

Whiteness in Non-Racialism: White Students' Discourses of Transformation at UCT

Ruth Urson

Department of Psychology

University of Cape Town

Supervisor: Dr. Shose Kessi

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Abstract

In post-apartheid South Africa, a gap exists between higher education transformation policies and practice. In this study, I investigated two related factors, namely the understanding and use of non-racialism and the roles of white students in racial transformation. This research was conducted within a framework provided by Critical Race Theory and whiteness studies, which views “race” as socially constructed but structurally salient in systems that privilege whiteness by rendering it invisible to white groups. This qualitative study aimed to investigate the ways in which white students talk about transformation and “race” at the University of Cape Town (UCT) and what role these discourses play in opposing or facilitating transformation. Four focus groups were conducted with 27 white UCT students from different programmes of study. Data analysis was guided by Willig’s (2008) framework for Foucauldian Discourse Analysis. Three discursive sets of *Rational Control*, *Defensive Rainbowism* and *Conscious Allyship* were identified according to how broader discourses drawn on by participants in constructing “race” and transformation positioned white students differently in practice and subjectivity. The study indicated that there are differences in participants’ willingness for transformation and their involvement therein that can be traced back to the ways in which they understand and experience aspects of life in post-apartheid South Africa. These findings contribute to critical whiteness literature by suggesting that white students’ consciousness of white privilege is related to their acceptance of meaningful higher education transformation roles.

Keywords: Whiteness; white privilege; transformation; non-racialism; race; higher education; South Africa.

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NAME: Ruth Urson

SIGNATURE:

STUDENT NUMBER: URSRUT001

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South Africa's apartheid regime left deeply entrenched systems of racial inequality in its wake. The transformation of these systems focuses on achieving non-racialism (Ramsamy, 2007) and is a contested topic in higher education (Kessi & Cornell, under review; Soudien et al., 2008). Higher education transformation efforts derive from the White Paper on Education, which explains that all apartheid structures which privileged white South Africans at the expense of black¹ South Africans must be re-constructed to serve the post-apartheid era (Department of Education, 1997). Despite national and institutional transformation efforts, racial inequality and discrimination persist in South African higher education institutions (Soudien et al., 2008). A review of the existing literature on transformation in South African higher education highlights challenges faced in achieving non-racialism and the different roles and experiences of white and black stakeholders.

Transformation as Policy or Practice

Transformation efforts in South African higher education derive broadly from values contained in the Constitution (1996), such as non-racialism. These values are echoed in national policies such as the Higher Education Act 101 (1997) and the Education White Paper 3 (Department of Education, 1997), as well as institutional policies which mandate higher education transformation (Soudien et al., 2008). However, transformation policies do not necessarily bring practical change, as despite often being considered transformative in themselves, policies are only aspirational descriptions (Ahmed, 2006). Accordingly, through a broad national overview of relevant literature, documents, and stakeholder input, Soudien et al. (2008) identified a gap between the aims of institutional transformation policies and what has actually been achieved regarding higher education transformation. The literature contains examples of these practical shortcomings.

One such example is the implementation of affirmative action measures to desegregate universities historically reserved for white students (Soudien et al., 2008). Despite racial redress measures, students still experience informal racial segregation in historically white South African universities (Erasmus & De Wet, 2003; Higham, 2012; Koen & Durrheim, 2009; Schrieff, Tredoux, Finchilescu, & Dixon, 2010; Steyn & Van Zyl, 2001; Suransky & van der Merwe, 2014). This segregation has been linked to "race"-related

¹ "Black" is used to refer to all groups classified as "non-white" under apartheid laws; namely, black, coloured, Indian, and Chinese groups.

discomfort (Erasmus & De Wet, 2003; Schrieff et al., 2010). In particular, some black students reported factors such as the subtle use of positive stereotypes of white students and negative stereotypes of black students as causes of this discomfort (Steyn & Van Zyl, 2001). For example, some black students reported having their competence undermined by white students and being excluded when working in racially diverse groups (Steyn & Van Zyl, 2001). Conversely, in a study examining UCT medical students' perceptions of "race" and racism, white medical students constructed inter-racial interactions in positive terms or invoked a colour-blind discourse, claiming not to see racial differences (Erasmus & De Wet, 2003). Erasmus and De Wet (2003) argued that white students' interpretation and use of non-racialism allowed them to avoid feeling discomfort, often leaving black students with the burden of racial awareness and discomfort.

Linked to discomfort is inclusion, another transformation goal which appears inadequately addressed in practice. An investigation of students' experiences at historically racially segregated South African universities showed that while explicit instances of racism were controlled and universities appeared inclusive, a deeper form of inclusion had not been achieved (Higham, 2012). At the historically white University of Cape Town (UCT), black students felt marginalised by the dominance of whiteness, exemplified by the primarily white academic staff and the Eurocentric symbolism on campus (Erasmus & De Wet, 2003; Steyn & Van Zyl, 2001). The dominance of white institutional culture and language and lack of acknowledgement of African scholarship are noted barriers to transformation (Bangeni & Kapp, 2005; Erasmus & De Wet, 2003; Higham, 2012; Soudien et al., 2008; Steyn & Van Zyl, 2001) and contradict the national policy goal of providing inclusive education which is both globally competitive and locally relevant (Department of Education, 1997). Growing dissatisfaction with transformation was demonstrated by Rhodes Must Fall (RMF), a collective of predominantly black UCT students and staff that successfully campaigned for the removal of a statue of British colonialist Cecil John Rhodes from UCT's campus, preceding ongoing protests aimed at the "decolonisation" (Rhodes Must Fall, 2015, para. 2) of higher education. This requires systemic change towards the liberation of black people from colonial power relationships and the development of an African university (Rhodes Must Fall, 2015).

Assessing Non-Racialism

While much research has focused on the practical failures of transformation in South African higher education, less research has considered why this gap between policy and practice exists. Erasmus and De Wet (2003) allude to the role of *non-racialism*, a value adopted by the African National Congress (ANC) as the ultimate goal of transformation efforts (Ramsamy, 2007). Despite its significance, its ambiguity was demonstrated in focus groups of South African citizens (Bass, Erwin, Kinners, & Maré, 2012) and leaders (Anciano-White & Selemani, 2012), who faced difficulties in defining non-racialism and in attempting to do so, produced divergent definitions.

The ANC's non-racialism initially referred to the establishment of a democratic nation in which racial identity would be replaced by a common South African identity (Ramsamy, 2007). The structural salience of "race" made this proposed abandonment of racial categories difficult and so a "Rainbow Nation" or multiracial rhetoric was adopted, but still called non-racialism (Ramsamy, 2007). In this conceptualisation, "races" are acknowledged but regarded as equal and contributory towards a united South Africa (Bass et al., 2012). This has been criticised for potentially reifying "race" as an essential and biological quality of humans, rather than understanding racial categories as social constructs with material effects or differences in lived reality (Suttner, 2012; Taylor, 2012).

Biko (1987) provided an interesting and deeper perspective on non-racialism which presents non-racialism as the outcome and not the method of transformation. Non-racialism, interpreted as equality of "races", is impossible while psychological and structural racial inequalities still exist (Biko, 1987). As white South Africans have benefited materially and psychologically from apartheid, using shallow non-racialism to promote equal treatment of different "races" would prevent systems of racial privilege and disadvantage from being addressed (Biko, 1987; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Shallow non-racialism could therefore be used by privileged groups to maintain inequality, thereby maintaining their privilege (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). As such, Taylor (2012) argued that a deeper non-racialism requires addressing structural factors which afford different "races" different realities.

Discourses of Dominance

Achievement of non-racialism and transformation is further hindered by whiteness (Biko, 1987). Frankenberg (1993), in her landmark interview study of white American women, argued that whiteness becomes normative and invisible in societies which facilitate

the systemic oppression of black people. Exploration of meanings and experiences of whiteness therefore becomes important in understanding whiteness as an identity of privilege and power rather than an identity devoid of history and context. This promotes a more active role for white people in facilitating meaningful transformation (Frankenberg, 1993).

Accordingly, different studies identified discourses used by white South Africans to resist change and maintain privilege. One discourse invokes the notion of non-racialism as colour-blindness, or a disregard for “race” based on a perception that “race” is not related to advantage or disadvantage (Steyn, 2001; Wale & Foster, 2007). For example, *reverse racism* is a term used by white medical students in describing affirmative action measures, which admit black students to university with lower marks, as constituting an unfair and discriminatory advantage (Erasmus & De Wet, 2003). This discourse allows white South Africans to ignore the structural inequalities and institutional racism which maintain their privilege and power (Steyn, 2001; Wale & Foster, 2007) and the exclusion of black students (Kessi & Cornell, under review).

Further discourses involve a normalisation of whiteness and the equation of blackness with a lowering of standards. This is exemplified by “White Talk” (Steyn & Foster, 2008, p.26), discourses used by white South Africans to convey support for values of the “New South Africa”, while dismissing the validity of a South Africa run by black Africans and invoking panic at the full inclusion of black South Africans in society. At UCT, this has been exhibited in beliefs that allowing more black students into the university through redress measures indicates a lowering of university standards (Kessi & Cornell, under review). Additionally, Steyn and Van Zyl (2001) identified a common assumption that the white culture of educational institutions must be maintained in order to maintain internationally competitive standards of education. White and Eurocentric education is therefore normalised while Africanisation of institutional culture, curricula and pedagogy are associated with lowered standards (Soudien et al., 2008). This discourse of standards, which constructs African education as being inferior, is a barrier to transformation.

These discourses marginalise black students by positioning them as inferior to their white peers (Steyn & Van Zyl, 2001). They are subjected to paternalistic perceptions of needing to be guided by white South Africans to more acceptable ways of being (Wale & Foster, 2007). Black students have to prove themselves as competent to white peers and lecturers and take on the burden of transformation under pressure to fit in to the white

university culture (Erasmus & De Wet, 2003). However, as the university is officially non-racial, some black students deny negative racial experiences and blame them on personal factors, or avoid the topic of “race” to preserve white students’ comfort (Erasmus & De Wet, 2003). Conversely, this non-racial discourse allows white students to ignore structural racism and remain unaware of their responsibilities in transformation (Erasmus & De Wet, 2003).

While it seems that transformation is in progress from a policy perspective, there is a notable gap between the adoption of policies and their practical implementation and success. Possible reasons for this gap, suggested by the literature, may be the interpretation and use of non-racialism in transformation, as well as the lack of attention paid to the role of white students in maintaining dominance rather than facilitating transformation in higher education. The literature reviewed suggests that more research is needed to identify common understandings of non-racialism and how they are used by white South Africans to aid or impede transformation efforts in a higher education context.

Aim and Research Questions

Aim

The objective of this study was to investigate discourses of transformation and non-racialism used by white students at the University of Cape Town. Discourses which supported and opposed transformation efforts were analysed to identify white students’ roles in transformation. An additional aim of this study was to challenge discourses that opposed transformation.

Main Research Question

How do white students talk about transformation and “race” at the University of Cape Town and what role do these discourses play in transformation?

Sub-questions.

1. How do white students define and understand non-racialism?
2. How do white students talk about “race” in transformation?
3. What do white students perceive their role to be in transformation?

Theoretical Approach

This study drew on two related theoretical paradigms, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and whiteness studies. Rather than a unified theory that prescribes methods, CRT is a paradigm contesting the assumptions underlying common thinking around “race” and power (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995). It arose in the United States in the 1970s,

when academics noted an increase in discreet forms of racism, despite liberal civil rights interventions designed to end racism (West, 1995). According to CRT, “races” are not essential and biological categories, but are social constructions which gain meaning and value according to history and context (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Furthermore, socially constructed identities intersect such that “race” groups are heterogeneous in terms of privilege and experience. CRT critiques dominant understandings of non-racialism for promoting “colour-blindness” at the expense of a deeper acknowledgement of racial inequality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). These shallow combative efforts only address obvious forms of racism and prevent acknowledgment of subtler structural racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Located within a CRT paradigm, this study aimed to understand and critique dominant constructions of “race” and transform these constructions to serve more positive ends (Crenshaw et al., 1995).

Specifically, this study drew on whiteness studies theory to explore these constructions in relation to whiteness. The field of whiteness studies arose out of a critique of white feminists as contributors to racial tension in American feminist movements in the 1980s (Frankenberg, 1993). In investigating how white feminists came to unconsciously propagate racism, Frankenberg (1993) defined whiteness as something that shapes identity and privilege, provides a standpoint or perspective from which white people view others and the world, and prescribes certain beliefs and practices. A core tenet of whiteness studies is the invisibility of whiteness due to its dominance in hegemonic Western systems and normalisation in modern society (Frankenberg, 1993; Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007).

As such, white groups often do not consider “race” as important in shaping their lives and identities (Hartmann, Gerteis, & Croll, 2009). They are often unaware of their white privilege in the context of structural racial inequality despite acknowledging how black groups have been disadvantaged by “race” (Steyn, 2001). In light of this, white groups are likely to hold a colour-blind ideology (Hartmann et al., 2009; Steyn, 2001), or to believe their successes and experiences come purely from individual characteristics rather than structural racism (Green et al., 2007; Steyn, 2001). Whiteness therefore privileges white people, but does not allow them to see this privilege (Green et al., 2007). Whiteness research aims to identify how “race” shapes white people’s identities and experiences and critique dominant constructions of whiteness in relation to the invisibility of whiteness, a denial of privilege, and colour-blindness (Hartmann et al., 2009). Whiteness studies are therefore aimed at

investigating that which is invisible, while acknowledging that whiteness is not a stable construct but rather a fluid one that changes across time, place and person (Green et al., 2007; Hartmann et al., 2009).

Methods

Methodological Considerations

Studies of whiteness within a CRT paradigm face various methodological considerations. Descriptive studies run the risk of reaffirming the essentialism, normativity and dominance of whiteness (Gallagher, 2000) and so, this research aimed to challenge and transform discourses of whiteness. Furthermore, whiteness research must take care to avoid treating whiteness as a unitary concept and in so doing, homogenising white experiences (Gallagher, 2000). Rather, this research aimed to identify the diverse discourses mobilised by white participants to make meaning. Lastly, researchers should explicitly acknowledge how they have helped to shape the research process (Gallagher, 2000).

Research Design

Whiteness studies approaches borrow from feminist approaches in that experiences of individuals can be analysed relative to their social and political context to learn about society (Frankenberg, 1993). I therefore used a qualitative focus group method to gather data on experiences of white students.

Participants

I used purposive sampling to recruit participants expected to provide the most relevant data according to predefined criteria (Durrheim & Painter, 2006). I aimed to recruit 20 white, South African, UCT students who were representative of different genders, programmes of study and faculties. UCT has seven faculties: Centre for Higher Education Development (CHED), Commerce, Engineering and the Built Environment, Health Sciences, Humanities, Law and Science. I gained access to participants through the Student Research Participation Programme (SRPP), the White Privilege Project (now Disrupting Whiteness) (2015) (see Appendix A), advertisements placed on campus and shared on social media (see Appendix B), and word of mouth. An online questionnaire was used to obtain personal and demographic details for screening purposes (see Appendix C). I recruited 27 participants, 14 male and 13 female, who were mostly undergraduate students from the Humanities and Commerce faculties, but other programmes and faculties were represented (see Appendix D).

One participant was not South African, but was included based on living South Africa for a substantial proportion of his life.

Data Collection Technique and Procedure

I collected data using focus groups. This avoided homogenisation of white experiences (Gallagher, 2000), as agreement and disagreement in groups indicated convergent and divergent constructions around transformation in real-time rather than through post-hoc comparison (Morgan, 1996). This was particularly important for aspects of the research such as the definition of non-racialism, as the group setting indicated similarities and differences in understanding and allowed participants to co-construct new definitions. Focus groups further allowed for the identification and exploration of dominant discourses and social norms (Kitzinger, 1995). In addition, groups can be transformative, in that the agreement and disagreement can prompt participants to change their minds (Kitzinger, 1995).

Data collection followed a specific procedure. Group composition was based on the use of personal and demographic data to create diversity, but also on practical constraints such as availability. I contacted eligible participants to select their availability for different focus group sessions. The aim was to have four groups with five participants each, justified by rules of thumb stating that little new information emerges after more than four to six groups (Morgan, 1996) and groups should range from four to eight participants (Kitzinger, 1995). However, the four groups had four, nine, seven and seven participants respectively, due to participant availability and over-recruitment to compensate for cancellations. Each group met once, for 60 to 90 minutes, in a classroom in the UCT Psychology Department. After obtaining informed consent (see Appendix E), allowing participants to introduce themselves and introducing myself and the research, I posed a broad question to all participants in the first group, "Please tell me about your views on transformation at the University of Cape Town." In later groups, I rather gave an overview of UCT's Transformation Policy as a prompt before asking what was understood by "non-racialism". Follow up questions and probes explored the research questions and aims, while following participants' tangents and leads (see Appendix F). Data was recorded on a mobile phone and a digital voice recorder and later transcribed and analysed.

Data Analysis

I analysed the data using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA). FDA assumes that discourses, or forms of verbal or written language, have a reciprocal relationship with the

construction of reality, as discourses influence how reality is constructed and this reality influences which discourses are drawn on (Wiggins & Riley, 2010). Unlike discursive psychology, which analyses discourse at a social and individual level, FDA methods examine the role of discourse in how people understand the world, within a broader social and political context (Willig, 2008). Dominant discourses are analysed according to how they affirm hegemonic social and political systems and counter-discourses are identified that challenge these constructions (Willig, 2008). FDA also identifies how dominant discourses both dictate and are validated by institutional systems of administration (Willig, 2008).

Foucauldian techniques further identify discourses as cultural resources (Willig, 2008). Discourses available within a culture partially determine what can be said and experienced and how reality is understood (Willig, 2008). Similarly, discourses construct subject positions, in that their use determines how one is constructed as a subject (Willig, 2008). Taking up a certain subject position influences one's perceptions of one's power and ability and prompts certain subjective experiences (Willig, 2008). FDA links to CRT and whiteness studies, which suggest that dominant ideas of "race", particularly whiteness, need to be identified and challenged. In this study, it was therefore important to examine the discourses that re-affirm and challenge transformational practices.

There is no strict method of FDA, but Willig (2008) describes a simple six-stage model for a basic form of this analysis, which I used as a guideline in analysing the transcribed focus group data. First, four discursive objects were identified according to the research questions: *transformation*, *non-racialism*, *roles of white students in transformation*, and *whiteness*. A table was created which identified and grouped all direct and indirect references to these objects in the transcripts. These objects were refined and renamed: *African university*, *Rhodes Must Fall/decolonisation*, *non-racialism and "race"*, *roles and responsibilities* and *whiteness*. References to these objects were then analysed to determine differences in constructions of the discursive objects and the wider discourses that these drew on to make meaning. Third, the action orientations of these discourses were determined, by examining what was accomplished by constructing the discursive object in a certain way (Willig, 2008). The discourses were then examined to expose the subject positions taken up in using them and the forms of action and subjectivity which these render possible or impossible (Willig, 2008). Deviating slightly from Willig (2008), a more meaningful framework was formed by grouping these discourses into three discursive sets (Table 1).

Table 1
Discursive Sets and Sub-discourses

Discursive Set	Sub-discourses	Operation	Possibilities for action
Rational Control	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transformation as control over justice 2. New South Africa as a meritocracy 	Constructed Western systems as superior and asserted control in transformation decisions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Black students' assimilation. 2. Policies take effect naturally. 3. Government "steps up."
Defensive Rainbowism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transformation as maintaining colour-blindness 2. Discourse of reverse racism 	Constructed "race" as skin colour and positioned white students as victims of racism.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inactivity or over-activity. 2. Forced integration. 3. Martyrdom.
Conscious Allyship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Non-racialism as racism 2. Discourse of decolonisation 	Counter-discourses which recognised whiteness and privilege and supported Africanisation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supporting black students. 2. Loud voices, white spaces.

Ethical Considerations

This study received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the UCT Department of Psychology and the UCT Department of Student Affairs.

Harm and stress. This study was minimal risk, in that research participation did not significantly increase risks of harm from those associated with normal life (Wilson & MacLean, 2011). While there was no risk of physical harm, it was ensured that focus groups took place in a safe area. A short and optional debriefing was held after the study to address unlikely psychological harm or distress which might have resulted from the group discussions (Wilson & MacLean, 2011).

Privacy and confidentiality. Researchers are responsible for maintaining privacy and confidentiality for research participants (Wilson & MacLean, 2011). As such, I stored demographic data in an online, password-protected account and changed participants' names and identifying details in this report. Audio recordings and transcripts were saved to my computer, protected by a password. The use of focus groups of UCT students leads to some loss of confidentiality, as participants were not anonymous to each other and cannot be prevented from speaking about the group discussions. In giving informed consent, each participant was made aware of these issues and signed a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix E).

Informed consent. Researchers need to inform participants about the research in a manner sufficient to allow participants to make an educated choice to participate or not (Wilson & MacLean, 2011). Informed consent was obtained for this research using a form read and signed before the meeting of each group (see Appendix E). All information which could influence the decision to participate was included in the form. I further confirmed verbally that all participants had read and understood the form and clarified concepts where necessary. An initial abridged form was also included before the personal details questionnaire (see Appendix C).

Debriefing. An optional debriefing was conducted after completion of the study, for participants to access further information about the aims and results of the research (Wilson & MacLean, 2011) and to aid the transformative and educational goals of this study. This was postponed due to widespread student protests, but when held was well-received despite being attended by only five participants.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a necessary process in qualitative research and includes recognition of how the researcher shapes the research both personally, through interaction with participants, and analytically, in interpreting the data according to a theoretical framework (Willig, 2008). Reflexivity is an acknowledgement of how results are co-constructed by researcher and participants (Willig, 2008). As a white woman, I needed to acknowledge how my positioning as both an insider and an outsider affected the construction of data (Gallagher, 2000). In wanting to recruit only white participants, I was identified in some ways as an “outsider” by some participants out of suspicion of persecution. As an example, one participant emailed me to ask if their name and opinions would be released to the media. I sometimes performed “insider” whiteness to regain rapport, through agreement, encouraging all opinions and reserving comment until the end, and participants became less guarded as the discussion progressed. I had also recruited several white male participants from personal circles and their gendered identification of me as a “nice” person aided in building trust. Gender dynamics were apparent in female students’ agreement with male students’ sexist remarks or dismissal of their opinions and I sometimes struggled to take an authoritative role with male students for fear of breaking my image of “niceness”. A limitation of this study is therefore its omission of an analysis of gender.

However, my positioning as a fellow white student allowed data analysis to be guided by intrinsic shared knowledge. My experiences of coming to terms with my whiteness impacted this analysis. At first I found myself defensively regarding the participants as enemies and distancing myself from them. Upon reflection, I attempted to position myself within, rather than outside, the discursive sets that I identified. The resultant learning has changed my understanding of my existence within whiteness and my role in transformation for the better. Participants additionally described how they had found the space helpful to aid in their critical thinking and enjoyed speaking to other white students about issues of concern. In some cases this was problematic, as it allowed participants to find solidarity in harmful opinions. However, several participants learnt about whiteness and privilege from each other and some became involved in transformation activities.

Results and Discussion

Participants drew on three discursive sets of *Rational Control*, *Defensive Rainbowism*, and *Conscious Allyship* in talking about “race” and transformation. These were distinguished by how participants constructed “race” and transformation in relation to the invisibility of whiteness, the denial of privilege, and colour-blindness, and the implications of this for positioning, practice and subjectivity.

Rational Control

This set comprises discourses that draw on dominant economic and scientific discourses to oppose transformation as structural change and to advocate rather for transformation as accommodation of black students into existing structures. It draws heavily on the “master narrative of whiteness” (Steyn, 2001, p.3) that constructs Africa as uncivilised and Western civilisation as superior. These discourses sustain whiteness by overlooking South Africa’s African context, favouring Westernisation over Africanisation, and positioning white people as the “voice of reason”.

Transformation as control over justice. Participants justified the current state of racial inequality by drawing on an evolutionary discourse of survival of the fittest.

So, in the natural world there's this kind of thing of survival of the fittest... So don't you think that in some sort of way, that's sort of what happened when the Brits came down. They had superior technology, superior power. They had fewer people and they still overcome- they still overcame the masses, you know what I mean? Just because they were more powerful. So in a, in a sense, and again, this is not like what I'm

thinking, but in a sense you can sort of feel like, so they were, black people were conquered, they were dominated by white people. Is it [sighs], is it something for us to sit and cry about twenty, thirty years later? (Greg, FG4)

Greg's analysis was reminiscent of Social Darwinist theories used to justify oppressive systems like apartheid by citing "superior" biological qualities of white people as reasons why they should have power over "savage" black people (Dubow, 1995). Distancing phrases like "this is not what I'm thinking, but..." suggested an inner tension between Greg's mild awareness of the racist nature of this view and his desire for it to be true, as this evolutionary discourse positions white people favourably, as winners rather than oppressors.

Maintaining Western civilisation as superior further rendered Africanisation a lowering of standards (Steyn, 2001). Participants centred white Europeans at the root of intellectual thinking by drawing on colonial ideas of Africa as intellectually deficient. A civilised-savage evolutionary dichotomy emerged in contrasting constructions of UCT, the "white" institution and Rhodes Must Fall, the "black" movement. Participants referred to RMF as uncivilised and irrational, describing them as saying, "screw what I'm learning at varsity, and then they go and throw stuff around and scream on the fields" (Lucy, FG3) and arguing that "there's no platform for you to disagree just like you know, based on facts and evidence and like you know, try and be as objective as possible... without you know, having dung thrown at you" (Erica, FG3). Both portrayed RMF not as active dissenters, but as uncontrollable savages.

This justified participants' adoption of the "voice of reason" to police and undermine black voices, for example by arguing that RMF "was so fantastical that people don't want to take it seriously anymore and then change can't come about in the right way" (Caroline, FG3) and how "as a historical event it's not gonna be taken as seriously as if they'd gone by due process" (Henry, FG3). Accordingly, participants expressed discomfort at following black leaders as, "you might be told that you can help this way, and that might contradict your own beliefs about how things should operate" (Simon, FG2). Discrediting black voices appeared to reduce participants' discomfort at the challenge black student protesters posed to the status quo of invisible whiteness of UCT, as it re-established participants' sense of control.

Participants further asserted control by referring to UCT as "we", particularly in expressing desires for UCT to remain a white, upper-class institution.

And this is horrible but university has always been a luxury for the elites, historically. So it's great that we try to get people in- and this is coming from a totally privileged position and I totally get that. But like you said there is only so much that UCT can do. And is UCT responsible for correcting the wrong- like, the inadequate schooling of so many people? When they actually do have an academic standard to uphold.

(Mary, FG2)

Mary's comments suggested that the "right" kind of transformation necessitates black students' conformity to existing "academic standards" and subtly implied that black students bring down these standards. Grievances of black students were reconstructed as "inadequate schooling" and there emerged a distinction between "good blacks", who choose to silently fit in and "bad blacks" who fight for self-determination (Steyn, 2001). Participants' comments additionally suggested their authority regarding these "standards". For example, Dylan (FG4) argued, "Let's not ascribe value to something just because it's African and we feel bad for excluding it in the past." The words "we" and "let's" positioned himself and by implication, white people, as the judges of merit and worth. This was reinforced by the positioning of black students at UCT as foreigners rather than Africans at an African university. Accordingly, black students' anger at UCT was dismissed as "by consenting to come to this university there are expectations. I can't move to France and be pissed off that nobody's speaking English to me" (Caroline, FG3).

Participants further negated the value of Africanisation using a competitive economic-scientific framework. Transformation was evaluated as a competitive commodity rather than a complex process of restoring justice. For example, Tom (FG4) dismissed the value of African knowledge by reducing it to a consumable commodity, arguing that it would not be useful to him in a business career, "other than if I wanted to go into supplying African cultures, which would be... what hair product does the township use?" This conveys a colonial relationship, positioning black people not as equal humans, but as a market to be used in expanding white economic wealth.

Other participants similarly commodified African culture, but rather in support of Africanisation. For example, Talya described an African university.

Think of like, tourists, when they come to South Africa. Big 5, patterns, huts, thatched roofs- that is Africa. You think Africa, you know you are in Africa... So the goal with

creating a more African university is one which when you attend it you know you're in Africa. (Talya, FG4)

Talya's tone of expertise and support was contradicted by her adoption of a tourist stance in drawing on stereotypes of African culture. Rather than supporting Africanisation as structural change, she seemed to be supporting a superficial change with economic justification, as she seemed to reason that this "Africanisation" would offer a competitive advantage in attracting international students. Similarly, Caroline drew on a paternalistic economic justification of competitiveness to oppose Africanisation.

Everyone will always align themselves to the global power... So, having an African, like an Afrocentric curriculum, it's not feasible, it's not sustainable for Africa to be able to compete globally... I don't think it's the right thing to do, I don't think it's a good thing to do for the people of Africa. (Caroline, FG3)

In removing her reality from its African context, Caroline advocated for transformation as assimilation of UCT into Western systems, rather than as structural change towards Africanisation. As such, participants suggested that rather than allowing the structural transformation of UCT towards Africanisation, the education system and black students should become more "Western". This maintains white control at the expense of justice for black South Africans.

New South Africa as a meritocracy. Participants similarly opposed transformation at UCT by constructing non-racialism as access to equal opportunities and success as a result of individual characteristics of hard work or choice only, not structural and historical factors. For example, drawing on capitalist and liberal democratic notions of freedom of choice, Lucy argued that Western education is a superior choice and constructed Africans as consenting consumers of this system rather than victims of colonial imposition.

Sure the Western one has been developed over like thousands of years, so that would be one that you could really entrust in... And Africa has been using our Western culture, so shouldn't we be Westernised and use Western education in order to use like the whole Western culture? (Lucy, FG 3)

Exhibiting the individualism inherent in a capitalist system, white privilege was further dismissed by being understood as an individual rather than structural phenomenon (Wale & Foster, 2007). By positioning themselves as equally free consumers of a "normal" education system, participants neglected their lasting privilege from apartheid and colonial

systems. White privilege was equated with individual wealth alone, allowing participants who did not consider themselves wealthy to deny their privilege or others to consider their privilege *earned*, not by historical structural oppression, but through individual hard work and merit. Greg (FG4) expressed both, arguing, “My mom works hard every day to pay for everything that we have. I went to a public school, I worked hard, I got good marks to get in here as well.” In this way, he could position himself as not having undue privilege, paradoxically utilising the privilege of being able to ignore how “race” affects his life (Frankenberg, 1993). As such, participants effectively acknowledged their history only from the end of apartheid, leaving them unable to acknowledge the legacy of structural privilege which they have been afforded. This means that participants perceived black students’ disadvantage largely as a result of personal failings or inferiority in effort or choice.

Possibilities for action. Drawing on *Rational Control* left limited possibilities for action. It assumed that the university could only accommodate “ideas that come from the West” (Scott, FG4) and transformation was considered “an addition to the university, rather than changes to the university” (Scott, FG4). This prevented acknowledging and deconstructing whiteness. As such, the burden of transformation was transferred to black students to work harder to fit in, using “privileges that are just- are given to them at the moment” (Lucy, FG3), and the government, to improve the standard of basic education as “by the time we get to university, and we’re having these culture clashes and these language problems and academic failure and stuff like that it’s really too late” (Henry, FG3). This implies that “Westernisation” should simply occur earlier in education systems to reduce cultural disparity. In contrast, the responsibility of white students was negated as “through the policies that have been put into place, I think that it will naturally eventually fall into place” (Lucy, FG3).

Adopting a discursive set of *Rational Control* therefore limited participants’ abilities to imagine a different world. Participants constructed Western ideas as superior and South Africa as a meritocracy. Adopting subject positions of evolutionary “winners” or hard workers allowed white privilege to be dismissed as earned, under an assumption of non-racialism as “equal opportunities”. Transformation was understood as control rather than justice; the accommodation of black students into existing education systems rather than systemic change led by black people. Black students and government were expected to

assimilate into whiteness, which remained unacknowledged, and participants sustained feelings of power and comfort.

Defensive Rainbowism

A second discursive set comprises discourses which draw on humanitarian values to appear supportive of transformation, but use these values equally to defend whiteness. It stems from the Rainbow Nation discourse, the post-1994 ideal describing South Africa as a place where all “races” are equal and form a united national identity (Mandela, 1994). This discourse has been criticised for its potential for “smug rainbowism” (Cronin, 1999, p. 20), a shallow form of peace in which the struggle for equality is considered over before it has begun, leaving South Africa a pervasively racially unequal country well into its official democracy. *Defensive Rainbowism* positions South Africa as a former apartheid state now shared equally by white and black people and avoids acknowledging white privilege by positioning white people as victims in the New South Africa.

Transformation as maintaining colour-blindness. Situating themselves within the Rainbow Nation discourse allows white people to adopt a new South African identity devoid of association to a white racist apartheid identity (Steyn, 2001). Acknowledging “race” was accordingly considered a threat to the Rainbow Nation and participants drew on the discourse of colour-blindness to minimise the relevance of “race”. Participant constructed “race” as skin colour or “physical characteristics” (Greg, FG4) only, allowing arguments that “just because two people have a similar skin tone, doesn’t mean they’re gonna have any kind of relatable background, or a sense of cultural empathy with each other” (Dylan, FG4). This was reiterated by the suggestion that racial division is better explained as “You gravitate to people with natural interests or commonalities, that’s just how we are as people” (Gabi, FG2). These comments, which denied the differing histories, cultural resources and lived experiences of black and white people, rendered participants unable to acknowledge the power dynamics and real structural correlates of “race” caused by systemic racism and oppression (Biko, 1987; Steyn, 2001; Wale & Foster, 2007).

Drawing on this colour-blind discourse, participants therefore implied that non-racialism is attained by ignoring “race”. As described by Julia (FG2), “It’s when I look at someone, I don’t identify them by their race but as an actual person.” Participants rather attributed racial issues to factors like class, culture and language, evident in Lucy’s

description of class-related commonalities being barriers to interracial friendship rather than “race” itself.

Like, so I’m not gonna be walking up to as many black people wearing Nikes as I would whites and in a few years’ time, I’ll most probably be walking up to more blacks than I would whites wearing Nikes, you know? (Lucy, FG3)

Interestingly, Lucy seemed to accept more easily this “non-racial” discrimination or segregation, suggesting that colour-blindness can be comfortably used to disguise racism.

Other participants similarly distanced themselves from racism by condemning the racism of other white people with comments like, “I personally know a few Dutchmen who would be like, no just shoot them all” (Greg, FG4). Megan (FG1), after mentioning the racism of her white friends, said apologetically, “I hope that doesn’t say anything about [laughing] the quality of my white friends, but uh, um, you can’t stop the people you went to undergrad with [laughs].” In addition, participants distanced themselves from racism by mentioning their proximity to black people and supporting their own opinions with those of black friends. For example, Caroline (FG3) opposed the UCT admissions policy by saying, “I’ve had a lot of black friends saying they feel, kind of embarrassed that they got in on lower marks.” This allowed participants to dismiss dissenting opinions of black students.

By constructing transformation as maintaining colour-blindness, participants were therefore able to distance themselves from the salience of “race” in their lives and from their apartheid-era white identities by repositioning themselves as open-minded and “non-racial”. While this seems to promote positive values of acceptance and tolerance, it also ignores and perpetuates institutional racism. White students were prevented from experiencing discomfort over their privilege, without actually acknowledging it. Ultimately, colour-blindness and the image of the Rainbow Nation allowed participants to position themselves as “good whites” by denying the privilege they have been afforded by a history of white racism, claiming “I was born in 1995, I had nothing to do with apartheid, I’m sorry” (Holly, FG4).

Discourse of reverse racism. The ability to ignore “race” is itself a privilege which white people have as a result of the invisibility of whiteness (Frankenberg, 1993). This causes *white fragility*, a phenomenon whereby white people have lower stamina in acknowledging and discussing racial issues and so being made aware of whiteness prompts anger, guilt, or other defensive reactions (DiAngelo, 2011). Greg displayed this disproportionate anger when confronted with his whiteness by a campus worker.

... and I get off my bike and I'm rushing off to a lecture and one of the campus workers stops me and was like, "Hahaha, me and my friend were just saying how all of the white kids are the ones with the bikes, because your parents have bought it for you." And I actually stood like in awe and- [Talya: That's the shit thing-] was like, "I'm sorry, I took a gap year last year and worked 7 days a week to buy this for myself. I have to get to class, fuck you." (Greg, FG4)

This seems to suggest a deep denial, as despite his heated attempt to justify his privilege by referring working to earn money, Greg's comment actually asserted his privilege by referring to the privileged concept of a gap year.

To ease this discomfort and vindicate whiteness from its negative apartheid image, participants tried to establish a positive racial identity through a negation of blackness (Dolby, 2001). Dolby (2001) describes this as *white fright*, a construction of white groups as the victims of black retaliation and black power. For example, black student movements aimed at challenging whiteness were regarded as threatening to participants, who positioned themselves as victims of this "anti-Rainbowism". For example, Caroline portrayed white people as being made powerless victims by RMF.

... you suddenly have your back up against the wall and suddenly you feel a little less respectful towards people, a little less understanding, because it's just come-, it's too fast, it's too much. And you're suddenly having all your power taken away, and you're being called all these things and it's easy to get offended, as well. (Caroline, FG3)

Participants similarly drew on this discourse in claiming to be non-racial and open-minded, while blaming black students for preventing the realisation of the Rainbow Nation.

I get quite angry with the way that there is almost, like, they always single us out. I feel a little insulted when I walk around and "We are black" is written all over the walls at UCT... It upsets me that they don't say that like, we are the rainbow nation. (Lucy, FG2)

In attempting to ignore "race" beyond skin colour, racism was implicitly defined by participants as discrimination arising from prejudice, rather than as the oppression resulting from the embedding of prejudice in societal structures through the exercise of power (Operario & Fiske, 1998). Drawing on this definition, racial discrimination was seen as "reverse racism" towards participants, even when addressing the legacy of institutional

racism. Participants explicitly described affirmative action in UCT's admissions policy as a "process of reverse racism" (Gabi, FG3) and rather argued for "colour-blind" admissions on a basis of "merit," or marks alone.

Ja like if their goal is to say let's ignore race, and then they turn around and they say "You're black, you can get 20% less in your report and we'll still let you in", you know, what is that doing? (Greg, FG4)

Such statements defended white privilege and entitlement by ignoring the structural disadvantage of black student and instead positioning white students as victims of "reverse racism". As such, "race" was only ignored by participants inasmuch as it privileges white people, whereas a loss of white privilege was constructed as "reverse racism".

Possibilities for action. In constructing the Rainbow Nation as a present state rather than an ideal, participants assumed that transformation requires only the maintenance of the image of the Rainbow Nation and were unable to see beyond this image. As such, participants explained one of their roles in transformation as facilitating everyday interaction with black students, for example Simon (FG2) suggested, "... go to a pub and buy a guy a beer, something like that you know". This speaks to ideas of colour-blindness and white fright (Dolby, 2001), as befriending black students allows participants to assuage associations with racism and fears of black retaliation. Alternatively, participants adopted a victim stance, which justified over-activity or inactivity in transformation. While Benjamin (FG2) suggested that white students need to avoid being made voiceless by saying, "Or do we simply reverse it and say... now we want a strong black culture that makes us completely voiceless?", Caroline (FG3) described this as a reason for inactivity, as "however you try to compensate, or socialise with, they'll always be like you're trying too hard, you're trying to make up for something, or you're feeling racial guilt."

Participants also adopted a martyr stance, explaining how their commitment to transformation was opposed by "racist" white people or "reverse racist" black people. Lucy (FG3) argued that "because people have the excuse to say racism, they use it more often than they should. And it almost makes you scared to interact..." Conversely, Erica (FG3) argued that it was difficult to call out racism in white circles, as it leads to getting, "all kinds of comments about oh no, you're so liberal, you're bending over backwards, and like, no!" Transformation efforts were portrayed as scary or threatening to white students' wellbeing and Talya (FG4), for example, argued, "I- I had a role within this, and it burnt me."

Participants' responses also suggested a belief that acknowledging privilege or calling out racism somewhat positions them as "good whites" and to group them with the other "bad whites" is unfair. In making these sorts of statements, participants were able to ease racial guilt but justify apathy towards real change beyond acknowledging privilege. Positioning themselves as members of the "Rainbow Nation" but as victims within it therefore reinforced apartheid-era fears of black power and shifted the responsibility for transformation to others, while offering participants comfort in the South Africanisation of their white identity. As such, drawing on *Defensive Rainbowism* limited the roles that participants could take up in transformation, as well as the depth at which participants could understand their world and imagine a different one.

Conscious Allyship

A third and more marginally used discursive set comprises counter-discourses which recognise whiteness and privilege. These discourses draw on newer sources of knowledge including the writings of Steve Biko and Peggy Macintosh, and within the UCT context, RMF, Disrupting Whiteness and critical social science courses. Unlike the other two discursive sets, these discourses positioned South Africa in Africa and outlined roles for white students in challenging whiteness.

Non-racialism as racism. Unlike participants who drew on the *Defensive Rainbowism* discursive set, those who drew on *Conscious Allyship* acknowledged "race" as a construct with material and social correlates and rejected the idea of non-racialism as colour-blindness. Participants not only acknowledged whiteness and white privilege, but also demonstrated a willingness to do the "'race' work" (Erasmus & de Wet, 2003, p.25) by educating and challenging other participants. For example, participants mentioned how white students "don't ever really encounter somebody looking at us and saying oh you got here because you're black" (Lexi, FG2) and how ignoring "race" is a privilege, as "it's easy for us, as white people, to like brush off issues and say they don't exist 'cos like we don't live them, we don't experience them" (Mary, FG2). Participants also challenged other participants' claims of reverse racism, through arguments of a "kind of white supremacy worldwide" (Mary, FG3) and, "If you've historically your entire life had privilege, like from the beginning of being white [laughs], zillions of years ago, I mean, you can't really reverse that." (Jenna, FG3). Participants further acknowledged UCT as a "white" institution which afforded them privilege relative to black students. Jenna (FG3) spoke about how in group

work, white students were always considered the “person of authority in the group”, while Megan (FG1) explained that black students could only achieve success by playing a “model C school [laughs], uh accented role.” Racist double standards were also acknowledged by Hannah (FG1), who explained how white students “seem to have great respect for European lecturers, even though we can’t understand a word that they’ve said, but very little respect for other African lecturers.”

Accordingly, participants argued that ignoring “race” ignores institutional racism and white privilege and so “non-racialism is new millennium racism” (Matt, FG1). Colour-blindness was reinterpreted and countered as, “people have changed the definition of racism and it all is so they would no longer be labelled racist” (Megan, FG1). As such, participants spoke of how despite being raised as “born-frees” to believe, “don’t see colour, you are non-racial... let’s all just hold hands and sing ‘Kumbaya’ ‘round the fire” (Hannah, FG1), they felt that acknowledging and addressing “race” could help them to improve society. Participants therefore argued for a reinterpretation of non-racialism.

I mean I guess I’d argue that non-racialism should be a point where we recognise that races are different and that races are represented in the colour of skin, but it is in fact irrelevant. Like institutionally and subtly and in terms of all that stuff. (Joe, FG2)

Joe’s reconstruction of non-racialism, unlike colour-blindness, acknowledged the work to be done in achieving it. In acknowledging structural racism and the current salience of “race”, participants distanced themselves from both white apartheid racism and shallow white liberalism (Biko, 1987) to take up a subject position of privilege, a consciousness with implications for their interpretation of transformation.

Discourse of decolonisation. Exhibiting support for Rhodes Must Fall, participants described their dissatisfaction with the slow pace of transformation at UCT and advocated for deeper change. Participants argued that UCT’s transformation aim is simply to “get the right dynamics, the right quotas, let’s have 3000 of these, 4000 of those, let’s put them all together, and not speak about it” (James, FG1) but, “It really tries to ignore the problem. It really tries to pretend it’s doing something.” (Matt, FG1). Participants described UCT’s transformation efforts as being slow at the expense of black students’ suffering. The contrast of this discourse with other discursive sets was clearly illustrated. Drawing on *Defensive Rainbowism*, the increased focus on transformation at UCT was described as “it’s too fast,

it's too much" (Caroline, FG3), while drawing on *Conscious Allyship*, it was described as "a little bit too little, too late" (Megan, FG1).

In addition to rejecting UCT's transformation efforts as shallow, *Conscious Allyship* allowed participants to accept systemic change by constructing Africanisation of the university as meeting new standards and fulfilling new needs. Participants constructed it as a "unique opportunity to learn about Africa in Africa" (Hannah, FG1) and considered it not a lowering of standards, but rather an opportunity to consider "what we mean by 'standards'" (James, FG1). Although supportive of Africanisation from a justice perspective, participants seemed to doubt the ability of Africanisation to meet *higher* standards, exhibited by implications that Africanisation and global competitiveness were mutually exclusive.

... What do you actually think a university should be doing, what is a university's role. Is it to be on top of the list, of, of 100 African universities, or is it to actually be an African university, to actually be for the public community? (Matt, FG1)

And, I think the whole idea of, you know, Afropolitanism in a university is wonderful, you know, it sounds so sexy. You might not be able to beat Oxford but you can certainly, like, be a leading role in that [Matt: Mm]. (Megan, FG1)

This might be a result of the pervasiveness of dominant discourses in white communities that portray Africanisation as a lowering of standards, or the lack of exposure to Africanisation, leaving it fairly mysterious. Despite this, in contrast to *Rational Control* and *Defensive Rainbowism*, which opposed changes that would reduce white authority, participants positioned within *Conscious Allyship* recognised such changes as necessary within an evolving South African context.

Possibilities for action. By constructing colour-blindness as racism, white students as privileged and Africanisation as favourable, participants took up the subject position of white allies. Similar to the concept of "true liberals" (Biko, 1987, p.25), white allyship describes an identity of whiteness characterised by supporting black movements without dominating them and engaging in anti-racism in white communities (Brown, 2002). Participants argued that "if the issue affects black people, they know best how to fix it" (Mary, FG2) and they would "let... people of colour take the lead" (Joe, FG2) rather than "policing how people of colour need to be feeling" (Lexi, FG2). However, in expressing solidarity with black students, participants acknowledged their whiteness. They problematised white leadership in black spaces and described the importance of appropriate white activism, as "white voices can be

very loud in white communities, without taking up black space” (Matt, FG1). White racism was constructed as “something in you that you have to work against” (Megan, FG1) and something structural which all white people share a responsibility to fight. Instead of distancing themselves from white privilege, participants argued that they could use it by “not forgoing responding to a racist comment when you’re in an everyday space” (Matt, FG1). Accordingly, calling out racism, or the “braai interaction,” was a responsibility raised in every group.

So when you’re standing at a braai and somebody’s like, “Oh the quality at UCT is going down” [Megan: Laughs], addressing those points, being like that’s where –so people, like that haven’t grasped the idea of transformation yet, um, will be more open to speaking to another white person than talking with a black person, because obviously they’ll like shut off their mind to a black person. (James, FG1)

Participants expressed feelings of being ill-equipped for this and described their responsibility to “stay well-read and to have an opinion that is one that is thought through” (Jenna, FG3). They expressed a need for a “space to learn how to do, to be involved in these conversations” (James, FG1) in order to be able to challenge whiteness. Such a space was actually created by *Disrupting Whiteness* following this focus group.

As a relatively under-utilised discursive set, *Conscious Allyship* holds new possibilities for imagination and action. Drawing on newer writings and ideas to construct “race” as salient and to begin to accept systemic change led by black people allowed participants to position themselves as white allies. This consciousness allowed for imagination of new ways of being white in the context of transformation at UCT and in practice, would allow for action which aims to disrupt rather than protect whiteness. This allowed students’ feelings of direction and critical awareness to replace feelings of control or shallow comfort as in other discursive sets.

Conclusion

Three discursive sets emerged in white students’ talk of transformation at UCT: *Rational Control*, *Defensive Rainbowism* and *Conscious Allyship*. Understanding discourses as cultural resources with a reciprocal relationship with the construction of reality (Willig, 2008) allows explanation of how these discursive sets contribute to understanding the slow pace of higher education transformation identified in the literature. Drawing on *Rational Control* removed participants from their African context and justified white power and

privilege as consequences of inherent superiority or merit, while drawing on *Defensive Rainbowism* removed participants from their racialised apartheid history and denied privilege by adopting a victim mentality. Such positioning allowed participants to distance themselves from the negative connotations afforded to whiteness by colonialism and apartheid, but in doing so, reduced participants' consciousness of their white privilege in a post-apartheid South African university, despite their awareness of black South Africans' disadvantage. This allowed them comfort in their opposition or apathy to forms of systemic transformation beyond "integration". It also restricted participants' abilities for imagination, as a world beyond the status quo was rendered unknowable by the comfort found in acceptance of whiteness as "normal" and the propagation of this construction as reality. As such, participants would be unable to take up roles in transforming the white culture of UCT.

In contrast, participants drawing on the marginal discourses of *Conscious Allyship* were better able to acknowledge their own privilege and the harm of oppressive whiteness, and feel the discomfort related to it. Beyond discomfort, acknowledgement of their privileged position within the dominant whiteness of UCT allowed participants to come closer to imagining a different future, by showing the willingness to use their privilege constructively to challenge whiteness. Although participants could not fully challenge the discourse relating Africanisation to lowered standards, they were able to support Africanisation as a form of systemic change towards social justice. Furthermore, participants demonstrated a willingness to change the status quo and were able to imagine active ways in which they could challenge whiteness.

Non-racialism further illustrates of the differences in understanding afforded by different discourses. Not only is the concept itself perceived differently, but different understandings facilitated different forms of practice and subjectivity. Defined in *Rational Control* as "equal opportunities," participants were able to justify white privilege not as a result of structural racism, but as a result of white merit and hard work. Defined rather in *Defensive Rainbowism* as "colour-blindness," participants could adopt a victim stance by levelling accusations of reverse racism. Both understandings conveyed only shallow non-racialism, which does not allow systemic change (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). In contrast, defined in *Conscious Allyship* as a point at which "race" becomes structurally irrelevant, non-racialism becomes understood as a goal yet to be achieved, requiring the empowerment of black students and the disruption of institutional whiteness.

This implies that white students have limited resources to draw upon in understanding their position within a transforming South Africa. The relative dominance of *Rational Control* and *Defensive Rainbowism*, even within a sample group interested in discussing transformation, suggests that whiteness at UCT is supported by these systems of meaning which perpetuate it. This has implications for policy-makers in reconsidering UCT's strategic goal of non-racialism and how it is communicated by the university. This definition should be re-examined according to differences in understanding and what these understandings are able to accomplish. It also has implications for racial education at UCT, beyond that being undertaken by student movements. The disruption of institutional whiteness required to facilitate meaningful transformation necessitates the education of all associated with the university. White students need new discursive resources in order to amplify use of a discursive set of *Conscious Allyship* in understanding themselves and the world.

These findings give some insight into the gap between policy and practice in higher education transformation. This study suggested that discourses of *Rational Control* and *Defensive Rainbowism* restrict white students' participation in meaningful transformation activities, by hindering their abilities to imagine a world beyond whiteness. The scarcity of transformative discursive resources reflects a need for the culture of whiteness to change and such a change reciprocally requires a proliferation and expansion of discourses of *Conscious Allyship*. This implies that transformation at UCT needs to extend its gaze beyond transcending "race" through integration and support, towards applying critical thought and action to the disruption of racialised systems of privilege and power maintained by discourse.

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Appendix A

Excerpt from White Privilege Project (2015)

This is not about white students educating people on black struggles. This is about white students persuading other white students about their role in these oppressions. If this already makes you uncomfortable, if you're feeling defensive or misrepresented or that your own experiences are not heard, then come, let us talk and let us listen.

‘White Privilege’ has been a buzzword on campus in recent weeks, but what does it really mean? Does it mean that you're a bad person if you're white? Does it mean that you have done something wrong? Does it mean that you ought to feel guilty for the colour of your skin? Is it "reverse racism"? Is it taking a step back in our country's progress to a non-racial society?

No. Having white privilege does not make you a bad person, mean you've done something wrong, or that you should feel guilty. It is not reverse racism and acknowledging it is not a set-back for our country.

White privilege is how ‘white people benefit beyond what is commonly experienced by people of colour under the same social, political, or economic circumstances.’ This project is open to everyone, but is directed at educating white students about what white privilege is and how we can work to resist the structural oppression that continues today. This is not an attempt to say we can understand what it means to be black, but rather, that we must endeavour to understand how our privilege affects ourselves and others.

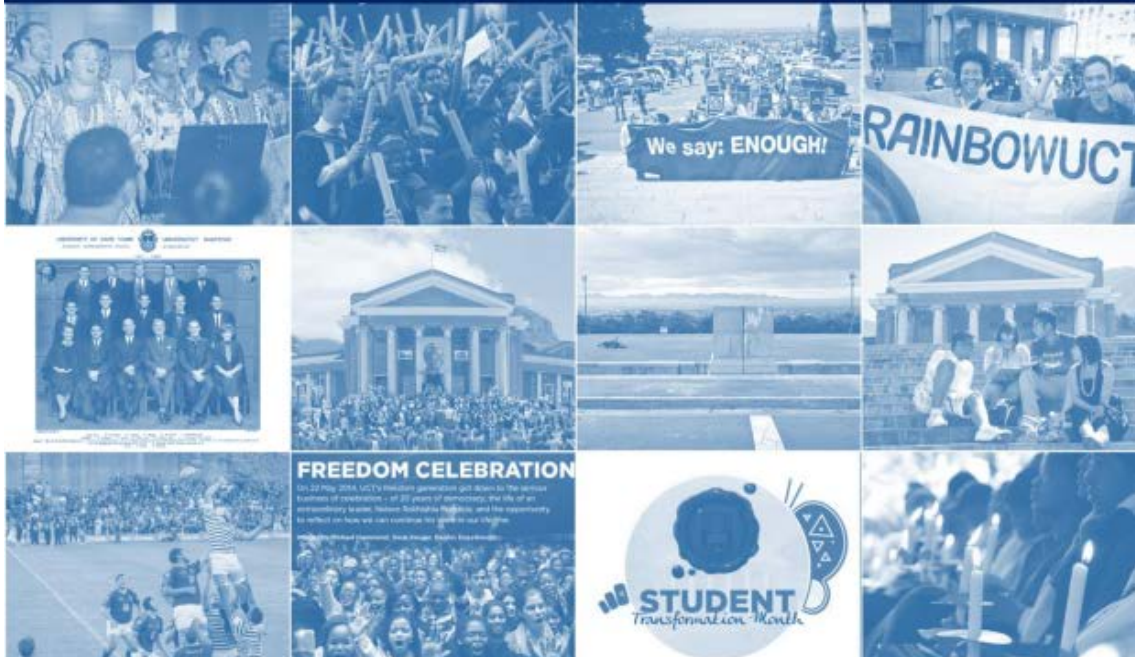
We have a duty to try and educate ourselves before demanding an explanation from others. This is a safe space to learn. We want to explore what white privilege means to us on campus. What white arrogance/ ignorance/ apathy is. The difference between experiencing racial privilege while still being subjected to economic difficulties. We want to explore what it means to be white in South Africa, what it means to be white at UCT. We want to explore what it means to be a white ally to #RhodesMustFall

We want to explore a topic that is often only discussed in an academic setting, without relevance to lived experiences. This is a safe space to learn for anyone who has questions about White Privilege and wants to know more. Bring yourself, your friends, and an open mind. Come. Let us talk. Let us understand. If you disagree with everything we have said, please come and tell us why. Let's create a safe space where we can explore racial privilege.

Appendix B
Advertisement for Participants

Let's talk about transformation!

Research participants needed for a Psychology Honours research project on the topic of transformation at UCT.



Details of Participation:

WHO: White students at the University of Cape Town.*

WHAT: One focus group discussion with other white students.

HOW: Go to www.surveymonkey.com/s/JX3BLVP to sign up, or email ruthurson@gmail.com for more information.

*This study aims to investigate the role of white students in transformation, to complement existing research with black students.

Have your say and contribute to improving the state of transformation at UCT!

Appendix C

Personal Details Form

Transformation Project Information Form

Personal details

Please complete this form by filling in your details. You will be contacted by the researcher shortly after submitting your results. All information will remain confidential.

Please note that participants in this research project need to be white, South African, and currently studying at the University of Cape Town.

*** 1. I understand that the goal of this research is to explore white students' experiences and attitudes around transformation at the University of Cape Town (UCT).**

I consent to providing my demographic information below and to being contacted by the researcher, Ruth Urson, using the means of contact provided below.

I understand that this does not bind me to participate in this research project and that I may withdraw participation at any time.

- Agree
 Disagree

*** 2. Please fill in your full name and surname.**

Name(s):

Surname:

*** 3. Are you a South African citizen?**

- Yes
 No

*** 4. Are you a UCT student?**

- Yes
 No

*** 5. Select your race.**

- White
 Black
 Coloured
 Indian
 Chinese
 Other (please specify)

***6. Select your current faculty.**

- CHED
- Commerce
- EBE
- Health Sciences
- Humanities
- Law
- Science

***7. Select the degree that you are currently studying towards.**

- Bachelor
- Honours
- Postgraduate diploma
- Masters
- Doctorate
- Other (please specify)

***8. Select your gender.**

- Male
- Female
- Other (please specify)

***9. Please fill in your contact details.**

Email address:

Mobile number:

Appendix D

Description of Sample

The following three tables indicate the composition of the total sample of 27 participants.

Table 1

Composition of Sample by Gender

Gender	<i>n</i>	%
Male	13	48.15
Female	14	51.85
Other	0	0

Table 2

Composition of Sample by Faculty

Faculty	<i>n</i>	%
CHED	0	0
Commerce	7	25.93
EBE	1	3.70
Health Science	2	7.41
Humanities	13	48.15
Law	1	3.70
Science	3	11.11

Table 3

Composition of Sample by Level of Study

Level of Study	<i>n</i>	%
Undergraduate	16	59.26
Postgraduate	9	33.33
Occasional	2	7.41

Appendix E
Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



Department of Psychology

White students' Experiences of Transformation at UCT

Focus Group Informed Consent Form

1. Purpose

You are invited to take part in a research project focusing on white students' views on transformation at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Conducting this project forms part of the conditions for completion of an Honours degree in Psychology.

2. Duration and Procedures

Participation in this research requires attendance of one 60 to 90 minute focus group session on the upper campus of UCT. In this session, the researcher will facilitate a discussion with you and about four other white UCT students, focusing on your views of various aspects of transformation at UCT. The session will be audio recorded.

3. Risks

Participation in this study does not carry significant risks. The discussion is not likely to cause distress, but if you feel uncomfortable, you may withdraw your participation at any time without any negative consequences. An optional debriefing will be held after completion of the study.

4. Benefits

You will be given a unique opportunity to share your opinions and experiences of transformation with other white students, and together, to form new ideas around transformation. Your participation will contribute to a broader understanding of the important topic of transformation in South African higher education, and may help to identify future directions for research and action. Undergraduate psychology students will receive 3 SRPP points upon completion of the focus group session.

5. Privacy and Confidentiality

Please be aware that in the group discussions, what you say will be heard by other members of the group. Although participants will be asked to respect confidentiality, be aware that full confidentiality of the group discussions cannot be guaranteed as the researcher cannot control what is said outside the group. However, strict precautions will be taken to protect your personal information. Personal information will be stored online in an account only accessible to the researcher. The audio recordings and transcripts of group discussions will be stored on the researcher's computer and will be protected by a password.

6. Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact Ruth Urson, 083 270 0287 or Dr. Shose Kessi, 021 650 4606.

If you have any questions about this research or your rights as a research participant and would like to contact the Chair of the Research Ethics committee, please contact Rosalind Adams at the Department of Psychology, University of Cape Town (UCT), 021 650 3417.

If you understand all of the above procedures, risks and benefits and you would like to participate in this project, please sign below:

Participant Full Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Agreement for Audio Recording

I agree to have my voice audio-recorded in the focus group discussions.

Participant Signature: _____

Confidentiality Agreement

I agree to keep all information shared in focus groups discussions confidential, particularly the names and opinions of other participants.

Participant Signature: _____

Appendix F

Focus Group Questions and Prompt Material

Prompt Material

I read the following excerpt from UCT's website, detailing UCT's transformation goals:

Making the university a more representative institution in terms of its academic and support staff, and of its student body; promoting enhanced intellectual diversity; transcending the idea of race, improving institutional climate and having an enhanced focus on our intellectual enterprise on African perspectives. UCT is committed to the goal of non-racialism.²

1. What do you understand by non-racialism?
 - a. Do you agree with this goal?
 - b. Has this goal been successful? Why or why not?
 - c. Is this goal possible?
2. I read UCT's definition, leaving it open for comment and discussion: A non-racial university is one where historical apartheid categories no longer have relevance to the probability that a student will be admitted or will pass; or to a staff member's likelihood of promotion.

Questions and Probes

1. What is the future of transformation at UCT?
2. As white students, what is your role in transformation?
 - a. Who is the focus of transformation efforts?
 - b. Do white students have a responsibility to transform the university?
3. How do you understand the role of "race" within the context of UCT?
 - a. Are students of different "races" treated equally at UCT? Please explain.
 - b. How successfully can a white student interact with people of different "races"?
4. What is white privilege?
 - a. Do you consider white privilege to play a role in your life?
5. How did you feel when you were asked to participate in this study, which invites only white participants to discuss transformation?

² UCT. (2014, July 3). UCT's new student admission policy explained [News article]. Retrieved from <http://www.uct.ac.za/dailynews/?id=8735>