CHAPTER FIVE: NON-RACIAL TRANSFORMATION AT WITS

This chapter deals with post-apartheid transformation at Wits. It does so by presenting a brief statistical review and then by focusing on academic staff’s meaning, perception, and experience of both working at Wits, and of institutional transformation (in a general sense and by reviewing specific transformation initiatives).

Statistical review of contemporary academic staff transformation

Over the past ten years there has been a significant shift in the demographic profile of Wits’ academics. In 1996, black academics represented 12 percent of all academics. By 2004 this had risen by 12.7 percent to 24.7 percent. The graph below illustrates that the most significant change occurred between 2000 and 2002, when the proportion of black academics increased by 6.3 percent over the two-year period. Since that time the proportion of black academics has begun to taper off and has remained fairly static between 2004 and 2005. What is particularly disconcerting is the decline in the number of African women academics, who have decreased dramatically from 63 in 2002 to only 49 in 2005 (See appendix A). However, more black academics are now at a senior level. In 2005, 16.4 percent of all academics at the level of senior lecturer and above were black, whilst in 1997 black academics only accounted for 7.6 percent of senior academics.

(Graph 1: Wits academics by race 1996 - 2005)

Over the ten years, the increase in the proportion of women academics has been less notable. In 2005, women had increased by 8.5 percent compared to 1996. However, women amount to a significantly higher proportion of total academics than black academics. Women account for 44.5 percent of all academics in 2005. As with black academics, there was a considerable (11 percent) increase in the proportion of women academics between 2000 and 2002. Interestingly, the proportion of women academics has also remained fairly static since 2003.

What is especially significant is that the number of African women increased from 23 in 2000 to 63 in 2002, after which time their numbers began to decline to 49 in 2005. What is particularly interesting is that in the 2004 – 2005 period, the number of white women increased by 14, the number of coloured women increased by only one, whilst African women decreased by ten, and Indian women decreased by one. Therefore, the marginal increase in the proportion of women is solely due to increasing numbers of white women. Furthermore, there is the issue of decreasing numbers of African women that the institution needs to attend to urgently.

The proportion of women amongst senior staff increased from 24.3 percent in 1997 to 32.5 percent in 2005. The following table illustrates the change between 1998 and 2005 in terms of academic staff per level, and by race and gender. It illustrates that black women increased the most within the category of lecturer, white women increased the most within the categories of senior lecturer and professor, black men increased the most
in the junior lecturer and associate professor level, whilst white men declined in all categories but most notably within associate professor and lecturer level. This illustrates that white women appear to have broken through the glass ceiling at the professor level, whilst black men are increasingly moving into senior positions. However, black women are moving through the system very slowly and remain concentrated at the lecturer level.

Table 7: Wits’ academic staff by race, gender and occupational level 1998 & 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>% Change per level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BW</td>
<td>WW</td>
<td>BM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Lecturer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
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<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>66</td>
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(The University of the Witwatersrand, 2005 and University of the Witwatersrand, 2003).

The current academic staff profile (2004)

Table 8: Wits’ academic profile by race, gender and occupation level in 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>HOS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(University of the Witwatersrand, 2004)

The above table reflects the race, gender, and occupational position of permanent academic staff at Wits. Fewer than 25 percent of academic staff are black; consisting of
14.7 percent African staff, 1.6 percent Coloured staff, and 8.3 percent Indian staff. 42 percent of permanent academics are women and 58 percent are men.

White women account for 75 percent of all women, whilst 13 percent are African, two percent are Coloured, and nine percent are Indian. White men also account for 75 percent of all men, whilst 16 percent are African, one percent are Coloured, and eight percent are Indian. Only 33 percent of black staff are in a senior position whilst the majority, 61 percent, of white staff are in a senior position.

Women predominate in the junior categories (associate lecturer and lecturer) whilst men dominate the senior categories (senior lecturer through to head of school). Black women are overwhelming in junior positions whilst white men are clearly over-represented in senior positions, such that 80 percent of black women are in a junior position, compared to 51 percent of white women, 49 percent of black men, and 27 percent of white men.

The Humanities faculty is 61 percent female and is the largest employer of women across all racial categories, although 75 percent of women in the faculty are white. Meanwhile, men are predominantly employed with the faculties of Science; Humanities; and Commerce, Law and Management – with black men found in greatest proportions in Engineering and the Built Environment; Science; and Commerce, Law and Management. However, Engineering and the Built Environment, and Science have the smallest proportions of black women.

Finally, 81 percent of staff are South African, six percent come from the rest of Africa, and 13 percent come from the rest of the world. The majority of black foreign staff come from the rest of Africa, whilst the majority of white foreign staff come from the rest of the world. Black men from the rest of Africa account for 32 percent of all black men, whilst white men from the rest of the world account for 21 percent of all white men.

These statistics illustrate that the institution, and seniority within the institution, is predominantly associated with white men. Black women experience the greatest
juniority. Faculty distinctions reflect the broader trends of the professions, and foreign staff comprise just under one-fifth, with foreign white staff being drawn from outside of Africa and foreign black staff being drawn from outside of South Africa but from within Africa.

**Meanings, perceptions, and experiences of working at Wits**

The academic experience, although fragmented, reflects the hierarchical nature of the institution. The institution is driven by an elite, whose distinctive features are racialised, gendered, class specific, and embodied within the particular ideology of conservative liberalism. Whilst this is held and maintained by the core, it has come to pervade the whole institution, as an expression of institutional culture which acts as a mechanism of inclusion or exclusion, shaping staff’s access to and experience of Bourdieu’s four types of capital. Inclusion is granted on the basis of assimilation, whilst those who remain institutionally identified as ‘different’ experience exclusion. Staff’s experiences of the institution, as discussed through the lenses of race, gender, class, and relationships to power structures, support the above assertion and are discussed below.

**Race and institutional racism:**

There was consensus amongst participants that non-racialism was the guiding ideology that Wits sought to adopt. The rationale being that in a post-apartheid South Africa, differentiation and exclusion on the grounds of race should not feature within the institution. However, participants differed in their perceptions and experiences of non-racialism. White participants felt that non-racialism was beginning to be realised because they could only identify a few cases that they labelled as overt racism. An illustrative example is:

I could only recall one racial…it was more an ethnic comment that ‘Palestinians should be processed as people pellets’, but otherwise…we don’t have racial jokes, it doesn’t happen (i26Wits:WW:CLM).
Meanwhile, black participants articulated numerous cases of overt ‘white-on-black’ racism, which reflect an expression of white intolerance and disrespect for people with different racialised experiences. One such example is:

the toilets in the building…get really disgusting and somebody was saying that black people don’t have servants surely they would look after the facilities better than those of us who have servants…I sat there thinking what the hell was that…who watches [to see] if a black person goes into a toilet and messes up…and comes out again, what does that mean? (i17Wits:CW:S)

Another participant raised the issue of verbal and physical abuse: “some of the [outsourced] workers complained about being beaten and being called a kaffir” (i14Wits:CM:H). These examples reflect an extreme variety of racism, for white participants their inability to recall many ‘extreme examples’ is often taken as evidence for the lack of racism at Wits. However, some black participants felt that there was significant pressure against discussing racism and even against using the term ‘racism’, as it was viewed as controversial and anti-Wits’ non-racial stance. For example:

I haven’t really commented to someone directly that I felt he or she was racist because I think that’s a word…that puts people’s back up and they come out fighting, so that the issue is ignored (i20Wits:BM:EBE).

White staff affirmed non-racialism as an ideal to aspire towards. This meant that for white staff, a first step in the personal practice of non-racialism was to not name race. For example, “we are not going to attract some of the good, its hard to be racist especially since apartheid has gone, but good black academics” (i13Wits:WW:S). This was further demonstrated by five (out of eleven) white staff who had difficulty in using the terms ‘race’ and ‘black’. In these instances the researcher was asked for permission to use these terms.

Whilst non-racialism was widely articulated it was also noted that it was an ideal, and that Wits was not there yet. Although white participants sought to not name race, their discussion clearly illustrated that ‘race’ was still a frame through which they understood society and the Wits community. For example, “there is a lot of support for our new VC and no one even notices that he is [pause], and I think his CV is good” (i13Wits:WW:S).
Erasmus and de Wet (2003) suggest that the absence of the naming of racism should not be taken as evidence for its absence, instead one has to look further into the practices described by participants to see where racism may occur. This position was shared by black participants who explained how the nature of racism or racist assumptions often take on a subtle character. In looking at participants’ discussion on the ways in which action, speech, and thought are racialised, it illustrates that the concept of race is of great importance, pervading participants’ interaction and experience of working at Wits.

For black participants, assumptions about race often act as a mechanism of exclusion through which they are marginalised and othered. A common example cited was the way in which students expressed their intolerance of black academics through an inability to comprehend language or accent. For example:

there was a bit of antagonism by some of the white students because they said they couldn’t hear him, they couldn’t understand him and I think that [they were] just not trying and unfortunately we are just not a non-racial society…[and] those preconceived notions about…peoples from Africa not being as good as Americans are right there in the forefront (13Wits:WW:S).

Another participant reiterates:

many students come to me wanting to be in my class because they can’t understand Mr X, they can’t understand his English so I think that is debilitating for the black staff and…you have so many requests…it’s hard to maintain a stance of integrity because they overwhelm you but some people just move, they vote with their feet (26Wits:WW:CLM).

In these examples, the expectation of a particular lecturer norm is clearly evident and the action taken illustrates the way in which students reinforce the notion of the university as Anglophone, and intolerant of diversity and difference (which effectively translates into non-white). Furthermore, the inability of staff to effectively deal with the situation also serves to exclude black staff and to reinforce racial discrimination and inequality.

Participants widely discussed the explicit and implicit assumptions that shape the nature of the institution and one’s experience within it. The most pervasive being the assumption of white superiority and black inferiority which, besides reifying black participants’ experiences as an ideological ‘other’, also had practical implication of marginalising black staff through exclusion from sites of voice and influence in decision-making, and
through procedural irregularities and double standards which limited progress and contentment within the institution.

Black participants felt that the perception of black inferiority was endemic within the institution. For example:

some will say some really stupid things like there aren’t really any black academics in South Africa. They’re just black journalists - show me a decent black academic. This is very high up people, and these things get around…and you discover that actually people are full of prejudice (i14Wits:CM:H).

Black participants discussed how this was evident in white staff’s response to affirmative action, whereby the capability of black staff was inherently denied and their progress was seen to solely amount to affirmative action. For example:

I applied for a…great scholarship, it was very difficult to get…I’m damned sure that [people said I] got it because [I’m] coloured. But it wasn’t affirmative action. But that’s the sort of attitude that whatever you do, if you’re a black woman and you go to someone and say won’t you fill in this form for me I’m applying for a scholarship, people will say of course you’ll get it, you will get it, because you’re black and a woman and you’re in a wheelchair, you know (i14Wits:CM:H).

This statement illustrates how affirmative action is perceived to be a form of job reservation or indiscriminate black advancement. This serves to reinforce the notion of black inferiority by denying black staff’s hard earned achievements. Furthermore, it illustrates how the notion of mobility in the workplace is still felt to be racialised, the difference being that it was previously whites who were secured of jobs, whereas now it is felt that black people are secured. White participants did not generally comment on the ambiguity of affirmative action rhetoric without corresponding institutional action to realise this. In fact, white academics were felt to wholly believe that affirmative action was firmly in place and were heard [in a staffroom with black and white staff] to say “…[white man] would be the best for the job but we all know…[black man] will get it” (i14Wits:CM:H).

Linked to this, black participants explained how black academics have to go beyond the norm and constantly prove their worth because white academics always “cast shadow on everything you do” (i09Wits:AM:H). This in turn led to black staff firmly advocating meritocracy in defence of their own achievements, to prove that they had got where they were through their own efforts.
Black participants also discussed how the negation of black people’s capacity was embedded in the perception that black people just chase the highest salaries. The upward mobility of black academics was felt to be an institutional crisis but not one that the institution took responsibility for, instead labelling it as an individual choice on the part of black people. In fact the ‘white’ institution appeared to give very little consideration to ‘push-out’ factors that forced black academics to leave.

Furthermore, black participants explained how such perceptions reflected the inability of white staff to understand that black staff come from a different socio-economic context and have different social responsibilities. For example, a participant discussing social pressures experienced by black staff elaborates:

their parents think that they are the redeemers, you go back home with… the cargo mentality, the idea of a returner… you are going to collect the goodies and you are going to take them back home. So if you can't deliver the goodies it places… a huge amount of not only pressure but stigma, and that idea of failure is always looming on your career. So you'll find a number of them end up moving out either going into industry or going to government (i10Wits:AM:H).

However, an inspection of workplace experience illustrates that it is not only external pressures that contribute to the revolving door syndrome. Black participants felt that no respect or consideration was given to their socio-economic, cultural, and political views. For example:

there is this bizarre idea that everyone on campus… is just a colleague, and if you happen to have a dark skin… they just don’t recognise you. It’s this bizarre idea of being non-racial… Colleagues will often say… we really like having you around... we’ve never really thought of you as a coloured… we just see you as a human being… We just ignore your history, we deny that you actually exist… but [white] people want to be colour-blind they just want to ignore hard historical realities. Well please grow up, this is not what it is about, I actually went through a real experience, you know (i14Wits:CM:H).

Another staff member reiterates:

there are a lot of [white] people who talk to me as if I am a white person, I think they get it either from my level of education and that I probably interacted more with them but I get irritated when they think I have grown up in the same environment and shared the same experience, it did not happen (i17Wits:CW:S).

This illustrates how expectations of sameness have the consequence of reifying otherness through lack of recognition of difference. Furthermore, assumptions of similarity were often manifested in offensive statements, particularly within the arena of national politics.
For example, black participants were angered by the way white staff pathologised black leadership and held up Tony Leon as the nation’s redeemer.

The alienation and marginalisation of black staff was not simply effected through ideological difference but also through the modus operandi of the institution. Institutional practices actively reaffirmed the sidelining of black staff. For example, the hierarchical nature of the institution meant that black staff were denied access to sites of voice (particularly faculty boards and senate), and as such were unable to effectively raise their concerns and were unable to shape university policy:

you constantly feel that ‘that belongs to them and I’m not part of the process’, and once you are not part of the process…you develop a strong sense of apathy towards everything that is around you (i09Wits:AM:H).

In 2004, only 16 percent of senior academic staff were black. Furthermore, 63 percent of black academics were in junior positions (University of the Witwatersrand, 2004). As a result the majority of black staff are denied access to sites of voice. None-the-less, one should not confuse the experience of black staff with that had by junior staff, as senior black academics also expressed voicelessness even if they had access to sites of voice. For example: “they only listen to me because I am naturally arrogant and demand to be heard” (i09Wits:AM:H). This illustrates that power within the institution has largely remained racialised and remains within white hands.

In discussion on why black staff leave Wits, it became apparent that the institutional culture and procedural inequalities were key reasons for staff’s departure. Double standards, lack of recognition, and biased selection committees were frequently cited. The hiring of an under-qualified white person in the place of a more or equally qualified black person was frequently mentioned. Black participants also felt that the institution tended to individualise or pathologise the departure of black academics, thereby stressing pull-factors (such as higher salaries outside of academia) and negating institutional responsibility for push-out factors.

Black participants felt unable to publicly criticise the institution because they were likely to be labelled as close-minded or racist in their approach. A number of participants
explained that the lack of safe sites of expression were a reason for their silence and their lack of public challenging of racist assumptions. In some instances participants also spoke of personal experiences, or of witnessing cases, where those [black academics] who had spoken out were accordingly labelled a racist. A participant relates:

they have to start with genuine openness, genuine willingness to talk...open discussions on what the problems are, but its very difficult, I wouldn’t want to open my mouth because I don’t want to make a bloody fool of myself and tell certain people what I really think...forget it, the effort of trying to persuade someone who’s not really going to be persuaded [is not worth it] (i14Wits:CM:H).

Another participant explains why it is difficult to confront assumptions:

the staff here are mainly predominantly white and...you get accepted if you have that ethos or that way of thinking...But what I do see is that where somebody, and it doesn’t only apply to the black staff, but when somebody would [voice difference], you very gently [get] pushed to the side. It is a very subtle process. I think very interestingly subconsciously part of me is afraid of that because this university is a huge place and if you don’t have your little circle of support you’d drift in a large, large sea, and maybe that is the reason why I don’t challenge a whole range of ideas (i17Wits:CW:S).

Other reasons cited for the lack of challenging assumptions included: apathy, as a result of exclusion from decision-making structures; lip service without real action; and the lack of confidential (safe) public forums. A number of participants also described the breaking of confidence as a reason that prevented their further active engagement with the institution and its transformation process.

Lastly, due to the lack of appreciation of difference and the experiences had by black staff, black participants felt that they were the ones who carried the burden of race and engaged in race-work. Black participants often rationalised why white academics may exhibit racist assumptions, for example, because of their age and life experience.

However, there was a noticeable absence of reflection by white staff on what it means to be white (whiteness). White participants engaged with the perception that only black people are raced. This was reflected in white participants’ discussion that the university should increase opportunities for cultural interchange. White participants were of the opinion that this would allow the opportunity for black people to articulate their grievances. White staff did not engage with their own racialised experiences, except to occasionally state how they could improve their tact according to the needs of black staff.
In some instances, victim blaming lay behind this understanding, for example:

I think the white people at Wits are very conscious of equality, we mustn’t treat other people differently just because they are another colour, that is not a problem. The problem is the other way and that is that because certain people have been through painful experiences because of their race that they are sensitive (i12Wits:WW:S).

Another participant felt that black staff contributed to their own marginality by regarding white people as suspicious and grouping together in the staff room.

A minority of white staff engaged with their racialised experiences. One such example is reflected by a white man who wished to be liberated from the oppressive label of the ‘pale male’ in post-apartheid South Africa. Another white woman reiterated how she would not like her race or culture to determine her mobility and opportunities within the institution. However, these appear to be limiting as they are self-serving and secure continued privilege for the participant, they do not lobby for a positive change in the experiences had by black staff.

A minority of black staff also hoped that they received no special treatment because they were black. However, this response is likely to be a defensive mechanism in response to the perception that affirmative action is reverse discrimination.

Some black participants did discuss positive experiences: “some of my best friends are the [white] women in my department” (i06Wits:IW:H). Another participant felt that she had received adequate institutional recognition in order to feel that the institution was improving. Some participants felt that happiness depended on one’s own disposition, for example:

I haven’t found the culture to be alienating...maybe it also has to do with me that basically when I come to work, I come to work. I am here in my office doing my work...I don’t come to work hoping to make friends and so I’m fine (i16Wits:AW:H).

The implicit meaning in this example illustrates that Wits is not actually a place where some black staff feel welcomed, or where they receive positive affirmation. Another participant asked “what more can they do, it is up to those being integrated to adapt”
(i19Wits:AW:H). This reflects the predominance of an expectation of assimilation on the part of those who have been ‘accepted’ into Wits.

These findings illustrate that the academic workplace is still racially segmented because black staff still account for the minority (25 percent), black staff are primarily in junior positions (63 percent), power still lies in the hands of senior white men, and procedural inequities continue to favour white academics at the expense of black academics. In addition, the institutional culture of liberalism coupled with racism also acts to actively exclude black staff. Furthermore, white staff are largely ignorant of how the workplace experience is racialised, and therefore (consciously or unconsciously) actively contribute to the negative experiences had by black staff.

This report has largely spoken of black and white experiences because there was little differentiation between African, Coloured, and Indian participants’ dialogue; and sharp differentiations were seen between white and black participants’ dialogue. None-the-less, white participants critiqued the indiscriminate use of the term ‘previously disadvantaged’ within the institution as it ignored differences in class, different experiences had by black staff, and the incorporation of black staff from outside of South Africa at the expense of local black staff. White participants discussed how in the past, selection committees just focused on black people because they were black and how this damaged the university’s reputation:

one of the candidates was a black man…and his CV was definitely appalling…He looked like he shouldn’t even be a full professor and that’s not the sort of person you want for your VC…That did not help Wits in its transformation policy, to put somebody up there and it looked like it was because of his skin colour, and that may not have been the reason but that is what it looked like to those of us further away from the process (i13Wits:WW:S).

White participants felt that this essentialism within the category of ‘black’ had to be further engaged with in order that “transformation actually benefits those who it is meant to, South African blacks [meaning Africans]” (i07Wits:WW:HS).

**Gender and institutional sexism**

As has been illustrated, the institution has historically practiced a segmented academic labour market. This process was clearly gendered, as women were deemed unemployable
after marriage, a principle which was never applied to men. Women were also treated as a reserve army of labour, especially during World War II, when they moved into the university in increasing numbers but in temporary junior positions (some of which were continuous). Women were subjected to lower wages and forced to take early retirement, and for the few women professors, Wits clearly symbolised a ‘man’s world’. As the findings will illustrate, women at Wits in the 2000s continue to see the institution as gendered and continue to feel as though they are second-rate citizens. None-the-less, it is important to note that as a collective, the category of women has increased substantially to comprise 42 percent of permanent academic staff in 2004, although, the majority of women (58 percent) remain junior in rank and only eight percent are employed as full professors or heads of schools.

Participants felt that the institution remained ‘old guard’ as the power balance was still tipped in favour of men, there was a lack of understanding of women’s issues and there was an expectation of assimilation. Women participants felt institutionally excluded because they were numerically and culturally a minority. Women discussed how the work environment took on a gendered nature, in which different styles of working were seen to be more ‘feminine’ or more ‘masculine’ and therefore more conducive to men or women. Women academics described the environment as predominantly masculine, characterised by male bravado and individualism. Women felt that their identity was negated, as assimilation into the dominant (masculine) mode of functioning was expected. For example:

To get ahead, you’ve got to act like a man in a dress, you have to learn the male game, you have to talk like men, behave like men in meetings, you have to assert power and authority in the way they do, and then you’re going to get ahead (i03Wits:WW:OTR).

Although this was one way in which women could progress within the institution, women criticised this approach describing it as “fak[ing] it in the male environment” (i03Wits:WW:OTR).

Women also felt that the predominance of men, particularly in decision-making structures, ensured that “the overwhelming way of functioning is male”
Therefore, the lack of women’s representation in sites of decision-making led women to feel their concerns were peripheral or silenced, in this way women felt as though they had no institutional support.

Women also explained how men were carried forward by the ‘boys’ club’ network of which women were not a part. Women felt excluded from these networks because of the differences between ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ ways of doing things, and also because men generally had less work to do in the home and for the family, which enabled them to partake more easily in social and academic network building during the evenings and weekends.

The ownership of the Wits’ culture by white men is operative especially within decision-making spheres where the predominance of white men is seen to ensure that white men hold the most power. However, at the time of research it appeared as though a women’s network was beginning to emerge, championed by several senior women of which Professor Margaret Orr and Dr Wendy Orr are prominent examples. However, women experienced a degree of intolerance by men to their assertion of the patriarchal nature of the institution. Although men were cognisant of the existence of glass ceilings within the institution, they denied that patriarchy was the root cause. This perception bears itself out in several discussions with men academics.

Women also spoke of double standards, particularly in the case of promotion, where the institution had no clear guidelines of what was expected. They experienced that each time they reached an allotted position, the goal posts shifted. In this way women felt institutionally marginalised. Furthermore, women criticised the use of tutor and lecturing tracks, as the tutor track was predominately filled with women, and mobility to the level of professor was effectively curtailed by procedural inequities. In addition, this system was seen to divide academic work into ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ work, with teaching seen as soft women’s work, whilst research was seen as hard men’s work and was given more institutional recognition.
Women on the lecturing track also felt that their contribution to the core business of the institution was devalued or not recognised. A participant discussed how a collaborative (group) PhD project was published in her absence and bore no acknowledgement of her contribution (i22Wits:WW:S). A black woman participant explained how power relations were endemic in collaborative academic writing, with black women’s work often being used to give empirical credibility to white men’s theoretical or conceptual frames (i23Wits:CW:OTR). This illustrates that the production of knowledge reifies white and men academics’ superiority, whilst devaluing black and women academics through their junior partnership and through dismissal of, in this case, preferred methods.

Women also explained how, in general, they had greater workloads than their male counterparts. Much of this was linked to multiple work shifts and women undertaking productive and reproductive work within the workplace. Particularly in regard to nurturing students and fellow academics, women felt they had more interaction and were more often sought out for advice and support. The assumption that all academics are the same and the failure to appreciate women’s burden of gender meant that the institution failed to rectify workload imbalances and ultimately reinforced the status quo.

Aside from women’s experience of academic marginalisation, women also spoke of the environment as being characterised by overt sexism and sexual harassment, which were largely seen as unproblematic by both men and the institution as a whole. Women gave examples of inappropriate comments, stares, and touching that made them feel discomfort and were deemed as inappropriate within the workplace. One woman explains:

I was standing at the photocopier machine and he walked up to me and bumped himself into me, quite a few times, and I was thinking why the hell do you think you can do that to me, I am your colleague? (i26Wits:WW:CLM).

Furthermore, women felt alienated in their experience of the institution, not only because of the way in which men excluded them, but also because they could not draw support from senior women colleagues. For example:
her attitude is ‘I got here under my own steam and I don’t see why I should help you, as a woman, to do the same thing’…that is the only way I can interpret her behaviour (i07Wits:WW:HS).

In a number of cases, participants felt that senior women actually were an obstacle to other women’s advancement because of their lack of understanding, unsupportive nature, and tendency to promote men over women in all instances. For example:

whatever I tried to do…was not recognised…whereas one of my male colleagues was promoted without any publications at all…and no conference presentations but on the basis that his administration was excellent (i07Wits:WW:HS)

Furthermore, an example was given where a woman worked for ten years in one department without promotion, and yet when she transferred to another sector she experienced promotion almost instantaneously. In some cases, participants explained this as senior women not wanting to be seen as parochial, but its effects were criticised because women felt it had directly hindered their progress. In addition, it reinforced male dominance, as men themselves continued to benefit from informal parochial networks (the boys’ club).

A large concern of women participants was managing their multiple work shifts both within the workplace and at home. Women explained how institutional inflexibility presented them with an ultimatum of ‘have a career or children’. Much the same assertion that the institution made in the 1930s against the continued employment of Mrs Ballinger. None-the-less, many women participants were developing a career and raising children, although several described the institution as ‘family-unfriendly’. Single mothers, mothers with small children, and mothers with disabled children experienced particular difficulty in managing work and childrearing.

A participant explained how the costs of raising her disabled child necessitated that she have several jobs, but the institution showed her little compassion in evaluating her performance output, particularly in regard to research and publications. Women academics also felt the university was unequipped to deal with family life, in terms of the absence of a crèche, childcare assistance, and the accompanying flexibility needed for women academics to be successful. It is thus suggested that the family-unfriendly nature
of academia, in this case Wits, perpetuates the historical status quo in which white men had, and largely continue to have, the least social pressures and the most social support to enable them to be successful in their careers.

These findings illustrate that the institution and its (male) members alienate women academics through both cultural and structural academic exclusion. The predominance of the notion of assimilation shows that ‘difference’ is either not recognised at all, or is articulated as other and therefore actively excluded. This illustrates that increasing the numbers of women is not the complete solution to improving the experiences of women.

This discussion has largely focused on the experiences of women. This has been because women actively spoke about their experience of gender whilst men, if they did engage with gender, spoke mainly of childcare issues and the perception of glass ceilings that their female colleagues encountered. Womanhood was also essentialised in the underlying assumptions that not conforming to a specific definition of womanhood is to “fake it”. In addition, womanhood was not deconstructed on the basis of different racialised experiences, except that there was wide acknowledgement that “black woman have the double whammy”, having two experiences of marginalisation (i03Wits:WW:OTR). In this way the institution understood identity interaction as additive rather than cumulative.

A silence in the data is that the experience of being a 'man' was rarely deconstructed. Instead, the perception of manhood was articulated as an essentialised uniform experience. To a limited extent there is some identification of difference between men. However only black men articulated difference, which was understood as the effect of racialised experience rather than a variant within gender.

As the section on transformation shall show, despite still being institutionally alienated and marginalised, women have made considerably more inroads into Wits (both historically and in the contemporary period) than black academics. Academics criticised this, feeling that white women, to a large extent, had been the beneficiaries of
transformation at the expense of both black academics and, in particular, black women academics. This was due to the fact that white women’s experience of whiteness was seen as more unifying and less threatening to white men than black women’s identification with blackness and womanness.

The role of class:

Wits has had a complicated engagement with class. Historically, it has been mostly middle-upper class students who have studied post-graduate degrees and therefore been able to proceed towards an academic career. Murray notes that Wits has historically been a facilitator for upward mobility for whites on the Witwatersrand. Furthermore, in the context of the post-apartheid period, Wits has contributed to the upward mobility of black students. However, Wits has also reinforced class inequality through its employment policies, procedures, and practices (see chapter two).

Participants engaged with the concept of ‘class’ in three distinctive ways. Firstly, as a set of society-wide, socio-economic positions and experiences. Secondly, as the distinctive constituencies that make up the institution (academic staff, management staff, administrative staff, outsourced support staff, and students) and thirdly, as the subdivisions within academic staff themselves. I will touch on all three of these understandings, but concentrate particularly on issues pertaining to academic staff, as this is the focus of this report.

Firstly, black participants engaged with student issues in order to reflect on the role of the institution in terms of broader social transformation. To this end, black participants felt that race-based transformation had been achieved within the student body, yet it was felt that class-based transformation had occurred to a minimal extent. Participants were very critical of recent developments at the institution (McDonaldisation, internationalisation, urbanisation, and financial aid cuts), feeling that these sought to reverse class-based transformation and create an embourgeoisement of the student body. The effect of these processes was to narrow the contribution Wits made to broader social transformation.
Secondly, participants felt that the university was highly stratified according to ‘class’, and that these divisions fragmented the university experience and reduced collective support between different constituencies. This argument was used to account for the insufficient rallying of support amongst academics for outsourced workers. A number of black participants were critical of the institution and its failure to defend the respect and dignity of outsourced workers in the process of restructuring. One participant exclaimed “he [the vice chancellor] is presiding over a slave farm in post-apartheid South Africa!” (i14Wits:CM:H). This issue has implications regarding who transformation at Wits is for, as well as Wits’ contribution to broader social transformation.

Participants also discussed the divisions between managers and academics, neither of who (it was claimed) know or respect each other’s needs. Participants’ discussion reflects an element of defeat. The force of managerialism appears to have weighed staff down, and there is a sense that all the restructuring at Wits is evidence of the victory of managerialism and the marginalisation of academic control. Although, in regard to academic transformation, power does not solely lie in the hands of management. Participants discussed interaction with administrators to a limited extent, except to complain of increasing inefficiency, whilst a few acknowledged the appalling conditions that administrators were subjected to, bearing the brunt of all the institution’s inefficiencies, and the frustration this commands from staff and students alike.

Thirdly, participants also discussed the stratification of academics themselves along the lines of junior and senior staff. Differentiation in salary, qualification, title, institutional influence, and (sometimes) ideological outlook were key factors that were seen to separate junior and senior staff. Participants described the environment as rigidly hierarchical, much more so than other institutions, on the continent and abroad, that they had worked at. Staff discussed how all decision-making structures were dominated by professors, who effectively controlled all decisions and imposed decisions on junior staff with very little/no consultation (despite their being the majority).
Staff explored how the exclusion of junior staff meant that black and women academics bore the brunt of institutional marginality and exclusion from sites of voice. Participants added complexity to this debate stating that the experience of black and/or women academics was not merely a reflection of senior and junior divides. Senior staff, even professors, who were black and/or women, complained that their access to sites of voice was limited in that they had a presence but little influence within these structures. For example:

It’s a question of being given the space to be heard, to have a voice...you can have so many numbers here but if the power game or the power relations are such that you still don’t have a voice then it doesn’t make sense (i09Wits:AM:H).

None-the-less, junior academics felt that senior academics had a different class experience that was characterised by maintaining their control and securing their interests – which were felt as being detrimental to junior staff. This is reaffirmed by participants who criticised senior colleagues for their lack of support of junior colleagues. Furthermore, participants explained how colleagues’ attitudes changed after the completion of a higher degree:

it is very interesting, how the further up people go along the ladder, the more difficult they become to work with...when somebody gets a doctorate, they assume a certain status (i17Wits:CW:S).

Participants also engaged with the socio-economic background of academics. White participants felt that academics largely originated from similar socio-economic positions although educational privilege was often bifurcated along the lines of race due to apartheid education legislation. However, black academics criticised white staff for not being aware of the different class experiences that black staff have. For example, a participant felt she was unable to reciprocate social events because none of her colleagues would want to go to Soweto.

In another example, an African participant explained how higher education was seen as a site of ‘redemption’ and that white staff were unaware of the pressures facing black staff because of their support networks. This reflects that white academics are largely middle-upper class whilst black academics may come from a wider range of class positions. This in itself, can lead to tension between academics based on different worldviews and different lived experiences.
Finally, the collective class position of academics is seen to have an effect on their organisation. Academics themselves are seen to act in class-specific ways:

South African academics belong to professional associations, they probably associate unionism with black chaos and violence and destruction and so therefore you are not in a union, you are in a professional group, but that posses limitations on your level of social engagement and so as a force they are [weak] (i18Wits:CW:H).

This questioning of academics’ capacity to act collectively and proactively is a historical continuity, as Murray mentions several times when a matter was investigated but no action was taken (for example, in defence of Mrs Ballinger). It is interesting to note that the majority of academics are assumed not to have histories of struggle or activism.

These findings illustrate several things. Firstly, one cannot reduce the experience of academics solely to race. Gender and class play a key role in shaping academics’ experiences of the institution. Secondly, the fragmentation of the institution (whether into occupational constituencies or into junior and senior staff) functions divisively to separate out interests. Thirdly, the hierarchical nature of the institution and the strict regulation on mobility imposes extra challenges to the transformation process. This will be further elaborated on in chapters seven and eight.

**Procedural inequities:**

Participants felt that the gendered and racially segmented nature of academia was maintained, not only through institutional culture, but also through procedural inequities. Issues of particular concern to participants were: the ‘upward floating colour bar’ which affected both black and women academics in regard to hiring and promotion, promotional ambiguity, ineffectual human resources policy, the lack of transparency in decision-making, and the breaking of confidentiality.

Black and women participants provided several examples of where a less qualified white and/or man candidate was appointed or promoted over an equally or higher qualified black and/or woman candidate. This contradicts the widespread claim that quality and excellence would not be compromised in hiring and promotion. It was felt that informal
caucusing and networks were the key mechanisms through which the appointment of a less qualified candidate occurred. The most influential networks were seen to be controlled by, and expressive of, white people and men’s interests. Therefore, participants critiqued the degree to which selection committees were able to practice equality.

Participants also criticised the hiring procedure, in which Human Resources’ (HR) representatives observe the interview process but not the final discussions that determine the outcome. Therefore, the procedure was felt to be inadequate as HR was unable to effectively ‘check and balance’ the process and as a result endorsed the employment of less qualified white staff. This illustrates how the institution continues to actively discriminate against black and/or women academics despite the appearance of accountability.

Black and women participants also spoke of how rising academic standards affected their progression within the institution. Participants were of the view that standards were not only being maintained, but were increasing - with the consequence of excluding black and women academics, in what appeared to be evidence of an upward floating colour bar in academia.

Participants also discussed how the notion of black inferiority resulted in “a lot of impatience with black scholars”, some of who work on their PhDs for ten years without significant recognition (i09Wits:AM:H). Women also complained of institutional ambiguity which meant that there were no clear expectations, especially in regard to promotion. Therefore, the work chances of black and women academics were institutionally constrained by active discrimination, exclusion from networks, and lack of access to information.

Furthermore, participants were also highly critical of the lack of transparency and accountability in most spheres of decision-making, and the way they were effectively excluded from these (as junior staff). Participants also felt that although there were
methods of recourse, these were not credible. The breaking of confidentiality and the leaking of personal information given in an allegedly confidential forum were the main reasons why participants felt these were discredited.

This section on staff experience has shown that the institution has experienced some change, with increasing numbers of black and women academics and the establishment of processes to regulate hiring and promotion. However, the continuation of exclusionary institutional culture, an impenetrable hierarchy, and ineffective application of policy or irregular practices have curtailed this progress.

The following section moves from the general to specific by focusing explicitly on institutional attempts to transform and how these are engaged with or received by academics.

**Meanings, perceptions, and experiences of academic transformation**

This section begins by exploring institutional responses to academic transformation, in the form of both general and programmatic responses. These responses are then evaluated.

**General Transformation Attempts**

‘General transformation attempts’ looks at the institution’s commitment to transformation, as borne out through changing staff demographics and action taken to engage with transformation at the institutional level.

Participants noted that progress had been made with regard to academic staff demographics. However, there were also many limitations discussed. Firstly, demographic change has been experienced as a slow process. Secondly, participants noted that the bulk of change had occurred within the junior ranks of academia, with insufficient change in higher echelons. This is offset at the highest levels by the vice chancellor and deputy-vice chancellor appointments. However, the positions of associate
professor, professor, head of school, and dean exhibited little change. As has previously been noted, it is this layer of staff that are seen as the ‘gate-keepers’ of the institution and thus demographic change at this level should be a priority.

Participants questioned whether new high-level appointments were token. The ability of the senior executive to effect transformation is very much dependent on commitment from senior academic staff. Participants questioned whether new appointees had this support because they were not always integrated into the dominant networks and because the institution demanded assimilation into existing methods of practice. In some instances, participants discussed how radical restructuring of the institution’s top decision-making structures would be the only way that new appointments could effectively carry through a progressive transformation agenda (i14Wits:CM:H).

Participants expressed support for the vice chancellor and his vision for transformation. In particular, participants spoke of his multi-cultural vision, in opposition to the institution’s narrow understanding of transformation as demographic change (i24Wits:WM:H). Participants also affirmed that the vice chancellor must capitalise on his position and become the principal champion for transformation (i05Wits:WM:S). However, criticism was expressed in regard to outsourced workers, student funding, and the re-emergence of institutional elitism. It was felt that these had deep implications for both the institutional and national transformation agenda.

White participants were also concerned about the employment of foreigners, feeling that insufficient recognition was being given to local academics. Furthermore, black participants questioned whether these appointees would articulate criticism of the institution given that their positions were dependent on obtaining a work permit. Participants were also concerned about the continuity of structural and institutional culture barriers which were seen as constraining the progression of black and women academics.
Participants briefly discussed their interaction with the Transformation & Employment Equity (T&EE) Office. The senior executive placed great faith in this office, with regard to its commitment to transformation, as well as its deep knowledge of the institution and how it was dealing with transformation. Participants within faculties acknowledged attempts to keep them informed via communiqué and pamphlets. However, participants were critical of the publication of demographic statistics, which were too generalised to be meaningful and hid many of the inequities within departments and schools.

A limited number of participants reflected on the Institutional Culture Survey that the university had commissioned. Amongst the senior executive, there was a great deal of referral to the report which shaped their understanding of the institution and increased their awareness and appreciation of diversity. A few participants noted that there had been prolonged debates on whether to release the report (it can now be found on the T&EE website). Much criticism was raised in regard to the methodology used in the institutional culture survey which was felt to pre-determine the findings. Furthermore, participants questioned whether the numeric domination of the institution by white men necessarily equated to patriarchy. For others, this resistance and criticism was to be expected as the report challenged the status quo.

Participants discussed how the institution had sought to respond to the issues raised in the survey through its programmatic responses run by the Centre for Learning and Teaching Development (CLTD). Participants also discussed the possibility of more broad-based responses, in the form of diversity workshops, to be held at the school-level (at the time of research, these were merely in the conceptual phase, and to date implementation has not yet been effected).

The Vice Chancellor’s Office, the T&EE office, and the CLTD ran three transformation seminars (with guest speakers) during 2003, to facilitate debate around transformation. However, the agenda and discussion focus was reset by the audience, who often embarked on discussions around student rather than staff transformation, on equity versus excellence, and on the practicality of diversity training amongst professionals such as
academics. In addition, several members of the audience reflected an expected rather than an interested presence. In the last seminar, discussion appeared to be effectively curtailed by the presence of the V.C and D.V.C, as the seminar appeared to take the form of a boardroom meeting in which discussion reflected institutional hierarchies.

Internal discussion proved to be fruitful for some and less so for others. However, a broader criticism can be made of the process. The seminars were not widely publicised (posters were placed only in senate house) and there appeared to be a select (and deliberately targeted) audience which included senior staff and heads of department or school from mainly the Science and Engineering and Built Environment faculties.

Soon after these seminars, a Transformation Think Tank (TTT) was formed, whose members included many of those who had attended the transformation workshops. The purpose of this group was to re-conceptualise transformation, to generate a new definition which would be broad-based and would effectively increase consensus across the institution, thereby decreasing petty syntactical struggles that stall actual change. In 2004, a conceptual document was publicised and during 2005, the vice chancellor presented this to the various constituencies. Unfortunately, the reception of this document and rigorous debate on transformation was, in some instances, curtailed by the issue of financial aid cuts which had just exploded before the presentations. Poor attendance at some of the presentations also impacted on how the document was received.

Furthermore, the TTT process can be criticised from several positions: there was a lack of transparency regarding how the TTT was chosen, how the document content was decided on, and the fact that there has only been public engagement during the end stage when comments were invited on the draft document. Participants also discussed how an objection was raised by the SRC, who had been overlooked and had no representative on the TTT. Additionally, some participants felt that the process was a waste of time, a stalling process in itself, and what was really needed was actual concrete change.
These findings illustrate that transformation at Wits is mainly in the conceptual phase, and that actual practice is minimally enacted within the broader institutional arena. The institution is concerned with transformation rhetoric but practice is constrained by anti-transformative changes within the non-academic staff sector, the continuation of structural and institutional culture impediments to academic staff transformation, and the lack of transparency in the way in which transformation attempts have been carried out.

**Programmatic Responses**

The Centre for Learning and Teaching Development (CLTD) is responsible for university training. They run a number of courses and seminars for both new and established staff. For the purposes of this report, only those programmes which cater specifically for the needs of academics defined as previously disadvantaged will be explored. These ‘transformation programmes’ include: Growing our own Timber, Wonder Women, and Glass Busters. In 2004, the Equity Development Unit (EDU) was established within the CLTD to run the equity programmes.

Growing our own Timber (GooT)

GooT, as with many other higher education equity programmes, was funded by Atlantic Philanthropies (Metcalfe, 2003: 4). GooT was a three-year programme designed to facilitate the development of black academic scholars within the institution. It sought to do this by enabling junior black academics to “acquire post-graduate qualifications and be introduced to the world of academia as junior lecturers” (i01Wits:WW:OTR). The intentions behind the programme were both pragmatic and transformative:

GooT was conceptualised by Colin Bundy… and the intention undeniably was to improve the numbers of black academics, qualified black academic staff. But also hopefully to create sort of a critical mass of junior black academic staff to start shifting the culture and the feel of the place (i01Wits:WW:OTR).

Furthermore, the GooT website states:

[Through the creation of 30 Associate / Junior Lectureship posts (10 per year in 2000, 2001 and 2002) for black postgraduate students and the provision of funds for mentoring, visits to overseas institutions and conference attendance, this programme aims to recruit, develop and retain a more diverse academic staff (http://www.wits.ac.za/depts/cult/goot/about.html:28/05/03).]
These quotes clearly illustrate the triple role GooT sought to fulfil: the achievement of post-graduate qualifications by mentees, a long-term increase in the number of black academics, and the beginnings of institutional culture change. However, by December 2003, of the first cohort, only one mentee had secured permanent employment within the university, another mentee’s department decided to extend his contract for a year, and only one mentee had completed her PhD (i22Wits:CW:OTR).

According to updated data received in January 2006; the institution has retained 32 percent of mentees (the majority of whom are permanently employed). However, 35 percent of mentees withdrew from the programme before completion. The table below gives a more detailed breakdown of mentees on the programme.

**Table 9: Growing our own Timber Mentee completion and retention information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Raw data</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of mentees</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of completed postgraduate qualifications</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number scheduled to complete in 2006</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total to still complete</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number retained by institution</td>
<td>10 9 permanent 1 contract</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of withdrawals from the programme</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of those who originally joined the programme, a total of 55 percent will have completed their PhDs by the end of 2006. Although this figure appears low, it is actually 85 percent of those who remained on the programme. What is worrying however, is the high rate of withdrawal.

The following discussion is largely based on 2003 data, and hence should not be interpreted as an overview of the whole programme, but merely its first three years in existence. The issue of contractual ambiguity was widely discussed by mentees and mentors, with varying perceptions on what the institution’s obligations were. In some
instances, mentees felt that they were being used to enable the university to increase its employment equity statistics without long-term commitment on the part of the institution.

Part of this contractual ambiguity can be explained by the lack of an integrated institutional approach:

GooT was largely planned at a central level with little coordination with faculties. The result of which meant that when faculties restructured, the GooT mentees were not factored into budgetary plans and hence, when mentees complete/or are close to completing their PhDs there are no jobs available for them (i03Wits:WW:OTR).

Furthermore, only minimal funds (to cover three extra months) were secured, to enable mentees to complete their PhDs beyond the original three year contract. The result being that some have had to seek alternative employment to finance their studies, whilst three (out of the initial cohort) have dropped out of the programme completely (Metcalf, 2003: 24).

There have also been many other difficulties experienced by the programme. Mentees recount being invisible or unknown within their departments, as well as experiencing resentment from other staff and students [because of their ‘privileged’ position] (i04Wits:WW:OTR). One participant explained that in a three-month overseas trip, she formed closer relationships with staff where she was visiting, than she was able to in her two years at Wits (i18Wits:CW:H). This indicates that mentees were insufficiently integrated into their departments, perhaps being seen solely as PhD candidates rather than as staff.

There were, however, a number of positive experiences recounted. Participants had varying relationships with their mentors. One mentor, discussing how close she and her mentee had become, said “she is almost like my daughter” (i06Wits:IW:H). Another mentee explained how her mentor had kept a check on her workload, and was there to help her through difficult life and academic experiences (i18Wits:CW:H). This mentee emphasised the importance of a good mentor-mentee relationship, due to of the length of the degree and the experience of sole study. However, criticism was raised by some mentees who felt they merely received post-graduate supervision, rather than mentoring.
The programme was essentially conceptualised as a skills developing initiative, with much of the focus on teaching and research, and with little focus given to changing/dealing with institutional culture (despite being an initial goal). The aim of creating a critical mass of junior black staff was not actively fostered. Participants discussed that there was limited diversity training and criticism was levelled against what was provided:

They, themselves need to do a...re-think, they need to conceptualise their role much more clearly before they can tell us what to do. So in most cases those exercises...appear to be a waste of time. They are basically flawed ideas and [they] ask us to thrash them out in five minutes and things like that, it’s very sort of undergraduate...and it doesn’t work (i06Wits:FW:H).

A further weakness participants identified was the absence of a powerful champion for change as a patron for the programme. This absence was felt to be the result of changes at the level of co-ordinator and vice chancellor during the course of the programme – preventing follow-through of vision. Additionally, the lifespan of the programme was predetermined, and that possibly contributed to the lack of urgency in making the programme a successful long-term initiative. This also illustrates the impact that donor timelines can have on the success of a programme. Furthermore, the programme was also seen, by some, as being a ‘technocratic exercise’, which also raises a question about the drive behind the programme.

However, despite these difficulties, it is also crucial to note that the participants (both mentees and mentors) still retained much optimism for the potential of GooT, and several strong working relationships and friendships have developed between mentors and mentees. In addition, the programme allowed for a process of induction into the university, which was seen as beneficial and enabled new staff to find their feet. Participants also spoke of how the programme was very well managed, was a good network opportunity, and enabled them to do their PhD. Therefore, the programme would have had some long-term benefits.

The findings discussed here support Metcalfe’s (2003) assertion that GooT’s main problems have been:
absence of career progression planning with the Faculty, until the eleventh hour; unrealistic time frames to complete the PhD; programme design flaws and concerns, from mentors and mentees, that influenced staff retention were not addressed; a top-down process; addressing institutional culture was not a priority and a lack of support network (Metcalfe, 2003: 14).

These appear to support the view that GooT’s structural orientation is more in line with developing the skills of the mentees, without sufficiently addressing the institutional barriers that face black academics. Structural and institutional culture impediments are the main constraints black academics face, and yet these have not been seriously addressed by the programme.

Finally, the lack of permanency of mentees is also likely to prevent the realisation of a critical mass that can change the institutional culture. Therefore, whilst GooT may have facilitated individual capacity building for mentees, it has not had a significant impact on activating substantial and lasting change within the institution. As a result, it has reinforced the assimilation model of change.

It is important to note, that GooT has now run its course and that there are no longer any programmes at Wits which seek to add to the complement of staff. All current programmes engage with staff already employed at the institution. This is likely to be due to financial constraints within higher education, which prevent institutions from being able to grow their staff complements. However, it severely restricts the capacity of institutions to transform.

**Wonder Woman**

Wonder Woman (WW) is a one-year training programme also funded by the Atlantic Philanthropies. The aim of the programme is to empower senior women academics to move beyond the position of senior lecturer or associate professor. It began as a pilot programme in 2002, seeking to address the difficulties women experienced in regard to promotion. The programme focuses particularly on issues of assertion, confidence building, increasing writing as a means to enhance one’s publication record, and managing double shifts within the workplace (and household).
Whilst WW’s aims are practical: to improve publication output and to strengthen the position of women in the institution; it is employed in a very personal manner which prioritises the individual, allowing her to make informed decisions and to be content with her decisions (i03Wits:WW:OTR). The website elaborates:

The Wonder Woman programme offers some hard skills, but is primarily focused on personal empowerment issues, making choices, setting your own flight path, and discovering how to be most effective in the Wits environment without sacrificing or mutilating your gender and/or racial identity (http://www.wits.ac.za/depts/cult/woman/home.html:03/03/05)

Furthermore, the following quote illustrates the developmental nature of the programme:

We do a lot of personal support, we do individual coaching, we do personal development planning, personal career plans, [we] go and see the heads or the managers of these women, in kind of a triangular discussion, that says what are her strengths, what does she have to work on, what are her goal posts, what are her flight paths…and invariably a lot of personal stuff comes in (i03Wits:WW:OTR).

The findings presented here reflect on the experiences of six WW participants in 2002 and 2003. During 2002, five out of the twenty participants were promoted, and the women participants and coordinators identified positive changes in their work life “that would not have happened a year ago” (i03Wits:WW:OTR). The main improvement noted was being able to stand up for one’s self. For example, “it gives you the ability to hold your own space…and to say no” (i12Wits:WW:S). Participants also discussed the importance of having a supportive network of (Wonder) women to draw on, if they wanted to challenge sexist behaviour in the decision-making structures. A participant illustrates:

the banner said, ‘the best man for the job is a woman’ and she said ‘can we please not use…these sexist stereotypes’ and there was stunned silence…then everyone said ‘yes, right, absolutely’ (i03Wits:WW:OTR).

The participants also gave very positive feedback regarding personal growth, and the development of collegiality and support networks (i07Wits:WW:HS). Participants spoke of the value of university-wide, non-threatening work groups. Participants felt that such collegiality was not always possible within a department or school as people perceived each other as a threat, whereas within the WW groups, everyone was working on different things, were equally valued, and were supportive of each other (i13Wits:WW:S). Some of these groups have exhibited longevity, lasting two years after the participants completed the WW programme. In addition, an edited collection of
Wonder Women’s writing entitled ‘Buttons and Breakfasts’ was launched in August 2006.

Whilst tangible progress (in the form of promotion and increased recognition) did occur on a limited scale, perhaps the greatest benefit of WW has been the personal empowerment that occurred. Participants discussed how they attended self-defence courses which were very beneficial in terms of knowing how powerful they are even in a threatening situation (i12Wits:WW:S). Participants also spoke about the value of knowing how to fix their own cars and knowing better how to dress so that they are taken seriously within the institution (i12Wits:WW:S).

The philosophy of the programme is that if there are areas in one’s personal life where one feels vulnerable, these insecurities will spill over into one’s academic work – therefore, all areas need to be considered holistically. Participants’ discussion illustrates improved contentment since being on the programme, although participants did not engage with their academic output, except for one participant who said “they spoke about the successes, but I’m not sure those who got promoted, wouldn’t have anyway” (i14Wits:WW:H).

Participants also commented on the use of professional training which allowed them to feel more confident in themselves. From participants’ discussion it is evident that discussions such as what was it like to be a woman at Wits, what they could do to change their experiences, and the nature of the institution were incorporated into the programme. Whilst the issue of institutional culture was approached, it incorporated elements of assimilation and transformation, as participants discussed the possibility of challenging or working the system (i14Wits:WW:H). Whilst this would allow women to personally benefit from knowing ‘the rules of the game’, its broader impact is questionable. For instance:

this is about saying ‘what can I change’, most of what you can change is you, you can’t really change the system, the system might be unfair, you can stand on the sidelines and bleat, it’s not really going to change the system, you can only really change yourself (i03Wits:WW:OTR).
Participants also raised criticism stating that some of the training was not very useful. This tended to be the soft skills training on aspects like PowerPoint. In some instances, participants also felt that the writing groups taught them nothing new and were ineffective (i14Wits:WW:H), whilst others found them to be very effective in terms of boosting writing output and building group cohesiveness (i07Wits:WW:HS).

Criticism was also raised at the essentialised understandings of womanhood, in which no understanding on the intersectionality of race, class, and gender was reflected on (i14Wits:WW:H). This is a serious limitation within the programme as it may not be able to effectively deal with the multiplicities of womanhood within the institution. However, most participants were appreciative of the highly personalised and impassioned approach of WW and felt that personal empowerment and growth had been achieved. Furthermore, the success of the programme appears to also be due to leadership, where the coordinators are active champions for the transformation of women’s experiences within the institution.

The programme is now in its fourth year and has undergone significant development. The table below lists the full set of workshops that are now available as a part of WW. Participants attend three retreats during the year, totalling 15 days, in which the primary focus is on writing and the core workshops are held during this time. The CLTD also aims to invite speakers on a monthly basis to address specific issues.

**Table 10: Summary of Wonder Women Workshops**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of workshop</th>
<th>Nature of workshop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time and stress management</td>
<td>Core held during first retreat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice and presentation skills</td>
<td>Core held during first retreat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
<td>Core held during second retreat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact self defence</td>
<td>Core held during second retreat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation skills</td>
<td>Core</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic ‘image’ – can you dress for success at a university?</td>
<td>Core</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective presentations</td>
<td>Optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership styles</td>
<td>Optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanner and wench</td>
<td>Optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict resolution</td>
<td>Optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Optional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(http://www.wits.ac.za/depts/cult/women/calender.html:03/03/05)
Glass Busters

Glass Busters (GB) was another one-year, Atlantic Philanthropy funded programme, which first began in 2004, during which time it targeted both black and women academics at a mid-level position. The programme accommodated ten participants per year and like the other programmes, it focused on empowerment. The objectives of the programme were:

- to increase the skills and confidence levels of mid-level academic staff
- to promote a culture of lifelong learning
- to empower black academic staff to address institutional barriers to success
- to "break the glass ceiling" currently impeding the advancement of female and black academics (http://www.wits.ac.za/depts/cult/Glass/glass.html; 06/08/05)

Participants on this programme are eligible for the same workshops that were mentioned (in table 10) under the WW section.

The following findings are informed by two participants (one in 2004 and one in 2005) who have been on the programme, and although limited, their criticism points to key issues of concern. The lack of specifically GB-tailored workshops led a 2004 participant to feel as though there was nothing special about this group. The programme appeared to be "a mismatch of the other courses offered by CLTD" with the opening and closing retreats only for GB participants only (i26Wits:WW:CLM). In addition, the effectiveness of the remaining (optional) workshops was undermined by the fact that the participant did not know the other people at the workshop. These two factors resulted in the lack of a group identity and lasting cohesion within the group. This participant explained how, as a new staff member, her expectations were that the programme would provide a space for companionship and a break from the isolation she felt within the institution – unfortunately these expectations were not fulfilled.

Criticism was also levelled against the lack of individual focus and integration of the programme as a whole. Participants were disappointed that little personal work was done and failed to see how any of the workshops related to their goal plan that was drawn up at
the first retreat. Furthermore, it was noted that whilst the voice and presentation skills training, in which a video was made of participants giving a presentation, was immensely useful, it appeared to create Eurocentric expectations and encourage assimilation. For example:

And she said ‘bird’ [as in bed] not bird [emphasis on ur] and the facilitator said can everyone hear what is wrong, now everyone say ‘burd’ (i27Wits:IW:H).

In addition, criticism was levelled against the cancelling of a diversity workshop due to the lack of demand. As the only workshop to explicitly deal with transformation issues, this was highly problematic, although this was clearly due to a lack of demand from participants and not the organisers. When the workshop was held, participants found the organisers’ understanding of diversity problematic as it was offensive and reductionist. The concepts of ‘diversity’ and ‘culture’ came across as pertaining mainly to black people. Furthermore, the facilitator reduced ‘culture’ to three basic types: African, European, and Asian (i27Wits:IW:H). Clearly, this is a problem as it reifies difference, reifies black people as those who bear difference and therefore carry the burden of culture, and is highly offensive and exclusionary.

In addition, an example of African culture was cited as ‘African time’ and participants were urged that since this was less precise than ‘European time’ and a cultural trait, that they ought not to reprimand an African person for being ‘late’ (i27Wits:IW:H). A final criticism was that the bulk of the workshops had a gender (as opposed to a race) focus and indicates that the organisers have a better handle on issues of gender than race.

Participants did note the luxury of the retreat venue and being “treated to a massage” as high points of the programme. From these accounts it would appear that the programme has failed to engage with personal development, with barriers facing black staff in particular, and with institutional culture. Therefore, its contribution is questionable.

In 2005, GB narrowed its focus to black academics only. The rationale being that WW actively catered for the needs of women and GB should do the same for black academics (i23Wits:AM:OTR). However, criticism was raised against the inherently assimilationist
nature of the programme and because there was no critical reflection of what it meant to be black within the institution. Furthermore, most participants were largely uncritical of the ways in which training itself sought to re-cast participants as homogenous adherents and aspirants of the existing institutional culture (i27Wits:IW:H).

Frontiers

Frontiers, another new programme, was implemented in 2005. It is designed to attract more people into academic management or executive positions. The principle ways in which this was envisaged was through the shadowing of deputy and vice chancellors, deans, and heads of departments or schools. At the time of research, this programme was still in its conceptual phase, although it has now been implemented.

Evaluation

General State of Affairs

It’s like we’re chipping away at the Vortrekker monument, with an ice pick…we’re still pebbles and ice picks at the bottom…and I don’t see any major cracks in the edifice yet, but hopefully it will happen (i03Wits:WW:OTR).

In terms of demographics, there has been notable progress in the increase of black and women academics. None-the-less, this has occurred in fits and starts, and is fragmented across the faculties. Change has overwhelmingly been at the junior level with insignificant progress at senior levels, particularly in the case of black women. Widespread concern was raised as white women appear to have been the initial beneficiaries of demographic change. The academic workforce is still racially segmented and to a lesser extent gendered. Furthermore, power structures remain racialised and black academics (by nature of their junior position) are actively excluded from decision-making.

In terms of institutional culture and diversity, Professor Nongxa has embarked on a process of obtaining university-wide consensus around the meaning of transformation
and a future vision for Wits. Whilst this denotes increasing transformation talk, there is little (effective) corresponding action to address these issues. Clearly, Wits is moving towards the ideological phase of transformation, a precursor to actual change. The lack of actual change is exacerbated by endemic nonchalance and resistance to transformation, both of which make the job of transformation agents particularly difficult. An extreme illustration of resistance is:

someone said ‘I think we shouldn’t use the term the transformation, it’s too politically loaded’. I mean if we can’t even say the word let alone go through the process, then we have a hell of a long way to go! (i01Wits:WW:OTR).

Transformation has been stalled by inaction, piecemeal action, and rhetorical debates. These illustrate that although something has been done: real and meaningful change has been impeded through structural and institutional culture limitations. These stalling mechanisms are not widely criticised and hence are effectively unquestioned within the institution. The institution has responded to transformation in a disjointed manner, primarily being driven by the centre, with little organic change occurring. ‘Transformation champions’ drive the institution’s response at the central level. However, there are not always university-wide academic staff activists for race-based and gender-based transformation. Furthermore, middle managers (heads of school or department) were seen as central figures for transformation activism or resistance - illustrating the importance of these positions for institutional change.

Programmatic Responses

A wide variety of programmes are offered by the EDU at CLTD and the discussion here has shown how these have had differential success. Of particular concern, is the differentiation in success between race-based and gender-based programmes, which illustrate that the institution has a better understanding and practice of gender transformation. Its attempt to treat identities and their associated experiences within the institution as siloed, has the effect of reinforcing the ghettoisation of interests. The success of gender-based transformation (for participants) is in part due to the champions of gender transformation. Whilst these are the same people tasked with the role of race-based transformation, they appear not to have the same degree of command over race-
based change within the institution. Furthermore, criticism is levelled at the institution’s inability to effectively deal with race and racialised experiences, and this shows a weakness in the institution’s commitment to change. The failings of GooT combined with the criticisms of GB illustrate that the institution has not managed to transcend its earlier weaknesses in regard to race-based transformation. Furthermore, the successes of WW do not appear to have been worked into the GB programme despite the fact that the workshops are the same. This illustrates the need to have specific and tailored courses for each programme rather than a menu of courses which anyone can go on.

Whilst skills development is a crucial factor in transformation, criticism is levelled against the focus of the workshops which, in several instances, focus on ‘soft’ rather than ‘hard’ skills. Furthermore, the fact that only those deemed as previously disadvantaged are targeted for these programmes evokes notions of a deficiency paradigm. However, this chapter has shown that institutional culture and structural barriers are of greatest significance. These are inadequately dealt with within the programmes. Additionally, white men also need to transform in order for long term and broad-based institutional change to occur – and this appears not to have been addressed by the institution.

Furthermore, participants criticised the expectation of assimilation that underlies these programmes, a factor that appears in some instances to support, rather than challenge, the institutional status quo. The programmes appear to attempt to ‘mould’ academics into generic types that fit a specific lecturer and research norms – which in itself, is something the programme coordinators criticise about the current institutional culture. Therefore, whilst the programmes do often realise individual personal empowerment (especially for women), they are less equipped to deal with race-based and institution-wide change.

Lastly, the use of funding can also be criticised. The Atlantic Philanthropies (AP) is the principal funder of Wits’ transformation initiatives. According to the 2004 Employment Equity Progress Report, the total funding for ‘targeted capacity building programmes’ such as WW and GB was over two million rand, whilst academic management programmes such as Frontiers received just over five million rand, and more than three
million rand was also provided for time out sabbaticals of three months, allowing black and/or women academics time to complete post-graduate degrees. This brings the total funding by AP to 10.7 million rand.

One can question whether this money has been put to its best use and whether the benefits derived will be long term. A significant cost within these programmes is likely to be the retreats which, if participants attended all the retreats, would total 15 days. In 2005, Kloppenheim Country Estate and Kievits Kroon Country Estate were the retreat venues\textsuperscript{11}. Whilst, individually, participants have benefitted from this experience; one wonders whether more effective, progressive and long-term transformative initiatives could not have been implemented to the benefit of the participants, the institution and the funders.

Conclusion

This chapter has been concerned with the nature and extent of transformation at Wits. The academic labour force and academic power at Wits has historically been segmented according to race, gender, class, and culture. Twelve years into formal democracy, academics, and those who hold power amongst them, remain relatively unchanged. However, to conclude that no change has occurred would be both simplistic and untrue. The demographics of academic staff have become more reflective of South Africa’s demographics, although there is a very long way to go. White women have historically been involved in the transformation process for longer and as a result are found in greater concentrations compared to black academics.

None-the-less, structural impediments and institutional culture continue to limit both the nature and the extent of transformation. Whilst the liberal project is no longer focused on ‘charity’ toward those deemed ‘other’, it has proved to still expect assimilation, regarding itself as the unchanging norm. Attitudes of nonchalance and resistance to transformation have been encountered by transformation agents, and black and women academics. This
has meant that Wits has remained within the ideological stage of transformation and has yet to move toward long-term and broad-based change.

The existence of transformation programmes illustrates a degree of willingness to change, however, this remains constrained by an expectation of assimilation and an insufficient grasp of the issues concerned. Another major concern is the differentiation in success of gender and race-based transformation, a sticking point that will continue to earn Wits the label of ‘anti-transformation’ in certain circles. Apathy and nonchalance of academic staff also contributes to the slow and ineffective transformation that is currently underway. Progressive academic activism is certainly needed in order for meaningful change to occur.
Chapter Five Endnotes

1 Despite this increase, it is important to note the number of academic staff increased substantially over this period. Whilst the number of black academics rose by 109 the number of white academics also increased by 178. See appendix A for more details.

2 This report uses 2004 data, as this is the most up to date statistics that were obtainable from UCT.

3 Furthermore, it is interesting to note the excellence qualifier added here. This issue is picked up on later in the chapter.

4 As in the case of a crèche, Wits’ does have one, therefore participants illustrate that they do not always have access to information that could ease their burden.

5 It is was difficult to decipher from men whether they just knew of women’s burden or whether they or the institution actively tried to ease this. A few knew that women colleagues were supported by the Wonder Women programme.

6 Which has a profound effect on the way in which programmatic responses engage with these identities (to be elaborated further later).

7 For example, several participants asked each other what the workshop was about. In terms of race and gender expectations, it was also interesting to note a group of white men deliberating who the speaker was. They ultimately selected a white man, when in fact the actual speaker was a black woman (observation notes).

8 Data received from the EDU at the CLTD (personal communication).

9 This is a key area for future research so that future transformation programmes could benefit from knowing potential pitfalls.

10 Glass Busters have the same range of workshops with the exception that Academic Image is optional.

11 See appendix C for retreat venues.