared social space and shared meaning. Given their different backgrounds and identities, students hold values and perspectives that differ, sometimes considerably from the institutional culture of the university. As much as they can contribute to the institutional enrichment and stimulate a dynamic and productive academic environment, these can also hinder a sense of community and strain the sense of life satisfaction and academic experience of the students, depending on the forms of mediation available. An interesting example is the battle over the student complex called 'the Matrix'. When Wits established the Matrix, a social and commercial centre to serve students' shopping and food needs, Wits students were divided. Some celebrated it as a major achievement. Others decided to toi-toi (march and protest) against it as a waste of resources needed for student support. The incident turned into a battle over meaning that could only be deliberated through the development of shared meaning around the Matrix. The implication is that induction processes, as forms of institutional mediation, are essential for establishing a space for dialogue and shared meaning. In this regard, academic staff and institutional leaders have the responsibility of helping students in determining the meaning of cultural symbols and other forms of institutional representation, which requires an understanding of the institution's history in its context, institutional memories, the discourses that underpin the institution's practices, changing student identities, and their implications in student integration into the university community. This requires knowledgeability and systematic introspective research.

CONCLUSION

Overall, Wits has shown commitment to addressing the problem of throughput—both at a policy level and in the numerous investigations and working committees that continue to operate. All faculties are actively involved in addressing the throughput issues and are re-

quired to report on their progress on an on-going basis. Understandings of throughput problems and the appropriate solutions differ, but the body of knowledge about these is growing and continues to be disseminated throughout the university. An ambitious plan is under discussion to improve the success rates of students not only in terms of the number of students who enter and complete a qualification and the time-rate in which successful students complete their qualifications, but also in terms of the overall quality of Wits graduates in areas such as critical reasoning abilities, research and world-of-work readiness, high-level technical competence and general communication skills (Wits, 2010 11).

A balanced interplay between student engagement and institutional/academic support is an essential requisite for a sound pedagogy of academic and normative induction of undergraduate students, towards enhancing the conditions of possibility of effective epistemic access. Institutionally, this would require a pragmatic approach to the question of vertical and horizontal alignment, the vision, strategies, enabling structures and related inductive activities. At vertical level, it requires synchronisation of the university's strategic goals, the profile of the undergraduate student population and the relevant academic support programmes and processes, underpinned by pedagogies, that emphasise student engagement and the proposed concept of 'graduatedness', i.e. that that embraces *research-readiness* for students entering higher degrees and *workplace-readiness* for those exiting into the workplace, as well as the principles of 'independent thought' and 'critical thinking' and social responsible citizenship that underlie Wits institutional ethos. At horizontal level, alignment is required to ensure more systematic coordination of academic support structures and inductive activities, to replace current "missionary efforts" undertaken by individual faculty members, risking their research and academic careers, with streamlined core activities driven by the overall institutional vision and strategy.

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CHAPTER 5

THE OFFICIAL FIELD: NEGOTIATING A MORAL CODE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals specifically with how students experience institutional efforts that are intended to promote a healthy and dynamic student life on campus. It engages with what students know about the official domain of the university and how they perceive this domain with reference to the efforts towards creating an institutional culture that ensures student success. The epistemological and ontological dimensions of policy and rule communication, negotiation and appropriation, especially around reaching a mutual understanding of meanings and purposes among the student population, involves the recurrent themes of awareness, experience, perceptions and understanding of their meanings and purposes with no ambiguities. Most importantly they involve "the recurrent theme of gaining awareness of the effect of power relations but also trying to find ways of enabling empowering dialogue to take place" (Sutton *et al.*, 2004). For students, reaching a level of understanding of these is of significant importance for negotiating an enabling moral code for social and academic achievement, and has some bearing on their practices, behaviour and student lifestyle. The chapter addresses the following main questions: Are students aware of the different aspects of the normative framework (policies, rules, regulations, norms and standards, etc.) that regulate

student academic and social life at Wits? How do they interpret it? And how do they respond to it? Whether and how students interpret or attach meaning to these facts and rules depends, on the one hand, on the nature of the pedagogy of social and normative induction through which the university mediates student experience and perceptions and, on the other, on their own background of capacities, know-how and dispositions—in other words, a sort of pre-intentional knowledge about how the institution works, and a set of abilities for coping in and with the institution. The rules or generalisations about behaviour proclaimed by structuralist analysts in anthropology and sociology do not seem to explain very much when it comes to what people do and are often neither predictive nor descriptive of social actions. Bourdieu replaced the notion of rules which govern or produce conduct with a model of social practice in which what people do is bound up with the generation and pursuit of strategies within an organising framework of cultural dispositions—the habitus.

KEY THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

Note, however, that these three aspects (institutional facts, constitutive rules and institutional identity) represent a perspective through which students' responses to dominant institutional culture have been examined and interpreted. Here we consider only those aspects that were articulated by students throughout our investigation.

FROM A REGIMENTED TO AN APPARENTLY OPEN INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

We use the notion of *open codes* and *closed codes* to distinguish how students differentiate how the normative framework operate at the university as opposed to the school (i.e. rules are constituted, communicated and internalised). In simple words, codes refer to principles regulating meaning. The difference is similar to Bernstein's (1977 116-56) distinction between visible pedagogies underpinned by strong classification in the organisation of rules and strong framing in their transmission—strong boundaries between their contents—and invisible pedagogies underpinned by weak classification and weak framing or rules—weak boundaries between their contents—as related to the social-class position and assumptions of the families served by the schools.

Closed codes manipulate meaning through vertical discourses in that they entail strategies that maximise negotiation with individual student identities and habitus or, in other words, their individual literacies and understandings about the forms of social life in learning organisations they are familiar with. Rules are made explicit and

communicated in somewhat managerial manner, which reflects the regimented nature of the school environment. Wits University operates through *open codes*, which make use or draws on both vertical and horizontal discourses, depending on the circumstances. In both cases, verticality prevails though at Wits students feel fascinated by its apparent openness. In both cases the assumption is that people or students in particular are rule followers or norm *obeyers* ready to comply with the established academic and social logic of life within the university within a framework of assimilation. Students internalise these norms and rules, reconstitute their social identities as they become assimilated into the established dominant institutional culture.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES: DISJUNCTURE BETWEEN POLICY AND PRACTICE

HOW DO STUDENTS INTERPRET AND RESPOND TO THESE EFFORTS?

The study points to very interesting patterns. First, generally students' constructs do not always reflect awareness or critical understanding of fundamental aspects of institutional and national contexts affecting campus life. As an emerging trend, once on campus students tend to focus on issues concerning their immediate experience (academic success, and social and recreational concerns), and less on issues of national concern. Following this logic, students tend to be familiar with the institutional aspects related to their situation or location on campus and in the residences, and to their immediate needs as students (e.g. code of conduct, sexual harassment policy and financial aid policy). They are less familiar with those aspects that appear more removed from the immediate and situated context (e.g. mission statement, language policy and international policy).

Second, institutional commitment to transformation is not widely understood. As already indicated, there is no doubt that the official framework defined by the institution's mission, policy and strategy documents indicates significant commitment to changing the culture of the institution toward inclusiveness and creation of a sense of community. As it will be shown in chapter 6, there seems to be positive experiences emanating from the decision of the university to diversify its student body. However, it is equally clear that institutional commitment to transformation is not widely understood nor experienced in the same way. For some students, Wits remains "alienating" and "racist." More specifically, these students acknowledge that the university has made significant progress in instituting policies, values and principles designed to promote human rights, social responsibility and justice, equity and equal opportunity, academic freedom and freedom of expres-

sion, and the well-being of students on campus; but there is a perception of a *mismatch between institutional policy and institutional practice* in certain areas, particularly staffing for both academic and support services. A student suggested that they've heard that social work is being closed down and indicated that they believe that this is largely because the majority of students registered are Black (African).[1]

Clearly students are not aware of the range of policies and strategies upon which the institution has embarked to deal with race, diversity and also representivity of staff. Our view is that Wits strategies for implementing these policies, particularly employment equity targets, are not well articulated among the wider student community by university authorities; they tend to be regarded as simple management tools. Perceptions of racism are mainly waged at the administration of the university and they focus on the following main issues:

IMBALANCES IN STAFFING OR STAFFING EQUITY ISSUES

> What I have noticed is that nothing can be done. It seems like they don't give Black people a chance. They give Black people minor jobs like secretaries and that. They don't want them to get involved in higher standards, higher levels...
>
> (S05, Zoology, AF, nR).

STUDENT FAILURE

Another student indicated that they believe that Black students are deliberately failed in examinations.[2] The failure rate in Engineering was, for example, attributed to White faculty members who may want to "frustrate the system" because they cannot get jobs elsewhere:

I think, I think that I'll talk about the negative side of it because uh, as you know in my, in my school, only 25% of the students who are initially registered in first year will, will graduate so not everyone and in that 25% Black people are the minority, you find one, three; one, two or three you know when the 75% could be mostly, uh, Black people, so I really... I think that, you know, because the government is trying to push the affirmative action, uh process, you get people who are trying to frustrate the system from the university level. And because, uh, we do know that ... a White guy will not get a job easily in my field, um... So what they do is, they end up leaving the country after they get their degrees and there are a lot of White people who

1 H 07, psychology, AF, R

2 E03, Electrical, AF, R

are studying this degree because they think it's interesting but because they get difficulty with managerial positions and everything you find them leaving the country, so... And most of the people who are lecturing us here on campus are, the White, the same people who are, who are not getting jobs outside so... I can... I just really suspect that they could be trying to frustrate that system from a university level. (E03, Electrical engineering, AF, R)

FINANCIAL AID CHALLENGES

A lot of students have also been excluded. And on the issue of race, because a lot of Black people rely on financial aid, that is pretty obvious for everybody. It makes you wonder again, because Wits is reputed for being a Jewish institution, I'm not certain about that, but pretty much is owned by Whites. Okay they say they are allowing us to come in, but what is happening with these ridiculous shoots (in fees) and they don't do anything to compensate for that. (H07, Psychology, AF, R)

PERCEIVED DOUBLE STANDARDS

In general the whole university is fine although the racism is unnerving sometimes. It is really annoying especially when it comes to administration. In order to get things done, you have got to bring in White people.... When White people go and approach the administration things happen very quickly but if you're Black, you have to run around and get this person's authority and this person will shift you to that person etcetera because they just don't trust Black people. (H20, Music, FW, nR)

This is how this student illustrated her concern:

> We had a performance with the Marimba band and we had to get Wits T-shirts because we were representing Wits. Obviously we had to get the money from the Department so that we can go and get the T-shirts and have them printed. I went to fetch the money, my tutor Laina said I should go and fetch the money so I went to Gisel, the admin person who deals with accounts. Then Gisel tells me she has not been told that I have to get the money. So I had to go to Malcom to authorise it first. So I go to Malcom and Malcom has not been told that someone is coming to fetch the money. ... I didn't like it because another White guy from our class went to fetch it and easily got it. (H20, Music, FW, nR)

CONTROVERSIAL OR DELIBERATE RACE-BASED DECISIONS BY THE UNIVERSITY

> ... I was quite disappointed because there are some faculties which I shall not name, that display or love racism if I ... would say. There are some

> elements of racism that you encounter, but as subtle as they are, [they] are there. And with whole thing of social work closing down ... Apparently there are rumours saying its closing down, and I'm not too happy about that, because it is a department that is dominantly Black. (H07, Psychology and African literature, AF, R)

FINANCE STRATEGIES DISADVANTAGE THE DISADVANTAGED

In the case of financial strategies that the institution adopts, students know these well and are generally underpinned by clear directives. However these financial strategies are perceived as being racist and exclusionary in that they prejudice poorer students, who are also largely Black.

The upfront payment clause: The advent of managerialism, efficiency and cost-saving discourses has been translated by a fees policy with serious implications for student students with financial difficulties. Students are required to make an upfront payment of R5000 before registration to gain secure admission to the university. Furthermore, 100% of the total tuition fee must be paid on or before the last working day of March. Finally interest is charged on the balance owing. International students (i.e. those who are not South African citizens or who do not have permanent residence status in South Africa) are required to pay their fees in full before registration.

University financial aid: Most students interviewed were receiving financial aid. Of these some felt that this was sufficient and that they had no financial problems as a result of the support they received. The Engineering faculty students in particular receive company sponsorship with which they are very satisfied.[3] However, there were others that felt that the financial aid was insufficient and that they struggle to photocopy textbooks[4] and also some forfeit meals in order to save money.[5] It appears that this category of students comes from poorer homes where parents are unable to supplement the university financial aid (e.g. one student who indicated that her mother is a domestic worker and her father is unemployed).[6] We came across students who did not personally have financial problems, but indicated that while the fees where extremely high the aid was limited. They emphasised that the university policy on financial exclusions is unfair, as it further disadvantages the poor. A student suggested that the cost of textbooks

3 E26, Quantity survey, AM, NR

4 H08, Sociology and psychology, AF, R

5 H08, Sociology and psychology, AF, R

6 H08, Sociology and psychology, AF, R

should be included in the fees as parents can then plan to pay this over a period of time as many of them do not have the cash to purchase textbooks which are very expensive.[7]

FEELING ALIENATED IN THE MIDDLE-CLASS FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

> Poorer students feel alienated in an environment that appears to favour 'richer students'. One student revealed that she will not speak to her friends about her problems because: "You know, for instance, at home you don't have enough food, how do you tell somebody who is wealthy that at home we don't have food and everything? How could they understand?"[8] This is linked to the feelings that price-wise existing services have been primarily conceived for middle-class students. For example the available canteen services are seen as not cheap and only catering for wealthier students.
>
> And I don't think it should be as elitist as it is, right? I don't think it is for the rich. Another concern that I forgot to mention is that students have got classes from morning until afternoon, and students are human, they get hungry. I'm concerned about the things like the cost of food. We don't have [a] cafeteria as is normal with universities or technikons. Who can buy Steers every day?
>
> (H11, International relations, AF, NR)

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE MEDIOCRITY

Even though students were more positive about their experiences with the administration services of the institutions as compared to the Campus Climate Survey of 2003, there is a perception that there is a disjuncture between their academic reputation and their administrative services i.e. academic excellence and administrative nightmare.

Some students pointed to a tension between institutional claims to excellence and inadequacies in administrative and finance services in the interaction with students. Examples include "lack of support and guidance during registration", "unfriendly staff", "too much red tape" and "too many rules",[9] "marks not released in time."[10] In general, students who have dealt directly with administrative services found them difficult and not service-driven.[11] Some students suggest

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7 H07, Psychology, AF, R

8 H 08, Sociology and psychology, AF, R

9 H07, Psychology, AF, R

10 E29, Town planning, IF, NR

11 E30, Town planning, AF, R

that Wits does not provide assistance with computer literacy and also guidance on how to use the library.[12] Many students suggested that they should be allowed to evaluate administrative services and provide feedback to the university.[13] This is particularly critical in the light of the fact that Wits administration staff is also held accountable for contribution to the academic project at the university.[14]

Concerns with a deteriorating physical infrastructure: The physical conditions within which students are learning seem to impact negatively on learning. Generally it appears that students are not satisfied with the state of lecture halls, residences, and so forth: the lecture halls are not well maintained have not proper heating which makes them extremely cold in winter[15] and the buildings are not conducive to learning:[16]

> The... the co-ordinators here... You'll tell them: Okay... my heater is not working. ...the answer will be by the end of this... month we are going to put [in] new... heaters. I've waited for two years trying to give them that... space to... change things that... I'm always concerned with to them, but they never.
>
> (E04, Quantity survey, AM, R)

Complaints about the residences included the fact that the walls are too thin and cannot prevent noise across rooms disturbing students as they study.

> Problem no.1 is that to me now the space is small. I need something more... bigger and something more matured and it's a junior residence catering from first, second year upwards. When you have stayed there in a long time you feel that you have to have something else. The benefit is that everyone is there, not like the place I stayed in Berea. Everyone that stays there is a student. There's this mood, this mood of study that is around. (E27, Town Planning, BM, R)
>
> I find that I'm more focused; I'm glad that I don't stay at Res. Because if I stayed at Res I would have found it way difficult to focus. I realise that my other friends that live there, their neighbours make noise in the middle of the night when they are trying to sleep or trying to study. People are not considerate. So partly the life here at Wits is very free, there are parties every weekend, if not every second weekend. It requires a lot of discipline

12 H 08, Sociology and psychology, AF, R

13 E03, Electrical, AF, R

14 The University's academic aims and values document. Draft version, no date

15 E30, Town planning, AF, R; E03, Electrical, AF, R

16 E28, Town planning, WF, NR

> to survive here. So I'm more focused and I don't desire to be here. (H20, Music, FA, nR)

The sense of what a good learning environment is includes good libraries and computer facilities as well as libraries opened for longer periods. Many students share few books and therefore have to wait their turn for access to these.[17]

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17 H07, Psychology, AF, R

CHAPTER 6

THE PEDAGOGIC FIELD. POSITIONING ONESELF WITHIN A HIGH PERFORMANCE PEDAGOGICAL ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION

As outlined in the third chapter, recent international literature points to the fact that the transition between school and university is associated with stress, anxiety, and tension, which, in the case of students who come from socio-economic and cultural backgrounds that are radically different from the learning culture of the university they seek access to, leads to students failing or withdrawing from the university (Thomas, Bol and Warkentin 1991; Darlington-Jones, Cohen, Haunold, Pike and Young 2003). Literature has also emerged on the question of the kind of transition assistance and academic support that is required to enable an enculturation process for students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds (Tinto 1987, 1993, 1995a, b, 2000; Tinto and Goodsell-Love, 1993; Tinto and Russo, 1993; Tinto, Goodsell-Love and Russo, 1993; McInnis, James, and Hartley, 2000). In South Africa, a host of literature has grown to examine (*inter alia*) patterns of students' participation in formal institutions of learning (Cross and Johnson, 2003), ways in which academics accommodate the needs of a diverse student population (particularly in times of new managerialism), ways in which socialisation into academic practice can support under-prepared learners (Giesel, 2004), and what academic knowledge is worth knowing (Muller, 2000).

This chapter explores the academic and pedagogic practices, norms and values that constrain or enable successful participation of undergraduate students. It looks at how students at Wits 'negotiate' their academic needs and aspirations; and reflect on their expectations from lecturers as educative authorities and from the university, as well as from themselves. Having spent time exploring the literature on policy in this field, this chapter turns to students' accounts of their experience. It focuses on the following main question: What social and academic resources do students draw on when they seek to integrate into Wits culture of academic performance, and in what ways do these align or not align with Wits culture of learning? The chapter highlights students' perceived understanding of the academic culture within an elite university environment undergoing a radical institutional change, with regard to their learning experiences, their accounts of their relation to the academic authority and more broadly their sense of development as students. Following on Manning's classification of culture in higher education, this chapter focuses on the values and assumptions that students express on the idea of learning at a university, their expectations from themselves and from their lecturers and the rules and academic conventions that they attribute to the social space of learning and teaching they encounter.

PEDAGOGIC MODELS: POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

To define what is meant by the *social space of learning* and teaching at Wits more specifically, I use Bernstein's distinction (2000) of two very different pedagogical models labelled as *"performance"* and *"competence"* models of pedagogic practice. Each model sets up different expectations from students of lecturers and from lecturers of students. These models are useful for illustrating how the liberal-globalisation discourse and the radical discourse of institutional-based transformation are recontextualised into the pedagogic field, and the tensions they give rise to in students' academic experiences. Before defining these models, it is important to emphasise that the idea of a "model" is a heuristic device that helps to focus the data and classify it, and to make sense of the important insights it brings to our attention. Bernstein cautions against using his models in too-simplistic ways. Not only is each of these two models divided into more specific modes, but also their construction in specific historical circumstances "may give rise to what could be called a pedagogic palette where mixes can take place" (Bernstein, 2000 56). This is how Bernstein defines the pedagogical space of the performance model:

> Space and specific pedagogic practices are clearly marked and explicitly regulated. Interstices for acquirers to construct their own pedagogic space are restricted. Regulatory boundaries limiting access and distributing movements are explicit and well-marked. Classification is strong. (2000 46)

The main characteristic of the *performance model* is carefully defined as a set of social relations between 'acquirers' (learners, students) and 'transmitters' (educators, lecturers), which are predicated on fundamental 'different from' relations. The 'difference from' relation is defined in terms of conception of specialisation of knowledge and in terms of the authority to transmit and evaluate knowledge. On the one side of this relation is the student whose role is focused on attaining the required performance (high performance), and on the rules and procedures that guide the process of acquisition (assessment). On the other side is the lecturer, who is granted the power to define what constitutes real academic knowledge, what constitutes a good academic text, what knowledge is relevant and how it should be assessed, and generally, when it is that a given student has attained the required performance level. Explicit criteria, feedback on gaps and absences in the student's text are central to this model.

From the perspective of the student, the locus of expectations falls on meeting the requirements that are defined by the lecturer and much less so on being recognised by the lecturer for being a different and particular individual with specific needs, problems or aspirations. The orientation of this identity is on achieving or on what will sustain achievement for the future. In this way the model recontextualises the core goals of the globalisation discourse—knowledge and innovation, the self-programmatic individual, high performance, and 'use value' for the economy. In the specific context of Wits, within the performance model, the axis of the slogan "Wits gives you the edge" turns on access to specialism and successful achievement.

At the extreme, the student is so focused on achievement that social life might be construed as an interruption to the real goal:

> I don't really have a social life, I'm serious, please don't laugh. I don't know how to describe it because everything I do is academically related. If I don't have assignments I go to look for information that will help me in future (sic).
>
> (H08, Sociology and Psychology, AF, R)

In the performance model, the relation between the student and the lecturer is hierarchical: each relates to the other in formal positional ways. Roles and responsibilities and thus expectations are very clear. Criteria of conduct are explicit. Their regulation though is self-pro-

grammatic, i.e. not only through a figurehead (e.g. as in schools) but rather through self-regulation. For example, time and attendance constitute a critical part of how to be:

> School is totally different, it's very different, to... varsity... I mean it's all up to you, you come to class, you'll make it, if you don't come to class, no one is going to run after you. Ya, so at school I didn't bunk or anything. I did attend classes and, I still do right now, even though I'm at varsity in my 3rd year, I still attend classes. I don't, I try not to bunk, I really try not to bunk. Um, I'm very punctual... I'm never late for a lecture. I'm very, very punctual, if I have an eight o'clock class, then I get up early and I get ready early and I get to class on time. I don't..., I'm never late (sic).
>
> (H46, Education, AF, R)

This seemingly banal statement is significant in the clarity it attributes to responsibility towards attendance. The student's role for herself in relation to the lecturer and the expectations from the institution are bound. The student understands the relationship as hierarchical and assumes a role of the conscientious, industrious and attentive student. The issue of 'time' in fact stands here for the idea of a frame of what is expected of the student in relation to the rules and procedures that operate in that space—you are expected to follow these rules, whether they are explicit or implicit and so it is up to you to recognise them. It is not within the student's control to change these rules (in this case, time of attendance). In this sense the social space is marked and the student is expected to adapt. Below are two responses from students recorded in our survey:

> I don't think anything prepares you for university. At high school you have to go to class. You are told to do your homework. At Wits you can do what you like.
> ... you think you have an idea of what university is going to be like, the way it looks, the way everybody behaves. No [this is not the case], because there's a lot of pressure on you to do your own work. You know?
> ...Yes I think you're constantly changing to adapt to your environment, so yes (sic).
>
> (E28, Town Planning, WF, NR)
>
> ... Not really, not really, it was a completely different environment and uh I had to start from scratch in terms of adjusting (sic).
>
> (E3, Electrical engineering, AF, R)

The performance model here is economic; it does not allow the student to expect any special treatment of extra time for example or to have

lenient evaluation criteria, because of any personal circumstances or need, or to get away with a wrong solution to a problem because the process was correct. In institutional terms, an extreme performance mode of pedagogy is highly selective and exclusionary. Academic selection replaces academic support and relations between students and lecturers are sporadic and formal.

This is how Bernstein defines the pedagogical space of the competence model:

> There are few specially defined pedagogical spaces, although facilitating sites ... maybe clearly bounded. Acquirers have considerable control over the construction of spaces as pedagogical sites and circulations are facilitated by the absence of regulatory boundaries limiting access and movements. Classification is weak. (H07, Psychology and African literature, AF, R)

The second pedagogical model, *competence*, is a progressive model of learning and teaching, which consists of open social relations and which foregrounds the person over the 'acquirer'. In this model, formal roles and boundaries are backgrounded and the student is trying to find herself and 'make a mark'. The social relations between students and lecturers are modelled here on the discourse of social justice, particularly on its emphasis on inclusion and participation. In this model, the learner's identity is not modelled on "acquisition" but rather on "participation" (Sfard, 1998), celebrating, assuming control and receiving recognition of her special and particular history and values. Economically, it is an expensive model, which requires small classes for its interactive aspect, academic support, mentoring and academic enrichment initiatives.

Psychologically, the competence metaphor stands for an approach to learning that foregrounds empowerment and emancipation over and above acquisition of skill for an instrumental purpose such as the pursuit of a career (Bernstein, 2000 50-56). From this point of view, learning and teaching is construed as a space of possibilities and choice, where the primary goal is self-development. Its use value is for growing and empowering the self. In curriculum terms, the competence model aspires to loosen boundaries between academic knowledge and everyday life. Its knowledge orientation is on the use value of the knowledge for external social interests, such as that of 'the consumer', 'the client' or 'the self'. Since the relation between academic knowledge and everyday learning is construed as open, students could be struggling with criteria, perceiving it as too open, possibly unclear or even implicit. In the specific context of Wits, within the competence model, the slogan "Wits gives you the edge" connotes individuality and voice. The emphasis in this identity is not on the rules but on pluralism and community:

> Basically, this is where you get to establish yourself as an individual. Wits gives you room to be an individual. You realise what you want, they propose all sorts of things, and you have to grab whatever you can. And it is not restrictive, you're allowed to venture into anything and experience with anything, and so definitely it does give you the edge (sic).
>
> (H07, Psychology and African literature, AF, R)

As stated above, analytically the two models are treated as heuristic devices that require greater subtlety to be used for reading the data. This is particularly so in view of the context of education at a university and even more so because of the mixed view (discussed above) of "access" and "participation" that the higher education sector in South Africa is expected to manage. It is anticipated that in the social space of a university in South Africa today, some of the practices associated with learning and teaching are more explicit and more binding than others, some of the lecturers are more formal and demanding than others, some of the courses draw on knowledge that is more specialised and requires a far more specific output, and some of the management will support ideas of empowerment and special support. In this kind of context, it is expected that the experiences of the students will vary. One of the aims of this analysis is to establish the pattern of variation.

VARIATION OF LEARNING GOALS AMONG STUDENTS: WHAT IS A DEGREE FOR?

When students speak about their choices of areas of study or the academic sense of their specific specialisation, three very different kinds of goals and experiences or social identities emerge. Some students have an instrumental goal in getting a degree that will be useful to secure a job. Such may be called a *market-related identity*. These students tend to come from engineering and they say things like "I just chose a degree that would guarantee a good salary" or the degree has given me "opportunity to come up with ideas that, will help in future... things like the 2010 [soccer] tournaments" or "I chose it because I saw that there was a need in the construction industry for people who can do... help for the infrastructures and the development" (sic).

The orientation of a *market-related identity* is what needs to be emphasised here. It feeds off the liberal/globalisation discourse, particularly its emphasis on flexibility and movement beyond national boundaries. The justification of why the area of specialisation is useful focuses on the relation between the discipline of knowledge and the economic sphere or the labour market. Its empowering aspect lies in the economic advantage for which it provides purchase. An instru-

mental identity is a product of the performance model of pedagogy. It depends on signifiers from the economy—what the economy needs.

Students of arts and drama are more inwardly oriented, focusing on building themselves through the expressive aspects of the field:

> I like our department because we get to think and create our own ideas, make them come to life and watch what we really want...For me the whole issue of being able to express myself as a student—I think that is really wonderful. I can express myself and if my ideas are good I get high marks.... So I get to pass because of what I'm able to do not what for instance because of what some philosopher wrote 'twenty thousand years ago'... That's what I mean by saying it is more informal; you don't feel like you're forced to do stuff. It almost like you do your degree or tutorial because you love it and not because you have to do it (sic).
>
> (H12, Drama, AF, NR)

I call this *an emancipatory identity*. The experience of being recognised as the centre of production of new knowledge rather than as responding to external needs or criteria is primary in this identification. Self-fulfilment is greater than marketability.

The third group of students includes those who have chosen fields like psychology, sociology, or international relations and who see the primary exchange value for what they study in helping them to understand themselves better—self-development/enrichment project—or to understand their society better, so that ultimately some form of improvement or change can be gained through their study. We call it *personal* or *social therapeutic identity*. A student of media and international politics "loves" what she is doing because she loves "meeting people from other countries" and "learning about new cultures and how things are done in other countries." An international relations student says that the field helped her to understand the conflict and the turmoil that is going on in the world, particularly in the Middle East. With the explicit goal of personal change the following student says:

> There are so many things about myself that I didn't understand before or I wasn't aware that they are affecting me. [For example] in terms of family life, my Mum and my biological father were not married, so there are some things that I have internalised, for instance, about relationships and how they operate. Even though I don't care about him (father), I try not to do the same mistake like the one [that] my mum did. (sic).
>
> (H08, Sociology and psychology, AF, R)

This conception of change is very different from the communal or collective sense that is pointed to by another student, a sociology student,

who claims that this field helps him to understand "the GEAR stuff" both politically and economically, and that this is why he finds the subject practical. Likewise, a student in the field of industrial psychology uses it to read events in her social world:

> *Respondent:* ... Industrial psychology, working with Unions and looking at what drives people, such like extrinsic motivation that actually compels people and drives people to excel in their work or what behaviour lead to strikes and all those things, I find those very interesting.
>
> *Interviewer*: That is interesting, is that also related to guidance and counselling?
>
> *Respondent*: Yes.
>
> *Interviewer*: So you can be employed as counsellor for a particular company or industry?
>
> *Respondent*: Definitely, like right now we're discussing the Cleaners strike and we look at it from the all dimensions, the dimension of the organisation, what we can do as psychologists to intervene between the employer and the employee, what has led to the situation. We try to point out the problem and give the solution to that.
>
> *Interviewer:* That is challenging.
>
> (H07, Psychology and African literature, AF, R)

Many students describe the Wits culture as diverse in terms of the variety of social identities that it brings together. The above sociological description of academic identities examines the academic facet of this diversity and suggests a combination of three kinds of prospective identities—*an instrumental identity* (market oriented), a *therapeutic identify* (self-recognition, voice), and an *emancipation identity* (self or social improvement). The following chapters will show the discursive components of these identities in terms of learning experiences.

SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY AS BINARY SOCIAL SPACES

I return here to some of the issues introduced in Chapter 4 regarding the differences between secondary education and higher education within the official domain. First, students are confronted with new conceptions about what counts as valid learning. Drawing on the literature by colleagues at the University of Gothenburg (Marton and Säljö, 1976a; Marton and Säljö, 1976b; and Svensson, 1977), Bradbeer makes a distinction between deep and surface learning:

> In deep learning, students seek to understand the material they are studying. Understanding involves building a personal meaning of the material, being able to express the concepts in one's own words and to apply them to new situations. In a simple phrase, deep learning involves the construction of knowledge and meaning. In surface learning, students are concerned with memorising the details of the subject matter. Success in learning means being able to repeat from memory, albeit often in a summary form, the material studied. The material has no personal value to the learner and the aim is simply to capture information so that it can be reproduced. While a form of surface learning may sometimes be necessary to get started in a new area of study, it may then shift to a deeper form as more knowledge is gained and the knowledge structure becomes more apparent to the learner. Surface learning is also very rarely rewarding to the learner and is associated with lower quality learning outcomes.

For him, higher education values deepen learning and seek to promote it.

Students tend to contrast the social space of the university to the one they came from—school. In this contrast the social space of the university *appears to be open* in comparison with the rules and regulations of a regimented school environment: "In school... you're constantly being watched, you're being monitored, kind of so you don't break the rules." In contrast to being monitored and watched at the school, the academic environment is attractive because of its freedom: "I did come around once when I was in school and I saw people having freedom, you know the freedom, which you do have in university and it was kind of attractive, I thought, from a young age." In the social space of the university no one "nags" you to do things or to do them on time:

> But when I got to Wits, I realised I wasn't prepared, High School didn't prepare me, it was a shock, the workload, and independent, you have to do things on your own, at your own pace, because in High School, your teacher is always nagging at you: 'do this exercise, do this', you know exactly that if you don't stretch, the teachers carry the stress for you, you just have to be there, you know. And getting to Wits was quite an eye- opener, and now I appreciate that as an individual I practice urgency (sic).
>
> (H07, Psychology and African literature, AF, R)

And no one tells you how to study:

> I thought they do everything for you, like making the academic stuff easier but [I discovered that] it was not [the case]. I did not for instance know anything about the computer, until I got here. I didn't know how to search for books in the library... Even in studying, they don't really tell you how to study (sic).

For some students who come from faith-based schools, the contrast is mediated by the cultural code that characterised their faith. In the following quotation, a student foregrounds the contrast between gender separation at school and gender integration at university. These gender boundaries are associated with a form of social relation that constantly monitors rules of behaviour:

> In school according to their rules you only associate with guys, girls with girls, so you come here, it's an open environment, you..., it's more comfortable basically. Because if you, if you're in an enclosed environment, you are constantly being watched, you are being monitored kind of so you don't break the rules, you know what I'm saying.
>
> I did come around once when I was in school and I saw people having like freedom, you know the freedom, which you do have in university and it was kind of attractive, I thought from, from a young age (sic).
>
> (E06, Urban planning, IM, NR)

Key in this contrasting metaphor is a notion of an individual with capabilities and responsibilities, who can empower himself academically *if* he does the right thing. No one will "carry the stress" for you.

It is important to note why we characterise the social context of the university as "appears to be open". This is because a relation of authority marks the social space of learning and teaching at the university—the lecturer authorises knowledge. This is evident in the way students describe their ideal lecturer, or when they explain the differentiating procedure, which they follow when they seek advice or help. What comes out clearly is a sense of hierarchy and seniority—lecturers at the top, then senior students (tutors), then peers. Here are the choices as described by students:

> Well I have lots of friends on campus some doing things similar to mine so I can consult with them anytime, if they can they will help. Otherwise tutors are always there with their consultation times, which sometimes are not at the best times so you have to try and fit in, and I also consult with lecturers. I find lecturers to be very helpful; if you go to them they will not turn you away.
>
> (H13, International relations, IF, R)

If you want an answer that is guaranteed you go to your lecturers:

> ... You don't want to be confused by someone else. If you [are] getting the information from someone whose going to be testing you, I'm sure they..., you [are] more guaranteed to be doing the right thing—unlike hearing

> something from someone else. So I do prefer consultation with the lecturers (sic).
>
> (E03, Electrical engineering, AF, R)

If it is more complex ("major"), you go to the lecturer: "Mostly if you just need a little help you do go to your friends; for something major you go to your lecturers." Or, "It depends on the question; if I think it's a stupid question I just ask my [fellow students], but if I think it's important, like relevant to my essay I go straight to the lecturer."

A sense of degree of difficulty gives one a sense of sequence of possible options: "If I have difficulties, I try to sort them out on my own, if I find I have no way of understanding I discuss with my friends, if that doesn't help then I go and consult my lecturers."

In the next level are senior students:

> I prefer to go for the senior students, those who are above, above me in terms of level of study. I mean, those that I regard as resourceful students for me (sic).
>
> (E05, Town planning, AM, R)
>
> My friend, he is doing [a] PhD now, he has a lot of experience so most of the time I go to him because he did the same things that I'm doing now (sic).
>
> (H08, Sociology and psychology, AF, R)

At times, the view of authority is mediated through perspectives that emanate outside the academic culture—in a perceived African culture:

> ...I usually prefer asking the students, you know, but it's not that, it's a problem going to the lecturers. It is not in my cult[ure]... it's not in me you know, because as you know, the African culture, it tends to, as an African, we are... very respectful... to older people. Therefore it becomes difficult to interact closely with people who are old or older age. So I think that's the thing that really caused me to be in that, it's my culture... [it] becomes difficult for me to consult, but it's not that I can't consult... because sometimes I do, but I would be limited in asking, you know? (sic).
>
> (E01, Town and regional planning, AM, nR)
>
> Yes, look. I did public speaking at school, so I did not have a problem when I came here, but in terms of being assertive about my ideas and opinions, I think I'm more assertive than I used to be. You know I come from a culture where we tend to respect older people and have to listen to them. But, right, I can enter into any conversation with an adult and speak confidently. So it is that confidence that is one of the things that I have actually got from Wits. It is the assertiveness and learning to substantiate my own ideas.

> Yah, like what I said. I had to get over things like being the submissive little girl, I'm the last born and I have a very traditionalist father, when you serve him, you serve him with the tray and such things. So even now I'm still finding the adjustment at home to be a bit difficult to live and be that little girl, the daughter and at the same time be firm with my father about certain things in my life like "you cannot open my mail", you cannot do this or that. So coming to Wits has helped because before I would just keep quiet and complain to my mother (sic).
>
> (H11, Media studies and international relations, AF, NR)

The latter student reflects on her socialisation process—specifically, the confidence to interact with authority developed when she learnt to differentiate between her culture and the culture of authority over knowledge at the university. In the academic culture, she says, the condition of possibility in engaging with knowledge is having ideas that can be substantiated, and not merely by being "in authority" (Peters, 1966). Hence, that which appears to be free and open when in contrast to the learning and teaching space at school, is in fact structured around the authority of the lecturer, including those that are close in hierarchy. That being the case, the mode of authority experienced is however remarkably different from the educator's authority in the school, whose role and responsibility is to *tell* the student on necessary behaviour. This type of social control over one's learning is mostly absent at the university. In the following section, I characterise the mode of authority used by the lecturer as it emerges from students' accounts.

SOCIAL RELATION TO EDUCATIVE AUTHORITY

Students articulate lecturers' educative authority with notions like "intelligent", "interesting", "challenging", "informative", "boring", "firm", "dedicated" and "eye opening", "absolutely brilliant", "motivating", "stand out". This way they describe their lecturers as "an authority" (Peters, 1966), as teachers whose knowledge base enables them to work with ideas, develop them *for* the student, and more broadly for the country in which the university serves to educate students. Students had this to say about their lecturers:

> He is a professor in industrial relations. His name: Eddie Webster. What he has achieved, I mean, academically and the input he made in South African economic and political life—let me say industrial relations generally, I mean, that made me like him. He has conducted research—and what South African industrial relations is, I mean, is because of him (sic).
>
> (H26, Sociology, AM, R)

> And the other one is Professor Tawana Kupe. He is the head of media studies. He is another very ambitious and really dedicated lecturer. He is very firm, he does not try to be our friend, he knows what he is here for and is very clear on his mind. He knows what he wants from students and communicates with us all the time. I think he is so dedicated to the students; he answers all emails and is so intelligent (sic).
>
> (H11, Media studies and international relations, AF, NR)

> We [were taught by] Kgafela last semester and he is already in the industry. So he knows how to make your mind think in a certain way. He really moulded us and helped us do beautiful work. And we [take classes from] Jyoti for Script writing. She is the acting Head of Department now. She can take an ordinary thing and make you think in a completely different way, for instance she can take a flower and start looking at it in terms of symbols and signifiers in a very eye-opening way (sic).
>
> (H12, Drama, AF, NR)

> *Respondent*: Professor Delius and Professor (Barnard?). They've really changed the way I understand history, especially South African history. They've been there the whole time and they've been very encouraging (sic).
>
> *Interviewer*: Why have they left a big impression?
>
> *Respondent*: Partly because I respect them, I respect what they've done and partly because they give very good lectures. They are very clever and they are interesting (sic).
>
> (H32, English and history, WF, NR)

In these and other such statements gleaned from students during the survey, the students express their confidence in the authority of their lecturers—they seem to have trust in what the lecturers transmit. This is precisely what Peters (1996) sees as the challenge in educative authority. Educative authority needs to prove itself and continuously justify itself. The process of justification is not personal or *ad hoc*. It is a rational process, whereby the person who claims to have an authority over knowledge, in this instance— the lecturer, communicates her/his knowledge in an intelligible way.

Authority is educative, when it appeals to reason, when its pronouncements can be challenged and, if its incumbent understands that her/his authority is provisional (*ibidem* 240). It is interesting to see how in defining what this means, Peters finds it necessary to contrast educative authority to what it is not. Educative authority, he argues, will not seek consent to a view through the use of fear,

command, indoctrination, hypnosis, or appeal to particular person. This means that the student's trust is gained because the lecturer follows a process that is trustworthy. What is this process? According to Peters, it is a public process in which the person who claims to know subjects herself to questioning by another in order to be able to provide reasons for her claims and views.

In fields where it is appropriate to talk about knowledge, there must be a motivating reason which supports the claim to know, and there must be public procedures for testing the reasons put forward. People must of course be brought up in the relevant tradition of thought and they must be trained to interpret evidence (Peters, 1966 251).

In the following I present two quotations. The first one is a short statement, which conveys a student's sense that studying requires that the relation between the student and the lecturer is rational. In Peters' terms the student does not refer to the authority as such, but is able to draw her own conclusions:

> Yes, and also the thing with Wits is that they let you use your own mind. There can be times when lecturers can be very biased, but generally they encourage a sense of expressing your own opinion and thinking for yourself, so that you can draw your own conclusions.
>
> (H13, International relations, IF, NR)

The second one is a long citation made by a student who felt that she does not belong to the same tradition of knowledge that the lecturer (and some of the students in the course) comes from, and feels that she is being prevented from entering it. Instead of being *brought into* the tradition by inter-subjective means or dialogue (alluded to in the above quotation from Peters), this student experienced alienation. She felt prevented from asking questions, professing that she did not understand, or prevented from testing her own ideas in public. What is disturbing about this student's experience is that in her attempt to make sense of a lecturer breaking the moral contract (implied by what educative authority is) and her resulting experience of alienation, she makes use of an explanation from everyday experience as a victim of the apartheid legacy, an experience largely mediated by racism. Unfortunately, this is a reality that many lecturers, who are predominantly White, are unable to understand, given their location in terms of social space and identity. In this case the student feels that she is not heard because she is not competent and is Black:

> *Respondent*: And the questions they ask because you're not so familiar... especially in Drama, they will say all these names of people who have written theories about drama and films and you find that you don't know them.

But other people, who have had the privilege, know them. It just scares you. Sometimes the lecturer acts as if we know these things and you find that I don't know these things and it becomes difficult to write essays. And I don't even know how to use the Internet.

... In class when we were asked a particular question, I could not answer because... I could not show that I don't know. Even though I could be having an idea, I could not say it because I would think that it is wrong. So I would just let the other people talk including the Black people who grew up around Gauteng because they had the privilege of going to multiracial schools. I remember I did design and drawing and when we were in class they were talking about all those terms like abstract and realist and everyone seemed to know and I don't. Then they would give us this assignment and it is the White people getting grade A, and this affected me and I would not even try hard to prove myself because I knew I would fail. So I only stuck to what I knew and if I got fifty per cent then I was happy and would not struggle to get eighty or something like that (sic).

Interviewer: And what happened afterwards?

Respondent: Well I quit Design and Fine Arts because it was just too difficult for me. I couldn't stand the pressure. Like when we were in class drawing and the lecturer would walk around to comment on what people were drawing, I could see he would go to some people and make detailed comments but when he came to me he said very little and I felt that perhaps my level of competition was lower [than] others'. I couldn't stand the pressure.

Well, we have consultations. If I struggle with something I go to the lecturers. But as I said some lecturers have this attitude that you must know these things. I remember I went to one lecturer for consultations; there was something that I didn't understand on the essay on what he wanted us to do. I don't remember exactly what he said but it was like he didn't want to listen to what I was saying. I explained what I didn't understand and he was like: "there is nothing I can do to help you and what you have to do is go to the Internet and research, because I gave you the essay topic so you just see what you can do." To me I expected him to explain a little bit more on what he expected but he just told me to go to the Internet and research (sic).

Interviewer: You thought he was not very kind?

Respondent: Yah, I thought he was not kind and then there is this thing they say that this is varsity, "we are not here to spoon-feed you", that they are lecturers and not teachers. I don't understand that, I mean a lecturer-teacher, what is the difference? You're all helping so you have to help us. Sometime you ask a question and they look at you like that is a stupid question: "How can you ask such a stupid question?" They tell you this is not high school, this is varsity and you should do ninety per cent of the work and we do ten per cent of the work. They give you stuff and they do not explain how to do it. Like this year, we got a new lecturer for Performance

> and he is very helpful. He doesn't mind even to just go to his office to sit and talk. He understands that with performance, we have different levels of development; we can't all develop at the same level so he treats us differently, whereas with other lecturers they expect that we should be at the same level. And if you're not they don't take you into consideration, they just concentrate on people who can catch up very fast, who're good at this or good at that. And acting is about process and other lecturers were not working on the process but on results. He concentrates on the process, on individual process. You can also relate to him not in a very personal manner but in a comfortable way (sic).
>
> (H14, Drama, AF, nR)

A Zoology student indicated that Black students are undermined from an academic perspective, which includes high failures rates, and deliberately preventing Black students from succeeding:

> ... it has this culture that a person could not understand. It has pressure, a lot of pressure. What it does, it underestimates people from other backgrounds.
>
> Some of us are failing not because we not doing well, maybe it's because we [are] Black. Whenever, White people will write whatever they want, they look at scripts, they look at names, and if your name isn't ... "mmm, already it is a deduction."
>
> Well mostly lecturers are racist ... They wouldn't give more attention to Black students than White people. For instance, we went to this other [woman] two weeks ago, during the September holiday. We did different projects. Before we went there I didn't know if they chose the groups to be White, I think it was planned. If there was a White person in our group, they would be our group leader. There is no one concerned whether we like it or not. Whenever we go to lecturers (for help) they tell us to go to students and they will tell us what to do (sic).
>
> (S05, Zoology, AF, R)

And an Engineering student reports that White students are offered academic support that is ostensibly not offered to Black students:

> *Respondent:* Well, what I know, in truth, if you can keep on interviewing the students from electrical engineering, they will tell you very well, as I have said, they don't want to see themselves anymore at Wits. They are tired of the school. At the same time they won't even influence any other one to come to Wits. And at the same time, they just want to get out, *in all proportion*, to get out, to get out of this school. Yes. As in, for the Black people, this school is not that great. We can see that the advantages are for the White students.

Interviewer: Is it altogether they don't have many advantages, Black students? Like White students?

Respondent: Yes, I would say so.

Interviewer: Is it about disadvantage... or...

Respondent: Like, I [always] hear that, if you have a... if you are struggling, with a certain course, you can go to the, er, to the school and explain in such a way that they can find you... a... like a private lecturer or... I mean a person who will help you with that course. At the end of the day, you never did realise... At the end of the day we never knew about that. And secondly, we never even saw *any*,... Black person getting something like that. And you can even see from the result path that Black people are really struggling in this school. So (animated) why keep on coming here in thousands, then, next thing, only two of us are getting out. No. (emphatic) Uh, ah. This is not worth it. As in, at the end of the day you think, is Wits a business institution, like a business institute, or is it like, to help South Africa as a whole. You don't really get an answer what is it exactly that Wits [is]... (sic).

(E17, Electronic engineering, AF, nR)

These three experiences may be isolated but they assume pointed significance because they are in direct conflict with the official policy of the university. As stated in the previous section, Wits' mission statement, as well as its transformation agenda, reflects the institution's serious commitment to fostering a culture of dialogue and respect amongst students. Secondly, it suggests the limitation of the performance model of pedagogy. The performance model works best in a tight selective education environment, which Wits as an institution is trying to transform. It is possible that to students who do not share the academic code and who experience knowledge gaps (mainly due to historical disadvantage), lack of support and recognition of their particular circumstances is experienced as unfair and unequal.

POSITIONING ONESELF AS A STUDENT WITHIN SOCIAL RELATION OF AUTHORITY: HARD WORK, INTERNAL REGULATION AND INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

The above discussion portrays a clear sense of educative authority ('an authority'), its hierarchical structure ('in authority') and students' respect for it. At the opposite side is the student; the student who receives this authority. How do students conceive of their role? How do students portray their share in the moral contract? We address these questions with reference to two constructs reflected in students' accounts: (i) *internal regulation*, which refers to the ways in which students experience the difference in relation to authority when

compared to their school experiences; (ii) *individual responsibility*, which is related to the distribution of responsibilities between 'the student' and 'the institution' in relation to the process of learning and teaching.

It is interesting to see that students regard the *individual student* as the primary locus of responsibility. This is, in my view, a very important point about the model of performance. As argued above, it is characteristic of the managerialist emphasis on the self-programmatic individual (a key element in the liberal/globalisation discourse). Many of the students convey a clear sense that it is up to the individual student (irrespective of her particular problems and difficulties, see below) to capitalise on what the institution offers: "it is up to the individual student to get the most out of what Wits offers." This includes a form of individualism which encourages "a sense of expressing your own opinion and thinking for yourself so that you can draw your own conclusions"—a social space of being yourself:

> Basically this is where you get to establish yourself as an individual. Wits gives you room to be an individual. You realise what you want, they propose all sorts of things, and you have to grab whatever you can. And it is not restrictive, you're allowed to venture into anything and experience with anything, and so it definitely does give you the edge.
>
> This is not to say that the students do not have any expectations from the institution; they do. But the students express their understanding of their role *vis-à-vis* learning and performing much more clearly (and more repeatedly) than they express the responsibilities of their lecturers. Lecturers are described as "interesting", "boring", "resourceful", "passionate" or "racist". Students on the other hand are tasked with the responsibility *to work hard* and get the results.
>
> But if you made people take responsibility of their studies, believe it or not people are serious and they would come for studies.
>
> I think I have got the advantage but also because I read. Look, I was not born knowing English and I think that is where my personality comes in. I'm sort of almost neurotic about something. When I make up my mind that I'm going to learn something, I learn, I read it and will do everything that I can. And it is not only English; it is the same thing as Afrikaans. Although I did not like the language, I knew that I had to write it in matric. So it is that positive attitude that helps students interact with their studies (sic).
>
> (H11, Media studies and international relations, AF, nR)

The following student makes sure that when she does not understand, she makes a point to find out, to understand, "to get it":

> I always make sure that what I don't understand I will try to find information and, ya, um, uh work hard on that.
>
> This way, things are not so difficult if you commit yourself. I committed myself to understand things although they gave me problems, but no I think that sometimes you need..., you don't need..., you don't always need to go to tutors and lecturers asking for a hand, [to] say "I don't understand this term, what does it mean?"—you have to go through the thing until you get it (sic).
>
> (E04, Quantity surveying, AM, R)

The environment is conducive to learning if *you* work hard:

> *Interviewer*: And do you think the environment in which you learn is conducive to learning?
>
> *Respondent*: It is positive if you work hard, I mean if you don't work hard you can't consult because what is it you will be going to consult on? (sic).
>
> (H08, Sociology and psychology, AF, R)

Students also express the value in putting in effort and coming out with something, which is worthwhile:

> Well I think, I think working hard and, and kind of seeing the results would make me happy. It would make anybody happy. I think putting in effort and coming out with something which is worthwhile and positive, it does make me happy so I can react [to] a few incidents actually but, [yes], there are a few.
>
> (E06, Urban planning, IM, NR)

The Wits learning environment is considered by certain students conducive to learning when one works hard: "It is positive if you work hard, I mean if you don't work hard you can't consult because what is it you will be going to consult on?" What really matters is 'putting in effort and coming out with something which is worthwhile and positive'. Lecturers too reinforce the idea that students have to be resourceful, independent and work hard. As one lecturer included in the study put it:

> My very first lecture is one of establishing the contract between my student and myself. What is my duty and what is their duty? We look at what we are supposed to get out of the time that we spend together. So that's the one thing that I would establish. The second question is always, always the same. Are there any disadvantaged students in this class? And it is interesting to see who puts up their hands. And I always look right through and never find any disadvantaged students—simply because we are all at Wits

> University. Do you understand? So I already set the course straight about, I don't believe in hard luck stories, I believe in effort.
>
> What needs to change is the student attitude. There needs to be an attitudinal change. That attitudinal change can only come about when a student body recognise that nobody owes them anything. For every student who gets into Wits, there's another five million who did not make it. So those students who get in need to recognise that they have a one shot, one golden opportunity and they need to make that [count].

These comments add a different dimension to the idea of individual responsibility. Specifically, they convey a sense of reduction of the notion of *institutional responsibility*, which will be further elaborated later.

Together with 'responsibility' and 'hard work' in this place, a student needs initiative. She needs to get out there to the specialist, the lecturer, and confirm whether what she has understood is, in fact, the right thing, as confirmed by this statement from a student: "[Yes] I do, very much so, actually I'm one of those people that you'll find following the lecturer after lectures—to go and confirm, yes." There is here a clear *reduction* of the notion of institutional responsibility and an *expansion of self* as the centre of power, action, change and development. Some further comments that evidence this include: "I practice urgency", "If I have difficulties, I try to sort them out on my own", "I commit myself", "you have to go through the thing until you get it." These are the kind of claims made by students that disclose their conception of the primary locus of responsibility. Further to this, students have said:

> ... If I have difficulties, I try to sort them out on my own; if I find I have no way of understanding, I discuss with my friends; if that doesn't help then I go and consult my lecturers.
>
> (H07, Psychology and African literature, AF, R)

> Some of them are boring. Some are just okay. The important thing is knowing your work regardless of whether they are boring or interesting (sic).
>
> (E31, engineering, AF, NR)

A different facet of responsibility is the way in which students negotiate their power in view of the reverence they have for educative authority and which makes the public space of transmission a space in which the self can feel vulnerable and shy. Students negotiate their power by deciding where to sit, when and if at all to participate actively in the public sphere of the lecture room. There seems to be little

or no mediation in this process. For some, active participation is associated with embarrassment or even fear:

> I find them interesting, although I know I don't participate as much as I should. In tutorials I do, but I get a bit intimidated in lectures, I tend to sit at the back and there are always three or four people.
>
> (H10, Modern languages, WF, NR)

> I participate in tutorials, in lectures I don't, because there are so many people and I feel as if my 'little question' is taking up all the lecturer's time (sic).
>
> (H28, International relations and sociology, WF, NR)

> *Respondent*: Do you mean like ask questions? Never, never, never, I wait for the end.
>
> *Interviewer*: Why?
>
> *Respondent*: I'm too embarrassed, if I had a comment to add, maybe, but hardly ever, once in a blue moon.
>
> (H09, Psychology and English Literature, WF, NR)

> No... like as you know how... [in] this degree, the Bachelor of Science in regional planning... there is a lot of presentation that... needs to be done... presentations, they are really hectic. Like my first presentation, I really suffered... because it was my first time to speak in front of people, and in front of my lecturer, whom I really respect ..., so it was really challenging ... it was. I wasn't angry, but I was afraid... lack of confidence. (sic).
>
> (E01, Regional planning, AM, NR)

Others will take their time but then take the risk:

> Well participation is something you gain after, afterwards you keep quiet, you shut all the information down. Who else is going to advise you if you can't raise your concern about what you don't understand? I think that participation is needed in class (sic).
>
> (E4, Quantity surveying, AM, R)

The general sense that is emerging here is of a student that acknowledges that she/he needs to try solving her/his problems, take responsibility for knowing the work that is required, seek the initiative to make a mark, address the lecturer when needed and, when he/she feels vulnerable, to keep a low profile. Both lecturers having a clear sense of

authority over knowledge and the student as the primary locus of responsibility, become two important markers of the social space of learning at Wits. As will be shown, the constitutive rules for effective student engagement in these processes tends to be assumed; they are not always made explicit. As a Drama student aptly put it: "There is this thing they say that 'this is varsity, we are not here to spoon-feed you', that they are lecturers and not teachers."

PERSONAL PROBLEMS BELONG TO THE REALM OF THE PRIVATE

Side by side of a strong sense of responsibility falling on the shoulder of the student is the sense that students get that their problems are personal and that it is their responsibility to solve them or to bear their burdens privately. Reduced institutional responsibility emerges clearly when students speak about personal problems. Despite the existence of official support structures in the university community, students feel that depression, family problems and financial problems have to be faced alone. Students relay the fact that personal problems are, too, one's own problem:

> When my mother passed away and with those assignments that I had to submit, you know they always say, "I understand, you guys have problems" and when you ask for an extension, they give you a week. For somebody who has got a very close relationship with the mother, that sounds unfair. We come from different backgrounds and this obviously comes with some strain like financial problems. Some people come here without food, they are hungry, they can't even concentrate... (sic).
>
> (H11, Media studies and international relations, AF, NR)
>
> And the question would be: why am I spending five years here? Well it goes like this: I went [into the] foundation [year] at first... [and] when... [I was in] the foundation [year], [I was] expected to complete [my] degree in five years. As time rolled on, because of those problems that I have mentioned in the beginning, that I had while I was staying at home, they cost [me]. They cost me to fail some of the courses not because I wanted to fail them but because, you know—stress was over me and I tried to cope, and being quiet... so, I had to lose one year, now I'm here for the fifth year and the following year is my final year ... at Wits university (sic).
>
> (E04, Quantity surveying, AM, R)
>
> I guess it's the helpfulness of everybody that is positive. It's my take to studying that I am very positive, I want to study, I want to get a degree. Negatively, it's not that much, but you have private issues that sometimes impact, but not all the time (sic).
>
> (E29, Planning, IF, NR)

> The environment is positive obviously, but it comes with a lot of strains. We come from different backgrounds and this obviously comes with some strain like financial problems. Some people come here without food, they are hungry, they can't even concentrate, but the fact that it's positive makes it okay. I'm fortunate to be in such a place (sic).
>
> (H33, Sociology and psychology, AF, R)

In the latter comments, the institution seems anonymous ("helpfulness of everybody"). The attitude that an individual student takes to their studies, is what matters. The rest are understood to be "private matters". These experiences need to be seen alongside students' emphasis on the need to work hard, achieve their goals by themselves, seek help if needed. Feeling shy or even intimidated is a personal setback, and in view of (some) lecturers', effort rather than hard luck is what really counts. Taken together these disclose a sense of institutional space that can be overwhelming, as can be seen in this student's statement: "The Wits community is massive and I see myself as a very small, small portion of Wits; I consider myself a number at Wits."

RULES AND PROCEDURES THAT MARK THE SOCIAL SPACE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING: EXPLICIT OR IMPLICIT?

Having a clear sense of authority over knowledge and the individual self as the locus of responsibility are two important markers of the social space of performance that nevertheless "appears to be free". A related issue is how the students get to understand how this environment works. This aspect is related to the sense of rules and a criterion that sign post what is possible and what is not, when and how things operate. The rules for a social space of learning and teaching signify what is possible and what is not. Rules of communication are important for expectations and central to creating a social order in which there is consistency and predictability. Rules provide structure and habituation (Bernstein, 1975). As we saw in the discussion above, students remember that in school they were being 'monitored' or 'watched'. As for university rules, students speak about a slow process of adaptation—'It's not like you know that you're changing; it's just that you adapt.' The university rules are inscribed in the academic culture of learning to which they need to adjust. This suggests that the constitutive rules are inscribed in some or other form of academic expectations, which might not always be explicit, but which clearly require an adaptation. As a student commented: "...It was a completely different environment and I had to start from scratch in terms of adjusting" (sic).

What practices of the social space of pedagogy are foregrounded by the students in terms of rules, rituals or criteria on how to behave

academically? First, and very common, is when and where one can approach the lecturer. A student says of this: "They, [are] more available to consultation in their offices, rather than after lectures when everybody's kind of in a rush etc., so and they make themselves available more frequently" (sic). Another student comments thus: "Yah, because they provide consultation time so it is very convenient, if the times they specify are not convenient for you, you can always make an appointment via a phone call."

How to find the lecturer:

> Lecturers, usually they, on the course outline, they give us their office numbers and their, their office if... their office telephone numbers and their office number, where we can reach them. And they always say that, if we need to consult with them, must either just look on their timetable or leave a note under their door, and then we can come make an appointment for consultation with them.
>
> (H46, Education, AF, R)
>
> Sometimes, I mail, sometimes I go to their offices, sometimes I call. It depends.
>
> (H08, Sociology and psychology, AF, R)

What is more appropriate? First, the kind of query determines where you raise it: "Well it depends, when it is a comment I can raise it in class, when it is a problem to do with understanding then I can go to them after class." Second, it is the pacing of the work that students need to submit: "When the lecturer decides to pile all our work all at one time towards the end of the second block. That really pisses me off. Excuse the language." Third, it is submission dates:

> I think reaching a deadline can be quite difficult. Lecturers can be quite stingy with extensions. I mean, I've never been granted an extension in my life. It's my pain. It's not funny. I literally finished each one on the day or the time in which it's...
>
> (H28, International relations and sociology, WF, nR)

Fourth, it is timetabling of exams:

> Now there was one time when I got my exam timetable and there was one exam in the afternoon and also another the following morning. I was so exhausted. That is really one of the worst things that I got really annoyed about. I know they have a lot of trouble trying to set up timetables and avoiding clashes, but that was pretty annoying. I think that impacted on my marks a lot, I can't remember what I got but I remember I was really exhausted. (H09, Psychology and English literature, WF, NR)

Fifth, is the expected times for marks to be published: "The only time is when for example we want marks and marks are not out yet. Otherwise there's nothing that made me angry."

In setting of conversational space by meeting in offices and not after the lecture, in the pacing of the work, in the timetabling of exams, in the publication of marks, in the short loan system that lecturers institute within the library, seem to be some of the ways in which the social environment of learning and teaching is marked with institutional rules on how to behave. The notion of rules of communication is important for expectations and it is central for creating a social order, whereby there is a sense of consistency and predictability in the communication between the student and the lecturer. Rules provide structure and habituation. So clear expectations set through a course outline, followed consistently by the lecturer, along with a good sense of what a student needs to prepare for an exam, are basics for many students. When these are not provided, students feel a sense of chaos or fright as if they have been thrown into the deep end. When this happens, some withdraw, others, as the following student describes, rely on their own personal discipline:

> Well last semester we had a new lecturer, they introduced TV production this year and it is still a very new course. He gave us a new course outline and here we're thinking, in the third week we will do this and so on, what happened eventually was that he started doing his own personal work using school equipment; he sort of started a cute little production company of his own. So the time we were supposed to be having our lectures he ended up going off to do his business and we showed up for the lecturer and he is not there. At the end of the day we knew that if we were going to go for TV production there was not going to be a class, so we asked him what we are going to do for our marks and his response was do whatever you want. People went haywire, they got cameras, shot whatever, edited, like I ended up editing something for two months. I learned a lot but one thing he taught me was that if I didn't have my personal discipline I would [not] have learned anything. You know I would have been lazy and that semester would have been a disaster. If a lecturer gives us a course outline, he is supposed to follow it.
>
> Also TV production this semester was not so bad but we were sort of thrown into the deep end. We were divided into three groups and the lecturer gave one lecture on the practical aspects of studio work. We shot in one day, exchanging positions all through; we didn't really know what we were supposed to do. Then we were given about three or four lectures then we were told, go and work on your stuff. So we went in, worked on our ideas and as time drew closer to our exam, it became more and more difficult, we felt thrown into the deep end. CTV were given like four lecturers and had a whole reading pack on what to do in studio. So it was really difficult but one thing it did for me personally was that it forced me to think on my feet and work. (H12, Drama, AF, NR)

It is important to understand that the social sphere of learning and teaching consists of layers of criteria and assumptions. What students describe above are the outside layers of the practice of learning—time frames, course outlines, etc. They are important but they do not disclose the evaluation criteria of the knowledge base itself, or the criteria of the kind of text that the student is expected to produce. In this we refer to the principles that underlie the specialisation or the discipline. As the following comment suggests, below the surface every field of knowledge teaches principles:

> And you know it is what you learn from each subject and not necessarily in the actual curriculum. It is the principles that are taught through the subject and how you incorporate that into the career that you want to have (sic).
>
> (H11, Media studies and international relations, AF, NR)

Making the underlying principles explicit is a very important practice in a culture of performance, where the idea of standards to be achieved is so paramount. We come back to it in the conclusion to this section and in the analysis. In the following communication, a very dedicated student in the Faculty of Humanities discloses her frustration. She knows that there are criteria. She knows that these are drawn from the specialisation of the academic field, in this case psychology, but they are not made transparent and can be misinterpreted. What this student wants is a clear set of criteria, which will make success or failure equally visible, and in this sense will help her to regulate epistemological access:

> *Respondent:* I thought they do everything for you, like making the academic stuff easier but it was not [the case]. I did not for instance know anything about the computer, until I got here. I didn't know how to search for books in the library... Even in studying, they don't really tell you how to study.
>
> Okay, my first year was tough in both subjects; you know in psychology the language they use is different from the normal English. ... psychological terms, some of them that you had never known that they exist, words such as psychic, mind, body and soul. And when the lecturer teaches, she assumes that everybody knows. And it takes time to adjust to university because in high school everything is done for you but not here. You have to attend classes, tutorials, take notes, submit essays; you don't have to create your own stories.
>
> Sometimes it happens, you know in a B.A. most of our assessments are in terms of essays and sometimes you misinterpret the question. And when you consult you get to realise your mistake.

> Okay, lecturers who expect to do hard work and they give you low marks. That is the only thing that irritates me. You know if I get an A, I want to know why, and if I get a C or fail, I want to know why so that I can improve. I don't want to repeat the same mistake and if I get an A, I want to know why so that I can do the same in other courses. So if you can't explain to me why I got a D, I get very frustrated (sic).
>
> *Interviewer*: Do you normally go to them to ask why?
>
> *Respondent*: I do always, it doesn't matter what mark I got (sic).
>
> *Interviewer*: Do they give you explanations?
>
> *Respondent*; They do and they are very patient (sic).
>
> (H08, Sociology and psychology, AF, R)

Fortunately, this student reports that lecturers explicate their assessment, but the dangers that she has noted of not making criteria explicit are multiple. They are multiple in that they go beyond the idea of epistemological access, so fundamental to the space of learning and teaching, particularly in the performance model of pedagogy. Much like the above experience of breaking off the educative social relation, here too, without clear criteria transmitted formally and pedagogically, other discourses (such as racism) could contaminate students' perceptions of their performance:

> It depends which faculty are you in, even the school are you in. For example there's a difference between Media Studies and the History of Art. Media studies they are fine. The lecturers are open; you can come in, though sometimes they say this time is consultation time, after this send an e-mail. The School of Art, there are students who say there's still that racial segregation or whatever you call it and to me it's like maybe it's like that a little bit because I was getting 40's and 50's and I used to work hard. The White students were not working hard but they were getting 80's and you compare your work and you see that I'm even better than them. You see that this White student fails to do referencing so how come the content ... ? (sic).
>
> (H27, History of art and media studies, AM, R)

In conclusion, the above analysis of the performance elements in the pedagogical domain has attempted to show, sociologically, the ways in which the social space of learning and teaching *appears* to be open. The emphasis in this analysis has been on the formal aspects of educative authority, its dialogical sense, the responsibility of the student, the rules and procedures, and the ways in which the student negotiates her power.

Notwithstanding these significant features in the data, many students relay their wish for community, small classes, pastoral care from their lecturers and recognition of their own voice. These ideas interrupt the authority structure of the educative relation and the emphasis of successful acquisition of the performance discourse. Through them students foreground their yearning for recognition of the self (*therapeutic identity*), as a particular self, with emotions, needs and difficulties, and potential competence. These ideas are associated with the competence model of pedagogy. It is to this that I will now turn.

CONFIDENT PARTICIPATION FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE

Everyone, no matter what her/his background is, has the same potential, as aptly expressed by this student:

> We have the same background and he keeps on encouraging me not to give up. He tells me that even if my mother is a domestic worker, it doesn't mean that I will be a failure in life (sic).
>
> (H08, Sociology and psychology, AF, R)

Different points of view are equally validated:

> Khanya, for her passion. She teaches us what is important, she's very open-minded but if you have a different view, she encourages you to hold your point of view even if it's different to hers (sic).
>
> (E28, Town planning, WF, NR)

Here the emphasis is not on standards of achievement or sense of regulation and responsibility. The emphasis is on the potential of the self as a whole rather than just on the performing aspects of it. The benchmark here is *inclusion* and *integration*. These ideas draw on the 'competence model' of teaching practices. There is a sense of expressed vulnerability in this identity, particularly in its call for a therapeutic kind of relationship with lecturers and for breaking the formal boundaries of learning and teaching. It is not predicated on personal effort and hard work, but rather on help from the others who care. Unlike the performance model which is predicated on fundamental 'different from' relation, the competence model is predicated on 'similar to' relation (Bernstein, 2000 50), demonstrated in students' mention of "treated equally", "becoming", "potential", etc.

Interestingly these comments came when students were asked to think of happy experiences at Wits, or from statements about lecturers that left an impression on them. In other words the ideas about community and care come when students think about the ideal. Students

articulate this yearning for community or for a pastoral other in different ways:

Being treated equally as one community:

> *Interviewee*: I mean, there's one, there's one lecturer from our department who inspires me most, most. Her name is Dr. Tanya Wingler. I mean, she's the one who'll take us and tell us, guide us through planning, tell us about all the complexity in the, around planning issues but above all that she does not treat us differently, she treats us equally as, one community (sic).
>
> (E05, Town planning, AM, R)

Building and giving direction:

> I remember this one lecturer named Mbatchu, although he's not around now, he took off two years back because of difficulties that I cannot mention, those were personal, I think. The guy did not just become a lecturer only, he played a role to many students, he gave them direction—including myself. If he sees you're falling apart he's trying to build you at the same time you, when or and only if you listen to him and take his advice. I think the lecturers here are good (sic).
>
> (E04, Quantity surveying, AM, R)
>
> It was my health psychology lecturer from last semester. Because my mum got diagnosed with breast cancer from last year, and her father passed away from lung cancer so we had quite a connection, I think my mum took him under therapy and from my health psychology, I think she probably had an effect.
>
> Even when I'm really down, when [the] going gets tough, there is always someone to pick me up, if it is a lecturer or a student. I have never felt like I wanted to give up and I'm person that gives up on a lot of things. So, the fact that I have kept on going, a lot of lecturers have been very helpful and encouraging. My friends always think I'm a sucker to the lecturers but the thing is that somehow the way I click with them is just amazing (sic).
>
> (H09, Psychology and English literature, WF, nR)

Providing motivation:

> Mbatchu, he left. That lecturer was, not just a lecturer, he was someone in my life. He played a good role in my life. Well, he motivated me, you know, he gave me direction. I told him my problems he gave me direction.
>
> He gave me direction as to how... how to become a good person, a good achiever and potential student at the same time.
>
> (E04, Quantity surveying, AM, R)

Infectious Passion:

> Khanya is just so passionate and Garth is so full of life. They actually make you want to be part of the whole planning thing (sic).
>
> (E30, Town planning, AF, R)

Growing through helping others:

> If you help another student... Ya, it's possible, dangerous. It's confusing what I'm saying. Take it this way, [when] you [are] alone you practice, you try to understand things and you get some solutions from somewhere, maybe, from your lecture or classmates and many things. You try to analyse those solutions and try to find out what, what, why did they answer like this and why did this become like this, and you are [on] your own, you are not with someone else, you just doing things yourself and someone from, maybe your friend will come and ask you something else. So in that way by talking to that person, giving him information helping him you are also benefiting... (sic).
>
> (E04, Quantity surveying AM, R)

Small groups enable sharing your point of view:

> ... And it's pretty much hands on, it's interactive, it's small groups, you know, so you able to share your point of view, you [are] actually able to listen more carefully. [Yes] it's the smaller group [that] does it better for me though. I think in the bigger classes such as geography and sociology and the maths, etc., bigger classes, it's almost tougher to cope but so far the content was fine (sic).
>
> (E06, Urban Planning, IM, NR)

Small groups enabling personal connection with the lecturer:

> Claudie is fantastic because you really feel her passion about what she's teaching and she really cares about her students as well. She teaches first years and she had [about] 50 first years [but] she would know each and what is going on in each one's life. Eve as well, her personality and how much she shares with us, but also the passion for what she teaches (sic).
>
> (H10, Modern languages, WF, nR)

Community depending on mutual commitment:

> ... I mean you find that sometimes you are in a group, your group members don't pitch, so it's something that is negative about that. Some people are just not willing to, to help you at times (sic).
>
> (E05, Town planning, AM, R)

Community also depending on compatibility between personalities:

> It depends, I mean like in Italian there are only five of us and we build up a nice relationship with our lecturer, but that again can be a problem because if there is a personality clash, then it is a big issue (sic).
>
> (H10, Modern languages, WF, nR)

The picture that emerges when students refer to features of the competence model of pedagogy is rather different. The lecturer is portrayed in ideal terms and more importantly not for her/his specialisation and authority over knowledge, but for breaking the formal boundaries between the lecturer and the student. In these statements, students emphasise the special treatment they receive from an individual—a lecturer who took the trouble to know their problems (their private and vulnerable self) and to support them when they needed it. These lecturers are also depicted for the personal time they devote themselves to guiding, and they motivate students.

The notion of 'guiding' is interesting in particular for the ease in which its meaning slides in students' utterances. The meaning slides between personal guidance because of personal problems and pedagogical guidance as in the lecturer "guides us through planning, tells us about all the complexity in the, around planning." This is worth noting, as many studies on pedagogy emphasise the importance of making learning more explicit by making the evaluative criteria transparent to the learner (Boaler, 2001; Black, 2003; Dann, 2002; Morais and Pires, 2002; Shepard, 2002). In the above comments students speak about the benefit of having a small class, a community or a one to one interaction. Amongst the benefits they list are included issues such as: (equality) "treating us equally", (counselling) "take his advice", (criteria) "how to become a good person, a good achiever", (interaction) "by talking to that person, giving him information helping him you are also benefiting", (attunement) "you actually, you actually able to listen more carefully", (intimacy) "she would know each and what is going on in each one's life."

In summary, I am suggesting here that the institutional culture of Wits' learning and teaching is constituted of two pedagogies—performance and competence. With regards to the balance between the two, and this is a tentative conjecture, it seems that the dominant model of pedagogy is the performance model. But the data shows that in its enactment only results in the outer layers of the learning process being made explicit. The criteria for the knowledge base—of what makes a good product in the given area of specialisation— is missing, and so the socialisation process of students who come from a disadvantaged background

is far more 'bumpy'. The omission of criteria is a serious absence in the performance model and it seems that the yearning for a guide, for advice and personal care, is the way the students are calling for some ways to help them to 'crack the code' of the institution. From the above data, the availability of the competence model of pedagogy depends on the good will and personal commitment of individual lectures.

The main point here is not quantitative—of how many lecturers are perceived to offer advice and guidance and to empower students, and how many lecturers are perceived as positioning themselves primarily as knowledge specialists. This could be an interesting study, but it is not the thrust of this analysis. It is also not intended to suggest that more of the competence model around the different faculties will improve throughput and retention. In fact there is a debate about this issue, which lies beyond the scope of this project.

The conjecture that can be made (albeit tentatively) is that in the absence of explicit evaluative criteria and in lieu of the language of instruction, has been difficult for students, students that understand the modality of knowledge and work hard thrive, while others manage better yet unevenly, depending on the availability of personal empowerment. Still, others drop out.

CONCLUSION

Performance-driven practices recall a time when Wits catered for a carefully selected, elite White student population, and emphasised merit, competition, and the survival of the fittest. Individual staff members have established pockets of support strategies.

There are also institutional interventions, which respond to issues of equity. They display commitment to institutional responsibility towards providing epistemic access. These include: training and support to staff through the Centre for Learning and Teaching Development (CLTD); a more inclusive language policy introduced in 2003; extended curriculum; access to a writing centre; monitoring of courses in which the pass rate differs significantly from the norm; Pre-Bursary Scheme in Engineering and the Built Environment; Foundation courses in Humanities; and services for support on physical, social and emotional issues within the Division of Student Affairs.

Notwithstanding these interventions, the overall picture that emerges from the study is worrisome. It shows that, although there are many positive experiences emanating from the decision of the university to diversify its student body, it is clear that its institutional commitment to transformation has not adequately balanced the two edges—"individual responsibility" and "institutional responsibility". As Morrow (2009 78) astutely remarked, the institutional resources

and conditions "... can, at best, only facilitate, and never guarantee [the student's] epistemological access." Ultimately, it is the student's involvement that renders him/her an active or passive participant in academic practice. The argument here is that the benefits that the student may derive from what the university environment has to offer rests with the student's involvement in campus activities (see Tinto, 1993; Astin, 1993; Pascarella and Terenzine, 2005).

We see three possible responses to this tension: (i) to stick to its performance-oriented approaches and align its selection and admission policies accordingly; (ii) to emphasise high participation over and above performance and to support staff in its attempt to adapt their teaching practices; or (iii) to adopt a hybrid model that retains the performance focus but offers greater support to students in need. The advantage of the last option is clear. It retains the best aspects of high performance and contextualises them within a framework of social justice. Such a model would foreground social over individual presence, the person over the student; it provides pastoral care and legitimises personal and collective forms of recognition. It institutionalises sustainable and continuous support that recognises that an integral aspect of the labour of lecturing is socialising students into sound academic practice. Here we refer to collective resources that target development and thus are labour intensive (small classes, collaborative teaching, and variation of pacing, individual and collective feedback on continuous forms of assessment—with the aim of making evaluative criteria explicit). This does not mean compromising standards, but rather making them explicit to students by enabling socialisation and providing learning opportunities especially for those who are unable to 'crack the code' of the higher education institution. This model would require systematic expansion of the efforts of individual academic staff. However, in this view, the choice is not between high participation and high performance; it is about confident participation for high performance.

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CHAPTER 7

THE PEDAGOGIC FIELD: POSITIONING ONESELF WITHIN A HIGH PERFORMANCE PEDAGOGICAL ENVIRONMENT FROM A CONDITION OF MARGINALISATION[18]

INTRODUCTION

Chapter six looked at how undergraduate students negotiate their performance within a diverse university environment. This particular chapter stretches this issue to explore how successful undergraduate students from marginalised communities or historically disadvantaged backgrounds navigate in this process given their socially and educationally impoverished circumstances or as asked elsewhere: how do they make their way up the academic ladder against the constraints determined by their unique historical circumstances? I refer here to those that by virtue of their race, gender, geographical location (rural, township or poor neighbourhood) etc., have been historically marginalised socially and economically, i.e. have historically been placed on the margins or periphery of the mainstream social and economic hierarchy. They represent a blind spot in current academic scholarship. These are students who entered the university under the stigma of

18 An earlier version of this chapter was published as Michael Cross and Vivian Atinde (2015) "The Pedagogy of the Marginalised: Understanding How Historically Disadvantaged Students Negotiate Their Epistemic Access in a Diverse University Environment", *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 37(4), 308-325. To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10714413.2015.1065617. (1/2).

underpreparedness having graduated from relatively under-resourced schools in rural areas, and as a result their academic experiences have been overlooked in current studies, or an object of misrepresentation that contributes to the perpetuation of their marginalisation.

A claim that has been articulated in current South African literature on student performance in higher education is that students from historically marginalised groups enter the university a with considerable degree of underpreparedness and as such are doomed to failure due to the lack of, or inadequate forms of social capital derived from their poor backgrounds (Czerniewicz and Brown, 2011; Naidoo, 2004; Fataar, 2012; Jones *et al.,* 2008). This claim is informed by Bourdieu's (1986) theory of social capital and habitus. This theory rests on two important claims. First, it is suggested that students from affluent backgrounds are more likely within high performance university environment given the particular forms of social capital they carry with them that they use as assets to succeed in their studies (Tzanakis, 2011 77). Second, it is also suggested that as part of their habitus, these students have dispositions and pre-dispositions that increase their adaptability within such academic environment (Kloot, 2009). By implication, this would broadly mean that students from poor backgrounds are condemned to failure for lack of such forms of capital and habitus. Put differently, Bourdieu's theory in its original meaning does not account for the fact that some students from poor backgrounds also develop assets that enable them to navigate successfully at university. As will be shown in this chapter, such assets entail active cognitive processes and learning outside classroom through a 'pedagogy of survival', conceptualised by Bandura's (1977) in his theory of behavioural change as self-efficacy. Bandura argues that (1977, 212) through persistence in activities that may be subjectively threatening, experiences of mastering these, and the consequent enhancement of self-efficacy, people process, weigh, and integrate diverse sources of information concerning their capability, which become central to regulating their choice of behaviour and effort expenditure as they confront new situations.

Given their successful performance in their undergraduate studies, the chapter builds on the assumption that certainly there is something right that these pool of students are able to do, and if this is done, then they should have different forms of assets that facilitate their academic integration and success at university, which are not easily intelligible when approached within a strict Bourdieu's conceptualisation. The idea of 'success', refers to productive use of accurate plans, development and learning opportunities resulting in the completion of their academic goals, 'epistemical access' to academic integration in its broader sense.

This chapter shows that, given social conditions (e.g. supportive community and family networks, critical individual agency and imagination), the experience within marginalised equips can equip aspiring university students with the capacity to respond positively and productively to key challenges within an academic environment. At social level, such capacity is derived from their own networking skills, resilience and determination to emancipate themselves from poverty. To capture this dimension, Bourdieu's concept of social capital is reconceptualised as "compensatory capital" made up of compensatory skills such as coping mechanisms, self-reliance, perseverance, adaptability and flexibility in the choices they make to their advantage, and the ability to unashamedly consult or seek advice from older or more experienced people. Of importance is also the pre-disposition to work as a group linked to communal life in the village where they tend to assist or support each other to survive.

At the level of dispositions and pre-dispositions, while their habitus may not be aligned or may even be in conflict with social life on campus, through their sense of resilience, intrinsic motivation and self-determination they enter the university with the pre-disposition to reframe their habitus and adapt to the academic environment in order to free themselves from poverty. This pre-disposition is critical in enabling them to adjust to life on campus and cope with new challenges. The chapter thus argues not all students from marginalised backgrounds are lost or doomed to failure as claimed in some literature; some of these do develop alternative forms of capital, dispositions and pre-dispositions, and a pedagogy which, when used creatively, enable them to navigate their lives successfully at university. These particular assesses and the cognitive processes entailed in their generation in the context of marginalisation, particularly the ability to apply the resulting learning to new situations, are referred to as the 'pedagogy of the marginalised'.

Unlike the rest of the chapters in this book, this chapter was based on in-depth interviews using a life history approach, taking into account factors such as race, class, gender and the profile of parents. Rooted in the tradition of narrative inquiry, in Goodson and Sikes' (2001) terms, life history approach allows for 'learning from lives'. It offers opportunities to interpret the relations between past, present and projected events in students' lives, and in particular, how they become successful under unpredictable, adverse and changing circumstances. The target included Black students from poor rural communities at the bottom of the economic and social ladder. In both data collection and analysis, careful consideration was given to those issues with direct bearing on the students' capabilities, dispositions

and learning experiences. These include: their background, in order to highlight their experiences before joining the university; their social and educational life, the difficulties faced, and how these were overcome; the challenges confronted at university and strategies used to address them; the interface with peers, faculty members and support structures; their initiative or agency, how they perceive themselves and others (as students); what motivates them to be resilient; and campus life (some students live with their parents, some live in university residences, some rent flats or rooms where these are available, and thus they all enjoy different living conditions that may enable or interfere with their studies). Similarly, critical incidents captured by phrases such as a 'never give up' attitude, being a 'fighter', 'self-made', etc., were important. For ethical reasons, the chapter uses pseudonyms, namely Sipho, Tsepo, Duminasi, Thabiso, Lerato, Makhanana, Precious and Selina.

CONFRONTING AN UNFAMILIAR ENVIRONMENT: CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Given the apartheid legacy of under-resourced schools staffed by under-qualified teachers, particularly in historically disadvantaged, Black and rural communities, the academic attributes associated with independent learning, language proficiency, individual resourcefulness and time management, can hardly be acquired by school graduates in these contexts. As such, when they come to the university they are confronted with numerous challenges. First, most of these students have problems with English language competence, which constrains the development of conceptual confidence. Mastery of the multifaceted conceptual skills that university education requires such as being able to reason theoretically, contextualise and re-contextualise knowledge as well as being able to relate knowledge to new and different circumstances, the vital ability to engage critically with academic literature and writing academically, etc., are all skills that necessitate fluency in English as the language of instruction in most higher education institutions in South Africa. They represent an almost insurmountable conceptual and practical barrier for those students who do not master the language.

Second, as highlighted in the previous chapter, the highly regimented environment in schools, where learners are "spoon fed" by their teachers, makes it difficult to transit to the *almost open* university environment, with limited directives regulating contact between students and lecturers, little explicitness in rules, procedures and requirements, and greater freedom in student decision making (the 'dos' and 'don'ts' concealed in everyday experience). The university en-

vironment requires considerable levels of individual self-regulation, autonomy and independence. As some students point out: here "no one nags you"; "you are not constantly being watched, you're being monitored ... so that you don't break the rules" (Cross *et al.*, 2009 25). The university environment also requires a greater sense of individual responsibility and work ethos, that is "the expansion of self as the centre of power, action, and change, and as the primary locus of responsibility" (Cross *et al.*, 2009 27).

Third, the logic of teaching and learning within a university environment is framed in particular ways and according to different mixes of explicit and implicit norms of behaviour, and codes of rules and procedures. Familiarisation with these is important for understanding expectations and central to creating a social order in which there is consistency and predictability, or in Bernstein's (1975) words, in providing structure and habituation (60). However, part of the peculiarity of the university is that its constitutive rules are very often inscribed in the institutional culture; they are not always made explicit, which clearly requires student effort for appropriation, internalisation and adaptation: "sometimes you are left to guess or you rely on what you see from colleagues; you are not told like in the [school] assembly" (Dumisani). Many students find it hard to adjust when this implicitness of university rules is extended to the forms of communication in the teaching and learning in terms of structures of authority, formal contact arrangements, time frames, course outlines, assessment criteria, etc. Indeed learning can be difficult when expectations are not communicated, when norms, rules and procedures, principles standards of the specific area of specialisation are not unambiguously spelt out and explained, particularly for those who come from a learning background that works with very different criteria.

Fourth, university campuses as learning spaces have changed considerably driven by information and communication technology (ICT). With ICT the notions of place, time and space have also changed in higher education. Learning is no longer confined to the classroom, lecture hall or seminar room; it takes place beyond these narrow boundaries where students are increasingly discovering new learning opportunities. As Oblinger (2005) puts it, "the notion of classroom has expanded and evolved; the space need no longer be defined by 'the class' but by 'learning'" (14). Such opportunities can be quiet perplexing for students who never had access to ICT in the past.

Fifth, in South Africa, the student learning experience is tied up with the social stigma of under privilege produced by race, gender, ethnic and other forms of discrimination. Repeated racist incidents amongst students, or between students and university staff, reflect the

prevalence of discourses of racism, sexism and xenophobia (Soudien *et al*., 2008) in society at large. As a consequence, many students who do not share the academic code and have knowledge gaps (due to historical disadvantage) tend to seek explanation about their failures within these discourses, and to translate their experiences into feelings and perceptions of racism, xenophobia and alienation.

Overall, it appears, when they enter the university, undergraduate students have to become used to a new lifestyle with further challenges, such as sharing a room for the first time, finding their way around campus, making new friends, adapting to living away from home, learning to manage their own lives and time, adapting to new teaching and learning methods, learning to use facilities such as the library, a computer lab, and so forth. They also have to deal with language barriers, social divisions, and numerous academic and environmental challenges. To borrow from Mellone (2002) "first year students are not only developing academically and intellectually; they are also establishing and maintaining personal relationships, developing a new identity, deciding about career and lifestyle, maintaining personal health, wellness and developing an integrated philosophy of life" (6). How historically disadvantaged students deal with these challenges has some bearing on whether they complete their courses successfully or drop out of university.

EXPLAINING SUCCESS IN DISADVANTAGE: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Theories that have been popularised in South Africa in the study of student success under condition of disadvantage include: Searle's theory of background or biography (1995); "Grit" and "Educational resilience" (various); Wenger's (1999) concept of communities of practice; Tierney's (1993) communities of difference, Coulon's (1993) membership or affiliation; and Bourdieu's theory of social, cultural and symbolic capital, etc., all with very little re-contextualisation. While I did find some of these theories, a major limitation has been the lack of de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation of them (Cross and Johnson, 2004; Cross and Carpentier, 2009; Cross *et al*., 2010, 2008).

This chapter draws on Bourdieu's (1986) theory of capital, particularly the concepts of "habitus" and "social capital", and the concept of self-efficacy based on Bandura's (1977) theory of behavioural change. In the absence of more suitable conceptual lenses, these theories appear useful for explaining student experience and learning in the context of marginalisation by virtue of social difference (race, gender, class, sexual orientation, rurality, and any other form of difference perceived as constitutive of disadvantage). Strictly in Bourdieu's

(1986) logic of things, the analytical implications are obvious. One could argue that students from rich backgrounds ('middle class' in his terminology) carry with them suitable assets, that give them an advantage in navigating within a university environment. Similarly, one could hold that their habitus help them to navigate confidently in this environment. In contrast, this could mean that students from poor or disadvantaged backgrounds, who in Bourdieu's terms do not possess the required forms of capital (social, cultural or symbolic) and whose habitus appear misaligned from the university environment, are generally condemned to fail (Cross and Atinde, 2015). This is in my view one of the most dramatic theoretical slippages imposed by the almost irresistible energy embedded in Western theories when applied uncritically to different contexts. The questions that should be asked are: can these students develop enabling alternative assets (forms of capital)? If so what forms would they take? What happens to their (misaligned) habitus?

Bourdieu's theory offers a strong analytical possibility but does not account for students from poor backgrounds who may develop alternative assets (forms of capital), cognitive and attitudinal that also enable them to succeed at university. For this possibility to be realised, the Chapter opts for De Souza Briggs (1997, 112) notion of social capital understood as embracing "resources stored in human relationships whether casual or close ... the stuff we draw on all the time, through our connections to a system of human relationships, to accomplish things that matter to us and to solve everyday problems". These relationships provide a source of connections, information, and understandings (Bryan, 2005 221). In this sense, the life events experienced by disadvantaged students may positively impact on their approach to learning (Howell *et al.,* 2003); sometimes, make them more autonomous and self-directed, and enable them to develop skills and attitudes such as social competence, problem solving, autonomy, sense of purpose, motivation and goal orientation, positive use of time. Without ignoring the main thrust of Bourdieu's theory, in his own terms, this is the necessary *epistemological break* with his theory that this chapter makes as its fundamental point of departure in this chapter. Let us elaborate on this important aspect.

Many other philosophers (e.g. Marx and Althusser) coined the concept of "epistemological break" to refer to the critical moments when new theoretical consciousness emerges or new paradigms are established. Grappling with the complexities of empirical research in unfamiliar contexts, Bourdieu narrowed down the concept of epistemological break to refer to the modes of vigilance required for achieving truthful explanations in knowledge production, which require

researchers to be reflexive about their own epistemological positions. He identified three distinctive kinds of epistemic breaks operationalised through "three degrees of vigilance" (Bourdieu *et al.*, 1991 87). The first is the epistemological break with our fixed constructs of social facts demarcated or perceived out of experience ("pre-constructed objects", "pre-notions" and "pre-concepts"). This type of break refers to breaking free from practical knowledge, i.e. free from the representations, questions and problem formulations of common sense understanding (e.g. 'In my culture, in Zulu culture, women must always greet men'; 'White South Africans are racist'; or the recent Penny charge 'Black South Africans behave like monkeys').

The second type of break is concerned with the objectivist and subjectivist dilemma. For Bourdieu, subjectivity is neither determined by, nor free from objective conditions, and objectivity is never free from subjective conditions. One has to be vigilant about possible distortions emanating from placing too much emphasis on either the objective or subjective conditions in social inquiry. The third type of break represents the main concern in this particular chapter—the break from the hegemony of theoretical knowledge—whether subjectivist or objectivist—because of its tendency to abstract reality, to confuse "the things of logic" (established theory) with the "logic of things" (empirical phenomena). I discuss this issue more extensively with reference to the historiography of radical theory in South Africa in a recent piece. Without considering such an epistemic break, knowledge claims could shrink into celebration of one's theoretical constructs, leading researchers to present only their theories as representations of the historical reality they analyse. Thus an epistemological break with the approaches privileging the notions of "absolute theory", "absolute method" and subjective inclinations is necessary. It is this particular epistemological break with fixed interpretations of Bourdieu's theory and concepts of capital and habitus that the conceptual framework of this chapter rests on.

Against this background, the concept of "social capital" refers thus to particular assets that under certain conditions marginalised groups may develop as a result of survival strategies, hardship and deprivation in their own impoverished social spaces. It could be compared to the methods and life skills that blind or deaf people develop for navigating in life, or the well-known successful story of the disabled athlete Oscar Pistorius. For the purpose of this chapter it has been reformulated into '*compensatory capital*'. Similarly, the concept of habitus is associated with a range of attributes that enable students to adapt to the university environment. This is based on the idea of "pre-constructed objects", "pre-notions" and "pre-concepts" from

Bandura's (1977) theory of behavioural change. In other words, the conception of habitus within Bourdieu's parameters (dispositions and pre-dispositions to conform) has been reformulated to include attributes such as intrinsic motivation, resilience, self-determination, self-efficacy and self-reliance (dispositions and pre-dispositions to change or adapt). These are important attributes cultivated within poor African communities, articulated by the students put through the interviews.

While this transformation of Bourdieu's theory is useful, its explanatory power is confined to the domain of social relations. It is also important to conceptualise the assets historically disadvantaged students bring to campus as a form of accumulated learning, i.e. to account for the cognitive dimensions of compensatory capital. In this regard, the chapter considers the concept of *agency*, which Reivich and Shatte (2002) call "response ability", or the different ways in which students respond to external pressures in their lives, which characterises their positionality. In this context, 'positionality' is the openness to being challenged, or the self-confidence to challenge or defend one's view. Positionality of students has some bearing on the possibilities for their success or failure.

Further, Bandura's concept of "self-efficacy" brings to bear the cognitive dimension of learning, the learning emanating from positive responses to adverse situations, or from positive outcomes in human activity. Bandura (1977) suggests that "persistence in activities that are subjectively threatening but in fact relatively safe produces, through experiences of mastery, further enhancement of self-efficacy and corresponding reductions in defensive behaviour" (191). He further suggests that cognitive processes play a prominent role in the acquisition and retention of new behaviour patterns. Through self-reflection centred on one's actions that produce positive outcomes (positive responses) or through observation of other people's actions, the individual forms a conception of how new behaviour patterns are acquired, and on later occasions the symbolic constructions emanating from these observations can be used as an effective guide for action in new situations and in new contexts. Thus, for Bandura (1977, 192), under adverse conditions, people learn from the consequences of their responses to the challenges they encounter, and these consequences serve as "an unarticulated way of informing individuals what they must do to gain beneficial outcomes and to avoid punishing ones."

A glance into the black box reveals interesting narratives from students' constructs. What follows is a close examination of these narratives with reference to the theoretical basis developed in this section.

NARRATIVE A: DEALING WITH FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

Disadvantaged students from townships or rural areas face particular financial challenges at university as a result of their geographic and socio-economic circumstances (Jones *et al.*, 2008). This is not however to suggest that there is a direct correlation between economic circumstances and student success, which would certainly contradict the argument in this chapter. Borden (2009) is convincing in his contention that "financial support may improve access, but its role in promoting persistence and degree attainment is less certain" (3). Financial support is necessary but not sufficient though it still represents a significant challenge, as disadvantaged students still have to find affordable accommodation in an unfamiliar city, and pay for meals, transport, clothes, textbooks and equipment. Nonetheless, it is revealing how these students deal with financial difficulties. Not only do they display a high level of financial literacy that allows them to make good use of their bursaries but they are also able to make savings to share with their parents. More important is the realisation that financially, if a bursary is available, there is no bigger challenge than the one left at home:

> I try to cope; there are times I can't even eat because there is no food. I spend the whole day at school and when I come back to the 'res' [residence], there is no food. Somehow, *I don't even consider these as challenges; they harden and motivate me to work harder* because, I know, I come from a community where there is a lack of basic needs like food, electricity, and water ... If you want to know what it means to suffer, go live where I come from (our emphasis).
>
> I'm proud of anything I have, and I can manage it, because I grew up in a very poor home ... we always managed everything we had. That is why I'm contented with the bursary, so if they say they would pay just my fees I'm okay with that. I just want to study hard and succeed so that I can get the bursary next year again.
>
> *The bursary is very small, but for me that is too much*; I know how to manage it to last me the entire academic year [our emphasis].

NARRATIVE B: GOAL SETTING AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

A central attribute of successful individuals in marginalised communities is the ability to make choices and execute them under duress though not exclusively, which they learn from their families, relatives or the surrounding community. Habituation into such lifestyle in disadvantaged communities results in individual resilience. This insight has been endorsed in several studies in other contexts (Bandura, 1977). Students attach to their educational experience the goals they set for their future and their emerging identities, whether these are market-oriented (e.g. a

rewarding place or position in the labour market) or altruistic (e.g. to go back and help the community or to work towards social change):

> *I like to be an agent of change*; I know I'll be influencing young lives each and every day. So I'll be building their future positively—that is what makes me be strong now. I know there will be challenges, but I will brace them when the time comes, just as I'm dealing with those that I'm encountering here now (our emphasis).
>
> I am the only hope for my parents; [it] ... will enable me to assist my family financially and otherwise.

As they set new goals and direct their actions to these goals, the students feel more motivated:

> My mother always said "Please work hard. I don't want you to live the life that I'm living". This made me to start thinking, and setting goals for myself. It made me to focus more on my academics (sic).

NARRATIVE C: THE MEANING OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

The "never give up" principle is also tied to the desire and commitment to build a better future or the opportunity for a better life. Unique to these students is that they tend to see university education as their own choice not imposed by their parents. It is perceived as the only means available to get out of poverty:

> I'm not from a rich family and I'll not want to go back to that kind of life I grew up in. So I have to study hard to make sure that I obtain that which will be my *visa to a better life* and ... will enable me to assist my family financially and otherwise, because I don't want to live that life we're living in my home (our emphasis).

Or...

> ... *I came here with a mind to succeed no matter what happens, nothing will make me change my mind concerning my studies*. I came here to study because *this certificate is my visa* to a good life for my family and me; therefore I'm not turning back (My emphasis).
>
> I told myself that 'that life' was not meant for me; I don't want to go back to the life of fetching water from distant streams, fetching wood, etc.

NARRATIVE D: EDUCATIONAL RESILIENCE: "I DON'T GIVE UP EASILY"

The constructs of eight students interviewed in this study converged on the question of educational resilience in at least four main aspects,

though articulated in different ways. The first is embedded in the 'never give up' idea, or determination "to beat the odds" (Wayman, 2002 6). This came from one student: "For me ... coming here ... was difficult ... but, like I said, *I don't give up easily"* [our emphasis].

Emerging from these constructs is the notion of *educational resilience,* as articulated in the phrases "I don't give up easily"; "I must... I have to make it"; "I've learned how to endure"; "my visa to a better life"; and "I like to be an agent of change". Educational resilience has been conceptualised in similar ways in different contexts, e.g.: "the heightened likelihood of success in school and other life accomplishments despite environmental adversities brought about by early traits, conditions, and experiences" (Wang *et al.*, 1994; Waxman *et al.,* 2003); the capacity of individuals to overcome difficult and challenging life circumstances and risk factors, or the ability to succeed academically when risk factors make it difficult for them to succeed (Benard, 1997); the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation in the face of challenging or threatening circumstances; and so forth. Resilient children are those who experience one or more difficult life circumstances or traumatic events, but somehow find the power to overcome their adverse impact (Bryan, 2005 220). In this respect, Alva (1991) stresses that academically resilient students are those "who sustain high levels of achievement, motivation and performance, despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of doing poorly ... and ultimately dropping out..." (19).

There are three important attributes associated with educational resilience that characterise *individual agency*—i.e. the ability of the students to position and reposition themselves towards constraining structural conditions or adverse circumstances. First, individual motivation appears to be a primary consideration in their accounts about persistence in their studies. Second, self-determination with a strong belief in and sense of self also appears to be central to their persistence. Their narratives show a rare pre-disposition to be critical change agents for reshaping their past. Third, they display core attributes such as control, ownership, reach and endurance, strengthened by the ability to seek help when needed. We consider each of these aspects in more detail in the following sections. An important question here is whether resilience is just an intrinsic trait or something that can be learned or enhanced. We argue that, although some psychologists agree that there are individuals who seem to be born with more resilience (Siebert, 2005), it can be found in a variety of behaviours, thoughts, and actions that can be learned and developed across one's life.

NARRATIVE E: (INTRINSIC) MOTIVATION

As in the case of students from rich backgrounds, some students from disadvantaged backgrounds carry with them specific enabling assets, which play a role in their academic success. One such asset is motivation, well captured in Petersen *et al.*'s (2009) notion of *'intrinsic motivation'*, which is characterised by a high degree of academic motivation, a sense of self-esteem and a positive attitude. The main factor behind their motivation is the opportunity offered by their studies to escape from the kind of life they grew up in and to strive for a better life, thus motivating them to work harder:

> You see, the community I come from taught me to be strong, to stand on your own, stay positive, to push and hustle. Because I don't want to go back to that kind of life, I would like to make a difference in my community someday. Therefore, I try my best to beat the different and numerous challenges I encounter every single day on this campus. (Sipho)

> That experience has made me who I am today. It has motivated me to be a fighter, to work hard, [to] be able to plan my things. I think most of the experiences I had at home have shaped me to be who I am now.

Some of the students do not seem to be bothered by what they consider "soft" challenges on campus: "I don't consider these as challenges; if you want to know what it means to suffer, go live where I come from". This is well illustrated in the following:

> The campus is a very big and different environment from where I come from. I know my neighbours and they know me. If I have a problem, I know where to go. But the life here is very different from the one I grew up in. *That does not scare me at all*, rather it motivates me to work even harder so I can be able to write my tests and exams and succeed like any other student.

Gottfried and Fleming (1998) argue that the home environment in poor communities can have a stimulating and significant effect on academic intrinsic motivation. This is not to suggest that poverty confers a positive effect. Children whose homes had a greater emphasis on learning opportunities and activities were more academically intrinsically motivated. The same claim can be found in Niebuhr (1995) who suggests that the elements of both school climate and family environment have a strong direct impact on academic achievement because these elements motivate students intrinsically to study hard. Similarly, intrinsic motivation has been consistently linked to reduced dropout rates and increased levels of student success (Halawah, 2006). This can be seen in the strong desire of these students to succeed at university,

in order to avoid having to go back to the poor and miserable life they have left behind.

The cognitive dimensions of motivation implicit in the narratives are also important, particularly when they refer to the learning experience or the pedagogy of life in marginalised circumstances. Once again, we resort to Bandura's suggestion that motivation is rooted in cognitive activities, an aspect implicit in students' narratives. There are three important dimensions to this aspect. The first is that learning can be derived from positive responses to past experience. The second is that the capacity to represent future consequences (the cognitive representation of future outcomes) can generate current motivators of behaviour. The third dimension is that a cognitively based source of motivation can operate through the intervening influences of goal setting and self-evaluative reactions (Bandura, 1977 193).

NARRATIVE F: SELF-DETERMINATION, FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY: "... IF YOU WANT SOMETHING BADLY ENOUGH YOU WILL MAKE SACRIFICES"

Underpinning student motivation is a strong sense of individual self-determination, which Deci *et al*. (1991) defines as "the process of utilising one's will" (35): "I'm in level three now because I was determined from the beginning not to drop out but to use all the resources available to pass my exams and tests and assignments; that is why I'm in year three, and I'll use this spirit to the end of my programme." Self-determination necessitates that people accept their strengths and limitations, are aware of the forces acting on them, make choices and decisions, and determine ways to satisfy their needs (Pintrich and Schunk, 2002). Hence, self-determination, flexibility, tolerance and adaptability are interconnected; to be self-determining, individuals need to decide how to act upon influences in their environment. According to Wehmeyer *et al*. (1996), self-determination has four essential characteristics: autonomous functioning, self-regulation, and self-realisation. Autonomous functioning is characterised by strong agency in decision-making skills, problem-solving skills, choice-making skills, and independent-living skills (Wehmeyer *et al.*, 1996). However, students' narratives in this study concentrated on the following key attributes:

- *Autonomous functioning*: "I have to take my own decisions and not let other people influence me negatively"; or: "I can easily adapt to any situation because I know what I want to achieve here at the university."

- *Self-determination:* "My determination to succeed is what has kept me going because it's really not easy for me."
- *Self-realisation:* through goal-setting around becoming agents of social change with an altruistic purpose: "... I want to be an agent of change in my family and community"; or role models: "I'm working hard so as to be a role model for others where I come from ..."
- *Self-regulation:* Such students set goals to work harder so as to be on the 'same academic page' as their friends, and not to make excuses that they lack reading tables or books, or that they live in a place that is not conducive for studies.

A key element in achieving these goals successfully is the set of dispositions and pre-dispositions for hard work that students have built up as a result of their survival strategies in the village, which enable them to adjust their habitus. These include the pre-disposition to make sacrifices (..."If you want something badly enough you will make sacrifices"); the pre-disposition to make difficult choices ("... guys, I'm studying today, I'm going nowhere, so please, give me a break"); the pre-disposition to adapt to new situations ("I can easily adapt to any situation... that has been keeping me going"); the pre-disposition to appreciate the limited services that the university is able to offer ("Coming from the rural area has made me appreciate the different sources that the university has put in place to assist us; I never had these opportunities back home therefore, what will stop me from working hard?"); and above all, the pre-disposition to do more with little.

Self-determination appears to be one of the key internal factors that enable these students to negotiate their success, particularly during the first year at university, when they are still adjusting to the university environment and experiencing challenges that may force them to drop out. This trait clearly displays how determined such students are. The result of a study on self-determination in the classroom proved that providing students with opportunities for self-determination increases their intrinsic motivation (Gottfried, 1990). It has shown how intrinsic motivation and self-determination positively affected academic achievement among elementary and junior high school students. Deci *et al.* (1991) demonstrated a direct relationship between self-determination and academic achievement in fifth-grade students. Similarly, Ryan and Deci (2000) established that autonomy-supportive environments impact positively on the academic achievement of college students.

NARRATIVE G: LEARNING THROUGH SELF-EFFICACY

Realising that university studies provide an opportunity for a better life is not just a given, but an outcome of reflective and evaluative activities (cognitive activities): "I know why I'm here and not at home; I must pass so that I can save my family from poverty"; "the community I come from taught me to be strong, to stand on your own, stay positive, to push and hustle"; "That experience has made me who I am today; it has motivated me to be a fighter, to work hard, be able to plan my things."

Such cognitive activities, which, in Bandura's words, constitute a measure of self-efficacy, also lead to the realisation that, besides persistence, changing a life situation or striving for a better life requires a high degree of discipline, characterised by hard work, self-determination and endurance.

NARRATIVE H - SEEKING HELP FROM SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

The ability to make decisions and use them to enhance ones' skills to manoeuvre on campus requires particular kinds of skills and attitudes, which include seeking help from significant others. The ability and confidence to seek help when in desperation is highly entrenched in poor communities: "I know which doors to knock when I'm facing difficulties with my work and I don't fear to knock at those doors." This is easier on campus, where a wider range of options is available. The primary sources of help and support lie with family members, when they are available: "... My mother calls me once a month to know how I'm faring and to wish me luck with my academic work." This is an important consideration, particularly when marginalisation is associated with passivity or under-preparedness. Depending on one's perceptions, there is also the option of getting help from peers, tutors or lecturers:

> I don't go to the tutors, after or before discussing an assignment with my friends. I go to the lecturers for clarification. I don't go to tutors because they are mere students like me. My English is very poor but the lecturers take their time and listen to me.

> ... I turn to my friends first, if I don't get it clear, I'll go to a tutor. But even when I get it clear from my friends, I still go to a tutor just to confirm. I believe that tutors have the knowledge.

The importance of establishing networks of support (learning communities) for collaborative consultation is increasingly being valued, and sometimes encouraged by lecturers:

> ... Our teacher used to tell us that you need to work together as a team. Even in life you need to work together to make it... Create networks; don't think you know too much because no one knows too much in life. Go to other people to get fresh and different ideas...

The key to successful networks is collaboration and sharing of ideas and resources. Collaboration enables students to achieve goals that cannot be achieved alone, but rather "through shared vision, responsibility, and resources; parity; joint work; mutual skills and learning; and shared outcomes in accomplishing the goals" (Bryan, 2005 223). What benefits do students gain from such encounters? The benefits are varied, but issues such as writing assignments and academic projects feature at the top of the list.

There are also benefits of a different kind, which reflect the nature of support networks within poor communities: the sharing of resources. For example, students use economic ways of assembling study materials, just as they did in their life in the village:

> ... One of my friends gave me books that he borrowed from his own friends. I used these books till the end of that academic year and then I gave them back in good condition. I'm a good caretaker.

Resilient students frequently form informal support networks of friends and family, which provide them with support in tough times. Peer support plays a central role in this process. It enables students to learn to trust while providing and obtaining academic support, and it contributes to the mediation efforts provided by tutors or lecturers.

NARRATIVE J: THE ROLE OF BIOGRAPHY OR BACKGROUND

An important claim being articulated in this chapter is that the attributes and skills analysed above are rooted in the students' past histories in the communities they come from. They are acquired from the patterns of social life and practices in every-day life in poor communities. Such an attitude is primarily rooted in the students' past experiences—their *individual biography* or *background*:

> It's the background situation where I'm coming from. I grew up under deplorable situations and as such *I've learned how to endure*. I'm working hard. Hmm, hmm, *I have to work hard* with all that the university has put in place to help me with the education [our emphasis].

More specifically, the "never give up" principle is drawn from their experience in the "deplorable" situations of their past, and the commitment to 'never go back' to it:

> When we moved to this rural area, it struck me that, if I don't work hard, I may end up in that place considering what we were going through. I told myself that 'that life' was not meant for me. So I started taking my studies seriously because, I knew, that was the only thing that could take me out of that situation from that time ... I started working hard as I didn't want to go back to the life of fetching water from distant streams, fetching wood, etc.

OVERALL

Taken on its own educational resilience—determination "to beat the odds": "I don't give up easily"; "I must... I have to make it"; "I've learned how to endure"; "my visa to a better life"; and "to be an agent of change"—does not account for the elements of power and empowerment. This is only possible when educational resilience is matched with the necessary assets (compensatory social capital), and relevant dispositions and pre-dispositions for students to be able to disrupt their habitus and adapt to the new and very often strange situations they encounter on campus in their struggles for emancipation. Key features of such assets include *inter alia*: autonomous functioning leading positive decisions; self-realisation through goal-setting around becoming agents of social change with altruistic or market purposes; self-regulation (as individuals or groups); and dispositions and pre-dispositions for hard work that enable them to disrupt and adjust their habitus. These attributes appear to be the key internal factors that enable these students to negotiate their success. Put differently, experiences from hardship are generally disempowering, they do however make some students more autonomous and self-directed, and allow them to develop skills such as social competence, problem solving, autonomy, and a sense of purpose—'compensatory assets/skills'.

These personal characteristics reflect the patterns of behaviour and the outcome of cognitive processes acquired from their day-to-day life in poor rural communities. In the community lies the ability to set goals, choose and decide where and when to seek help, who to turn to in case of need, how to manage the scarce resources available to them efficiently, how to draw on team work when necessary, etc. All these skills reflect common practices within poor communities.

CONCLUSION

Rural and historically disadvantaged students come from backgrounds in which specific values and socio-cultural systems are prevalent. Their experiences at university are not entirely the same as those of urban students or of those who come from economically privileged backgrounds. Rural disadvantaged students face considerable challenges when they join higher education institutions, since there is a much greater gap

between their socio-cultural practices and those of the institution, than is the case for the traditional student population in universities.

This chapter has shown that students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds can negotiate their success at the university successfully, and that their background is instrumental in their ability to address the academic challenges they face. They carry with them social assets and learning resources of a different kind, which do not always constitute a liability in Bourdieu's logic, but rather an important asset. Primary success factors range from educational resilience, motivation and self-determination, and pre-dispositions to transform their habitus and positively and productively adjust to the academic environment. The chapter has demonstrated that these personal characteristics cannot be separated from the patterns of behaviour and the outcome of cognitive processes acquired from their day-to-day life in poor rural communities. Within these communities, they learn or develop "the ability to set goals, choose and decide where and when to seek help, who to turn to in case of need, how to manage the scarce resources available to them efficiently (e.g. bursaries, sharing resources such as books), how to draw on team work when necessary, etc." (Cross and Atinde, 2015 322). All these attributes and skills reflect common practices in everyday life of poor communities in South Africa.

The chapter highlights three main epistemological and theoretical implications for future studies. The first is the tendency to approach historically disadvantaged/marginalised groups as being homogenous or monolithic (perceived generally as underprepared), as while some have failed, there are those who have succeeded. A generalised approach constrains our pedagogical and student mediation strategies designed to support these students. The second is a necessary epistemological break with the Western theoretical hegemony in analyses that require modified or different analytical lenses that are sensitive to local complexities. It requires a degree of vigilance in the way we adopt and operationalise Western theoretical and methodological strategies, or more specifically the emphasis on 'theoretical theory' at expense of careful empirical work. This is particularly important because researching the marginalised requires awareness and understanding of the dynamics and processes of marginalisation peculiar to the contexts in which they live. Further, knowledge misrepresentation is one of the more powerful forms of social disempowerment. By reframing Bourdieu's concepts of social capital and habitus it became possible to have a better understanding of and do justice to the experiences of historically marginalised students. By doing so, considerable opportunities are opened for maximising student agency in designing pedagogies that deal with this category of students. It became clear that their success rests on their strong individual agency and the

positive pre-dispositions and attributes that they possess as well as the bulk of compensatory social capital they have accumulated.

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CHAPTER 8

THE SOCIAL FIELD: NEGOTIATING SHARED SPACE AND SHARED MEANING

INTRODUCTION

Student social life on campus is mediated by a variety of institutional and student driven agencies, organisations and activities through which students find spaces for mutual engagement, joint enterprise, construction and expression of group identity, affirmation of difference, and the development of awareness and learning. These include student governance structures (e.g. SRC), student political organisations (e.g. SASCO, ANCYL or ISA) to other social, academic, and religious organisations, which all serve to foster norms of mutual trust, student solidarity, support and reciprocity among students. They also include all forms of recreation and leisure on campus. In line with Woolcock and Narayan's (2000 230) theory on how social capital works, these can offer spaces for "bonding", "bridging" and "linking" people with different life profiles in potentially empowering social networks.

This chapter explores this particular domain of student life, the activities that dominate it, the spheres of social life that gain expression in them, the patterns of social interaction that characterise them, as well as the perceived effects of these forms of interaction on their social and academic development. This book addresses three inter-

related questions: How do students respond to institutional efforts to alter the campus environment to accommodate an increasingly diverse student population into a cohesive and interconnected community and how do these affect their experiences? What possibilities exist for the university to enhance its mediation strategies? It argues that, while many students have responded positively to these efforts, a sense of discontent persists for a large sector of the student body. This discontent is largely due to the fact that students from different backgrounds experience campus life differently and attach different meanings to institutional changes. It points to the need for mediation strategies that facilitate dialogue, negotiation of shared social spaces and meanings about campus experience.

The chapter addresses three focal areas concerning student life and social experience, and how these relate to student social and academic development. The first focal area deals with the student imagery about Wits, i.e. ideas, perceptions and images about Wits University and how they may impact on student identities. Thus the *dialectic expectation/experience vis-à-vis awareness or understanding* represents a key dimension in this analysis. The second focal area concerns perceived patterns of social interaction, the main interpretations and understandings of these, and how these may affect student social and academic experience. An important question in this regard concerns the way students attach meaning to their experiences. In our view, this depends on their degree of awareness, that is, their situatedness, or way of being in relation to the surrounding world. The third focal area deals with the expressions of student agency in these processes or, in other words, students' expressed choices and stances concerning the world surrounding them, openness to being challenged, or to having enough self-confidence to challenge or defend one's view, and exert one's imagination and creativity.

DIVERSITY AND CAMPUS CLIMATE REVISITED

Campus climate is the formal and informal environment within a university in which we learn, teach, work, and live. For an institution to reach its highest potential, it is necessary to know the environmental conditions that contribute towards or detract from that institution's mission. Campus environments that produce feelings of alienation, hostility, social isolation, and invisibility, can hinder the recruitment of new students, their social adjustment and retention, as well as satisfaction levels and graduation rates. Universities are not simply, however, a pattern of weather or change of season to which people must adapt. Campus life entails a dialectic between the environment and the university community—staff, students and

other internal stakeholders—as agents of change. In this way, "campus climate" is used in a dynamic sense that presupposes conditioning, negotiation, contradiction, change or disruption by and between individuals that shape it and experience it. This means that campus climate is subject to change, as new waves of students and staff join or leave the institution.

Research exploring institutional efforts to enhance campus climate is young, limited and in a formative stage internationally (Appel, Cartwright, Smith, and Wolf, 1996; Smith and Associates, 1997), and almost unknown in South Africa (Cross and Harper, 1999; Cross *et al.*, 1999). This book seeks to add to this body of literature and sets new parameters for the analysis of campus climate and the diversity challenge. The topic has gained momentum in recent years in response to the increasing diversification of the student population and the need to deal with social justice issues on campus (see for example Cross *et al.*, 1999; Hurtado, 1992, 1994; Appel *et al.*, 1996; Bensimon, 1995; Cross, 2002; Goduka, 1996; Goduka, 1996a; Goduka, 1998; Goduka, 1999).

Traditionally diversity has been associated with race, gender and culture differences (Cross, 2000). Recent literature has widened its scope to embrace characteristics such as age, physical traits, sexual orientation, ethnic and religious background, socio-economic status, place of origin, social and political affiliations, seniority and experience, education and training, and so forth. As such, diversity represents a mix of characteristics that makes a person or group unique, or gives them an identity. In this sense, diversity initiatives can be conceptualised as activities and practices aimed at *embracing*, *accommodating* or *engaging* differences (Cross *et al.*, 1999). Schneider (1997 128) suggests that, in addition to the input of diversity into new curricular content, developing capacities for "engaging difference" is essential to the success of a diverse democracy.

Some authors challenge perceived overemphasis on culture in conceptions of diversity (e.g. Fraser, 1997; Cross *et al.*, 1999; Beckham, 2000). Particularly contentious is the emphasis on cultural recognition at the expense of equity issues as if the problematic of cultural difference had nothing to do with social equality. Against this background, I argue that the effectiveness of any diversity initiative will certainly depend on its ability to integrate a theory of cultural recognition with a theory of social justice; or, more precisely: "We should see ourselves as presented with a new intellectual and practical task: that of developing a critical theory of recognition, one that identifies and defends only those versions of the cultural politics of difference that can be coherently combined with the social politics of equality"

(Fraser, 1997 12). Recognition politics that fail to respect human rights are unacceptable, even if they ultimately promote social equality.

ON "BEING AT WITS" OR "BECOMING A WITSIE": PATHWAYS TO CAMPUS AFFILIATION OR CAMPUS MEMBERSHIP

This section pays particular attention to the politics of space and location, which set the parameters for social interaction within the university. Students, as key agents in the formation of counter-hegemonic cultural practices, need space for dialogue where the revision or reframing of current campus practices should begin. This may mean moving out of one's comfortable niche and pushing against assumed race, sex, ethnicity and class boundaries. Here students confront a dilemma of choice and location: either to position themselves on the side of perceived oppressive and alienating aspects of institutional culture, through a pre-disposition to assimilation; or to stand in political resistance, ready to offer their ways of seeing, understanding and shaping a new cultural project to create "a space where there is unlimited access to the pleasure and power of knowing, where transformation is possible" (Hooks, 1990 145). The notion of institutional culture encompasses all the attitudes and behaviours which, though inherited from history, appear nevertheless resilient to change or almost immutable. These attitudes and behaviours characterise the institution and different actors from within; they constitute its identity. The institutional culture defines itself, therefore, not as an essence but as a process like any other identity process. The choices they make in this dilemma are conditioned or determined by their past experiences, biography or social background.

Three important theories are important for understanding the dilemma students face in their efforts towards adjusting to campus environment and social life. First, from the point of view of classical sociology, the university as an institution is structured by a system of norms that fulfil an integrative function for the student into the dominant institutional order (Dubet, 1994). The paradigm is thus that of incorporation of the actor into the system and the system unto the actor "according to a process of *interiorisation* of norms and values by the individuals" (Dubet, 1994 31). This system imposes a code of conduct to both students and lecturers—which they internalise more or less—a code that defines the *modus operandi* beyond which one falls into 'deviance'. The paradigm proposed by Dubet (1994 91-92, 105) differs drastically from the classical theoretical model inasmuch as it develops the idea of a *plurality of logics of action,* which are open to the actors:

> Social experience forms itself where the classical representation of society is not adequate any more, where the actors are required to manage at the same time several logics of the action rooted into various logics of the social system, which is not then any more a system, but the co-presence of systems structured by principles. The combinations of logics of action, which organise experience, do not have a centre; they rest on no fundamental logic [...]. The sociology of social experience aims at defining experience as a combination of logics of action, logics which link the actor to each of the dimensions of a system. The actor is required to articulate different logics of action, and it is the dynamic procreated by this activity which constitutes the subjectivity of the actor and his reflexivity.

Dubet (1994 85-86) thus endorses the idea that there is no unique system or logic of action but a non-hierarchic plurality that the actor must manage. In line with this analysis, once we acknowledge the capacity of initiative and choice of the actors, the lack of their integration into a unique system, it is necessary to look into what the social action involves. In other words, it is not the rules, norms and values which determine social action but the reciprocal relations through which actors negotiate and construct a moving "social reality" in which the individual cannot be defined by the *interiorisation* of the social and system of norms. His is "a non-determinist theory of action, in which activity becomes social in that it implies being accountable to others." It allows for the role of student agency in mediation of institutional culture.

Drawing on ethno-methodology, Coulon (1993 167) links student failure to the difficulties in institutional affiliation. For him, to affiliate is "to naturalise while incorporating academic practices", which have not been developed by the students. In other words, it is "to know the local ethno-methods which allow first to understand the role of the rules" (Coulon, 1993 167). Taking into account both the failures and drop-out of students, Coulon (1993 165) argues that it is those students who do not manage to become affiliated that fail:

> I showed that the first task that a student must fulfil when he arrives at the university is to learn his student's profession [...]. The main problem the students meet is precisely to go beyond the first year [...]. Today, the problem is not to enter the university but to remain there [...]. To learn his student's profession means that it is necessary to learn to become so, otherwise one is eliminated or eliminates him/herself because they remain foreign in this new world [...]. It is necessary to move from pupil's status to that of student. As for any [ritual of] passage, this involves an effort of initiation. I called this process an affiliation.

The affiliation appears as the third stage of a process characterised, on the one hand, by the strangeness linked to the discovery of a new world with new institutional functioning and, on the other hand, by the apprenticeship of codes, implicit or explicit, which leads to the final stage of affiliation characterised by the mastery of these codes and the capacity to interpret them, or even to infringe them.

By affiliation, the true rite of passage by which the candidate becomes a student and as a student the candidate gains membership is cast in the following terms:

> Becoming a member, is to affiliate to a group, to an institution, what requires a progressive mastery of common institutional language [...]. A member, according to ethno-methodological conception is, therefore, a person endowed with a pool of procedures, methods, activities, know-how, which make him/her able to invent mechanisms of adaptation to give a meaningful sense to the world which surrounds him/her. (Coulon, 1993 183)

In the context of the South African universities, the process of affiliation is not unequivocal. It differs depending on the situation and the biographies of the students. Depending on their specific biographies and socialisation in the family, community and school, students come to campus with their own constructs already formed and embedded in their own expectations, awareness and perceptions of student life at Wits. There are essentially three categories of constructs (i) about the nature of the institution (the idea of the university and the image of Wits University); (ii) about the perceived path to success and the necessary coping strategies; and (iii) about expectations on what is expected from them on campus. They also come with pre-conceived expectations of what it is to be a "Witsie". These constructs provide interesting insights into the differing ways students describe and interpret the environment in which they live or are expected to spend part of their lives. They assume different patterns depending on factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion and nationality or citizenship. Such constructs have some bearing on the ease or difficulty with which students experience initiation and integration into campus life, which may be facilitated or complicated by initial student orientation.

IMAGINING WITS: STUDENTS' IDEAS, PERCEPTIONS AND IMAGES OF WITS

A striking aspect was the description amongst students of Wits as a high standing institution. Students gave reasons for choosing to study at Wits, while showing its assimilationist nature, when referring to the adjustment and integration difficulties they face. The high standing of

the university was articulated through a variety of descriptors based on information from their parents, friends, media—internet, radio and other media—the voices of loyal alumni and proud staff members and fellow students ("Witsies"). Here are but some examples: "Wits offers a high standard of education"; "Wits is world-recognised and the standard of education is very high"; "I will be getting a good quality of education"; "An internationally recognised university"; "I will be highly marketable"; "It has a very good reputation, more than other universities in South Africa"; "Wits is a university with a lot of heritage and that is what is appealing to me"; "The qualifications of Wits are top notch"; "One of the leading universities in South Africa"; "A centre of intellectual thought"; and "I always thought it was a cool university... you know when kids say it's cool, it's something they want to get into... probably because it's in Jo'burg and Jo'burg is the thing"; "[Wits] offers both formal curriculum as well as opportunities to develop leadership skills."

Most students interviewed considered themselves "lucky" or "honoured" to be at Wits and also felt as if they were the "top students" in the country. Besides family, friends and peers, several factors seem to have brought Wits to their attention. A student said that:

> You look at the news, even when I was still in High School, any news analysis done; it was always a professor from Wits University. So there is a question of distance and although there is RAU next door, for me things like that when you see them on T.V. they influence your perception a lot (sic).
>
> (H11, Media studies and international relations, AF, nR)
>
> I guess it means getting the best form of education since this campus is one of the best in South Africa—if not the best. It is quite an achievement you know, especially toward the Black people. There is so much respect for Wits [when compared with] most other universities. If you happen to come to Wits there is this prestige about it (sic).
>
> (H15, Political science, AM, nR)

Several other students alluded to the advertising slogan "Wits gives you the edge."

The significance of the images that students have about Wits goes beyond expressed feelings of pride and honour. They are also constructs about expectations, which are generally geared at aligning ambitions; that is, setting goals and devising strategies for meeting them. More specifically, these constructs are about recognising and interpreting the specific institutional constitutive rules, adjusting to established living and academic standards, and coping with the challenges

of campus life. Embedded in their constructs is a pre-disposition and a degree of preparedness students have towards integration into campus life.

ON BECOMING OR NOT BECOMING A "WITSIE": VARIED RESPONSES

Once students join the university, these constructs become an object of fierce contestation, centred on issues of meaning and difference as students develop a much more informed and lived understanding of the actual meaning of being a "Witsie". Embedded in their changing constructs is the expectation of a profound process of acculturation and assimilation into an established institutional culture, which can be individually taxing. The pathway to success or failure in this process is informed by their imagined or actual understanding of what Wits has to offer and their assumptions in this regard. These point for example, to various forms of resources (social and institutional capital), which provide individual challenges and opportunities for personal growth. Students express that Wits is socially diverse and flexible: "It is very social, very academic, it combines all those situations." Wits, it would seem, gives you self-confidence and assertiveness. This is most eloquently summarised by the following student:

> *Interviewer*: So what does it mean to be a Wits student?
>
> *Interviewee*: Uuh! Elitist! No, honestly, the confidence, the confidence! You need go out and expose yourself to almost anything. I think what is important about the degree that I'm doing is that it is not rigid. If I wanted to go into the corporate world I could, you know what I mean, I could literally go into any direction that I want. And *it is about shaping the direction of that confidence*, because a lot of people may be qualified, but they get into [an] interview and mess it up because of lack of confidence or communication skills. I believe that most people get their jobs because of the way they sell themselves (sic) (our emphasis).
>
> (H11, Media studies and international relations, AF, nR)
>
> And my other brother who is a medical doctor would always tell me that when they went for practicals, students from Wits had so much confidence and they acted like they knew everything—while them, they struggled for confidence although perhaps they knew some of the things. So he believed that because they came under the name of Wits, it gave them confidence. So that [caused] me to think I should come to Wits and carry that name because *it will give me the confidence*. Fortunately I was accepted at Wits (sic) (emphasis added).
>
> (H19, Media studies, AF, nR)

Wits makes you marketable: "To me now I feel like a member of the community and in terms of the corporate world, they do respect Wits ... as they say 'Wits gives you the edge' and now 'take the lead with Wits'."

Students further express that Wits provides you with leadership and leadership skills:

> Having the privilege of experiencing both universities [RAU and Wits], I would say Wits has a culture of learning, a culture of wanting to better yourself.
>
> ... In getting to RAU, I was exposed to a lot of freedom and in such cases you tend to slack in your academics. You start thinking you can miss a lecture and go have a beer and it tends to become a cycle and at the end of the day you compromise your studies. At Wits that is not allowed and there is a culture of learning, people go to lectures, people engage in lectures, so that is what I liked about Wits. And my sister too was at Wits and told me about it. I have also asked a couple of people about the best place to do Political science degree and they said Wits (sic).
>
> (H22, Political science and international relations, AM, NR)

Students say that Wits promotes individual autonomy and independence in thinking:

> Yes, and also the thing with Wits is that they let you use your own mind. There can be times when lecturers can be very biased, but generally they encourage a sense of expressing your own opinion and thinking for yourself so that you can draw your own conclusions (sic).
>
> (H13, Psychology and international relations, IM, NR)
>
> Very supportive and they allow you to be an individual, there are no rules in the group, if you don't see one person for a month, it is fine, I like the individualism in the group (sic).
>
> (H22, Political science and international relations, MA, NR)

Students also say that Wits promotes the ability to voice opinions about established social values and conventions:

> Like, I come from a very conservative background, so I used even to dress differently from everybody else. I used to have these long braids and all my dresses were long. I hardly ever used to wear trousers, I didn't even wear jeans. So when you get here, you kind of feel like an outsider, and then as time passes you learn to adjust and fit into the way of doing things. I had a huge culture shock when I came here. We don't wear short skirts where I came from, but here, it is like anything goes. So at the end of the day I had to adjust to the mindset of being at varsity like for the fact that my personal morals are not necessarily another person's morals (sic).
>
> (H12, Drama, AW, NR)

It is through participation in activities and forums through which these values, skills and institutional ethos are disseminated that a Wits student develops a sense of belonging to the Wits community and an identity as a "Witsie". How does one become a "Witsie"?

Becoming a "Witsie" entails individual epistemological and cultural contestation and social battles through which social spaces are negotiated and social identities developed: "You are either in or out but to be in you have to be like them [the Witsies]." This process may require a radical change in language, values, attitude and behaviour and identity, depending on one's biography. Evidence from the interviews points to a multilayered and hierarchical structure of student responses with three main categories:

The first category of responses involves those who are open to the rules, codes, norms and standards, including rituals that characterise Wits institutional life (institutional facts and constitutive rules), have adapted to them, have the resources to negotiate their social and learning spaces, have developed a sense of identity with the campus community—that is, students that have become "Witsies". This sense of identity sets boundaries very often expressed with some pride: "This is how we do things at Wits", or, in reaction to what is perceived as unacceptable by their standards, "Certainly not at Wits!" Generally they have chosen to reframe or renegotiate their identities or, in other words, to adapt to campus life. They can say with certainty: "[Yes]. I feel like I belong here. I'm part of Wits." "I feel that I belong to Wits because I adapted well and I understand the situation now." A student (interviewed in 2004) gave an interesting account in this regard:

> At the convent, before I came here, they are sort of relaxed; there isn't too much competition; here I had to change everything, I had to adjust... you know, the dressing, the way you walk. I had to start moving faster, to start learning too fast, to sort of, you know... adjust to being my own, and trying to find my way in the world. Initially I didn't feel as if I belong here, but... now I sort of made friends, I'm even a class rep[resentative], so I've evolved. So [yes], I do feel a bit like that (sic).

Adaptation becomes an easy road for those who, through previous socialisation, have discovered their habitus on campus and feel comfortable with what is currently defined as being a "Witsie"—taken here as a first category. The institutional environment matches their habits, their un-thinkingness in actions, their dispositions and pre-dispositions. Students encounter the university "as a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense and with value, in which it is worth investing one's practice." In this case, habitus minimises social displacement. This is not to deny, however, the choices and consequent actions

made by some students as active agents of their own lives; in other words, the role of agency. In contrast, when graduates from rural and township schools come to campus, their habitus encounters a social world, which does not match and has little to contribute to it. As a result, they encounter an environment that has little meaning and value to them. This is what happens to students in the following categories.

The second category—*the survivors*—includes those who have found the institutional facts or constitutive rules of the university community alienating, a threat to their identities—and, as such, contestable; and who have opted to negotiate membership in their own terms, through struggles of different sorts. Previously cited, the following student expresses themselves thus:

> I think I have got the advantage but also because I read. Look, I was not born knowing English and I think that is where my personality comes in. I'm sort of almost neurotic about something. When I make up my mind that I'm going to learn something, I learn, I read it and will do everything that I can. And it is not only English; it is the same thing as Afrikaans. Although I did not like the language but I knew that I had to write it in Matric. So it is that positive attitude that helps students interact with their studies (sic).
>
> (H11, Media studies and international relations, AF, NR)
>
> ... If I have difficulties, I try to sort them out on my own, if I find I have no way of understanding I discuss with my friends, if that doesn't help then I go and consult my lecturers (sic).
>
> (H07, Psychology and African literature, AF, R)

They associate themselves with campus life but resist any form of assimilation and fundamental change in identity and personality or, not willing to undergo this metamorphosis, stress the value of difference and diversity. Asked whether he had to change anything about himself to adjust to Wits life, a student answered: "Yes, you know, of course I did, but... not much of myself. There are so many things that happen at varsity, so to adjust is what I did. But I didn't change my personality to suit the institution" (sic).

Students do however struggle to impose, assert or re-negotiate their identities in their own terms or within a framework of compromises:

> Basically I was studying at Dinoto High School, and the language that was mostly used at that school was Sesotho and Zulu. So I applied to Wits and was admitted. The experience of being accepted to the university was wonderful. When I got to Wits, the language used is English and coming from the background where I come from, speaking English was quite

> difficult. So what I did was to put myself under the pressure of having to read books and trying to communicate with people as much as possible. Another problem that I had was to interact with people and to create social bonds because I was not feeling confident with my language. So what was happening was I was spending most of my time alone and could not share most of my academic experiences with other people. That year was not good for me because that year language was a serious issue for me. Coming to my academic performance as well, language really hampered my performance. Like, I would go to classes and would understand my work but when it came to writing and expressing myself, it was quite a difficult thing. I would... I'm a hard worker, but I was demotivated because I would work hard and because of the language problem, my results would come out as average, although I never had that thought of dropping out of school.
>
> (H19, Media studies, AF, NR)

The third category comprises those who lack the resources to negotiate their identities in either way, either in their own terms or in terms already established on campus. They may develop feelings of cultural displacement, alienation, withdrawal/isolation or marginalisation, as expressed by one student saying: "I do not belong here", or indeed as highlighted in the following interviews (some of which have been cited in the previous chapter):

> Not really! Not really! I don't. I think to be a member of the Wits community means you are always at all events—it's more like you participate in everything that Wits has to offer (sic).
>
> (E28, Architecture, WF, NR)
>
> I don't identify myself with Wits students or Wits anything. I'm just here to get my degree. I don't even feel like I belong here. It is difficult when you come from a very poor family. ... How can you identify with those people who have because you are totally different from them? (sic).
>
> (H08, Psychology, AF, R)
>
> Wits community is, well I can't say much about it because... no, I've been hiding for several years, and I think that... uh, has pulled me away from knowing things (sic).
>
> (E04, Quantity surveying, AM, R)
>
> Well, what I know, in truth, if you can keep on like interviewing the students from electrical engineering, they will tell you very well, as I have said, they don't want to see themselves anymore at Wits. They are tired of the school. At the same time they won't even influence any other one to come to Wits. And at the same time, they just want to get out, in all proportion,

> to get out, to get out of this school. Yes. As in, for the Black people, this school is not that great. We can see that the advantages are for the White students... No. (emphatic) Uh, ah. This is not worth it. As in, at the end of the day you think, is Wits a business institution, like a business institute, or is it like, to help South Africa as a whole. You don't really get an answer what is it exactly that Wits... (sic).
>
> (E17, Electronic engineering, AF, NR)

The radical possibilities of the discourse of marginality on campus should not be underestimated. Particularly in response to the legacy of apartheid, and to borrow a phrase from Hooks (1990 147), sometimes there is a need "to create spaces where one is able to redeem and reclaim the past, legacies of pain, suffering, and triumph in ways that transform present reality." The margins very often offer the conditions that make such action possible. This is, in our view, the rationale behind the establishment of gender-specific or race-specific student associations, a declining phenomenon on campus.

Pertinent questions to ask are: what happens to students in the third category? Are their chances of success compromised or diminished? They have chosen or been forced to choose between, on the one hand, being at Wits, developing a Wits identity (become a Witsie), participating and benefitting from the social, intellectual and cultural aspects that go with it, in addition to getting a Wits degree, and, on other, just get a Wits degree. There is certainly a perception among students that participation in the Wits community enhances the chances of epistemic success, though it is not a condition *sine qua non* that one succeeds. There are, indeed, instances where students resort to resources outside campus.

PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCE OF SOCIAL INTERACTION ON CAMPUS

Surprisingly, once on campus and familiar with its institutional rules, students tend to interpret the tension between their own identities and the institutional environment as a battle between student subcultures, or as an expression of how students negotiate spaces among themselves. The distinction is made here between, on the one hand, the on-going battles that students fight with the university administration over specific decisions (concerning for example, tuition fees, exclusions and student governance) and on the other, more invisible issues related to the different manifestations of the dominant institutional culture. These battles are fought primarily within the student body and over a variety of issues, such as the prevalence of a highly individualistic ethos among students, language, values, politics and so

forth. It comes time to turn to the nature and significance of some of these battles.

THE QUESTION OF RACE, GENDER AND ETHNICITY

In the Campus Climate study (2005), we arrived at a somewhat gloomy view of affairs on campus. As articulated by the students interviewed at the time, exhausted by the harsh experiences of apartheid legacy, many South African students came to Wits expecting to enjoy the pleasures of a "rainbow nation": a perfect non-racial harmony, the company of "blonde, White girl friends" for instance, "hanging around with my friends from Soweto", and so forth. The reality is that: "There isn't ... really this sort of rainbow nation theme here." In the words of students, on the contrary: "There are a lot of groups: Chinese people with Chinese people, Blacks with Blacks, Whites with Whites; there are a few [groups] of Blacks and Whites, and Indians and Coloureds but basically they are separate [groups] of Indians with Indians, Chinese with Chinese and Blacks with Blacks and Whites with Whites." This was very disconcerting for one international student from Kenya who had not been exposed to apartheid:

> The only thing I really realised is that you have groups of different races around... so it is very difficult for you to enter into a group; it's very hard for you to say that you want to befriend someone in that group... or that you would like to make friends with others ... they form a sort of a gang when they are in a group. But on one-to-one ... they are very good people, everyone is very nice (sic).

Another international student noticed something similar:

> When you look at the way students move; they move according to their colour or according to their backgrounds. So I don't really think that they are united in that sense. If you sit, Blacks sit with Blacks, Asians with Asians and Africans with Africans. If you look at it in that perspective, Wits is a community that has many people but it is not one big community to me.

Their accounts were also revealing with regard to ethnic groupings: "I encounter an academic problem ... I know Wits authorities will always help me, but socially I know I can only socialise with people from Lesotho." Very often this generates anger, as the student relates her experience: "There is a guy who always reminds me that I am a Zulu girl and everything I do is because I am a Zulu girl and I will never be civilised"; or another student who expressed that: "I am [a] Zulu-speaking person... there are some guys from Lesotho who call me Zulu boy... so really I don't like being called like that; I want to be called by my name" (sic).

The social layout of group identities seems to remain the same. Some international students who have entered Wits are struck by the unfamiliarity of the scenery as apparently "racist":

> I think it's the whole racial thing. Everything is so racialised here. That's why I think I could never live here, because I wouldn't want my children to think that way. No matter what you wanted to say, you're gonna be influenced by that.
>
> (H30, Social work and French, WF, NR)

However the boundaries between the different race and ethnic groups are certainly thinning and becoming more and more porous. As a result, many students interviewed do not see manifestations of racism in their interaction with peers. For them, as illustrated in the previous chapter, instances of racism were identified in relation to the university administration and some staff. Race and ethnic grouping is justified through affinity arguments. The intellectual and social engagement on campus is increasingly turning the Wits student community into an open society. One student compares RAU to Wits as follows:

> Wits students are more engaging, they are *more open*, they allow you to be you, you have that space. And there is not that outright racial segregation because at RAU you have a place where White people chill and a place where Black people chill, similarly for Indians and Coloureds. Here it is just the Matrix, although *obviously you're going to chill with people you relate with and in most cases it is people that you have a familiar background and sometimes that background is race* (our emphasis).
>
> (H22, Political science and international relations, AM, nR)

> Well, I don't know the problem; I have got a whole load of White friends, well not as many as my Black friends, and they are just general people that I get along with, guys we go to class with. Like in my politics class, there are times when [we] talk about racial issues, there are points where I agree with my White friends and disagree with my Black guys, because I feel that sometimes they are talking from the heart and are not thinking about issues. Personally, I have got no issues. I think one thing that helped is the high school I went which was racially mixed and I got along with White guys pretty well. I had no problem identifying myself with others (sic).
>
> (H15, Political science, AM, nR)

THE QUESTION OF LANGUAGE

As already mentioned, students interviewed do not see English as the medium of instruction as an object of contestation; it is widely accepted as an institutional fact in spite of the difficulties that many second-

language-speakers experience. Most of these indicated that they do not have any problems with English as the medium of instruction, as one student put it: "it is better to use English." Most students who attended private schools or ex-Model C schools have no difficulties with English. One of these put it as follows:

> No difficulties at all, I guess English has been my medium of instruction throughout primary school and high school, so I have no difficulties because even at home I forget myself and start speaking English. I was taught from an early age that it is quite a necessity to communicate in English (sic).
>
> (H15, Political science, AM, nR)

This is in contrast with the difficulties that students, who come from Black and rural schools, where the mother tongue is predominant, experience: "So I think language, it's really giving... I mean, students... I mean, who are coming from rural schools a problem (sic).

For some it represents a barrier to conceptual access as expressed by the following students:

> To be honest, I just listen, that is what I have learnt to do after coming from matric, being surprised because of the environment, and... You see some kids having a nice time during lectures. And on the other hand here you are struggling to conceptualise what is being delivered in the lecture and catch each and every English word, that itself is a challenge to you (sic).
>
> (S03, Life sciences, AM, NR)
>
> ... I don't speak English all the time. At home I speak Zulu so my English is not going to be perfect, there are going to be grammatical errors now and then. [Yes], so my studies are affected (sic).
>
> (H20, Music, FW, NR)
>
> There is one lecturer in Italian, who is teaching us in English, and it frustrates me a lot because if you get the concept in one language it is so difficult to translate it in another (sic).
>
> (H10, Modern Languages, WW, NR)

It also impacts on the mother tongue because they have to speak English all the time:

> ...The English language. Sometimes you know you, one day you wake and you feel like I don't have to talk English today and you lose everything. You just lose everything you try to talk to people... You lose [because] you didn't feel at first that you [would speak] English. So, [yes] it does somehow, but

> as time goes on..., we need to understand that..., things like those are... need not, be forgotten (sic).
>
> (E04, Quantity survey, AM, R)

It lowers one's self-esteem and confidence in social interaction:

> You know, the place I'm coming from is semi-urban. English, I mean, I only spoke English at school, not a good one. You know—I told you, I'm from a public school. Sometimes I tried to express myself in English and it gave me a problem—sometimes it lowered my self-esteem. So I think language, it's really giving... I mean, students... I mean, who are coming from rural schools a problem (sic).
>
> (H26, Sociology, AM, R)

> I had the perception that White people are privileged, so they know things. So in class when we were asked a particular question I could not answer because so that I could not show that I don't know. Even though I could be having an idea, I could not say it because I would think that it is wrong. So I would just let the other people talk, including the Black people who grew up around Gauteng, because they had the privilege of going to multi-racial schools. I remember I did design and drawing, and when we were in class they were talking about all those terms like abstract and realist and everyone seemed to know—and I [didn't].
>
> I grew up in the location it is strictly Black people and we all speak Shang'ani and I come here, even though I have been exposed to other languages like English, Sotho, Zulu and other African vernacular languages, but here you're put in a large environment where you have to relate to speakers of many languages. I have never been in a class with White people and I experienced it when I came here for the first year. And I'm quite an introvert, so I felt like there was pressure on me to prove myself because of stereotypes. Even in the company of friends I had this peer pressure. Because my parents are not here, they could tell me—let us do this, let us go to this club or that, so I had these kinds of social pressures (sic).
>
> (H14, Fine Arts, AF, nR)

The most cited example is the presence of "the model C school phenomenon" on campus expressed in language, group identities, materialistic values and lifestyles. This is how it is portrayed:

> There is something they call a *Wits lingua*, they try to make everything, I don't know whether to say romantic! You know when a Wits student is speaking; you will know that this one is from Wits (sic).
>
> (H16, Drama, AF, R)

Some students have gone to extreme lengths in attempting to come to grips with the phenomenon of "Wits Lingua" as articulated in the 2004 interviews:

> ... This is very difficult. So you live like you are 'leftovers' so to speak, like you speak a 'nigger' type of English... my English is not very good. I'm not speaking that American lingo. So I feel left out but now I'm able to cope with that (sic).

To stress that the position of English as *lingua franca* that provides important cultural capital creates a contradiction that Lodge (1997) has labelled "the access paradox". If you provide students with access to the dominant language, you contribute to perpetuating and increasing its dominance. If, instead, you deny students access, "you perpetuate their marginalisation in a society that continues to recognise this language as a mark of distinction" and "you also deny them access to the extensive resources available in that language; resources which have developed as a consequence of the language's dominance."

THE QUESTION OF XENOPHOBIA

Xenophobia is another issue that has had significant repercussions. According to one international student, xenophobia is something that makes South Africa a "very intimidating" society. The word xenophobia is derived from the Greek words 'xeno', meaning stranger or foreigner, and 'phobia', meaning fear. Put together, these two words mean the fear of strangers. In South Africa, these largely unfounded fears are based upon a fear that foreigners are to blame for all social problems. Xenophobia can also be related to a fundamental fear of difference that can result in cultural shock. This refers to a situation of being uncomfortable among individuals of other cultures. Like racism, xenophobia is not just an attitude, but an activity. It is not just a dislike or fear of foreigners but a violent practice that all too often results in bodily or psychological harm and damage. We asked international students whether they felt like outsiders. The answers were revealing:

> Yes, sometimes. South Africans are xenophobic. They are. They'll let you know it's their home and they are not very accommodating. Some, not all. They'll basically cut you down to pieces and they'll make you feel like you have to defend where you come from (sic).
>
> (E30, Town planning, AF, R)

Xenophobia is most often perceived as non-acceptance of diversity, rejection of and hostile attitude towards otherness and others, the latter being foreign students who cannot seamlessly express themselves in local languages:

> Yes, like with the languages. People just look at you and they just assume you're Zulu or Sotho or Xhosa and so forth. So people come up to me and speak to me in their language. And I think it is so disrespectful, so when I ask them back in English they think you're such a snob. And then like every once in a while they do and I speak to them in Tshona which is my language, they start thinking that I'm shouting at them or I'm scolding them and that is the only time that they turn to English, to tell me I'm rude. So when they speak their language it is fine but when I do I'm rude (sic).
>
> (H12, Drama, AF, NR)

Xenophobia seems to be directed at foreign students from other African countries who are generally Black students:

> (Laughs) No! No! No! ... As you know the South African community like, it tends to ... separate from other African people, like it tends to think that all African people accept South Africans, they are, they are not into standard that they expect ... an African who is not South African tend to be, to be looked down upon, you know. So that thing to me personally is not that I am, have anything like. I've got my experience ... I think people here, they are not very much friendly to, to African people (sic).
>
> (E01, Town planning, AM, R)

Finally, some students have concerns with an overly-individualistic campus ethos that these students bring to campus: "It is very carefree; everybody just goes about their own business, not really caring about what's happening around other people." A student from Queenstown added: "... they all think that they have got money and they are better than the next person, so the people don't really worry about each other."

THE VALUE OF INSTITUTIONAL AND STUDENT DIVERSITY

The changing student demographics seems to have produced visible social benefits as much as it poses serious challenges to both the students and the institution. It seems to have had an impact on students' identities and patterns of interaction. First, it has meant more flexibility for students when they choose whom to interact with: "Socially, also even culturally, Wits is really diverse, you will find your way either way." This is eloquently expanded by a Media Studies student:

> [The] Wits community in general is very diverse, not only culturally but also economically as well. There are people who are rich, in the middle class and those who are poor. Culturally it is a very flexible society, even if you are a very individual person, you will always find people to relate with and other groups of people you don't relate with. So to an extent the culture and the Wits community is very diverse and flexible. On the issue

> of dressing and presenting oneself, there is a way in which it is a basis for exclusion, because if you dress in a particular way, you're more likely to be accepted and if you dress in another particular way you are seen not to be in fashion. So to some extent at Wits you have to dress yourself in a particular way to be accepted (sic).
>
> (H19, Media studies, AF, nR)
>
> It is so huge and there [are] so many people. It [is] huge because you have people on West campus and people on East campus and then you have different groups on each, you have like the BSc people and then the BA people, but it is nice. A friend of mine goes to RAU and I have been there quite a lot. It is not nice to be in RAU, because there you go there and when you go home you don't really know people, you don't interact with people. But when you're at Wits, you go to places and meet the same people so you do interact with people, so you have at Wits these different groups but these groups are not always separated (sic).
>
> (H18, English and media studies, WF, NR)

Secondly, it has increased social interaction across race, gender and ethnicity:

> ... I think it makes a positive impression because with people of diverse backgrounds you tend to learn a lot from them. So like, it helped me to grow, socially and intellectually so this, I think, helps a lot.
>
> (E01, Town and regional planning, AM, NR)
>
> I mean, like, as a Black student..., during my first year of study I used to, to be more around people of my colour at that time. But nowadays, because of such dramatic change in demography, I had to also adjust myself to, to talk to other people of other, from other colours.
>
> ... I think so. I think going back to the school aspect again, it was more, you know ... How will I say this? Genders were separated you know, boys there, you know women, men here, girls, 'boys here-girls there' kind of life and when you come here everything is different [because] everything… it's everything integrated. And I found it actually easier considering some of my friends found it tougher because they've only, in a way like you only meet... you only associate... In school according to their rules you only associate with guys, girls with girls, so you come here it's an open environment, you... It's more comfortable basically because if you, if you're in an enclosed environment, you [are] constantly being watched, you [are] being monitored, so you don't break the rules, you know what I'm saying? (sic).
>
> (E06, Urban planning, IM, NR)

> Maybe you could say I have become a bit more social. Being forced to interact with everybody. Not trying to fight with everybody can make you have to sort of calm down, learn how to socialise at a broader level. Even though I am not somebody that goes out trying to meet everyone under the sun. I just think, in terms of accommodating other people (sic).
>
> (S04, Science, AM, NR)

For the university, the challenge may also require problematising the nature of the expectations that the university holds for its clients (the students), and the institution's approach to its own *institutional facts* and *constitutive rules*, which it often takes for granted. In this regard, student diversity has also impacted positively on certain aspects of institutional life, with profound implications for the changing institutional culture. Collective agreement about the function, status and meaning of what has been for many years accepted as institutional facts, is not immune to disruption, contestation and change, as the university community changes with new currents of people and ideas.

The challenge facing Wits is about how to find and foster a sense of community among diverse individuals, and how to offer integration in a highly disintegrated society—in an environment with strong centrifugal tendencies. Within a university campus, where students from different backgrounds (in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, country of origin, religion and sexual orientation) are brought together with an assumed common purpose, the challenge is to recognise difference and consider its consequences in accomplishing that common purpose. While progress has been made, the fact that students coming from poor backgrounds, Black schools and rural environments claim to have a raw deal on several aspects of student life, points to major challenges for both the students and the institution. For students, coming to grips with diversity may require recognising "the educative value of understanding different constructions of social reality and the possibilities of establishing new, shared meanings and practices." For the university, I am in agreement with Broekman and Pendlebury (2002) that "impossible though it seems to make the rules explicit, it may be worth the attempt because the very exercise of trying to specify institutional facts and their constitutive rules..." may help the institution to "decentre", and so come to reflect on and refine its own institutional rules and procedures. Institutional reinvention is a fact in the same sense that students reinvent themselves, whether through negotiation or contestation.

DEALING WITH DIVERSITY AND NEGOTIATING SHARED SPACES AND MEANING: THE ROLE OF STUDENT POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC STUDENT AGENCIES

We use Tierney's (1993) notion of *communities of difference* to refer to the range of campus organisations, forums and social groups, through which students find spaces for mutual engagement, joint enterprise, construction and expression of group identity, affirmation of difference, and the development of awareness and learning.

It has been a long tradition among Wits students to constitute themselves in *communities of difference* (associations, forums, committees, working groups, clubs and other networks). Generally, these include social, academic, and religious organisations. Students also use organisations to negotiate meaning in practice over social issues of interest to them or to compensate for an absent family support on campus. Such communities represent constellations of competing—and in some cases, conflicting—student expectations and interests, values and norms, and social traditions, drawn from the students' cultural backgrounds. In this regard, a survey conducted in 2003 points to a highly fragmented and diverse student body, constituted around different interests and socio-cultural activities, leisure and recreation activities and sports (Cross and Johnson, 2003). The numbers of these organisations have increased considerably in recent years. The table below illustrates a sample of the range of student organisational affiliation at Wits:

SOCIAL	POLITICAL	ACADEMIC	RELIGIOUS
Ballroom Dancing Club	ANC Youth League	Wits Students	Zion Christian Fellowship
Debating Society	Democratic Students' Association	Archaeology Student Society	Student Christian Association
Disabled Student Movement	South African Students' Congress (SASCO)	Arts Student Council	Muslim Students Society
Zulu Cultural Society	Palestinian Solidarity Committee group	Builders and Quantity Surveyors	Adventist Christian Fellowship
Fine Arts Students' Association	Mpumalanga Association of Students	Dental Students' Council	Muslim Students Association
Hip Hop	INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS	Geography and Archaeological Society	Anglican Society
Mail and Guardian Society		History Society	Association of Catholic Tertiary Students

HIV/AIDS Action Group	Botswana Student Association	Wits Pharmacy Students' Association	Catholic Student Society
Photo Club	Italian Student Association	Medical Students	Christian Action Fellowship
RAG (Remember and Give)	Lesotho Student Association	Mining Engineers Society	Church of Christ
Khomanani Society	Swaziland Student Association	MS SHAC	Ministry of Jesters
ROCSOC	Zimbabwe Student Association	Nursing Students' Council	Hindu Students Society
Wits Wine Society	Wits International Student Association	Politics Society	The Navigators
Silly Buggers		Social Work Student Association	
Voice of Wits		Postgraduate Students' Association	
Wits Debating Union		Psychology Students Society	
Wits Emergency Medical Society		Engineering Students	
Drama Students Association		Wits Economic Society	
Jewish Students Union		Students' Teaching and Education Programme (STEP)	

In so far as student affiliation goes, the present study has confirmed some of the aspects and patterns identified in the 2003 Campus Climate survey. The first pattern concerns changes in the form and content of student politics. First, a very limited number of students interviewed are affiliated to a political organisation (one affiliated to the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) and two other former members have pulled out in disagreement on its direction). Students with organisational affiliations are linked to social, cultural, religious organisations.

Second, traditional student political concerns, with the emphasis on wider national issues, have become a matter of intense contestation. SASCO and ANCYL have been outplayed by a new set of middle-class concerns represented by the Independent Students Association (ISA), which won the SRC elections in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005. SASCO, which won the 2006 elections, seems to have also redirected

its concerns towards student-related issues and has become low profile on national issues. The data from the interviews point to a loss of membership or passive resistance within the ANCYL, due to its emphasis on national issues at the expense of attention paid to Wits student issues. It is uncertain whether SASCO will sustain its leadership for many years. Third, students involved in the study seem to be silent about any involvement in academic organisations, which have gained significance among postgraduate students, particularly among medical, science and engineering students. It can only be speculated that this trend is specific to postgraduate students.

In my opinion, and taking into account the legacies of apartheid, the constellation of interests and practices as represented in the table is not a weakness but a strength in terms of the cultural enrichment of campus life. While, for lack of sufficient data, it cannot be claimed that student organisations as communities of difference are in any essential way an emancipatory force, the social energy that they are able to mobilise must not be underestimated. Drawing on Wenger (1999), Tierney (1993) and Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1991), we have identified three possible parameters of empowerment.

Leadership development: current student organisations do operate as—or in some cases have the potential to become—effective "communities of practice", in Wenger's terms (1999), with an important incubating and nurturing role. This is particularly true of those groups focusing on intellectual, political, cultural and academic engagement. As Wenger (1999 85) puts it, as a locus of engagement in action, interpersonal relations, shared knowledge, and negotiation of enterprises, "such communities hold the key to real transformation—the kind that has real effects on people's lives." This is for example what can be learned from these organisations: "They [are] grooming my leadership skills, I must say, grooming me to be a good leader, if anything, that's it, ya." And "First of all it gives me skills, organi[sational] skills: it gives me leadership skills; it gives me a lot of skills that I will use in future; it keeps me out of other stuff that's happening on campus." She added, "I think it's useful and I'd advise other students to join it, especially first years" (sic).

Social and cultural awareness: In this regard, student organisations form a parameter for "understanding the 'other' in the midst of and across multiple socially-constructed realities: "It's important to understand what's going on around you [with regards to conflict in Palestine] especially if you're a student". Or, as one student expressed:

> ... for instance now there's this African renaissance. I think it's important that people know who they are and where they come from. I think even

> these different cultural societies must establish an umbrella so that they'd be able to understand each other (sic).
>
> (H27, History of Art, AM, R)

Replacement for family or institutional support: Some students see student organisations as providing *common spaces* and *resource networks* within a community at loggerheads or in confrontation with itself on racial, religious, ethnic and cultural issues and on encountering a somewhat strange or unfriendly institutional environment. They provide spaces where once-isolated individuals may now live in communities or, as some have indicated, in adopted "families". The "impersonal" and carefree environment on campus, and the intimate and relatively closed communities of these organisations, force students to live with one another and "to come to terms with the meaning of citizenship, social responsibility, conflict and how to resolve it, and intellectual freedom", very often constrained by the codes and norms of academia. "It makes it feel better—a bit like home. It makes you feel comfortable. It's a home away from home" and "It is like being in Church, I feel like I belong; it is the only place I feel like I belong around here in Jo'burg" (sic).

Or even more dramatically, another student expressed:

> I had, like, five guys grabbing my butt. It was the first time I went out wearing jeans and I was dancing with my boyfriend. Then these guys come one by one and grab and move and grab, move. I felt so violated, so I said that is not my social scene, every [once] in a while I go to the [Postgraduate pub], but only when I'm invited by a friend. Otherwise, my social arena is mostly Church. The best friends I have now I got them from the Church, and of course my neighbour at home or my roommate.
>
> (H12, Dramatic arts, AF, NR)

Reaching out to communities: A student stated during the survey that "There were a lot of things that, I mean, I learnt; I learnt a lot from going out to communities, reaching out to communities and talking to young people, telling them about the importance of education, encouraging them and telling them how to apply for bursaries, if they want to make it into universities, helping out in old-age homes."

Another important pattern in student behaviour, which remains largely unexplored by both the institution and the students, is about the interface and interplay between student activities and institutional life or culture. There seems to be a degree of institutional uncertainty about what strategies should be put in place to facilitate constructive engagement between current student organisations and the university,

a role that, under the circumstances, cannot be played effectively only by the SRC. If student engagement in institutional life is understood as being mediated by the communities in which meanings are negotiated in practice, then student organisations—as critical nodal points in the creation and recreation of institutional culture—should be taken very seriously. Such organisations may be part of the social fabric of learning and enrichment. Promoting academic associations among undergraduate students, for example, could play an important role in promoting academic citizenship. This unfortunately lies beyond the scope of the current study.

A matter of concern is that these fragmented communities seem to demonstrate little effort towards promoting the politics of articulation, beyond individual or group boundaries. Students tend to accept dispersion and fragmentation as part of the construction of a new social order, that reveals fully where they are and what they can become, and which does not demand that they forget or consciously unlearn certain forms of behaviour, through the idea that Wits is a diverse and flexible community, where it is just a matter of finding your own space. As Durkheim has indicated, social order could deteriorate into a fragmented, atomic culture if moral "glue" does not arise spontaneously for persons when they realise their fundamental interdependence with one another (Durkheim, 1984 85). The university is undoubtedly an institution where people become individuals as they realise this interdependence, and thus it is "an indispensable source from which character is formed" (Bellah *et al.*, 1991 6). From this point of view, universities are not instruments of repression and social control, or simply *loci* of power, which reproduce culture. They are agents of social change, which empower individuals to open up to new possibilities of citizenship and interrelatedness. Such processes should certainly provide leverage for tackling the taken-for-granted elements of institutional life, and for negotiating and building a dynamic institutional "culture that is more dependent on process than stasis and an understanding of education oriented toward social change rather than social reproduction" (Rowe, 2003 3).

NEGOTIATING A SHARED SPACE AND MEANING: THE NEED FOR INSTITUTIONAL AND SOCIAL REINVENTION

As the present account has so far indicated, the challenge facing the University of the Witwatersrand is about how to find and foster a sense of community among diverse individuals. Upon a university campus where students from different backgrounds are brought together with an assumed common purpose, the challenge is to recognise difference and consider its consequences in accomplishing that common pur-

pose. This task may require recognising "the educative value of understanding different constructions of social reality and the possibilities of establishing new, shared meanings and practices" (Broekman and Pendlebury, 2002 291). It may also require problematising the nature of the expectations that the university holds for its clients (the students), and the institution's approach to its own *institutional facts* and constitutive *rules*, which it often takes for granted.

It is argued here that the above are dynamic aspects of institutional life. Collective agreement about their function, status and meaning is not guaranteed—contestation and change are inevitable as the university community changes with new currents of people and ideas. We certainly agree with Broekman and Pendlebury (2002 293) that "impossible though it seems to make the rules explicit, it may be worth the attempt because the very exercise of trying to specify institutional facts and their constitutive rules..." may help the institution to "decentre", and so come to reflect on and refine its own institutional rules and procedures. Institutional reinvention is a fact in the same sense that students reinvent themselves, whether through negotiation or contestation.

As indicated in the title, the current study also pays particular attention to the politics of space and location. Students, as key agents in the formation of counter-hegemonic cultural practices, need spaces of dialogue where the revision or reframing of current campus practices should begin. This may mean moving out of one's comfortable niche and pushing against oppressive boundaries set by race, sex, ethnicity and class domination. Here students confront a dilemma of choice and location: either to position themselves on the side of a perceived oppressive and alienating institutional culture, through a pre-disposition to assimilation; or to stand in political resistance, ready to offer their ways of seeing and theorising, of shaping culture via a progressive project to create "a space where there is unlimited access to the pleasure and power of knowing, where transformation is possible" (Hooks, 1990 145). In line with our main argument, we consider below three main scenarios.

The first scenario concerns those who have accepted the constitutive rules of the campus community; who have adapted to them, have the resources to negotiate their membership, have gained membership and have developed a sense of identity with the campus community—that is, have become a "Witsie". This sense of identity sets boundaries very often expressed with some pride: "This is how we do things at Wits", or, in reaction to what is perceived as unacceptable by their standards, "Certainly not at Wits!" The second scenario concerns those who have found the constitutive rules of the university community

alienating, a threat to their identities—and, as such, contestable; and who have opted to negotiate membership on their own terms, through struggles of different sorts. The third scenario concerns those who lack the resources to negotiate their membership in either way, either on their own terms or in terms already established on campus. These students face alienation, withdrawal or marginality. Very often they embrace the discourse of marginality and find their location on the margins: "I do not belong here." Or, as was highlighted in one of our interviews:

> Belong? No! I don't feel like I belong, I just feel I'm still meddling, I'm still trying to find my way. I'm still trying to find my place so I don't really feel like I belong, yet! Maybe I will over time but now I don't. I'm still trying to find my way around (sic).

As it will be shown, we should not underestimate the radical possibilities of the discourse of marginality on campus. Particularly against the legacy of apartheid, and to borrow a phrase from Hooks (1990 147), there is a need "to create spaces where one is able to redeem and reclaim the past, legacies of pain, suffering, and triumph in ways that transform present reality." The margins very often offer the conditions that make such action possible.

NEGOTIATING A SHARED SPACE AND MEANING: THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONAL MEDIATION

The challenge for the university is also to enable students to live on campus within the constitutive rules of a dynamic academic environment, by establishing a space of dialogue and possibilities that allows for regeneration, innovation and enrichment. According to Morrow, once students have gained access to the institution and campus, the challenge is to ensure that the campus environment assists them in achieving epistemic access; that is, retention and academic success. Students re-invent themselves with reference to their past experience and memories, and with reference to their perceptions about dominant institutional discourse. Such perceptions include values and practices (institutional culture). The notion of *mediation* is central to the argument pursued in this chapter: some of the tensions that persist on campus result from the fact that students from different backgrounds experience campus life differently.

In this perspective, the strategies aimed at turning the university campus into a shared space should entail mechanisms for facilitating the mediation of meaning construction, and therefore of shared meaning of the experiences that students have of campus life, regardless of their diverse backgrounds. As already indicated, Woolcock's conceptualisation of social capital has proved useful. His concepts of

"bonding", "linking" and "bridging" provide insights into how social capital can be concretised in ways that improve campus climate. We have used this framework to expand on our concept of mediation, to show how social capital can facilitate activities related to information sharing, coordination of activities, collective decision making, and the creation of an enabling environment.

Through mediation, students can be helped to respond as good citizens conversant with the institutional patterns of culture. Yet the patterns judged to be harmful or less desirable can be altered or eliminated by empowered individuals willing to act collectively to re-shape reality. The HIV/AIDS campaign represents an excellent example of where the institution facilitated—and the students themselves provided—mediation to create awareness, shared experience and shared meaning. Through different initiatives and through working together to address the AIDS crisis on campus, students were able to establish an environment of mutual trust, reciprocity, and a sense of shared future. Two students suggested two concrete forms of mediation that the university may consider in addition to current strategies. Firstly, by promoting interaction between undergraduate and postgraduate students, as articulated below:

> *Interviewer*: OK, the main question we are looking at is about the main factors that influence students' performance and students' successful completion of their studies, so in that line, what would you generally recommend.
>
> *Respondent*: OK, I think that, like, for every department, let me take the psychology department, when you come in, they introduce you to tutors. But I think they should go further and organise a function where they have all psychology students, postgraduates and undergraduates to go maybe for lunch somewhere or picnic or something like that, to increase the interaction between postgraduate and undergraduate students. This will help students to know each other, form ties and this makes students to help each other in solving problems and coping with their work.
>
> Undergraduate students tend to [hold great faith] in postgraduate students and if they allow that interaction and sharing of experiences, I think the performance of students will improve. Sometimes when you come from a poor background, you are socialised to believe that you are a failure. But if you interact with other people, some of them with similar experiences like yours, you get to be freed from such beliefs and you can improve quickly as compared to when you remain alone. So I think they need to increase student interaction and more so on the social basis that academic, and this will improve their lives. In fact the academic performance is not only based on the academics, there is need to learn to compartmentalise the academic and social life particularly for undergraduate students because they are not used to the system and everything is big, everything is new. So I think if you

> start interacting with people who have been in your shoes, it is much easier for you to adapt (sic).
>
> (H19, Media studies, AF, NR)

By promoting inter-institutional interaction of students:

> *Interviewee*: OK, like, maybe... trying to allow, maybe, having, interacting, university students, interacting with other university students, Pretoria University and other universities, something like that, but I think it can help for the Wits student to, to grow in their understanding, in their social understanding, of life commander (sic).
>
> (E01, Town and regional planning, AM, NR)

In this perspective, the strategies aimed at turning the university campus into a shared space should entail mechanisms for facilitating the mediation of experience, meaning construction, and therefore of shared meaning of the experiences that students have of campus life, regardless of their diverse backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

The study has shown that current student opinion recognises that Wits University has come a long way in putting into place policies and services designed to enhance campus life. However, these efforts are not fully translated into a healthy and harmonious campus experience. In our view, this seems to have some bearing on the generalised lack of student awareness or interest in major social issues. In this regard, the study has raised three important issues. The first issue is the considerable number of students who have witnessed or experienced incidents of discrimination on campus. The second issue is the students' lack of awareness of major issues, either social issues on campus or national issues, which have some bearing on their future. The third issue is the limited number of students who have been exposed in one way or another to institutional programmes, courses or activities, in the context of diversity education.

Where campus experience is mediated by diversity—and where, as a result, students experience the campus environment differently, irrespective of campus improvements—efforts must be made to enable mutual engagement and the creation of shared meaning. Briefly, it appears that while Wits University is on the right path in its efforts to deal with diversity, more substantive institutional mechanisms are required to meet the challenge of an increasingly diverse student body. The focus should be on curriculum, involvement of students, faculty/staff-student and peer-student interactions, along with continuing efforts towards institutional change and improvement. A general implication

of the argument pursued in this study is that institutional change strategies should also focus on organisational culture, which mediates both institutional practice and student life on campus. Higher education institutions in South Africa should consider setting up strategic portfolios centred on organisational culture and student governance.

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CHAPTER 9

PULLING IT TOGETHER

This study has dealt with three main questions throughout. These are: How do students negotiate their access and success within the Wits University environment? What individual or collective resources (cultural and/or material) do they resort to in the process? And, how does the institution mediate this process? In this chapter, I return to these specific questions in a focused way to highlight the overall picture emerging from the analysis throughout this book, and to find suitable pathways to a more enabling institutional environment and practice. I build our claims on the voices expressed by both students and the faculty interviewed in the study.

INSTITUTIONAL IMAGE AND STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

The study confirms the widely held, historical reputation that Wits enjoys as "a world-class university" or "a centre of excellence" with high academic standards. Assuming that this perception is a reflection of "good results", and these are an outcome of "good practice", student opinion converges on the idea that *something is right with Wits University*, which makes it more attractive compared to many other South African universities. While positive, this particular image has double effect on the students themselves. On the one hand, it makes them feel honoured and proud for having being admitted to such a reputable

institution. On the other, it raises their expectations of what they should do to succeed in such an institution. Students stretch themselves almost to breaking point in pursuit of academic success. An extreme case recently reported in this regard concerns a student who went so far as to try to commit suicide.

When the pressures and frustrations that accompany their efforts to succeed are not met with the necessary institutional support and enabling mediation, students feel alienated and marginalised. Those who find themselves under this fate tend to describe Wits in many ways as a harsh, cold and unforgiving environment where many students, particularly those from a disadvantaged background (from Black or rural schools) hardly fit the mould (of excellence and independence) and struggle to survive. A perception develops out of their experiences that *something is fundamentally wrong inside Wits*. We argue here that the image of excellence attached to studying at Wits constitutes an important historical legacy that needs to be cherished and nourished through more context-sensitive and innovative strategies—strategies that take serious account of the increasing number of students who suffer from inordinate pressure whilst undertaking their studies.

THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM

While rates vary across the faculties, on average, fewer than 50% of students who begin an undergraduate degree will graduate and fewer than 45% will graduate in the minimum time. Black students and male students are less likely to graduate than White students and female students and usually take longer to graduate. Many degrees exclude more than 20% of students for academic or financial reasons. The only faculty with significantly higher throughput is Health Sciences, where highly selective entrance requirements apply.

Throughput and retention at Wits has been the focus of a number of studies and continues to be a reporting priority for all faculties. A number of different strategies have been implemented to improve throughput at a systemic level and is aimed at staff and student development. Teaching and learning committees in each faculty coordinate a wide variety of initiatives at the level of faculties and schools.

THE POLICY CONTEXT

Our analysis of official documents (mission statement, Wits Transformation Strategy, Wits 2010, Wits Strategic Plan and other strategy documents) and review of previous studies (audits, departmental reviews and HEQC programme reviews, etc.) show without doubt considerable institutional commitment to changing the culture of the institution towards inclusiveness. As indicated on page 22 of this report

"Wits' mission statement strongly advocates social inclusiveness, anti-racism, anti-sexism, supporting tolerance and diversity, ensuring active participation of students and staff in all aspects of the institution, as well as creating an enabling environment through the provision of well-resourced, well-maintained and friendly campuses." This means that at policy level, Wits University has committed itself to providing the necessary collective resources (institutional forms of support and mediation) to students who need help to supplement or compensate for the lack of individual resources. By resources, we refer to the necessary pedagogical, service and social structures as well as mediation strategies and practices that enable a productive and generative learning environment that is inclusive and supportive, particularly for historically disadvantaged students.

Of course, one could argue that the inclusive learning environment is not a condition for a successful academic participation or that the main priority of a university is to make sure that it produces research of an international standard and that it provides education for students who can cope with its standards. Therefore, the mere fact that the university formally enables access for diverse students demonstrates its commitment to transformation. This is nonetheless a somewhat trite claim, which does not match the perceptions that students have about their actual experiences at Wits. The challenge facing Wits, which extends beyond the boundaries of this investigation, is to explore what a productive and generative environment should be like, what kinds of structures, strategies and practices constitute productive interventions, which of these are provided across the three faculties considered in this study, and what happens to students who need this support but do not get it, or in other words—the critical questions that pertain to how students experience the institutional culture. As the university tackled this, it would certainly minimise current perception among many students that a disjuncture exists between institutional policy and institutional practice (see Chapter 3).

At the level of official policy, Wits has also committed itself to the improvement of the quality of the teaching and learning experience and innovation in curriculum development and pedagogy, with a view to improving success and retention rates (WITS, 2010 and FJC/Admissions Policy, 25 October 2003, S2003/1713a). The following interventions have been suggested:

- Offering training and support to staff through the Centre for Learning and Teaching Development (CLTD)
- A more inclusive language policy (2003)

- Introduction of an extended curriculum
- The establishment of a Writing Centre
- Monitoring of courses in which the pass rate differs significantly from the norm
- Pre-Bursary Scheme (in EBE)
- Foundation courses (Humanities)
- Physical, social and emotional services (Division of Student Affairs)
- Study of the gap between the final year of school and first year of study in order to upgrade the content knowledge of teachers and investigate the advantages and disadvantages of more inclusive admission polices

PATHWAYS TO INDIVIDUAL ADJUSTMENT: STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND RESPONSES

Notwithstanding these interventions, an overall picture emerging from the study is worrisome. It shows that, although there are many positive experiences emanating from the decision of the university to diversify its student body, it is equally clear that neither is institutional commitment to transformation explicitly recognised and understood by students, nor is it experienced in the same way across the students that we interviewed in this study. To highlight the experiences of the students we interviewed, we divided them heuristically into 3 groups: "The Witsie", "the survivor", and "the culturally displaced" student.

The *Witsies* are students whose learning orientation matches (more or less) what is expected, and carry individual resources (material and symbolic) to engage meaningfully with their studies; in addition, with or without the help of individual lecturers on those rare occasions that they may be needed, they are able to decode the learning and adjustment criteria and expectations and to develop consistently into Wits graduates. Such students do not experience any crippling adjustment problems to Wits environment, they enjoy but do not depend on the Wits social life to succeed, and generally benefit from supportive home environments (educated parents and/or peer groups). Briefly, Witsies are students with *aligned ambitions*, which is the ability to set goals and develop or identify strategies to achieve them.

The *survivors* are students who do not share the learning orientation required, carry knowledge gaps from school, but have, for some reasons or other, life experience of being 'go-getters', and take it upon themselves to work hard, to improve their language competence, to develop their self-confidence and assertiveness, to find academic

sources, to learn computer skills and to mine the internet and, when needed, to go to the lecturers and ask for help. There are students who acknowledge that it is up to the individual student to try and solve problems or find out what work is required, and when they feel vulnerable or not confident, they choose to hide away and keep a low profile. These students can benefit from personal care and support given by individual lecturers, provided that it is done in a manner that is respectful of their background and is generally encouraging. Many students spoke about this kind of care.

The *culturally displaced* are students who do not share the required learning orientation, who carry knowledge gaps from school, and for some reasons or other, do not have the resources to negotiate their needs on their own terms and, in view of the little collective resources offered by the university, may develop feelings of alienation, deep anger about the experience of inequalities, and thus, ultimately, may decide to withdraw. These kinds of students need much more than personal care and academic attention from individual lecturers. They need sustainable and continuous support that should be recognised in the division of labour of academic staff (in the workload of lecturers) in order to socialise them into sound academic practice. Here we refer to collective resources that target development and thus are labour intensive (small classes, collaborative teaching, variation of pacing, individual and collective feedback on continuous forms of assessment; all with the aim of making evaluative criteria explicit).

MODES OF ACADEMIC PRACTICE: PEDAGOGICAL AND CURRICULUM STRATEGIES

Dominant at Wits is the performance model, which emphasises high student performance and low participation. In the context of Wits, the performance model reflects a legacy of the dominant academic practice in the past, which catered for a predominantly White and carefully selected student population, emphasised merit and equal opportunity, competition among students, and the survival of the fittest: students had to come, adapt or perish. Embedded in it were limited concerns with social justice or issues of formal access and epistemic access beyond a meritocracy framework. Institutionally it is an inexpensive model demanding very little from the lecturers, but very taxing and demanding on the student's side.

On the other side, pockets have emerged of the competence model promoted by individual faculty members and driven by concerns with institutional social responsiveness; these assert the need to provide space for higher student participation and epistemic access. It is a response to the challenges posed by the increasing numbers of the

so-called non-traditional students, i.e. students from historically disadvantaged background. In this model, a *learning contract* goes hand in hand with a *moral contract*. In some cases, current academic practices in some schools can be described as hybrid, embracing aspects of the two models. Nonetheless, general academic practice at Wits falls within the framework of the performance model, which has serious implications for undergraduate students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. In crude terms, this legacy leaves the institution with two choices: (i) to emphasise the Wits traditional meritocracy-driven model or its current performance model, rooted in the globalisation logic, and align its selection and admission policies accordingly; or (ii) to invest systemically in strategies that offer continuous support for students in need, drawing on the best practice from both models.

Emphasise high performance. This will require an admissions policy that carefully selects candidates that can 'make it', predominantly on their own, i.e. a policy based on the assumption that the fittest will survive and continue at a high standard and on to very selective postgraduate studies. The performance model of pedagogy works best in a tightly selective environment, which Wits is trying to transform. It is suitable particularly for the first group of students, and those students of the second group who are more likely to survive, though they may find it difficult if teaching and assessment are not made a priority by the lecturer.

Emphasise a hybrid model that integrates the best aspects of high performance and high participation and contextualises them within a framework of social justice. This model can work for the three categories of students. First, it could enhance the capacity of the first group of students to navigate through the system to the best of their abilities. Second, it has the benefit of catering also for the needs of those students who do not share the academic code and who experience knowledge gaps, by specifying criteria, norms and standards through suitable support strategies:

When we enter into any new setting or practice we may *think or believe* that we understand the criteria of the practice, but we may or may not in fact be *following* them. It is only when we receive some form of feedback to the effect that our understanding or actions are inappropriate, that we may attempt to adjust accordingly. Thus, feedback is an essential part of learning what it means to participate in a practice (Slonimsky and Shalem, *forthcoming*, page 18).

Briefly, if current throughput and retention is to be improved with current student diversity, the best elements of the competence model of pedagogy must be promoted and enhanced through more open social relations that foreground the *person* over the '*acquirer*/*student*',

as well as through pastoral care and personal and collective forms of recognition. This does not mean compromising standards but rather making them explicit, actively and collaboratively, to students by providing learning opportunities, especially for those who do not share the code. In this view, the choice is not between high participation and high performance. The choice is about *confident participation for high performance*. Economically, it is an expensive model, which requires small classes for its interactive aspects, academic support, along with mentoring and academic enrichment initiatives—as it is currently being planned for postgraduate students.

INSTITUTIONAL MEDIATION: CHANGE AND CONTINUITIES

Wits student demography has changed. Many of its students are historically disadvantaged, and many of them drop out before completing their degrees. Sixty nine per cent (69%) of its students are in undergraduate courses, where support is arguably needed even more, given that this is where the building blocks for socialisation into an academic practice are put in place. Past interventions—like an extended curriculum—do not seem successful, and where success has taken place (Pre-Bursary Scheme and foundation courses) financial support was not given priority.

In 2003, the Report of the working group on retention and throughput (S2003/1797) to Senate and the Senate Teaching and Learning Imbizo (Wits, 2004), lists students' under-preparedness (student-related factors), outdated pedagogies and methods of assessment (staff-related factors), and too little support for students; making the transition from school and a lack of recognition for teaching and academic development work that discourages academic staff from putting energy into their teaching duties (systemic factors) as the main factors that contribute to the high failure rate. Are these observations still relevant? Is this still the shared common sense amongst staff and students? What has changed and what has remained the same? Most importantly, can the findings suggest a way forward?

The following explanations seem to be common (amongst students) for why student performance is weak:

- *Racism*—for example: White lecturers frustrate the system because they can't get jobs and so they protect the market by failing Black students.
- *Schools do not provide preparation*: "When I got to Wits, I realised I wasn't prepared, High School didn't prepare me, it was a shock, the workload, and independent, you have to do things

on your own, at your own pace..." (sic). (H07, Psychology and African literature, AF, R)

- *Lack of individual effort on the part of students*: "[the learning environment] is positive if you work hard, I mean if you don't work hard you can't consult because what is it you will be going to consult on?" (sic). (H08, Sociology and psychology, AF, R)
- *Language gaps*: "I'm a hard worker, but I was demotivated because I would work hard and because of the language problem, my results would come out as average, although I never had that thought of dropping out of school" (sic). (H19, Media studies, AF, NR)
- *The outside layers of rules* are clear (when and where one can approach the lecturer where to raise a complicated set of questions, etc.) but the essential criteria of what counts as good work are not made explicit (which makes it particularly difficult for students of the 2nd and 3rd groups).

THE WAY FORWARD: WHAT DO STUDENTS SUGGEST?

What kinds of support do students foreground as helpful for them? Among the Wits staff (both academic and administrative), there are those who take a less individual and performance-driven approach to students and are genuinely helpful, empathetic and take an interest in students beyond their ability to perform. These individuals act as support systems to students and students indeed seek these people out.

- *Clear communication of expectations*: "He knows what he wants from students and communicates with us all the time." (H11, Media studies and international relations, AF, nR)
- *Organised and informative course outline* that is actually followed.
- *Making evaluative criteria explicit* by giving clear instructions about expectations and by disclosing what an A, or an F, really means in the context it was given. This can also happen through active guidance in relation to a project, etc.: "I mean, there's one, there's one lecturer from our department who inspires me most, most. Her name is Tanya, Dr. Tanya Wingler. She's the one who'll take us and tell us, guide us through planning, tell us about all the complexity in the, around planning issues..." (sic). (E05, Town planning, AM, R)
- *Relaxed atmosphere* or feeling safe in class to say that you don't know; that you have not heard about the concept or idea be-

ing discussed, and that you can go to the lecturer concerned and ask for help: "In class when we were asked a particular question, I could not answer because... I could not show that I don't know. Even though I could be having an idea, I could not say it because I would think that it is wrong." (H14, Drama, AF, nR)

- *Encouragement and support* that can help a student who comes from a very poor background *to believe* that she can also succeed: "he keeps on encouraging me not to give up. He tells me that even if my mother is a domestic worker, it doesn't mean that I will be a failure in life" (sic).(H08, Sociology and psychology, AF, R)
- *Personal care*: "Even when I'm really down, when my going gets tough, there is always someone to pick me up, if it is a lecturer or a student. I have never felt like I wanted to give up and I'm [a] person that gives up on a lot of things. So, the fact that I have kept on going, a lot of lecturers have been very helpful and encouraging..." (sic). (H09, Psychology and English literature, WF, nR)
- *Tutorials and small classes*—to ensure that students get individual attention when required.
- *Rational pacing of work*—to avoid a bottleneck for students at the end of the course.
- *Adequate timetabling of exams*—arranged in such a way that one has reasonable break between one exam and another.
- *Reasonable consideration for personal circumstances*—in relation to date of submission.
- *Making materials available*—through lecturers putting up sources for short loan.
- *Maximising peer support*—for example, through more interaction between undergraduate and postgraduate students.

OVERALL

The picture that emerges at the University of the Witwatersrand concerning the changing institutional culture and its possible effects on throughput and retention is varied, multi-dimensional and not without paradoxes. On the positive side, both the staff and students, in their different and diverging understandings and interpretations, have embraced the idea that academic achievement at Wits University requires a great deal of individual discipline, hard work and

appropriate work ethic from all students. On the negative side, the university has not yet clearly found an identity that matches the profile of its student population. On the whole, we are impressed with the policy instruments that have already been put in place, though not yet translated into practice in comprehensive and systematic manner, as well as what we saw in both students and staff as unrealised potential. In substantive terms, we have the impression of considerable efforts and well-targeted accomplishments in some departments, underexploited potential and delivery practices in almost every single faculty examined in this study, but no comprehensive strategy to meet the diverse needs of the undergraduate students it attracts.

Against this background, it is our view that the emphasis placed on individual effort rooted in the performance model in an almost unproblematic way (without recognising its limits for catering for the diverse student needs) should be complemented by a balance with comprehensive institutional academic support and mediation, particularly regarding new students. This is more pertinent with regard to students who have graduated from disadvantaged schools, both rural and urban, and who come from communities with limited resources and social capital, who are increasingly becoming mainstream within the Wits student body. This challenge cannot be effectively addressed through current scattered, fragmented and uncoordinated initiatives championed by dedicated faculty members. The challenge begs for an integrated, broader programmatic and institution-wide support strategy, which requires allocation of resources, leadership and institutional pragmatism tied to its vision as articulated in Wits 2010. In this regard, we cannot overestimate the need for synergy in support strategies, environment enhancement mechanisms and experience mediation initiatives with the mission of the institution and its strategic planning instruments. As demonstrated, the policy context for such a paradigm shift already exists. What is missing is a concerted strategy synchronising strategies at the levels of student interaction on campus, pedagogical support strategies, operational and service delivery issues, in order to mobilise and support the immense energy and commitment on behalf of students—as is evident in the interviews conducted here.

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PROGRAMA **SUR-SUR**

This book utilises a broadly critical cultural approach to explain access and retention. In recent years, the use of cultural approaches has made a significant contribution to how we understand societies and particularly social institutions undergoing transition. The impact of these approaches is evident in the social sciences and in interdisciplinary fields such as education, where different dimensions and perspectives within respective cultural approaches have been applied to a variety of topics.

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