

**A Historical Exploration of the Institutional and Residence Cultures of Stellenbosch
University, c. 2000 – 2018**

by
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Declaration

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Abstract

Universities, as microcosms of society, have been characterized as public interest institutions. According to sociologist, Kathleen Lynch, they have been considered as bastions for the free exchange of ideas and creators of knowledge for the greater good of humanity. Since the inception of democracy in South Africa post 1994, political pressure to transform the remnants of the apartheid regime in the higher education domain has been at the forefront. This has demanded the establishment of a socially just institutional landscape which is responsive to change. Transformation of the university experience has resulted in incongruences between the compilation of policy and the implementation of such framed interventions.

Higher Education reform in South Africa has been profoundly shaped by procedures which climaxed in the construction of numerous documents such as the 1996 *National Commission on Higher Education* (NCHE) report, the 1996 *Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation* and the 1997 *Education White Paper* which launched a series of commissions, investigations, and task teams which framed and guided the formation of policies within universities across South Africa.

This study focuses on Stellenbosch University (SU), one of the highest ranked institutions in South Africa, located in the picturesque town of Stellenbosch. The contentious history of the institution has led to much criticism since the turn of the 21st century. The year 2000 was a turning for the university, as it embarked on various campaigns to reappraise its image, spaces, and practices. This has involved various rectors, stakeholders amongst both staff and students and monitoring structures. Its 2000 *Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond* was the catalyst to various processes of restructuring and re-dress of past systemic injustices. Despite this, there continues to be a contradiction between its policies and residence spaces, and ambiguity in social interactions has led to scrutiny. This will be examined through the lens of state reports, institutional reports, residential monitor reports, student leaders, residence heads and archival material such as publications and commemorative volumes from sampled residences.

Overall, the study explores whether residence culture, through the lens of their welcoming practices, is symptomatic of the Stellenbosch University institutional culture, or whether residence culture is a collective-perpetuated system of the space. Welcoming can be considered a staged manifestation of residence culture and identity, based on intentional design. The question of whether Stellenbosch University and residence practices have changed is evaluated within the

context of these constantly changing spaces. As a residence is a collective of individuals, it could be argued that it is a collective-perpetuated system, defined by a symbiotic relationship with the management structure and regulated by student protest. These actions and reactions have had a direct impact on the changing nature of the institutional *Matie* and residence identities.

Opsomming

Universiteite, as ‘n mikrokosmos van die samelewing, word as instellings vanopenbare belang gekarakteriseer. Volgens sosioloog Kathleen Lynch, is dié instellings as bastions vir die vrye uitruil van idees en as skeppers van kennis vir die verbetering van die mensdom gesien. Sedert die ontstaan van demokrasie in Suid-Afrika in 1994, is politieke druk om die oorblyfsels van die apartheid bewind in die domain van hoër onderwys te transformer die focus van debatte. Dit het die daarstellingvan ‘n sosiaal regverdigde institusionele landskap wat reageer op verandering geëis. Transformasie van die universiteitservaring het gelei tot teenstrydighedetussen die inhoud van beleidsrigtings en die implementering van intervensies,

Hoër Onderwys hervorming in Suid-Afrika is gerig deur prosedures wat ‘n hoogtepunt bereik het met die skepping van verskeie dokumente. Hierdie dokumente sluit in die 1996 Nasionale Kommissie vir Hoër Onderwys verslag, die 1996 Groenskrif oor Hoër Onderwys Transformasie, en die 1997 Onderwys Witskrif wat ‘n reeks kommissies, ondersoeke, en taakspanne begin het wat die vorming van beleidsrigtingsbinne universiteite dwarsoor Suid-Afrika bepaal en gerig het.

Hierdie studie fokus op Universiteit Stellenbosch. Die omstrede geskiedenis van dié instelling het sedert die draai van die 21ste eeu tot baie kritiek gelei. Tussen 2000 en 2018, het die Universiteit verskillende veldtogte geloodsom hul beeld reg te stel. Dit het verskeie rektore, belanghebbendes – beide personeel en studente – en moniteringstrukture betrek. Die Universiteit se 2000 Strategiese Raamwerk vir die Eeuwisseling en Daarná was die katalisator om die verskeie prosesse van herstrukturering en regstelling van sistemiese ongeregtighede in die verlede te begin. Ten spyte van hierdie pogings, daar is steeds 'n teenstrydigheid tussen die beleid en koshuispraktyke. Hierdie kwessies sal aan die hand van staatsverslae, institusionele verslae, monitorverslae oor koshuise, studenteiers, koshuishoofde en argiefmateriaal, soos publikasies en gedenkbundels uit steekproefkoshuise, ondersoek word.

Dié studie ondersoek of koshuiskultuur, deur die lens van verwelkomingspraktyke, ‘n weerspieeling is van Universiteit Stellenbosch se institusionele kultuur, en of koshuiskultuur ‘n kollektiewe-verewigde stelselspesifiek die tipe ruimtes is. Verwelkoming kan gesien word as ‘n doelbewuste demonstrasie van koshuiskultuur en identiteit. Die vraag of Universiteit Stellenbosch en koshuispraktyke verander het, is binne die konteks van hierdie voortdurend veranderende

ruimtes geëvalueer. Omdat 'n koshuis uit 'n kollektief van individue bestaan, kan daar aangevoer word dat dit 'n kollektiewe-verewigde stelsel is, wat gedefinieer word deur 'n simbiotiese verhouding tussen bestaande bestuurspraktyke en studenteweerstand of protes teen verandering. . Hierdie aksies en reaksies het 'n direkte impak op die veranderende aard.van die institusionele *Matie* en koshuis identiteite.

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List of Abbreviations

Afrikaans Studentebond	ASB
Afrikaanse Nasionale Studentebond	ANS
Central Disciplinary Committee	CDC
Centre for Student Communities	CSC
Council of Higher Education	CHE
Division for Student Affairs	DSAf
Germanophilist Ossewabrandwag	OB
Higher Education Institutions	HEI
House Committee	HC
Institutional Forum	IF
Monitoring Advisory Committee	MAC
National Commission on Higher Education	NCHE
National Party	NP
National Union of South African Students	NUSAS
North West University	NWU

Prim Committee	PC
Private Student Organisation	PSO
South Africa	SA
South African Human Rights Commission	SAHRC
Stellenbosch University	SU
Student Parliament	SP
Student Representative Council	SRC
University of Pretoria	UP
University of the Free State	UFS

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Rationale of the Study

Leading up to 1994, the systemic racialized apartheid regime began to dismantle. Since then, well-established South African higher education institutions felt national pressure to adapt their largely inherent hegemonic heteronormative and patriarchal institutional cultures. Moreover, the institutions have been faced with the complexity of “managing” the diverse interests and needs of students. Despite a series of interventions and reforms within higher education in Africa, it has been suggested by sociologist, Tade Akin Aina, that institutions lack distinct values, goals and missions which connect them to the broader local and global challenges.¹ South African universities are microcosms of their societal context as they influence the broader community, and at times, are influenced by the communities which surround them.² Studies on the formation of institutional identities is not new to the social sciences; although research on measures to account for efforts to transform the social construction of institutions, has been undervalued due the questionable legitimacy of such systems.³

In 2000, Stellenbosch University (SU) published a “Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond”, where it committed to a broad process of self-scrutiny and institutional renewal. The institution committed to a critical reassessment of its institutional identity in accordance with the 1997 directive from the South African Higher Education Department.⁴ The following year, a student died during a residence initiation ritual. This tragedy evoked a more severe process of reflection and renewal at SU about the way in which

¹ T.A. Aina, “Beyond Reforms: The Politics of Higher Education Transformation in Africa”, *African Studies Review*, (53), (1), 2010, p. 33.

² S. Vandeyar, & A. M. Mohale, “Embracing Diversity: The Case of EquityRes, a Student Residence at Urban University”, *Journal of Social Sciences*, (48), (3), 2016, pp. 161-173.

³ R. Truscott, & M. Van Bever Donker, “What is the University in Africa for?”, *Kronos*, (43), (1), 2017, pp. 17.

⁴ Stellenbosch University Archive, hereinafter referred to as SUA, “A Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond”, Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch University, 2000, p. 7.

it welcomed new students: questions were being asked about the preferred characteristics of a *Matie*.⁵

As a result of this incident, the Institutional Forum (IF) investigated issues around first-year orientation practices. This was necessary to change patterns amongst the newcomers. The investigation concluded that orientation practices needed to be monitored by individuals who were independent of university structures.⁶ Furthermore, the relevance of the orientation monitoring structure – which was conceptualised after 2001 in response to the death of a student during an initiation practice – for welcoming programs of student communities at SU, has been under scrutiny since its inception, due to its supposed institutional watch-dog status.

The need for an external evaluation of residence spaces can be supported by the findings of historian Wessel Visser, who argued that the 1980s revealed a change in student representation at Stellenbosch University. This change led to a noticeable shift in power amongst student structures. The split of the SU Student Representative Council (SRC) in the 1980s revealed a new “voice” of student representation.⁷ This was initiated by the establishment of a Student Parliament (SP) in 1981, which changed the organisation of student representation to a more democratic system.⁸ According to this new system, each student at the university would be assigned to a constituency, which represented a residence or a Private Student Organisation’s (PSO) interests. However, this system produced growing indifference within the student union at the time and by 1986, students no longer relied on Student Parliament to mobilise themselves. They voted directly for the SRC. Visser alludes to the fact this shift in student structures showcased the desire for students to voice their own concerns instead of trusting structures to do so on their behalf.

These changes that started in the 1980s set in motion a series of actions and reactions which unfolded on the campus and were again brought to the forefront in the 2000s. The negotiations between students and management regarding the governing of the student body and student experience has had many turning points over time. According to Visser, SU has traditionally been defined by its unique residential spirit. This so-called “*Matie-spirit*” is said to have been

⁵ C. Brink, *Anatomy of a Transformer*, p. 52.

⁶ SUA, “Annual Report”, Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch University, 2001, p. 20.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

⁸ *Ibid.*

created from “student life in the residences, where strong ‘residence-centric’ loyalties developed”.⁹ Residences developed unique identities with their own meeting procedures, dances, dinners, symbols, colours, flags, songs, sport days, and even newspapers.¹⁰ According to their own written histories and commemorative volumes, each residence space has suggested that they had formulated a collective identity built over time based on the underpinnings of their traditions but adapted to accommodate contemporary concerns. This is, however, questionable.

Residences have continued, discontinued, and re-evaluated practices and traditions against the ever-changing environment which emerged in post-1994 South Africa. Up until 1965, 61% of students were housed in residences and SU was regarded as the largest residential university at the time. This drastically changed as universities were pressured by the new government to diversify their student population.¹¹ By the year 2000, residences no longer represented the majority of student culture and dominant forms of thinking at SU. By 2003, only 36% of students at SU lived in university residences or university-associated accommodation and only 23.7% stayed in traditional residences. This reveals the shifting paradigm of the student culture: most students that were attending the university were not submerged in the traditional residence culture, but rather a broader *Matie* student life.

Due to these changes on the campus, it can be argued that in the course of 2000-2018, numerous turning points and concerted efforts to repackage a collective *Matie* identity were made and this permeated into student spaces such as the official residences. These efforts included developments in task teams, reports, and policies – driven by rectors, significant role players amongst both staff and students, and other relevant stakeholders. Although policy may have formulated organizational structure, it is debatable whether the reception of policy by students, and thus implementation by identified stakeholders amongst staff and students, followed suit due to numerous variables. In residences, these variables were the culture, identities and traditions which governed the community. Systems, practices, values, and structures which were often taken as the “norm” were being challenged and asked to reorganise

⁹ W. Visser, “The Stellenbosch Student”, in A.M., Grundlingh (ed.), *Stellenbosch University 100* (Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University, 2018), p. 96.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

in line with new approaches to the broader institutional culture driven in large part by state initiatives on transformation of the tertiary education system.¹² There exists an intricate connection between state initiatives, institutional policies and student spaces, in this instance residences, on identity formation.

This dissertation investigates if and how residence cultures have adapted to the institutional change at the management and student leadership levels. This will assess what factors contribute to the characterisation of their social practices and the nature of the space. What it does not do is attempt to provide an overarching analysis of individual student experiences, nor does it represent the majority of the student experiences over time. It is strictly confined to institutionalised changes at management and student leadership levels within the broader Stellenbosch University management structure, monitoring bodies and select residences on campus.

1.2. The Making of the *Matie* at Stellenbosch University, 1918 – 2000

Stellenbosch University has an arguably jaded past because of its origins and the influential people who taught, graduated, and published material which were largely supportive of discriminatory regimes and policies during apartheid. Many of its alumni served in influential posts during apartheid. Similarly, some of the greatest critics to the apartheid regime hailed from its halls. This section aims to provide background to the history of the university and how the remnants of its past have influenced its institutional culture and interventions. It is largely based on a critical examination of the institution published in 2018 during the centenary celebrations. This dissertation reflects on the neglected aspects between 2000 and 2018. These aspects are residence spaces, what constitutes their social practices, how it intersects with the university's institutional culture and what is the effect of this on these spaces?

¹² D. van Reenen, "Maintaining Plausible Deniability: Detecting Mechanisms of Subtle Discrimination in a South African Higher Education Institution", *Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice*, (13), (1), 2016, p. 18.

In 1679 the town of Stellenbosch was founded by Simon van der Stel as an agricultural settlement.¹³ The first school in the town was established in 1683 to meet the educational needs of the colonists' children.¹⁴ It was under the supervision of the church. Over the years tension grew between state and church over the control of education in the town. In 1714, with the establishment of the Political Council – later named the school commission – it was decided that the church would no longer have a role to play in the decision-making of education in Stellenbosch.¹⁵ This was in theory, but not in practice. Many clergy were involved in the establishment and leading of schools from 1801 onwards.¹⁶ British occupation of the Cape from 1814, and the appointment of Lord Charles Somerset as Governor, disrupted Dutch schooling. Governor Somerset made a concerted effort to anglicise most Dutch-speaking subjects and enrolled the Scottish clergy who adhered to the teachings of the Calvinistic church.¹⁷ Governor Somerset believed they would resonate with the Dutch population. Although schools such as Rhenish Girls' (1860) and the Girls' Public School (1875) – later known as Bloemhof – offered a diverse curriculum, the nature and character of the Stellenbosch seminary were embedded in the Afrikaans-Dutch language and culture. Thus, in December 1863, leaders of the seminary embarked on the establishment of a gymnasium that would offer advanced education to prospective theology students. It could be argued that it was an effort to preserve a hybrid Dutch heritage. This school was opened in 1866 as Het Stellenbosch Gymnasium – also known as the Stellenbosch First Class Public School, popularly known as Stellenbosch Gymnasium at the time. As the school grew, and after the establishment of the 1874 Higher Education Act, it began taking the shape of a tertiary educational institution. In 1880 there was a shift in emphasis on the status of the school as an academic institution. This led to it being referred to as the Stellenbosch College and Public School. At this stage the institution was the only college that had more than three professors and it is suggested that this is the reason why the college received a special donation from the superintendent-general of education, Dr. Langham Dale for the funding of its library and science laboratory. As the college grew it required more teaching venues. The matter, which was brought to the attention

¹³ H. Heese, "The Origins of Stellenbosch University (SU)", in A.M., Grundlingh (ed.), *Stellenbosch University 100*, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, 2018, p. 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 5 – 6.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

of Sir Bartle Frere, the British colonial administrator, who raised funds for the construction of the Old Main Building which was completed in 1888. In gratitude to his main donors, it was renamed from Stellenbosch College to Victoria College, in honour of Queen Victoria, on the 1st of March 1866. It has been argued that by the late nineteenth century, the Afrikaners in the Boland area, unknowingly, made English colonial values and customs their own.¹⁸ Although they spoke Dutch-Afrikaans in their homes, English was used for intellectual engagement.

Relations with the British were disrupted with the outbreak of Anglo-Boer War – also known as the South African War – of 1899-1902. This war instigated the formation of a movement to unite Afrikaners as a nation, partly on the basis of their language.¹⁹ This movement was largely supported in the town of Stellenbosch. This is apparent in the publication of the first Dutch introductory editorial which appeared in the Victoria College’s *Stellenbosch Student Quarterly* in 1907, where a correspondent protested that, “[...] the language of South Africa is not Dutch, but actually Afrikaans”.²⁰ Symbolically, with the Union of South Africa established in 1910, the establishment of a university that would pay homage to Afrikaner nationalism, became a realisation when Jannie Marais donated a sum of £100 000 to Victoria College, with the provision that Dutch-Afrikaans should not occupy a lesser place.²¹ This led to additional funding by individuals who had strong ties with Afrikaners and who were sympathetic towards the establishment of an Afrikaner establishment.²² When the University Act was passed by the Union Parliament in 1916, Victoria College was renamed Stellenbosch University (SU), and the university was officially established on 2 April 1918.

The first Student Representative Council (SRC) was inaugurated with 16 members. Amongst them was T. E. Dönges who later became a National Party cabinet minister and the chancellor of SU.²³ Only two women were members. After the renaming of the university, the Senate report was written in “early official Afrikaans” for the first time.²⁴ According to Prof. J. F. W. Grosskopf, an Afrikaans writer (1885 – 1948), Stellenbosch became a custodian of

¹⁸ H. Heese, “The Origins of Stellenbosch University (SU)”, p. 15.

¹⁹ W. Visser, “The Stellenbosch Student”, p. 93.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

²¹ H. Heese, “The Origins of Stellenbosch University (SU)”, pp. 24 – 25.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

²³ Anon., *Studenteraad 1903 – 2003 Universiteit Stellenbosch*, Sun Press, Stellenbosch, 2004, pp. 22 – 25.

²⁴ W. Visser, “The Stellenbosch Student”, p. 94.

Afrikaans culture and civilization, and its devotion to Afrikaans validated its existence. It was to become the “[...] center and cradle of a higher Afrikaans spiritual life [...]”.²⁵ In response, a language policy was established to position Afrikaans as an academic language of instruction that could compete with English-speaking universities.²⁶

The notion that SU would represent a people’s university and be the foundation of Afrikanerdom was highly praised by many students at the institution.²⁷ Afrikaans became the primary language for the development of newspapers, academic departments, along with cultural and theatrical activities and events. Debate topics started to include the language issue, the political climate of the South African Union, and the position of female students. The SRC at the time had stated that SU “should progressively develop towards monolingualism, with Afrikaans as the language of teaching”.²⁸

By 1919, the SRC started developing relations with the *Afrikaans Studentebond* (ASB), established in Bloemfontein in 1916. The SRC also engaged in other efforts to involve Afrikaans-speaking students in the Cape Province nationally. However, SU itself did not affiliate with the ASB and a pattern of the university’s ambivalence about student organizations emerged. Visser alludes to the fact that SU did not whole-heartedly support the conservative nature of the debate. He argues that the Stellenbosch “ambivalence” is referred to in relation to other Afrikaans-speaking universities and the national Afrikaans-speaking student discourse at the time.²⁹ Essentially SU did not commit itself to taking an overt stance, nor did they overextend themselves to showcase support for student organisations.

In 1922, the constitution of the SRC stated that Afrikaans as well as English would serve as the official language mediums of the student union.³⁰ They soon discovered the complexity surrounding the issue of language at a national level. In 1924, the SRC sent a delegate to the founding conference of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) and SU

²⁵ J. F. W. Grosskopf, “Die Nuwe Stellenbosch”, in N. J. Brummer and J. J. Smuts (eds.), *Gedenkboek van het Victoria-Kollege* (Kaapstad: De Nationale Pers Beperkt, 1918), pp. 178, 180. See also Van die Redaksietafel, *Stellenbosch Universiteitsblad*, (XXI), (4), December 1920, p. 102.

²⁶ W. Visser, “The Stellenbosch Student”, p. 94.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

became a member of the body which represented all affiliated universities and university colleges in South Africa. By association, SU became part of the broader South African student community, which included English speaking universities. Initially the SRC demanded that NUSAS be politically neutral, however, it established a student parliament in which the elected members represented different political parties.³¹

In response to these changes, in 1927 there were complaints in the *Matie* ranks about NUSAS treating Afrikaans as an inferior language. This led to the broader Stellenbosch student community adopting a sceptical attitude toward NUSAS.³² Subsequently, in 1933 the *Afrikaanse Nasionale Studentebond* (ANS) was established. The students at SU became more invested in this organization that revered Afrikaans and demanded that no “Coloureds”, “Natives” or “Asians” be allowed in NUSAS.³³ The attitude of racial segregation had already been reflected in an objection made by the SRC in 1921 about the mixing of races at bioscope facilities.³⁴

NUSAS objected to the exclusion of other races from the union, and it was decided at a mass meeting in 1936 that SU should withdraw from NUSAS. The decision was executed by the SRC in 1937.³⁵ This was a significant turning point as the rise of Afrikaner nationalism led to conservative views on student issues such as dancing, theological debates, and the race question dominating student publications such as *Die Stellenbosse Student*.³⁶

From the end of the 1930s, the upsurge of Afrikaner nationalism and political conflicts were being reflected on campus. The political division within Afrikaner ranks at Stellenbosch deepened when the Germanophile *Ossewabrandwag* (OB) became active. The OB was, “an Afrikaner nationalist mass movement comprising of nearly all social divisions of the Afrikaner

³¹ W. Visser, “The Stellenbosch Student”, p. 98.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 99.

³³ Please take note that apartheid racial classification terms will be used within this study to make a clear distinction between the different historical and political identities that existed during the apartheid era and not to justify the derogatory or discriminatory symbolism that can be associated with that terminology. The author also acknowledges that these are essentialist, socially constructed terms and every attempt has been made to refer to self-identification markers within the text.

³⁴ W. Visser, “The Stellenbosch Student”, p. 99.

³⁵ D. Reitmann, “Die Arme Afrikaans”, *Die Stellenbosse Student*, (XXVIII), (2), April 1927, pp. 82-83.

³⁶ Anon., *Studenteraad 1903 – 2003 Universiteit Stellenbosch*, pp. 17-18.

population”.³⁷ They placed an emphasis on *volkseenheid* – national unity – and rejected South Africa’s participation in World War II as Great Britain’s ally.

Nationally, a political split in Afrikaner ranks emerged and led to the formation of a Purified National Party by Dr D.F. Malan. This directly affected campus politics. This was principally due to Malan’s personal relationship with the university; first as councillor and later as chancellor from 1941-1959. The split in the Afrikaner ranks about South Africa’s involvement in World War II influenced the SRC elections.³⁸ The party-political division also extended to communities in Stellenbosch itself as tension and intolerance between the pro- and anti-war groups intensified.³⁹

On the 27th of July 1940, the Battle of Andringa Street broke out in Stellenbosch.⁴⁰ This event was sparked by growing racial tension within the town between the largely White Afrikaner student population and local Coloured population. It was the first recorded moment that skirmishes had broken out between the local inhabitants and SU students. On the day in question, SU students who had attempted to halt the noon-day pause in commemoration of the war in Cape Town returned to Stellenbosch. While in a queue at a local café, harsh words were exchanged with local coloured people. This triggered a skirmish lasting a few days. Other SU residents joined in on the attack of houses and destruction of property which belonged to Coloured people who lived in Andringa Street.⁴¹ Many urban legends surround the origins of the battle, one of which is the belief that the local Coloured people were supporting the more liberal United Party instead of the white Afrikaans National Party. Afrikaans-speaking Coloureds were somehow expected to align with the National Party because they shared a common language.

The battle received much attention and was condemned by both the SU management and the local municipality.⁴² It can be seen as a culmination of growing radical politics during the

³⁷ C. Marx, “The Ossewabrandwag as a Mass Movement, 1939–1941”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, (20), (2), 1994, pp. 195-219.

³⁸ Unknown author, “Ons Nuwe Kanselier Dr. DF Malan”, *Die Stellenbosse Student*, (XLII), (2), April – May 1941, pp. 66-67.

³⁹ W. Visser, “The Stellenbosch Student”, p. 102.

⁴⁰ H. Biscombe, “In Ons Bloed”, *Die Burger*, 15 Desember 2012.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

war and increasing racial tension in the town. It must be added that the local inhabitants placed all the blame on students who had come “from the north” and who, they claimed, were unaccustomed to seeing the interactions of Coloureds and whites in Stellenbosch. In response, the SRC declared that damage was caused to “innocent and decent” Coloured people, but that, “the property of innocent white people was also destroyed”.⁴³ The SRC was quick to deflect blame because, at the time, the Coloured population were often viewed as outsiders compared to the rest of the Stellenbosch community.⁴⁴ These racial clashes not only point to the divergent ways in which white Afrikaans politics was unfolding, but it speaks to the fractured Afrikaner identities being moulded during this period in Stellenbosch. In addition to the complexity of the Afrikaner identity, students had to negotiate their identity as a student of Stellenbosch University.⁴⁵ This also underlines the impact of the institution on the town of Stellenbosch.

These frictions between students and the town, were not restricted to politics or race. The Battle of Wilgenhof, for example, took place in 1957 when students from the Military Academy – which was originally based at the University of Pretoria – were temporarily housed in one of the oldest, and most notorious, men’s residences, Wilgenhof. The tension between Wilgenhof students and Military Academy students, apparently grew due to military students not submitting to the residence’s civil student culture and initiation traditions, which led to physical assaults from both sides.⁴⁶

Tension also existed between *Maties*. *Die Matie* – the official student publication – reported that during the 1970s that SRC elections were considered a power struggle between conservative and liberal factions in the student community.⁴⁷ This can be attributed to an increase in English-speaking students and the proliferation of politicised Afrikaans-students who were becoming increasingly critical of the so-called *Matie* identity.⁴⁸

⁴³ W. Visser, “The Stellenbosch Student”, p. 103.

⁴⁴ C. Fransch, “‘We Would Have No Name’: The Porosity of Locational and Racial Identities Amongst the ‘Coloured Communities’ of Stellenbosch, c. 1890–1960s”, *African Studies*, (69), (3), 2010, p. 410.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ W. Visser, “The Stellenbosch Student”, pp. 119-120.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ P. Kapp, *Maties en Afrikaans* (Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis, 2013), p. 57.

The *Matie* identity was unique to Stellenbosch and, according to Visser, originated within residence spaces.⁴⁹ It was subsequently appropriated by the entire student populace. A factor which promoted the *Matie* and residence spirit was the relative isolation of Stellenbosch, not simply geographically but certainly ideologically. Students in the 1960s, generally did not have cars and depended on bicycles and rail transport. The high cost of travelling also meant that many students could only go home once or twice a year. This resulted in student life being shaped by the students themselves and students “[...] relying on their co-residents for leisure activities, entertainment, friendship, and mutual support”.⁵⁰ The significance of this bubble was that students who resided in residences became integral in the formation of what was to become the university’s *Matie* identity. It should be noted, however, that during this period the majority of the student body resided in residences. This has subsequently changed.

Entrenching this identity was pivotal and the easiest way to condition future generations of *Maties* was through “initiation” in residence spaces. This would entail entrenching both a broader *Matie* institutional identity, as well as a residence identity. One of the earliest recorded initiation practices occurred at the first male residence of Victoria College, Wilgenhof, in 1909.⁵¹ Initiation rituals included, “[...] blindfolding and tying students up and making them free-fall on a rope from the first floor into a mud bath on the ground. They also had to recite poems or sing songs and drink castor oil. This was followed by a [arguably homoerotic] brushing session with towel slings by the seniors, who stood in a long row”.⁵² On the 2nd of April 1918, Victoria College acquired university status and became Stellenbosch University. Wilgenhof, along with its practices, was absorbed into the growing institution.

When the first official residence of SU opened – Dagbreek – the initiation practices were of a similar nature to those described at Wilgenhof. First year students had to “wear initiation signs and drink various concoctions. Their heads were shaved and chastisement, midnight parades and mud baths were part of the process”.⁵³ Any acts of brutality, bullying, exhaustion,

⁴⁹ W. Visser, “The Stellenbosch Student”, p. 96.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

and danger were abolished by the SU authorities in 1922, the necessity of which provides evidence of the brutality of these practices.⁵⁴

However, these practices continued for many years disguised under various euphemistic terms such as “induction”, “incorporation”, “orientation”, “adaption”, “welcoming”, “integration” and “settling in”.⁵⁵ These covert activities were defended in *Die Stellenbosse Student* in 1935.⁵⁶ It was argued that the *Matie* spirit would be fragile if initiation systems were entirely dismantled, especially as there were a growing number of private students over which residences would have no control.⁵⁷ Initiation represented the organization and discipline of student life and without it, so it was claimed, student life would amount to a “farce”, “confusion”, and “chaos” with no mutual “bond” between newcomers.⁵⁸

Thankfully, the media’s criticism of the initiation system ensured that the practice was once again officially abolished in 1936. Despite attempts at regulating student behaviour and banning initiation again in 1972,⁵⁹ complaints regarding belittlement and humiliation of first years were still engulfing the Rector’s office by 1977.⁶⁰ The complaints suggested that practices continued despite these bans but also that many first years were intimidated and too afraid to report the incidences resulting in a barrage of letters being sent directly to the Rector’s office.

An investigation launched by *Die Matie* in 1979, revealed that – although the SU administration had formally banned initiation practices intermittently since 1922 – the actual practices had changed little.⁶¹ By 1991, allegations of initiation malpractices were still being consistently reported by *Die Matie*. As a result, a commission of inquiry was launched by SU management.⁶² Yet another ban was imposed on initiation practices when it was discovered that borderline human rights abuses were taking place such as sleep deprivation, physical

⁵⁴ SUA, Anon., *Studenteraad 1903 – 2003 Universiteit Stellenbosch*, p. 13.

⁵⁵ W. Visser, “The Stellenbosch Student”, p. 96.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.119-120.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.103.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 141.

discomfort, the forced intake of food or liquids, mental intimidation and coercion to “voluntarily” participate in group activities.⁶³

However, the Prim Committee – which is a representative council of all heads of residences and Private Student Organisation’s (PSO) – organized a referendum in which 91,8% of students in residences overwhelmingly voted in favour of “welcoming” first years.⁶⁴ The cycle of initiation continued into 1993, and the front page of *Die Matie* predictably featured new allegations of initiation incidents in Huis Marais, Dagbreek, Eendrag, Helshoogte, Huis Visser, Majuba, Wilgenhof, and Helderberg – all of which were male residences.⁶⁵

Die Matie was accused of no longer representing the interests of the student union as it supposedly published “one-sided” and “only negative articles”, some of which were being labelled as “blasphemous”.⁶⁶ Up until the end of the 1990s, initiation, was still being reported on the campus and student safety became a vital concern, which SU’s management was not always inclined to prioritise.⁶⁷

The 2000s brought about various turning points at Stellenbosch University. According to Robert Kotzé, a Residence Head, the cluster structure instituted by the Centre for Student Communities in 2008, affected the traditional identity of residences as it instigated a new student culture and identity as students could identify and interact with multiple spaces, rather than just their own residence space.⁶⁸ Clusters were created to encourage students to study and socially interact outside of their residence bubble.

Although the cluster initiative is not a focal point of this study, Visser’s argument will be considered by identifying the reaction of residences to initiatives which demanded a change and embracing of practices beyond the residence culture. The complexities of multiple residence cultures will also be appraised. What will be further examined is Visser’s argument which states that a strong emphasis on student individualism over the years has resulted in a decline in residence loyalty, group culture and participation in residence activities. This is

⁶³ W. Visser, “The Stellenbosch Student”, p. 141.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

apparently showcased in the larger variety of student sport and other activities present on the campus. A conclusion Visser presents is that students today are fully aware of their rights as students and citizens, however, the fact that unwelcoming practices continue brings to the discussion a question on whether student leaders are being held accountable. How this process unfolded also requires further investigation. Moreover, it questions whether students are being enabled and empowered to speak out about the welcoming period. The following three theoretical points of departure which correlate with the breakdown of the content chapters have informed this investigation.

1.3. Locating the Study in a Broader Literature on Institutional Cultures, Student-led Transformation in Higher Education, and Identity Formation

The democratization of higher education, coupled with the effects of this on defining the parameters of institutional culture, is a central focus for this study.⁶⁹ A shift in national power in South Africa and the surge in access to higher education institutions has influenced changes in the student body. Consequently, the transformation in the student body has had both an implicit and explicit effect on the culture of the institution. Furthermore, universities are said to mirror societal experiences and are expected to be vehicles of social restructuring.⁷⁰ This study will use student residences as a lens into the formation of a collective identity and culture within the broader institutional culture. Three theoretical considerations will be incorporated in this study and unpacked further in this literature review: (i) transformation and institutional culture; (ii) student led transformation initiatives within universities and (iii) identity formation.

⁶⁹ M. Cross & C. Carpentier, "New students' in South Africa higher education: institutional culture, student performance and the challenge of democratization", *Perspectives in Education*, (27), (1), 2009, pp. 7-10.

⁷⁰ S. Bazana & O.P. Mogotsi, "Social identities and racial integration in historically white universities: A literature review of the experiences of black students", *Transformation in Higher Education*, (2), 2017, p. 2.

1.3.1. Transformation and Institutional Culture

Social scientist Kathleen Lynch has defined universities and other higher education institutions as institutions which have promoted themselves in the public sphere and have functioned on their “enlightenment inheritance”, which suggests that they are custodians and “[...] creators of knowledge produced for the greater good of humanity in its entirety”.⁷¹ Lynch further argues that they claim to be, and are perceived as, the “[...] watchdogs for the free interchange of ideas in a democratic society. They claim to work to protect freedom of thought, including the freedom to dissent from prevailing orthodoxies”.⁷² Furthermore, Lynch contends that universities and other higher education institutions are quintessentially characterized as “public interest institutions”. This alludes to the complexity of negotiating transformation and maintaining freedom of thought and expression within these institutions. This is further challenged by deep-seated notions of culture embedded within these institutions.

Cultural historian Raymond Williams argues that there are three general categories in the definition of culture: (i) culture is an ideal state or process of “human perfection” where there are definitive or universal values; (ii) culture is documented, by the experience of others; and (iii) culture has a social definition which defines its way of life, the significance of acts and the value of the behaviours practiced and instituted.⁷³ Williams suggests that culture is an all-encompassing and complex collective, which requires individuals to understand it in order to understand one another and effectively communicate with each other, particularly in the Higher Education landscape.⁷⁴

Transformation within South African Higher Education has been an ambiguous and contentious topic for the public and students. According to sociologist Tade Akin Aina “transformation” has been “synonymous with reforms and systemic change”. Aina has defined the term within the context of Africa as a deliberate social, political, and intellectual project of organized change - which is designed to address historical disadvantages, inequalities, and

⁷¹ K. Lynch, “Neo-liberalism and marketisation: The implications for higher education”, *European Educational Research Journal*, (5), (1), 2006, pp. 1-17.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁷³ F. Anbaran, “‘A Whole Way of Life’: Ontology of Culture from Raymond Williams’s Perspective”, *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, (67), 2016, p. 55.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

severe structural dysfunction. Aina argues that projects of transformation contest assumptions, values, and power relations, and present an alternate vision and condition.

Aina further suggests that transformation denotes concrete and epistemological gaps present, a deconstruction and construction of structures, relations, cultures, and institutions. In the case of African higher education, transformation “[...] entails going beyond reform [...]” as it demands a reappraisal of inherited institutions and a reconsideration of the socially accepted and constructed practices which take place within these spaces. Aina suggested that it is only after this appraisal takes place can a process of reconstruction of these institutions unfold to establish, “durable, sustainable structures oriented to meet Africa's needs”.⁷⁵

These constraints are global. In 2018, a study was conducted at an American university about the impact of a college tradition on a university’s culture.⁷⁶ The study explored university traditions at Taylor University and Westmont College. The study looked at whether tradition shapes “institutional culture as much as institutional culture shapes tradition”. The first findings that emerged from the study were that tradition has been a fundamental building block in shaping communities. Secondly, that traditions reflect the universities’ institutional cultural values. Finally, that there were similar environmental traits with regards to traditions that led to their prestigious reputation amongst the community.⁷⁷ Therefore, there exists an intricate link between traditions, institutional culture and the broader community which shares a space with that institution. This is further complicated in decolonised spaces.

According to historian, Teresa Barnes, African universities have faced a definitive collective of challenges over the decades since the late 1950s.⁷⁸ Originally these were characterised by the by the nature of the relationship with the metropolitan/colonial universities, which had frequently influenced the establishment of satellite campuses in the colonies. Barnes highlights that African universities then began to consider the grievances of Africanization/indigenisation, in terms of curriculum, and staffing. Literature has shown these

⁷⁵ T. A. Aina, “Beyond Reforms: The Politics of Higher Education Transformation in Africa”, p. 33.

⁷⁶ D.M. Sproutz, “A college favorite: Students perceptions of Traditions and Culture in Higher Education”, unpublished Master of Arts Thesis, Taylor University, 2018, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ T. Barnes, “Politics of the mind and body: gender and institutional culture in African universities”, *Feminist Africa 8: Rethinking universities I*, (8), (8), 2007, p. 9.

debates dominating the early 1970s, however, by the 1980s most universities were preoccupied with their own survival in an era of financial uncertainty.⁷⁹

Barnes further argues that the 1990s revealed the struggles faced by universities to re-orientate themselves towards developmental goals. Enrolment escalated and African academics debated where their primary loyalties lay: with their institutions, their national leadership, notions of so-called truth, or with the students of these institutions.⁸⁰ Barnes refers to the works of Higher Education Researchers, Yann Lebeau and Mobolaji Ogunsanya, who proclaim that, “the African public university is no longer the breeding ground of the elite as was the case during and immediately after the colonial period”.⁸¹ Rather, they suggested that African public university’s distinguished position has been gradually disintegrated by expeditious population growth, the increase in secondary school education, and by a decline in the socio-economic value of the degree.

Tertiary institutions globally are undergoing reform. A public debate was held at the University of the Western Cape in 2016 entitled “The University and its Worlds”. This was a part of “The Idea of the University in Africa” public lecture series. Here, David Theo Goldberg a professor known for his works in critical race theory, the digital humanities, and the state of the university; Wendy Brown, a professor and political theorist; Judith Butler, a philosopher and gender theorist; and Achille Mbembe, a philosopher and political theorist, each offered a set of vexations on universities in times of neoliberalism.⁸² According to Brown, neoliberalism extends beyond economising the university and increasing profits. Brown argues that “financialisation” positions universities toward shareholder value, rather than only return on investment. In addition, rankings, and ratings act as indexes of “creditworthiness”, which creates opportunity to reimagine the university.⁸³

Goldberg further contributes to this argument, by stating that the increase in innovation and entrepreneurship globally, has resulted in a shift in universities investing in the student

⁷⁹ T. Barnes, “Politics of the mind and body: gender and institutional culture in African universities”, *Feminist Africa 8: Rethinking universities I*, (8), (8), 2007, p. 10.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² R. Truscott, & M. Van Bever Donker, “What Is the University in Africa for?”, *Kronos*, (43), (1), 2017, p. 16.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

learning experience. There is an emphasis on the overall student experience – aspects surrounding the learning experience - rather than being directly related to it.⁸⁴ As a result, academic learning is becoming the “skillification” of labour rather than critical thinking sets of engagement.⁸⁵ Goldberg further argues that the student and the learning experience is being mapped and measured to take care of the liability experienced by a university. Universities have essentially become a brand, and Goldberg suggests that the larger the clout, the more a university must corporatize itself. This begs the question of what a 21st century university should represent.

Goldberg refers to the “uberization” – commoditization of existing services – of the university experience which has diluted the impact of the critical learning experience.⁸⁶ Butler adds that the value of critique is something that can be capitalised on, as it guides the dismantling of values that are yet to be institutionalised. These values are seen as “modes of social transformation” that seek to change or democratise learning institutions, which are undervalued precisely because it is neither measurable nor likely to increase the “creditworthiness” of the university.⁸⁷ Brown’s argument concludes that there is thus a need to disrupt and to dismantle certain structures. Butler latched onto this and professed the need for a “radical re-imagining” of the place of the university.⁸⁸

Their arguments are significant because it indicates a shift in thinking of what the university represents, prioritises, what it should offer and where it is going. This is relevant to be aware of for the study as it indicates the pressure put on university’s to reform in order to remain competitive and relevant.

Post-1994 South Africa has been plagued with the remnants of the apartheid tertiary system and the state had the unenviable task of expanding services to formerly excluded students as well as transforming spaces, cultures, traditions, and identities. This occurred with a limited budget and in a broader climate of global tertiary institutional reforms. According to Barnes, during the apartheid era, the South African government intended to establish and

⁸⁴ R. Truscott, & M. Van Bever Donker, “What Is the University in Africa for?”, *Kronos*, (43), (1), 2017, p. 14.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

support a higher education sector that restricted the level of tertiary education of, “black South Africans to a narrow range of fields appropriate to a racially determined labour”.⁸⁹ This socially unjust backdrop serves as a point of departure to the necessitated “redress” within Higher Education Institutions. Barnes further demystifies the suggestion that liberals were distinctively progressive and architecturally adverse to apartheid. Here, she essentially questions the assumption that the University of Cape Town (UCT) was a “protest-only university”.⁹⁰ In contrast, Trish Gibbon, known for her works within the field of higher education policy, claimed that, unlike any other South African university in the post-1994 era, the student body at Stellenbosch University remained predominately white and Afrikaans,⁹¹ leading her to conclude that it was the “last bastion of white dominance”.⁹² This makes the present study even more necessary as it tackles systemic apartheid malpractices.

Since 1994, governmental publications such as the *National Plan for Higher Education in South Africa* (2001), asserted the necessity for universities in contemporary South Africa, to neither be classified as black nor white, English nor Afrikaans, but boldly South African.⁹³ In addition, former technical colleges were transformed into universities but by 2001 institutions had to be streamlined. In an effort to curb expenditure, several South African universities were expected to merge to “solve problems of duplication, fragmentation, and a lack of access in part of the country and improve the quality of education on offer”.⁹⁴ This resulted in a reduction of the total number of higher education institutions from 36 to 23 through, “a process of merging and closure”.⁹⁵

This was met with resistance, slow change and a plethora of obstacles. Some studies have been conducted on the transformative process within such institutions. North West University (NWU), for example, is a merged institution of the former Potchefstroom University located

⁸⁹ T. Barnes, “Changing Discourses and Meanings of Redress in South African Higher Education, 1994 – 2001”, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, (41), (1–2), 2006, p. 150.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ T. Gibbon, “Weighing success and diversity in the balance at Stellenbosch University”, in M. Letseka *et al.*, *Student Retention and Graduate Destination. Higher Education and Labour Market Access and Success* (Cape Town: Human Science Research Council, 2010), p. 67.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Department of Higher Education and Training, *National Plan for Higher Education in South Africa*, Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 82.

⁹⁴ F. Kamsteeg & H. Wels, “Traveling ideas: Equality and power play around “diversity” at North-West University (NWU), South Africa”, *International Journal of Business Anthropology*, (3), (2), 2012, p. 89.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

in Potchefstroom, and the all-black “Bantu campus” located in Mafikeng.⁹⁶ NWU became an institution where diversity was highly valued and given policy attention. The Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (known as PUK) dates to 1869, where a theological seminary was opened to train ministers and teachers. Due to its relationship with the Dutch Reformed Church, religion had an overwhelming influence. All lecturers were ministers at the Church and two of them had strong connections to the Netherlands Potchefstroom, which highlights its early Dutch influences.

To receive state subsidies, PUK hesitantly opened itself up in 1913 to other academic disciplines, and by 1951 it was officially recognised as a university. At the time, PUK came under increased scrutiny for its pro-apartheid stance. Post-1994, the South African government adopted Affirmative Action as one of its basic guides to implement required policy. Institutional transformation was aligned with national policy. The NWU merger was considered remarkable as Potchefstroom had a long history of being an academic stronghold of, “apartheid serving the white clientele of the Transvaal”, which was considered one of the most orthodox areas in the country.⁹⁷

In 2008 – four years after the rapid merger and formation of NWU – the *Mail and Guardian* (M&G) reported on what was dubbed the “merger mess”. The new institution was considered unmanageable even though it was more diverse. The student body was racially divided and operated as two separate universities. However, the university’s 2008 Institutional Plan suggested that after three years it had indeed achieved most of the objectives set out in the “Merger and Incorporation” guidelines of the Department of Higher Education.⁹⁸ While management celebrated their so-called transformative achievements, the media was quick to point out the continued disparities which existed amongst the student body.

According to philosopher, Dionne van Reenen, this racial divide amongst the student body at NWU, indicated that, “despite all the freedoms that equality laws and strategies have generated, members of society are still subject to microaggressions in the forms of subtle or

⁹⁶ F. Kamsteeg & H. Wels, “Traveling ideas: Equality and power play around “diversity” at North-West University (NWU), South Africa”, *International Journal of Business Anthropology*, (3), (2), 2012, p. 89.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

everyday discrimination; with higher education institutions being no exception”.⁹⁹ Van Reenen argues that persistent institutional divisiveness is prevalent through microaggressions. Van Reenen uses the University of the Free State (UFS) – a historically white, Afrikaans-medium institution as a case study to argue this standpoint.

Grey University College, the pre-cursor to UFS was established in 1904.¹⁰⁰ It was initially a white English-medium institution until 1918 when the language of instruction was changed to Afrikaans. This remained in place until the 1990s. In 1991, black students were permitted on the campus. This led to racial clashes and eventually racially separated living arrangements.¹⁰¹ With the turn of the century, residences accommodated almost exclusively “racially homogenous groups”. This was partly to blame on a skewed placement policy where the institution would place 30% of the new cohort with student leaders of residences placing the remaining 70%. Naturally, they would give preference to “desirable” applicants.¹⁰² In 2005, the Rector observed that – against the university’s intentions – “voluntary residence allocation, coupled with parallel medium instruction, had in effect divided the institution racially into black and white campuses both in the residences and the lecture rooms”.

The case of UFS indicates that the design of the system contributed to the campus divide. Van Reenen’s argument of the existence of subtle discrimination defines the concept as one which denotes everyday manifestation of systematic inequality as it is neither overt nor aggressive. Blatant discrimination is unambiguous and much easier to dismantle.¹⁰³ Subtle discrimination is considered a “soft punch” as it has an imbedded intention to belittle the “other” without being too obvious or explicit.¹⁰⁴ Van Reenen offers the argument that students subject themselves to such practices of discrimination based on the premise that they too will one day assimilate.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ D. van Reenen, “Maintaining Plausible Deniability: Detecting Mechanisms of Subtle Discrimination in a South African Higher Education Institution”, *Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice*, (13), (1), 2016, p. 18.

¹⁰⁰ J.N. Githaiga, P. Gobodo-Madikizela, & W. P. Wahl, “They dug up wounds’: University of the Free State students’ experiences of transformation and integration in campus residences”, *Race Ethnicity and Education*, (21), (6), 2018, p. 774.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 774.

¹⁰⁴ D. van Reenen, “Maintaining plausible deniability: detecting mechanisms of subtle discrimination in a South African higher education institution”, p. 19.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

It is suggested that students sacrifice who they are for the sake of the “other”, who does not have the intention to acknowledge this “sacrifice” and has little consideration to return this act.¹⁰⁶ The result is that the “student” who now has “reduced agency” due to sacrificing their identity, submits to the status quo, and thereby becomes complicit in their own circumstances, and constructs a moral attachment to their behaviour to legitimize the position they find themselves in. This submissiveness and complicity results in silence and withdrawal, as a posture of assimilation emerges as the acts from the hegemonic group are intentional yet concealed. The “[...] bruises and beatings do not show until later [...]” when the student wilfully recognizes their experiences.¹⁰⁷ Van Reenen further argues that these actions are “mis-framed” as “choices”, when rather they are “ontologically complicit”. They are part of the process of acquiring and exercising social capital necessary to succeed in a modern society.¹⁰⁸

A similar transformative system to UFS, was attempted at the University of Pretoria. Established in 1908 as the Pretoria campus of the Transvaal University College (TUC), the first student committee was formed in 1909 and the first initiation of first years commenced in the 1920s.¹⁰⁹ It was named the University of Pretoria (UP) in 1930. It remained a largely white Afrikaans institution until the Minister of National Education revised the Extension of University Education Act in 1983, admitting black students to the institution. Student demographics hardly changed until 1989. The shift in South Africa’s political affairs provoked UP to, “re-assess its admission policies and transformed it from an exclusively white university to a multiracial institution”.¹¹⁰ A new multi-lingual language policy was drafted in 1994 and a concerted effort was made to integrate and diversify the halls of residence. By 2008, the university had 27 residences: eight of which were allocated to male students, twelve to female students and seven were co-educational.

Matsie Mohale, a 2016 Master of Education in Curriculum and Instructional Design and Development student, argued that these changes did not alleviate racial tension between

¹⁰⁶ D. van Reenen, “Maintaining plausible deniability: detecting mechanisms of subtle discrimination in a South African higher education institution”, p. 20.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹⁰⁹ M.A. Mohale, “Interactions of diverse students in a South African university residence: the Case of Tuks Village,” Unpublished PhD diss., University of Pretoria, 2016, pp. 5-6.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

students, and this was largely attributed to the language divisions between English and Afrikaans speakers. Black students were not willing to engage in Afrikaans-orientated traditional residence practices.¹¹¹ This was ameliorated by 2010, when transformation agendas were mandated. Every residence was required to have black students and staff members amongst its leadership. Outdated offensive traditions were banned.¹¹² The Council of Higher Education has attributed transformation at UP to these initiatives. Furthermore, the *taaldebat* was argued to be the most significant contributing factor.¹¹³

Language has historically been an ideological point of contention since the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910.¹¹⁴ Language was synonymous with culture. The Department of Education therefore mandated a bilingual English and Dutch educational policy. This was adopted by the University of Cape Town, Stellenbosch University, and the University of South Africa (UNISA) in 1918. This shifted as Afrikaner nationalism grew in the mid-1930s, leading to monolingual medium of instruction in some institutions.¹¹⁵ When the National Party (NP) was elected in 1948, separate development policy resulted in, “ethnolinguistic enclaves” where universities were classified as white, black, Indian, or Coloured institutions.¹¹⁶ They were separated racially, linguistically, and culturally. They were also, “administered by white Afrikaners who studied in Afrikaans universities where they were educated in the philosophical assumptions, values, and ideals of the apartheid system”.¹¹⁷

The historically black institutions naturally differed quite substantially. In 1959, the apartheid government extended the power and scope of its earlier Bantu Education Act (1953) by passing the Extension of University Education Act and the University College of Fort Hare Transfer Act. These two forms of legislation served to extend the policies of separate development to South Africa’s universities and created five “university colleges” known

¹¹¹ M.A. Mohale, “Interactions of diverse students in a South African university residence: the Case of Tuks Village,” Unpublished PhD diss., University of Pretoria, 2016, pp. 5-6.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Afrikaans for the language debate.

¹¹⁴ D. Mkhize, “The language question at a historically Afrikaans university: Access and social justice issues”, *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, (36), (1), 2018, p. 17.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

pejoratively as “bush colleges”.¹¹⁸ These were segregated by race so that African, Indian, and coloured students could separately embark on selected higher education programmes. Courses were designed to produce graduates who would take their skills back to the Bantustan “homelands”.¹¹⁹ Black South Africans had no control over the construction of their university environment. For example, at the University College of the North, known as Turfloop, white academic staff outnumbered black academic staff.¹²⁰ Further to this, white staff were affiliated with the secretive Afrikaner group, the *Broederbond*, who extended control over the university’s council (the highest decision-making body) and any financial decisions. The absence of autonomy and black leadership became a subject of student protests in the first two decades of the university’s establishment.¹²¹ It is therefore no surprise that by 1968 student politics in South Africa took a startling – and, to some, reactionary – turn.¹²² Black South African university students cut ties with their so-called liberal white counterparts and shaped their own racially exclusive student organisation. During the 1960s and 1970s universities such as Fort Hare were driven by political divides over liberalism and racialism.

In contrast, student protest at Stellenbosch University took another form. The SRC elections during the 1970s were characterised by power struggles between conservative and liberal factions in the student community and these were split along linguistic English-Afrikaans lines.¹²³ An increasing number of SRC candidates who were not supported by the junior division of the Afrikaner Broederbond or by conservative students were elected to the SRC between 1970 and 1973. According to Visser, former Maties were apparently concerned by the “new spirit” which began to form amongst students based on the developing relationship between English-speaking and Afrikaans-students on campus. By 1982, *Die Matie* newspaper became more vocal about apartheid and racial discrimination.¹²⁴ As a result of brutal police action against anti-apartheid protesters, and detentions without trial, increased polarity and political activities and speeches at SU emerged.

¹¹⁸ A. Heffernan, *Limpopo’s Legacy: Student Politics and Democracy in South Africa*, Wits University Press, Braamfontein, 2019, p. 22.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹²³ W. Visser, “The Stellenbosch Student”, p. 117.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

In September 1985, a political protest march comprising of 300 coloured and white Maties took place on the campus, a first in SU history.¹²⁵ The protest was aimed at the Group Areas Act, detention of anti-apartheid activists and political prisoners amongst other things.¹²⁶ It was the beginning of joint activism against the apartheid regime which replicated the national narrative at the time. According to historian, Albert Grundlingh, the 1980s saw prominent Afrikaner musicians at the time, with sharp social commentary, challenge the generally perceived grave and constrained Afrikaner on both a political and cultural level.¹²⁷

The Universities of the Free State, North West and Stellenbosch prioritised Afrikaans as a medium of instruction since their inception.¹²⁸ This fell under scrutiny from 1994. As a result, Stellenbosch University instituted the T-Option in 2002.¹²⁹ Though, English could be used as a medium of instruction in a predominantly Afrikaans-language teaching module. The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences adopted the policy in 2005. The debate continued into 2007 when the then rector, Chris Brink, remarked that the preservation of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction would ultimately have an impact on academic quality because it would foster academic isolation thus leading to the development of a small “parochial” regional university.¹³⁰

Brink’s reflection at the time, indicated that for Afrikaans-medium universities the adoption of a transformation model would imply a shift to English as a language of instruction and administration. Parallel-medium language policies were considered to be more financially feasible. These were considered a compromise between “the need to reform and maintain Afrikaans in order to appease their traditional clientele”, and the need to transform which would increase access.¹³¹ Many of these strategies had financial implications. Either the withdrawal of alumni funding in the face of unwanted transformative actions or the need to maintain

¹²⁵ W. Visser, “The Stellenbosch Student”, p. 134.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ A. Grundlingh, “Rocking the Boat” in South Africa? Voëlvry Music and Afrikaans Anti-Apartheid Social Protest in the 1980s”, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, (37), (3), 2004, pp. 485.

¹²⁸ T. du Plessis, “From monolingual to bilingual higher education: The repositioning of historically Afrikaans-medium universities in South Africa”, *Language Policy*, (5), (1), 2006, p. 106.

¹²⁹ C. Brink, *Anatomy of a Transformer*, p. 144.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

financial sustainability as these policies were enforced. New discussions also focussed on the role of social capital in this endeavour.

Incidents around the language debate that have taken place across university campuses put a spotlight on residences in South Africa, which led to the establishment of the 2008 report of the Ministerial Committee on *Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in the Public Higher Education Institutions* – often referred to as the Soudien Report. This report provides one of the most detailed lenses into the student lived experience in residence spaces at South African Universities. The report refers to residences as “social cauldrons”. It provides a limited account of lived experiences of students within residence spaces at historically white universities: Stellenbosch University, the University of Johannesburg (UJ), the University of the Free State (UFS), University of Pretoria (UP), University of Cape Town (UCT), Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU), and Rhodes University (RU).

University residences have “typically been defined as a home away from home”.¹³² Residence spaces are according to the Soudien report, “not socially cohesive” as they are “spaces of shared norms, values and practices”.¹³³ The report unpacks the limitations of policy on residence culture and tradition, from the influence of senior students on juniors, the freedom of association beyond room placements which creates a lack of integration, the difference in socio-economic background of students, the obstacle to the principle of participation, and the issue of decentralization and representation of residence committees.¹³⁴

The discussion around representation within university spaces is best described by the works of Frantz Fanon – a French West Indian psychiatrist and political philosopher – who believed that the decolonisation of the university started with the “de-privatisation” and “rehabilitation” of the “public space”. He referred to the rearrangement of spatial relations, which involved what is public and reclaiming spaces which were previously defined by systemic structures of oppression.¹³⁵

¹³² C. Brink, *Anatomy of a Transformer*, p. 75.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 76-80.

¹³⁵ A. Mbembe, *Decolonizing knowledge, and the question of the archive* (Johannesburg: Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WISER), 2008), p. 5.

Student residence spaces are notorious for reflecting the dominance of a hegemonic culture and can be arguably classified as heterotopias. French philosopher, historian of ideas, social theorist, and literary critic Michel Foucault conceptualised the theory of heterotopias in 1967. A heterotopia is considered in contrast to a “utopia”, as it is considered a “space” that is both imaginary and real.¹³⁶ Foucault uses a mirror to illustrate the simultaneity of both illusion and reality and considers them as, “places that interrupt the apparent continuity of ordinary everyday space”.¹³⁷ Foucault’s theory can thus be utilised as a conceptual framework to understand an institution’s culture and, more relevant for this study, residence culture both real and imagined. In essence, residences are defined as “other spaces” which have their own rules, culture and context.¹³⁸ Foucault’s theory is comprised of six principles for heterotopias: (i) they are preserved for those in an “crisis” or “deviance”; (ii) their function is affected as history unfolds; (iii) they are formed from juxtaposing spaces; (iv) they are connected to moments in time; (v) they are closed systems; and (vi) they have a relationship with the wider society.¹³⁹ What is essential here is the intricate link between institutional culture, residence space and context within a broader town community

Foucault’s first principle provides two categories of a heterotopia – one of crisis and one of deviation. A crisis heterotopia is considered reserved for those in a vulnerable state or naïve state of mind such as adolescents and, it could be argued, first year students at a university.¹⁴⁰ Residence spaces can undoubtedly be considered heterotopias of deviation as the culture of a residence has been characterised as one that “[...] signifies the ‘unity of the group’, which is based on a common set of activities that bind the group” and which would appear foreign to those outside of the space.¹⁴¹ The displays of loyalty are often held by the charisma of its leadership and thus “the challenge of integration and the resultant conflict and tension are

¹³⁶ M. Foucault & J. Miskowiec, “Of other spaces”, *Diacritics*, (16), 2008, pp. 22-27.

¹³⁷ M. Cenzatti, “Heterotopias of difference”, *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society* (Oxford: Blackwell University, 2008), pp. 75-85.

¹³⁸ E. Blaire, “A further education college as a heterotopia”, *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, (14), (1), 2009, p. 94.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

¹⁴¹ C. Soudien, W. Michaels, S. Mthembu-Mahanyele, *et al.*, *Report of The Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions* (Pretoria: Department of Higher Education and Training, 2008), p. 81.

integrally linked” to the organization of these residences based on their identity, culture and tradition.¹⁴²

It has also been argued in the Soudien report that the historical inheritance of an institutional culture often creates tension and anxiety over the fear of losing residence culture.¹⁴³ Reportedly, “traditional orientation and initiation programmes at higher education institutions (HEIs) [in South Africa] have been receiving a lot of negative attention and criticism in the media, due to the nature and unintended consequences linked to the implementation of the programmes”.¹⁴⁴ These orientation programmes – also known as welcoming programmes – aim to “introduce newcomers – [first year students] – to the social behavioural [ideals] of a new academic context and to assist them in adjusting to a social context where their belief systems and worldviews are challenged by new [experiences]”.¹⁴⁵ However, reports have indicated that newcomers of HEI’s have often been pressured to “conform to group dynamics that [emphasise] the dominant, controlling position of senior students, which is sustained through intergenerational transmission”.¹⁴⁶ Welcoming programmes traditionally did not reflect the norms of inclusivity, human dignity, equality, and respect for diversity.¹⁴⁷

A welcoming and inclusive community is considered one that is culturally competent and which “welcomes people from all backgrounds”, “demonstrates commitment to inclusion”, equity, and “has the capacity to enable individual development and wellbeing, regardless of one’s abilities, ethnicity cultures, languages, gender, socioeconomic status, religion or country of origin”.¹⁴⁸ Characteristics of a welcoming and inclusive community are one that manifests positive attitudes toward “diversity and inclusion”, enables “policy procedures that fight racism

¹⁴² C. Soudien, W. Michaels, S. Mthembu-Mahanyele, *et al.*, *Report of The Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions* (Pretoria: Department of Higher Education and Training, 2008), p. 81.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

¹⁴⁴ S. Chigeza, J. H. De Kock, V. Roos, & M. P. Wissing, “The subjective well-being of first-year tertiary students during an induction programme”, *Africa Education Review*, (14), (3-4), 2017, p. 21.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ M. Guo-Brennan, & L. Guo-Brennan, “Civic Capacity and Engagement in Building Welcoming and Inclusive Communities for Newcomers: Praxis, Recommendations, and Policy Implications”, *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*, (11), (2), 2019, p. 32.

and discrimination”, programs and resources to meet “newcomers’ needs”, “social integration and cohesion between locals and newcomers”, “culturally responsive practices”, and “equal engagement and development opportunities”.¹⁴⁹

In 2001, the Minister of Education, under pressure from the South African Human Rights Commission, published a *Report into Initiation Practices at Educational Institutions and a Preliminary Report on Cultural Initiations*.¹⁵⁰ The convenor stated that, “South Africa is now a constitutional state, therefore, all aspects of our society must stand the test of constitutional scrutiny. Those practices in conflict with the values and principles embedded in our Constitution must be weeded out”.¹⁵¹ Reports such as the Soudien report, have indicated that initiation has been considered as the antithesis to establishing a transformative welcoming student experience. Although the concept has been condemned by institutions, it has been disguised under various conditions all in the name of “welcoming”. The term has a historical connotation of involving degrading and humiliating acts that have jeopardized the safety and human dignity of many students.¹⁵² Interventions by the state since 2000 – which will be explored in this study – indicate that welcoming practices have been under scrutiny for decades in South Africa.

Welcoming culture formulates a dominant part of this dissertation. The concept entails the orientation of new students into the university, and thus the multi-faceted components of the *Matie* and residence identities will be explored. There are three “characteristics of a campus culture of inclusion” which will be used as the framework for this study. The first being the need to create an “interconnected campus community with concretely defined working relationships between the individuals who hold the capacity to foster, regulate and enforce policies, and those who are affected by them as a direct consequence”.¹⁵³ The relationship between these stakeholders is key to shape and influence the campus culture of the community.

¹⁴⁹ M. Guo-Brennan, & L. Guo-Brennan, “Civic Capacity and Engagement in Building Welcoming and Inclusive Communities for Newcomers: Praxis, Recommendations, and Policy Implications”, *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*, (11), (2), 2019, p. 32.

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.sahrc.org.za/home/21/files/Reports/REPORT%20INTO%20INITIATION%20PRACTICES.pdf2001.pdf> [Accessed 17 September 2020].

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² V. de Klerk, “Initiation, Hazing or Orientation? A Case Study at a South African University”, *International Research in Education*, (1), (1), 2013, p. 87.

¹⁵³ J. Gillies, & S.L. Dupuis, “A Framework for Creating a Campus Culture of Inclusion: A Participatory Action Research Approach”, *Annals of Leisure Research*, (16), (3), 2013, pp. 193-211.

The second characteristic which needs to be considered is that of a “supportive and enabling campus community”.¹⁵⁴ This needs to be considered in terms of the “physical, psychological and social needs of its members” in order for authentic connections to emerge. Without this component, there are inherent barriers which foster an unwelcoming campus community as the accessibility of a campus ensures there are no physical obstacles. The visibility of diversity ensures that stigma’s and “otherness” can be addressed. Socialization amongst diverse individuals – that is “persons of different abilities, genders and nationalities” – has been said to aid citizens to “unlearn stigmas and assumptions and relearn new appreciation for uniqueness”.¹⁵⁵ Lastly, an informed campus community enables the fostering of a culture of consideration and consultation in recognizing the needs of the students. While these transformative elements have been largely instigated and monitored by the state, the institutional management team or residence leaders, the transformative role of student-led initiatives in reaction to poor institutional change should also be considered.

It needs to be foreground that university institutional cultures are not monolithic. They constantly adapt and are collectively constructed. Although Stellenbosch University and institutions alike have a long way to go to achieve a transformative student experience and institutional culture, transformation is not linear. It could be argued that it is cyclic. It is a constant reappraisal of the past, review of the present and a projection of the future. Transformation is ambiguous because it is a constant state of becoming. It is when an institution is complacent and stagnant in its transformation agenda that concern should be raised. In the case of Stellenbosch University there is an evident constant re-evaluation of the state of affairs. However, according to research psychologist, Natalie Donaldson, the policies institutions create which are aimed at being more inclusive and addressing discrimination often reinforce exclusion and discrimination even though this is the opposite of their intent.¹⁵⁶ The reason for this is captured by Louis Vincent, a qualitative research methodologist, who argues that an institution’s culture includes its beliefs and practices which essentially encapsulate the institution’s worldview.¹⁵⁷ This worldview influences the narrative of the institution and

¹⁵⁴ J. Gillies, & S.L. Dupuis, “A Framework for Creating a Campus Culture of Inclusion: A Participatory Action Research Approach”, *Annals of Leisure Research*, (16), (3), 2013, pp. 193-211.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 203-204.

¹⁵⁶ P.A. Tabensky, and S. Matthews, *Being at home: Race, institutional culture and transformation at South African higher education institutions*, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 2015, p. 15.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

contributes to the construction of the institution's story. This is the story it tells about itself, and the story others tell about their experience of the institution. These stories construct and perpetuate an institution's culture. This contributes to the complexity of an institution's culture. Furthermore, according to Vincent, transformation of institutional culture cannot evade an engagement with existing material manifestations of cultural practices, identities, and subjectivities.¹⁵⁸ Vincent expresses that those in power have the responsibility to create the conditions under which counternarratives might emerge, be told and be heard.¹⁵⁹

1.3.2. Student-led Transformation in Higher Education

Sally Baker, whose works on equity in higher education, and Brian Brown, whose works focus on diversity and identity, argue that power and knowledge within higher education institutions do not necessarily correlate.¹⁶⁰ A research study published in 2014, sampled 20 flagship universities around Africa, which revealed uneven representation of students in university governance and therefore in the decision making process of changes in policy.¹⁶¹ This showcases a divergent power dynamic within institutions.

Barnes argues that student activism was fundamental to oppositional politics at universities. First by NUSAS and, from the late 1960s, increasingly by black students' movements. According to Calamita Naicker the process has been driven by the increasing number of black students at universities such as UCT, Stellenbosch, the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS) and Rhodes University. The culture and practices of those students come into direct conflict with the ways in which these institutions functioned, exposing

¹⁵⁸ P.A. Tabensky, and S. Matthews, *Being at home: Race, institutional culture and transformation at South African higher education institutions*, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 2015, p. 35.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁶⁰ P. Ainley, "Rethinking Universities, The Social Functions of Higher Education – By Sally Baker and Brian Brown", *Higher Education Quarterly*, (63), (1), 2009, pp. 114-116.

¹⁶¹ T.M. Luescher-Mamashela & T. Mugume, "Student Representation and Multiparty Politics in African Higher Education", *Studies in Higher Education*, (39), (3), 2014, p. 508.

entrenched white, male, heteronormative institutional practices.¹⁶² The statements are made but poorly supported by evidence. This is rectified in this study.

While state and institutional efforts at transformation loomed on agendas from 1994, it was periods of mass student protest that clearly revealed the extent of structural and systemic untransformed spaces within tertiary institutions. Amongst many other concerns such as gender-based violence, LGBTQ+ rights and support staff contracts, was particularly the continued use of Afrikaans as a language of instruction. From 2015 onwards, South African universities were faced with a barrage of hashtag (#) movements, collectively known as the #MustFall, with the #FeesMustFall movement promoting the “kinds of political praxis that is often used, and seen as, outside the institutional space”.¹⁶³ Arguably, it became a movement which represented the interests of those who felt “marginalised and excluded from institutional culture and practices of the liberal university”.¹⁶⁴ As a result of this, these students embraced political practices that were “closer to urban social movements and independent strike committees than traditional trade unions and political parties”. These movements rejected representational structures such as the SRC, student organisations and political parties, as students aligned themselves with groups outside the “elitist space of university and civil society”.¹⁶⁵ At Stellenbosch University, this grew out of the institution’s exclusionary policies entrenched during the apartheid-era. It should be added that the reputation of the institution as an exclusionary institution, also led to many not wanting to be exposed to systemic racism and thus opting not to apply. The movement at Stellenbosch also received nominal media coverage and some criticism circulated amongst the various groupings across campuses that Stellenbosch was far too passive. This lacuna will be addressed in Chapter 3.

According to Reitumetse Obakeng Mabokela, a professor in the field of educational policies, SU admitted its first black student in 1977.¹⁶⁶ In 1983, when universities were legally

¹⁶² C. Naicker, “From Marikana to #feesmustfall: The praxis of popular politics in South Africa”, *Urbanisation*, 1, 2006, p. 57.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ R.O. Mabokela, “Selective inclusion: Transformation and language policy at the University of Stellenbosch”, *Apartheid No More: Case Studies of Southern African Universities in the Process of Transformation*, Westport, Greenwood Publishing, 2001, p. 59.

permitted to admit black students, African students comprised less than 1% of the student body and Coloureds only 1.42% of the 12,056 full-time students. In 1995, the proportion of African students had increased only to 2.55% and Coloured students increased to 9.56% of the total student population.¹⁶⁷

A 1994 analysis of Stellenbosch students by home language indicated that 73.62% identified Afrikaans as their dominant home language, 20.25% English, 1.7% both Afrikaans and English and 4.37% other languages. Most of the Afrikaans speakers – 46% – resided in the Western Cape and Northern Cape provinces.¹⁶⁸ The high percentage of Afrikaans speakers served as a justification for maintaining Afrikaans as the dominant language on campus. As a result, SU was to be an “inclusive Afrikaans university”. Mabokela further highlights that the University’s administration argued that their responsibility was to the broader Afrikaans-speaking community in the Western Cape. According to Mabokela, senior administrators often reiterated that “[...] this is an Afrikaans university. Just look at the demographics of the Western Cape”.¹⁶⁹ It should also be noted that this justification was also led by Coloured groups who reclaimed the language of Afrikaans, arguing, which is an ongoing debate, that it was their language which had been culturally appropriated by white Afrikaners.

Upholding Afrikaans as the primary language of instruction was to serve the interests of both white and Coloured Afrikaans students. A racial issue had once more become one of language. After 1994, it was unclear how the university planned to achieve its goal of inclusivity, without efforts to accommodate other linguistic groups. Other Afrikaans universities implemented measures to address and accommodate the linguistic needs of their students by offering dual-medium (English and Afrikaans) instruction.¹⁷⁰ Stellenbosch appeared to be a constant anomaly in the transformation process of higher education in South Africa.

¹⁶⁷ R.O. Mabokela, “Selective inclusion: Transformation and language policy at the University of Stellenbosch”, *Apartheid No More: Case Studies of Southern African Universities in the Process of Transformation*, Westport, Greenwood Publishing, 2001, p. 59.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

An opinion piece in the *Daily Maverick* on the 28th of April 2015 by the #OpenStellenbosch collective, heavily criticised management attempts at transforming the space. A range of policies were introduced between 2000 and 2015. These included the “Strategic Framework” of 1999, the “Vision 2012” of 2000, the “Transformation Strategy” of 2008, the “Overarching Strategic Plan” of 2009, the “Quality Development plan” of 2007, the “Employment Equity Plan”, and the “Diversity Framework”.¹⁷¹ The #OpenStellenbosch movement of 2015 “challenged the hegemony of white Afrikaans culture and the exclusion of black students and staff”.¹⁷² It also critiqued the pace of transformation at the institution.¹⁷³ The movement further called for the implementation of English as the main medium of academic instruction and general communication at the university; the radical change of the institutional culture to reflect diverse cultures and not only white Afrikaans culture; and the public acknowledgement and remembrance of the role Stellenbosch University and its faculties played in the conceptualisation, implementation and maintenance of the apartheid system.

A primary focus of the movement was to protest the university’s language policy, which marginalised non-Afrikaans learners.¹⁷⁴ On the 20th of August 2015, a documentary was released called *Luister* which documented the lives of students of colour who attended Stellenbosch University.¹⁷⁵ Students recounted how they had been marginalised by racially discriminatory practices within the town of Stellenbosch.¹⁷⁶ Language, institution, race and the broader Stellenbosch town was drawn into the discussion. It was only in 2016 that a new proposed policy was advocated. The Constitutional Court of South Africa ruled that English as medium of instruction was constitutionally valid.¹⁷⁷ These institutional, residence and student-led transformative changes speak to the various ways in which new forms of identity-formation and belonging unfold.

¹⁷¹ <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2015-04-28-op-ed-open-stellenbosch-tackling-language-and-exclusion-at-stellenbosch-university/> [Accessed, 31 August 2020]. These will be discussed in Chapter 2.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ <https://www.matiemedia.org/three-of-the-most-prominent-stellenbosch-movements/> [Accessed, 31 August 2020]

¹⁷⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sF3rTBQTQk4> [Accessed, 31 August 2020].

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-10-10-english-prevails-in-stellenbosch-university-language-battle/> [Accessed, 31 August 2020].

1.3.3. Conflicting Identities

Universities and residence spaces can be considered imagined communities, as defined by political scientist Benedict Anderson.¹⁷⁸ These are spaces where the members that form a part of the community share an image of their association across space or time.¹⁷⁹ These imagined communities have their cultural roots imbedded in symbols, rules, regulations, time, and other practices.¹⁸⁰ Similarly, a further consideration of universities and residence spaces as imagined communities, is literary critic Erik Blair's argument, that learning institutions such as colleges and universities can be considered as heterotopias of defined imaginary spaces infused with elements of reality.

Johnathan Haidt, a social psychologist, refers to ethics of autonomy and ethics of community which establish an understanding of where the individual operates. As a result, an institution works with two different identities and thus functions in two areas because of the separation of the individual identity and that of the community.¹⁸¹ This suggests that individual identities, residence identities and spatial identities are constantly being negotiated. These spatial identities take different forms according to the location of the institution. Stellenbosch University, much like Rhodes University, are university towns. The institution, therefore, has a direct impact on the communities who live within its borders.

The influence of institutionalized practices within a space can further be supported by the work of historian Janeke Thumbran who argues that UP was complicit in the apartheid state's making of racial subjection of coloureds as a " [...] separate community, premised on their racial difference from white".¹⁸² A central part of Thumbran's argument is how Coloured spaces such as Eersterust had been appropriated by UP after 1962. Furthermore, those communities were sites of many sociological investigations, which were used by the apartheid

¹⁷⁸ B. Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso books, 2006), pp. 9-36.

¹⁷⁹ Y. Kanno & B. Norton, "Imagined communities and educational possibilities: Introduction", *Journal of language, identity, and education*, (2), (4), 2003, p. 241.

¹⁸⁰ B. Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, pp. 9-36.

¹⁸¹ J. Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Vintage Books, 2013), pp. 116-117.

¹⁸² J. Thumbran, "The 'Coloured Question' and the University of Pretoria: Separate Development, Trusteeship and Self Reliance, 1933-2012", unpublished PhD, University of Minnesota, 2018, p. 2.

state to disenfranchise them even further.¹⁸³ Thumbran further argues that Pretoria's urban policy and the University of Pretoria's architecture department's intervention in Eerterust later in 2011 are processes that coincide with literature on the "spatial legacy of colonialism and apartheid in the post-apartheid city".¹⁸⁴ Thumbran's argument needs to be considered in relation to Stellenbosch University's geographical location.

Die Vlakte in Stellenbosch was an area home to a mix of races, the majority of whom were historically Coloured.¹⁸⁵ Many people were forcefully removed by 1964 and many of the SU buildings are located in this space. Over several decades, the official history of Stellenbosch has failed to include the events surrounding the Battle of Andringa Street or the removals of *Die Vlakte*. Unlike the UP-case study, SU literally occupied this former Coloured space. This speaks to the way in which the institution is spatially positioned within the town, but clear distinctions are made between "the students" and the *Stellenbosser*.¹⁸⁶

Thumbran's work suggests that "subjectivity" rather than "identity" should be applied when studying institutions. This allows one to investigate the "[...] convergence of power and knowledge that produced and re-produced forms of racialized subjection".¹⁸⁷ This argument needs to be considered in analysing the institutional and residence culture of SU and the reciprocal impact it has on the broader Stellenbosch communities. In addition, the ways in which the student identity is transformed by its location is also a point of reflection.

Literary critics, Tatiana Golban and Evla Yürükler discuss the concept of identity formation in relation to Louis de Bernières' novel *Birds Without Wings* and refer to the works of philosopher George Hegel, who argued that "[...] identity is mostly intersubjective rather than being subjective, and it is not individually but socially located".¹⁸⁸ According to Golban and Yürükler, Hegel argues that human consciousness is precluded from being "independent"

¹⁸³ J. Thumbran, "The 'Coloured Question' and the University of Pretoria: Separate Development, Trusteeship and Self Reliance, 1933-2012", unpublished PhD, University of Minnesota, 2018, p. 3.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

¹⁸⁵ E. Costandius & A. Neeske, "Exploring Shame and Pedagogies of Discomfort in Critical Citizenship Education", *Transformation in Higher Education*, (4), (0), 2019, p. 8.

¹⁸⁶ Afrikaans term used to refer to people who call Stellenbosch their permanent home.

¹⁸⁷ J. Thumbran, "The 'Coloured Question' and the University of Pretoria: Separate Development, Trusteeship and Self Reliance, 1933-2012", p. 2.

¹⁸⁸ T. Golban & E. Yürükler, "Social Construction of Identity in Louis De Bernières' Novel *Birds Without Wings*/Louis De Bernières' in *Kanatsız Kuşlar Romanında Sosyal Kimlik Oluşumu*", *Humanitas*, (7), (14), 2019, pp. 406-407.

from external factors such as the social world, which results in it “embracing of or submission to an ‘other’”.¹⁸⁹ This suggests that the emergence of the “self” takes place through the participation in social life. This so-called “Hegelian social perspective” argues that the “self” is framed by an individual’s inclusion in, or identification with, a certain collective.

The complexities of identity formation are illuminated by sociologist, Thomas Blaser, who argues that Afrikaners, like most other groups, are “experiencing multiple identities as they move between different ethnicities”.¹⁹⁰ Blaser further argues that this intersection between ethnicity and identity leads to “creating and re-creating” identities, which results in a fluid identity but ones where there is the desire to “value tradition, culture and language and take pride in it”.¹⁹¹ These complexities are further demonstrated by educationalist, Jonathan Jansen who argues “[...] political and cultural identities are not like an overcoat that can be slipped off as easily as weather changes; they are a much more complex and constrained process in which change exists alongside continuity, and the preparedness to change is not unconditional, divorced from self-interest, or without contradictions.”¹⁹² Jansen argues that individuals are invested in the identities they decide to adopt, it creates a foundation for their decision-making process and informs their choice to perform an act which would risk their identity or contradict it.

Identities are strongly intertwined with institutional culture. In the context of tertiary institutions, institutional culture refers to how an institution constructs significance and socializes its constituents.¹⁹³ There is a deep complexity in social, cultural, and historical factors shaping education according to sociologist, Jenny Stuber.¹⁹⁴ Social identity theory explains how new incoming students assume identities affiliated with their respective

¹⁸⁹ T. Golban & E. Yürükler, “Social Construction of Identity in Louis De Bernières’ Novel *Birds Without Wings*/Louis De Bernières’ in *Kanatsız Kuşlar Romanında Sosyal Kimlik Oluşumu*”, *Humanitas*, (7), (14), 2019, pp. 406-407.

¹⁹⁰ T.M. Blaser, “Afrikaner Identity After Nationalism: Young Afrikaners and the ‘new’ South Africa”, unpublished PhD, University of Witwatersrand, 2009, p. 17.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁹² J.D. Jansen, *Knowledge in the blood: Confronting race and the apartheid past* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp.250-251.

¹⁹³ E. De Rosa & N. Dolby, ““I don’t think the university knows me...”: Institutional culture and lower-income, first-generation college students”, *Interactions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies*, (10), (2), 2014, pp. 3-4.

¹⁹⁴ J.M. Stuber, *Inside the college gates: How class and culture matter in higher education* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2011), p. 8.

institutions. This suggests that as they are socialised in the environment, their intersubjective engagement influences their reception of the space.

As a public institution, a university has the social responsibility to demonstrate responsiveness to the social grievances of its constituents. Universities are seen as incubators for the civil development of individuals.¹⁹⁵ What these institutions explicitly and implicitly subject their constituents to defines their institutional identity. Narratives constructing institutional identities are similar to the construction of cultural identities.¹⁹⁶ Cultural narrative identities are constructed through classifications such as gender, age, religion, race, and ethnicity.¹⁹⁷ These cultural categorical identities characterise causal stories which inform policy. These causal stories define the “problem” in the environment and are usually indicative of the need for policy to protect the individual, group, or organisation. They frame the categorization of individuals in the institution and the behavioural act of said individuals. The predominant difference between cultural narrative identities and institutional narrative identities is that the latter is consequential. The policies within institutions are designed to organise people into identity categories. As a result, the narratives of institutional identity shape the socialisation of people within the space, and what they are subjected to.

As traditions are defined as the transference of customs and beliefs through generational interaction and engagement, it can be argued that the remnants of traditional practices and stories within Stellenbosch University residences inherently contribute to defining a residence’s identity. Although, as residence spaces are microcosms of the broader institution, residence identities are affected by institutional policy which is informed by the causal stories of its constituents. Stories which are indicative of the realities of living in a space characterised by a specific cultural identity which exclude those who do not identify with the predominant culture. As policy characterises institutional identity, it is evident that policies such as the 2013 SU Residence Placement Policy, are designed to diversify residence environments to encourage alignment with the institutions values and encourage integration of multiple cultures. Therefore, this study will further investigate the factors that contribute to the

¹⁹⁵ W.M. Sullivan, “The university as citizen: Institutional identity and social responsibility”, *The Civic Arts Review*, (16), (1), 1999, p. 3.

¹⁹⁶ D.R. Loseke, “The study of identity as cultural, institutional, organizational, and personal narratives: Theoretical and empirical integrations”, *The Sociological Quarterly*, (48), (4), 2007, p. 667.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 663.

formation of residence identities at SU and how that is negotiated alongside the broader institutional identity, known as the *Matie* student identity at SU.

1.4. Problem Statement and Thesis Question

Transformation in tertiary institutions has been a primary concern for the post-apartheid state. A series of initiatives, policies and commissions were rolled out to establish the best methods of transforming previously exclusionary institutions. These were well-established centers of higher learning which had a history of excluding student enrolment and participation based on race and language. One could extend this to class where institutions charged exorbitant fees thus by default excluding most students. Out of necessity institutions had to conform under the pressure of ministerial directives inspired by constitutional reform. By 2015, institutions were faced with the challenge of transforming their environments in a period of financial uncertainty and making the experience relevant to the present. Additionally, a complete overhaul of the curriculum was placed on the agenda in the call for a decolonized and African focused curriculum.

These institutions fostered an institutional identity to ensure that students showed loyalty to the institution. This challenged the student's personal identity depending on how they immersed themselves in the student community. Thus, one cannot speak of a single individual identity. All individuals undergo identity shifts and the co-existence of multiple identities, can be anticipated. The institutional identity, by contrast, was expected to fossilize ideas of established traditions in an attempt to create an ideal and conforming collective. The literature speaks of the ways in which this was entrenched not only in lecture rooms but also in the various student spaces. Instrumental to supporting the entrenchment of the collective identity was the residence space. In addition, these residence spaces also required allegiance to their own residence identity.

As institutions attempted to conform to the requirements of the new political dispensation, a series of transformative policies were introduced in several institutions. On the one hand, management would argue that they had met quantitative targets. On the other, the newly settled

student cohort which consisted of many more previously excluded students, spoke out about inherent and systemic forms of discrimination which they had to confront daily. Concerns included continued heteronormative and misogynistic attitudes, gender-based violence, exclusionary language practice, exorbitant university fees, student discriminatory experiences especially in white spaces, white privilege, and entrenched exclusionary residence experiences. This unfolded in the context of a broader unease over economic disparity, frustration over promises made by the ANC regarding free education and a general unhappiness at the pace of transformation across the country. In addition, discriminatory residence practices which were exposed in the media provided the opportunity to have these uncomfortable discussions. Of particular concern were continued patterns of dehumanizing initiation practices – in whatever way these rituals have been termed over time. Concerted efforts were made to regulate the space.

The existing literature speaks to many of these issues in various institutions across the country. A comprehensive history and even contemplation of changing student population and practices at Stellenbosch University have also been delineated in the work of Wessel Visser. However, the process and intricate connections between how state initiatives, institutional reform policies, student initiatives, and importantly resistance to this as seen in the more “secretive spaces” of the university residence, is yet to be explored. This is of importance because these processes have a direct impact on the changing nature of the collective identity of the *Matie* and the negotiation of that institutional identity with that of the residence. It is through this medium that the transformative process amongst student body are most visible.

Ideally, personal narratives from students would have proven beneficial to the study. This is particularly important as most students opt not to be placed in official university residences because of their reputation as being particularly untransformed spaces. However, there are three points of reflection which have motivated the focus of this study. Firstly, identity formation is complex, and the study is focused on “collective” levels to avoid having to navigate the intricacies of imposed and self-personal identification markers. Because a residence is a collective of individuals it could be argued that it is a collective-perpetuated system defined by a symbiotic relationship. Individuals within the space are subjected to existing practices which may benefit them implicitly or explicitly, or cause harm. Their mere participation in these practices can be considered a form of endorsement of these practices.

This potentially leads to a continuous perpetuation of the residence culture and identity which leads to the co-creation of the space which continues the cycle. It can be further argued that the welcoming culture of these spaces, demonstrates who they were, who they are, and where they are going. Welcoming can be considered a staged manifestation of their culture and identity, based on intentional design.

Secondly, the complex processes which have unfolded at an institutional level has yet to be fully unpacked. This is a necessity to understand the ways in which these policies have disseminated within the institution and how they have been implemented. The limitations of a Master's study have necessitated streamlining of this study's focus to structural levels and to focus on residence spaces.

Thirdly, and most importantly, was the diversity of different lenses from which to investigate these changes. Institutional documents and archival material located at the various residence spaces necessitated the need to access a counter-narrative. This is necessary to understand how these policies have led to student involvement and resistance. It is for this reason that the first-year welcoming week has been given prominence in this study. To ensure that residence spaces were complying with the latest institutional values an independent monitoring advisory committee to monitor first-year orientation was established. These monitors were positioned across the various male, female, and mixed-gender residences across campus. Their perspectives provide a sound transitional and somewhat oppositional voice between institutional policies and application of these directives in residence spaces.

The objective of this study is, therefore, to investigate the changing nature of student residences as products of the broader institutional culture at SU according to their actions toward adapting their welcoming culture and practices over time and their reactions toward the critique of these efforts between 2000 and 2018. While there are many aspects that influence residence culture, this investigation seeks to provide a lens into what has been symptomatic of the broader institutional culture, and what has been explicit of the individual residences' cultures.

The aim of the study is to use SU student residences as a micro-lens into the formation of a collective culture, the role of "place" in identity creation and to examine the actions and reactions toward welcoming practices. Furthermore, this study will: (i) identify the

stakeholders and structures involved in the decision-making process of change in broader institutional practices and specifically residence welcoming practices; (ii) connect and interpret interventions made within residences with regards to their welcoming practices and how power and negotiation has shifted; and (iii) scrutinize how change has been measured over time with regards to the welcoming experience of students.

The main thesis question is: Through the lens of welcoming practices at Stellenbosch University residences, what impact have state and institutional transformation initiatives had on institutional and residence identities between 2000 and 2018?

1.5. Methodology

This study was conducted by analysing and interpreting government publications and institutional reports of Stellenbosch University, both published and unpublished. In addition to these documents, orientation monitor reports were used as a lens into the welcoming period of residences alongside archival material and news articles. Interviews with former and current student leaders and staff members were conducted to gain insight into the residence space. The greatest challenges have been securing institutional ethical clearance to conduct the study, free access especially to residence archives, and the separation of material into explicit or implicit manifestations of culture. Explicit culture refers to the observable acts and products regularly found in a group. Implicit culture refers to principles underpinning the organisation of explicit culture.¹⁹⁸

The initial intention was to analyse the various archival repositories kept at the different residences on campus. Informal permission soon manifested into evasive behaviour and, as a result, the focus had to shift to other forms of acquiring intimate knowledge on the workings within these spaces, especially after the national Covid lockdown instituted in March. The primary investigator of this study is very aware that the range of sources released may have

¹⁹⁸ I. Greener, *Designing Social Research: A Guide for the Bewildered* (London: Sage Publications, 2011), p. 63.

consciously or otherwise been pre-selected. To overcome possible gatekeeping practices, four different source bases require mention.

Government publications and reports were used to contextualise the national landscape and as a backdrop to understand the state directive towards institutions of higher learning. Stellenbosch University's institutional documents such as policies, notices, letters, annual reports, and task team reports were used to monitor how national directives were adapted to suit the institutional landscape. There is little doubt that these were framed in such a way as to foreground the institutional intent at the time, but the purpose of this study is to investigate how these directives were adopted in residence spaces, so the nature of this drafting is not discussed in great length.

Institutional archival documentation of Stellenbosch University were more easily accessible. These included task team reports, letters, monitor reports, transformation reports, annual year reports, and management policies. There were various challenges in locating documentation as documents are housed in specific divisions within specific centres at the University – sometimes even with specific portfolios. It is for this reason that the complex structural composition has become the focus of Chapter 2. Again, these were strategically constructed documents. Their implementation is more significant than the process of construction. These documents will be categorised under the broad archive of Stellenbosch University Archive (SUA) in the footnotes with specific reference, where necessary, of the actual unit which houses these documents.

While many residence heads initially pledged open access to their archives, it became increasingly evident that the investigator would have limited access. The commitment by some residences to this project was disappointing. This was, in part, a result of the chaotic ways in which these residences maintained their archive. Where possible material such as letters, in-house publications, constitutions, and commemorative volumes were used. More could have been extracted from within these archives but unfortunately lockdown constraints during the outbreak of COVID-19 led to pursuing alternative sources of information. Therefore only a few specific residences were sampled, to provide a lens in the changes that occurred within the residence culture and practices over time. For this reason, it was decided to conduct interviews with student leaders and past residence heads to gain some perspective on residence spaces.

Some respondents were more responsive than others, but these interviews provided a contextual lens into different time periods through personal narrative.

In addition, the unfortunate events of 2001 when a student died during initiation, led to various monitoring systems being put in place to observe the welcoming week of student communities and to critically evaluate if practices were in line with the University's values, vision, and mission. Over the years this monitor group – which consists of students from various student led spaces – has been referred to as the “watch-dogs” of the institution. They submit a report of all incidences within residences and PSOs and provide a general overview of the welcoming period. The contents of these Monitoring Advisory Committee (MAC) reports is discussed by the Centre for Student Communities amongst the Residence Heads as well as with the Vice-Rector for Teaching and Learning. While a good source of counter-narratives, they do not detail the events of these incidences. It is here that attention was shifted to residence archives and interviews with leadership heads of the time to unpack the details around these events.

Sixteen interviews were conducted with current and former student leaders who resided in residences, as well as staff members who are currently residence heads and who have worked directly within these spaces. These interviews provided a structural lens into residence spaces. Individuals recruited for the study were asked to share their first impression of their residence; the reaction of their residence to broader campus issues and dialogue; their welcoming experience; the role and relationship of the residents with the alumni and seniors; challenges to adopting change; and to highlight significant turning points within the residence community.

The interviewees were selected based on a non-probability sampling technique as not all members of the population had an equal chance of participating in the study. Judgemental sampling was used as it involved selecting a group of individuals because of their knowledge and experience within the Stellenbosch University student community landscape. Their institutional knowledge, training, and representative status made them favourable to understand what was expected of student leaders and residence heads to facilitate the transformative student experience as espoused by the institution. Additional advantages of this technique was that it was easy to identify these stakeholders based on their leadership position. Further advantages of this sampling approach were that there was a surety of first-hand experiences. It

is acknowledged that the use of this sampling method does risk bias selection which can result in generalisations of the population based on the individuals' experiences in the environment.¹⁹⁹ However, this study makes no claim to provide a general overview of transformation in all residence spaces.

Due to the ethical limitations and responsibilities of the study to protect the anonymity of the individual participants, identification markers have been withheld. Pseudonyms according to the phonetic alphabet are used to ensure anonymity of the individuals. Those who were interviewed were from different racial groups, different gendered residences (male, female and mixed), a resident student leader (either a mentor, House Committee, or a Vice-Prim/Prim) or a residence head or general staff member.

Seven of the student leaders interviewed were heads of their respective residence; three were from female residences, three were from male residences, and one was a Vice-Primarius at a mixed gendered residence. Three participants were mentors; one from a mixed gendered residence, one from a male residence, and one from a female residence. Two participants were House Committee representatives; one from a female residence and one from a male residence. These participants were from the following communities during a specific year: Goldfields, General Staff Member, Centre for Student Communities Staff member, Minerva, Huis Visser, Irene, Dagbreek, Nerina, Sonop, Eendrag, Metanoia, Wilgenhof. For an historical study such as this, ideally, more continuity and representatively over time within residence spaces would have elevated the value of these interviews. This is a substantial limitation to this study but was unfortunately unavoidable during the research embargo of 2020 due to COVID-19.

Only staff who were or are currently residence heads – or who have worked with residences – and students who held a leadership position within a residence were considered to provide an oral history account of their experience within residence spaces. Student leaders were identified for interviews as they were elected representatives. Furthermore, both student leaders and residence head/staff were privy – to a degree – to first-hand experience of the restructuring of residences within at the institution. They also had intimate knowledge on practices that occurred within these spaces. These role players would also have first-hand

¹⁹⁹ W. Zikmund, B. Babin, J. Karr & M. Griffin, *Business Research Methods* (United States: South Western Cengage Learning, 2013), pp. 392 – 394.

knowledge regarding events which took place within the residence. These individuals provide a dissenting voice of the experience of the environment. These oral history accounts provide insight into the reaction of residences to change, how it took place and what turning points took place for the residence community.

Limitations of oral history accounts is that if a significant period has passed between the actual experience and the interviewee, it may result in specific details being inaccurate or forgotten. Traumatic experiences may be emotionally triggering, which may result in a generalised account of some experiences.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, experiences in the present may impact records of the past and in this way the individual may be compelled to reassess recollections appropriately.²⁰¹ This is most apparent when past traditions are reappraised within a contemporary framework. Personal biases, opinions, and the cultural background of the individual needs to be considered in interpreting the information conveyed, as a degree of subjectivity is always present. While attention has been given to these limitations, inspiration is drawn from Maurice Halbwachs work on the selective process of memory.²⁰² He argues that an individual's memory is influenced by the collective as experienced by observations and interactions. The personal recollections are, therefore, a product of the collective process of sharing experiences. History, tradition and memory are considered collective representations and these interviews, while arguably subjective, shed some light on the collective at a residence level.

A study such as this could not pay adequate attention to all the residences at SU. Sampling took certain characteristics into consideration. This included student demographics, in terms of gender – thus male and female classified residences were sampled along with gender-mixed residences. Only traditional residences which catered for undergraduate students were sampled.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ L. Layman, "Reticence in Oral History Interviews", *The Oral History Review*, (36), (2), 2009, p. 216.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² M. Araújo, & M. Santos, "History, Memory and Forgetting: Political Implications", *RCCS Annual Review. A selection from the Portuguese journal Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, (1), 2009, p. 77.

²⁰³ D.J. Stoker, "Sampling in heterogeneous populations", in J. Mouton, *et al* (eds.), *Theory and Method in South African Human Research: Advances and Innovations* (Pretoria: Human Science Research Council, 1998), pp. 307-317.

The original sample method for the study was structured according to the SU Cluster System as geographical proximity was taken into consideration. The following residences within each cluster were originally sampled: Wimbledon Cluster (Eendrag and Sonop); Victoria Cluster (Wilgenhof and Harmonie); Validus Cluster (Simonsberg and Goldfields); Rubix Cluster (Nerina and Metanoia). This number was significantly re-evaluated to only four residences due to the more systematic record of their archives and to meet the time-sensitive deadline of this research study. Furthermore, this re-evaluation, shifted the focus away from cluster systems to only the residences. The following residences have been sampled:

Male Residences	Wilgenhof (1915)
	Eendrag (1961)
Female Residences	Nerina (1968)
Mixed Residences	Metanoia (2005)

Private Student Organizations were not included in this study for the reason that these students are subject to an alternative community culture, consist of commuter students, and is a non-residential structure. Tygerberg Medical School and the Saldanha Military and Belville Business campuses were not included as

they are located in vastly different spatial settings far removed from the main campus. These restrictions have undoubtedly far-reaching consequences for the limitations of this study.

Overarching generalisations cannot be made about the identity formations within all residence spaces. Individual experiences and identity formation have been consciously excluded. The findings of this study have also revealed further complexities that are discussed in the dissertation and that is the existence of sectional identities within residence identities. These concerns are further explored in the dissertation.

For the purpose of this research, it needs to be disclosed that the primary investigator of this study has represented numerous structures within the student communities of Stellenbosch University, and has had first-hand experience in the training and preparation for the monitoring of unwelcoming practices. The investigator has also served on the Monitoring Advisory Committee, as Head Monitor for the Centre for Student Communities in 2020 and therefore,

has a subjective insight into the present functioning of the committee. Thus, having both experienced and observed student communities, closely and at a distance, there is an inherent influence both implicitly and explicitly on the study. The benefit of being imbedded in the structure is advantageous familiarity with the complexity of the institutional structures. It is however recognized that the researcher's individual experience with these structures has shaped many of the concerns raised. However, this study has been driven by the evidence made apparent from the various source bases and a concerted effort has been made to create debate rather than a closed conversation.

1.6. Chapter Outline

There is an immense complexity in examining a university. As has been indicated in this chapter, the theoretical points of departure of this study are institutional culture, transformation within higher education and student identity formation. Chapter Two of this study will examine state interventions and the response by universities – particularly SU – to these and the interconnected relationship of all the governing structures of SU. It will examine the national benchmark of transformation through state documents and reports. It will then explore the documented change in the universities' visions and missions which have supposedly shifted the definition of its institutional culture and identity. It will also provide insight into protest movements and how these pressurised the institution as well as student leaders, which resulted in a shift in campus dialogue and student engagement.

Chapter Three will serve as a lens into residence spaces through the monitor structure. It will focus on the purpose of the welcoming period and what policies; task teams and structures have been established to ensure a “transformative” student experience. It will examine the general overview of the monitor reports between 2000 and 2018 and identify themes that provide a backdrop to areas of concern with regards to welcoming practices. It will explore the history of the Monitoring system and the role it has played in identifying changing dynamics within residences. Furthermore, it will explore the historical trajectory of the interventions of the Monitoring Advisory Committee and strategies implemented by the Centre for Student Communities within the Division of Student Affairs.

Chapter Four will turn attention towards residence spaces through the experience of student leaders and managerial structures. The sampled residences will serve as case studies to contextualise a residence's culture in the broader context of the institutional culture, alongside the experience of individual student leaders and residence heads.

Chapter Five, the Conclusion, will highlight key arguments, limitations, and the conclusion of this study.

Chapter Two: Transformation & Organizational Structures at Stellenbosch University, 2000 – 2018

2.1. Introduction

Generally, University histories have conventionally been dominated by commemorative publications which have foreground favourable aspects of institutional change. Most prolific are those of previously white institutions, which have traditionally entrenched hegemonic and exclusionary policies. Many competing and contrasting narratives have arisen.¹

The institutional cultures and identities of higher education have been under scrutiny since the dawn of democracy in South Africa. The ambiguity of the process of change has created room for debate. The notion of diversity is connected to broader societal redress and transformation in higher education.² Western paradigms of higher education have continued to dominate the discussion.³ Democracy has compelled former controversial universities to conform to a collective organisational culture that entrenches democratic values.⁴

The process of change has been slow and certain public outcries have expedited the need to transform institutional cultures. One such example was the outcry over “the old Potch⁵” forcing its institutional norms of so-called “proper science” upon its merger partner at NWU. This led to unrest in 2008 which led to the Minister of Education mounting a national commission of inquiry to look into the situation.⁶ This was determined after another incident occurred at a former-white institution. In the same year, the “Reitz incident” at the University of the Free State (UFS) went viral on YouTube, exposing even deeper issues of racism and disregard for human rights.⁷

¹ B. Strydom, “South African University History: a Historiographical Overview”, *African Historical Review*, (48), (1), 2016, p. 58.

² F. Kamsteeg, & H. Wels, “Traveling ideas: Equality and Power Play around “Diversity” at North-West University (NWU), South Africa”, *International Journal of Business Anthropology*, (3), (2), 2012, p. 88.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ In reference to the Afrikaans institutional history.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ F. Kamsteeg & H. Wels, “Transformation and Self-identity: Student Narratives in Post-apartheid South Africa”, *Transformation in Higher Education*, (1), (1), 2016, p. 2.

Three black workers were captured on film being humiliated by four white males. Under the guise of youthful play, these workers were persuaded to part take in a series of competitive challenges; play rugby, down a beer at the student bar and eat a repulsive “stew concoction” – the details of which are too repugnant to outline.⁸ The winner received a bottle of wine. It was even more shocking that the students filmed and disseminated the disturbing footage on social media. To add even more insult, was a comment made by one of the perpetrators: “the Boers lived happily in Reitz until the previously disadvantaged discovered the word integration in a dictionary – Reitz was then forced to integrate, and we started our own selection process”.⁹ Broader structural racism and prevailing white privilege were at the forefront of the ensuing discussions about institutional reform.

Jonathan Jansen, who was appointed Vice-Chancellor at UFS in 2009, noted that South African universities had made strides towards “racial desegregation” but had been far less effective in accomplishing institutional cultural integration, including racial inclusivity.¹⁰ In order to tackle these deeper systemic problems, Jansen established the Interdisciplinary Institute of Reconciliation and Social Justice at UFS to, “coordinate research and public debate on the very issue of institutional transformation and human rights”.¹¹ This was in an effort to, “contribute to the task of transforming the historically white university into a non-racial environment”.¹²

These public incidences were undoubtedly symbolic of the unsavoury practices which were occurring in these spaces. Stellenbosch University has also shared in a long history of unsavoury practices. What is significant is the impetus these public events played in speeding the process towards rapid reform. This chapter, therefore, traces the various ways in which the state has steered the transformation process. Secondly, it outlines the ways in which these policies were adapted into the SU institutional reforms as well as showing how transformation processes and policies dissipated through the complex institutional structures between 2000 and 2018. This chapter argues that despite a steady attempt at transforming the institutional

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljcyXLMQHzg> [Accessed 14 November 2020].

⁹ F. Kamsteeg & H. Wels, “Transformation and Self-identity: Student Narratives in Post-apartheid South Africa”, p. 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

culture at SU from the early 2000s, it was the personalities of rectors and the reactions towards their tenure by protesting students which fundamentally dislodged the *Matie* identity from its previously fixed form rooted in tradition to one which was more permeable and open to constant adaptation and interpretation.

2.2. The National Benchmark for Transformation

Prior to 1994, under the apartheid government, institutions of higher learning and other institutions of learning were racially and linguistically divided.¹³ This was shaped and designed to establish and cement the power and privilege of the ruling white minority.¹⁴ As a result of these circumstances, the inequities of class, race, gender, institutional and spatial landscape, were embedded in South African Higher Education. The product of this was the creation of patterns of systemic inclusion, exclusion and marginalisation of specific social groups and classes.¹⁵

As a result of this exclusion, Higher Education reform in South Africa has been profoundly shaped by policy procedures which climaxed in the construction of numerous documents such as the *National Commission on Higher Education* (NCHE) Report (1996) – which stated that, “[...] in order to preserve what is valuable, and address what is defective requires transformation. The systems of higher education must be reshaped to serve a new social order, to meet pressing national needs, and to respond to a context of new realities and opportunities”.¹⁶ Following from the NCHE report, the *Green Paper* (1996) *on Higher Education Transformation* emphasised that:

¹³ South African Human Rights Commission, *Transformation at Public Universities in South Africa*, Pretoria, 2016, p. 2.

<https://www.sahrc.org.za/home/21/files/SAHRC%20Report%20%20Transformation%20in%20Public%20Universities%20in%20South%20Africa.pdf> [Accessed, 19 March 2020].

¹⁴ I. Bunting, “The higher education landscape under apartheid”, in N. Cloete, *et al.* (eds), *Transformation in higher education* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), p. 52.

¹⁵ South African Human Rights Commission, *Transformation at Public Universities in South Africa*, p. 2.

¹⁶ Department of Education, *Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation*, Pretoria, Department of Education, 1996, p.4. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/green-paper-higher-education-transformation0.pdf [Accessed, 19 March 2020].

[...] the system of higher education must be both expanded and transformed, within the reality of limited resources. In order for such expansion and transformation to be effective, and to deliver the required results, redress is a further imperative. Redress must operate partly in terms of access: it must ensure that no-one with the capacities to succeed in higher education is barred from doing so. And redress must also operate at the institutional level, in ensuring that inherited inequities and disparities are identified and addressed.¹⁷

Of particular importance was the Higher Education Ministers stance to, “[...] support a democratic ethos and a culture of human rights by educational programmes and practices, conducive to critical discourse and experimental thinking, cultural tolerance, and a common commitment to a humane, non-racist and non-sexist social order”.¹⁸ The significance of the “democratic ethos” is democratisation which, as in the *Green Paper* of 1996, is defined by a system that is representative, and participatory.¹⁹ This signifies that reform within universities needed to ensure that it was representative of the student body and to enable a participatory approach by all vested parties.

In August 1997, the *Education White Paper 3, A Programme for Higher Education Transformation* was released.²⁰ This was the result of a broad process of examination and consultation which had been initiated with the establishment of the NCHE in February 1995 by President Nelson Mandela. It outlined the framework for change where the higher education system was required to be planned, governed, and funded by a single national co-ordinated system.²¹ This was initiated in order to overcome the fragmentation, disparity and ineptitude of the past. The goal was to create a learning environment which nurtured the creative and intellectual energies of the people towards meeting the national aspirations of reconstruction and development. This *White Paper* emphasises that the transformation of the structures, values, and culture of governance within higher education institutions is a necessity and not an option. These institutions needed to ensure that their system of governance reflected and strengthened the values and practices of the new democracy.²²

¹⁷ Department of Education, “Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation”, p. 4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Department of Education, “Education White Paper 3: A programme for the transformation of higher education”, *Government Gazette*, Notice 1196 of 1997, p. 42.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 35.

The Department of Higher Education committed to driving the transformation of the higher education system, through policies and strategies. This was buttressed by the *White Paper on Education and Training* of 1995, where the department committed to academic freedom and institutional autonomy within the framework of public accountability as a key condition for a vibrant system. One of the concerns in the White Paper 3 was that of institutional culture. The department was concerned with evidence of “institutionalized forms of racism and sexism as well as the incidence of violent behaviour on many campuses of higher education institutions”.²³

The institutionalised forms of discrimination were not clearly defined in the 1997 *White Paper 3*. The Higher Education Department did, however, commit to, “promoting the development of institutional cultures which would embody values and facilitate behaviour aimed at peaceful assembly, reconciliation, respect for difference and the promotion of the common good”.²⁴ The Ministry proposed that “all institutions of higher education develop mechanisms which would create a secure and safe campus environment”. In turn, this environment was expected to, “discourage harassment and any other hostile behaviour directed towards persons or groups on any grounds whatsoever, but particularly on the grounds of age, colour, creed, disability, gender, marital status, national origin, race, language, or sexual orientation”.²⁵ This echoed chapter 2, section 9.1., of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996.²⁶

Above all, the Higher Education Department proclaimed the need to “promote a campus environment that is sensitive to racial and cultural diversity through extracurricular activities that expose students to cultures and traditions other than their own”.²⁷ Inherent to the department’s mission, was to target discriminatory institutional traditions such as initiation.

The legislative and policy framework for higher education was made public in the *Higher Education 101 Act of 1997* which established the “legal basis of a single, national higher

²³ Department of Education, “Education White Paper 3: A programme for the transformation of higher education”, p. 36.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

²⁶ <https://www.gov.za/documents/constitution/chapter-2-bill-rights#9> [Accessed, 14 November 2020].

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

education system on the basis of the rights and freedoms of the Constitution”.²⁸ On the 27th of July 1999, Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, began to review institutional policies. This was to be a matter of urgency, as, he argued, the current landscape was dictated by the geo-political imagination of the apartheid architects.²⁹ As a result, a task team was formed by The Council on Higher Education who published a report in 2000: *Towards a New Higher Education Landscape: Meeting the Equity, Quality and Social Development Imperatives of South Africa in the 21st Century*. This report provided design strategies – beyond a set of guiding principles – to implement and to ensure that the higher education system was indeed on the “road to the 21st century”.³⁰

The report sought to institutionalise the values of the *White Paper 3* of 1997 and entrench its social and educational goals. The Task Team further emphasised the need for a differentiated, diverse, integrated and co-ordinated system. This was on the premise that a homogenous and uniform system would not result in institutional equality or equity.³¹ This is significant, as it showcased that although the Higher Education Department instituted a rigid framework, there was still a high degree of flexibility within it which needed to be interpreted by institutions of higher learning. One could argue this was to establish shared accountability and promote participation from institutions in the transformative process, rather than a prescribed punitive state directive.

By February 2001, the *National Plan* for Higher Education in South Africa was published by the Minister of Higher Education to outline the framework and mechanism for implementing and realising the goals of the 1997 *White Paper 3*.³² The *National Plan* of 2001 was a developmental approach to guide institutions to meet the national goals and was in response to the recommendations made by the Council on Education on the restructuring of the higher education system.

²⁸ Department of Education, “Higher Education Act 101”, *Government Gazette*, Notice 1655 of 1997, p. 38.

²⁹ Council on Higher Education, *Towards a New Higher Education Landscape: Meeting the Equity, Quality and Social Development Imperatives of South Africa in the 21st Century* (Pretoria: Department of Higher Education, 2000), p. 6.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 4.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 32.

³² K. Asmal, “National Plan for Higher Education in South Africa”, https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/institutionalplanning/documents/National_Plan_f_or_Higher_Education_in_South_Africa_2001.pdf [Accessed 20 September 2020].

The need to establish a national plan arose from the “[...] development of a competitive climate between public higher education institutions, which has been fuelled by the emergence of a market in higher education, as a result of a growing private higher education sector”.³³ This competitive climate – a product of financial constraints and a decline in student enrolments – resulted in further fragmentation and exacerbated inequalities within the higher education system. The danger of this competitive landscape – as identified by the Council of Higher Education – was that it had resulted in a lack of institutional focus, distorted missions, and the ability for, “historically advantaged institutions to reinforce their inherited privileges, unjustified duplication of activities and programmes, excessive marketisation and commodification with little attention to social and educational goals, and insufficient attention to quality”.³⁴ Reportedly, the increased competition between institutions further, “fragmented and intensified the racial divides in the higher education system”.³⁵ One of the factors which contributed to the national plan, and which is of particular significance, is that building new institutional identities and cultures was an integral part of the national co-ordinated higher education system that was being branded as unashamedly South African; abolishing all barriers built around language or race.³⁶ The structural deficiencies, however, were again the centre of controversy later that year.

In October 2001, the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) released a *Report into Initiation Practices at Educational Institutions and a Preliminary Report on Cultural Initiations*, which became a catalyst for intervention strategies to eradicate problematic welcoming practices. This commission of enquiry had been initiated at the beginning of 2001 when a student from a residence at Stellenbosch University died during an initiation ceremony.³⁷ He, along with other initiates, were dropped off outside of the town in their underwear and told to walk back to campus. The student was knocked down and killed

³³ K. Asmal, “National Plan for Higher Education in South Africa”, p. 12.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.76.

³⁷ South African Human Rights Commission, *Report into Initiation Practices at Educational Institutions and a Preliminary Report on Cultural Initiations*, 2001, p. 3, <https://www.sahrc.org.za/home/21/files/Reports/REPORT%20INTO%20INITIATION%20PRACTICES.pdf2001.pdf> [Accessed, 19 March 2020].

by a passing vehicle. During the same period, the Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, received:

[...] numerous letters from members of the public, especially parents and former students at schools and higher education institutions in South Africa. These individuals alleged that in many educational institutions, unacceptable initiation practices [continued] to occur, and requested an investigation to be conducted into such practices at these educational institutions.³⁸

In a report to the Minister of Education in 2001, a range of initiation infractions were reported by parents and students ranging from sleep deprivation of first year students by senior students and house committee leaders, being forbidden to contact families during the initiation process, second year students having their hair shaven off, having their bodies painted, and being dropped off outside the town naked and being told to make their way back to the hostel. Thus, the problem extended beyond SU and other tertiary institutions in the country.

Subsequently, the Minister requested that the SAHRC launch an investigation into initiation practices at schools and higher education institutions and suggested that recommendations be made which could assist in the regulation of initiation practices which could cause harm to learners. He later implemented a code of practice on how to accommodate initiation practices. He publicly called on Stellenbosch University and all institutions to end all forms of initiation, labelling the practice as reprehensible. In a media statement he added: “There is no place for such infantile and irresponsible behaviour in South Africa anymore”.³⁹

The SAHRC report defined the scope of limitation of initiation practices according to section 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of South African: “everyone has inherent dignity and their right to have their dignity respected and protected”. Dignity, however, was never defined. Moreover, practices needed to be aligned with other sections of the constitution. According to Section 12: Freedom and Security of the Person – to be free from violence, torture, cruelty, or be treated in an inhuman or degrading way; Section 28: Children – which stated every child has the right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or

³⁸ South African Human Rights Commission, *Report into Initiation Practices at Educational Institutions and a Preliminary Report on Cultural Initiations*, p. 3.

³⁹ <https://www.iol.co.za/travel/south-africa/students-road-death-sparks-initiation-probe-51645> [8 November 2020].

degradation; Section 9: Equality – which states that the state nor a person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on the grounds of race, gender religion, language and other factors; and Section 31: Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities – which states that individuals should be permitted to enjoy the right to practice their cultural, religious and linguistic practices.⁴⁰

The SAHRC also pointed to the misconstrued understanding between orientation and initiation. The orientation process itself was defined as one that sought to introduce new students and learners to their academic environment, which the SAHRC acknowledged as necessary.⁴¹ However, the SAHRC clearly defined the limitations between induction, which amounts to orientation, and practices which amount to initiation. According to the 2001 report, “[most] institutions from which complaints had been received, or where initiation practices were part of the tradition of the institution, seemed to be grappling with the distinction between initiation and orientation following the adverse publicity at the time, towards these practices”.⁴²

The argument presented by these institutions’ management structures was that “initiation practices were part of the institutional culture of induction, and to forbid or abolish it would [completely] drive such practices underground”.⁴³ Additional arguments were put forward that the practice of initiation assisted in learning life skills, as it prepared students for the hardships of life after university, both socially and professionally. The relationship between seniors and first years was rather short-sightedly considered to represent that of an employer and employee and the practice thereby instructional.⁴⁴

The SAHRC begged to differ. Initiation, they argued, was a subjugating and degrading act of humiliation, and a demonstration of needless power. These practices manifested in different ways; from coercion to over-consume alcohol and then to be stripped naked and painted to wearing a nametag to describe their character. It was concluded that the purpose was to humiliate the student and demonstrate the existing hierarchical order.

⁴⁰ South African Human Rights Commission, *Report into Initiation Practices at Educational Institutions and a Preliminary Report on Cultural Initiations*, pp. 9-12.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

It is evident that this played out differently at different institutions but there were various similarities across all. These practices were seen by the SAHRC as a threat to the self-esteem of an individual and a culture designed to undermine rather than enhance, the learning process of students.⁴⁵ In addition, it went against the fundamentals of the Bill of Rights. The cultural values initiation was supposedly imparting, as argued by institutions, were, therefore, in direct violation of the basic law on human rights. Resistance was rife. Amongst the biggest opponents were the alumni who are considered to be the bastions of residential tradition.⁴⁶

The lasting effects were also not being considered. Trauma and the lasting legacies of these abuses were easily dismissed. The SAHRC continued to receive numerous complaints regarding a clear lack of commitment by the administration of universities and threats of intimidation by other students for speaking out. The SAHRC recommended that universities needed to demonstrate a commitment toward regulating initiation and proposed the involvement of independent bodies to investigate any incidents.⁴⁷ These calls went unabated. Students would waive their rights by signing a declaration that they were engaging in initiation rituals voluntarily. The constitutional court emphasised that such practice would only be considered legitimate if informed consent was demonstrated whereby the “applicant was aware of the exact nature and extent of the rights being waived and the consequences of such consent”.⁴⁸ The SAHRC was quick to react to cases of possible coercion and peer pressure.

The main issue was the poor way in which ministerial directives were being disseminated within public institutions. In 2008, for example, the Ministerial Committee on Higher Education Transformation indicated that across all higher education institutions, there was, “poor dissemination of information pertaining to policy, limited awareness of policies, a lack of awareness of roles and responsibilities pertaining to the implementation that [flowed] from the policies, and a lack of institutional will to [drive these policies]”.⁴⁹ This necessitates a

⁴⁵ South African Human Rights Commission, *Report into Initiation Practices at Educational Institutions and a Preliminary Report on Cultural Initiations*, p. 17.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁴⁹ Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions, *Report of the Ministerial Committee on transformation and social cohesion and the elimination of discrimination in public higher education institutions* (Pretoria: Department of Higher Education, 2008), p. 14.

deeper investigation of how these conversations dissipated within institutions. It also requires some reflection on the impact this had on conditions within the institutions.

In 2016, an evaluation of the progress of these transformative policies in public universities was conducted by the SAHRC. The report affirmed that, although South Africa was more than twenty years into democracy, the country continued to face profound embedded inequalities in all spheres of society, especially in public universities. The SAHRC report stated that regardless of significant developments made in tackling historical inequalities in public universities, “patterns of systemic exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination” persisted.⁵⁰ Examples of this disclosed in the report were:

Incidents such as that which occurred at the University of the Free State (UFS) where four black members of the University’s support staff were subjected to inhumane treatment at the hands of white students (commonly referred to as the “*Reitz Four*” incident); the death of a student at Stellenbosch University during an initiation event; and the death of another student at the North West University, allegedly at the hands of white students, during a freshman ceremony; are a manifestation of the abiding impact of systemic exclusion, prejudice and inequality which plague many institutions in our country.⁵¹

It is within the context, that attention is now drawn to the way in which SU dealt with its transformation policies during the period in question.

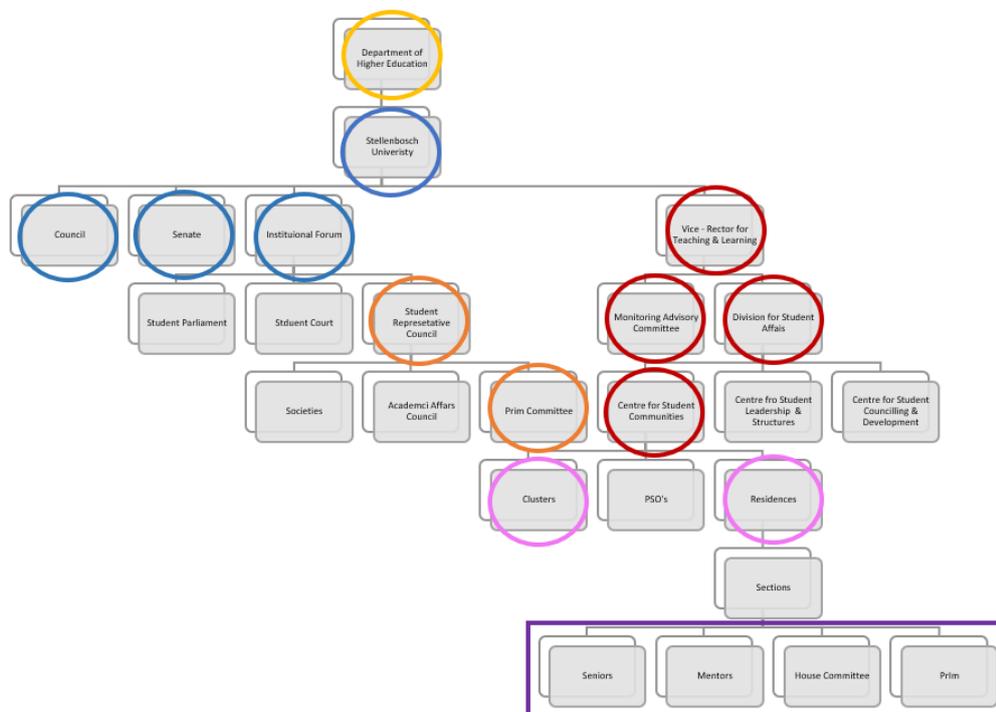
2.3. Stellenbosch University Institutional Strategies, 2000 – 2018

The management of the Stellenbosch University is spearheaded by the Vice Chancellor and Rector, the Rectors’ Management Team, which is made up of the Vice-Rectors, who report to the university’s Council, Senate, and Institutional Forum. Under these structures there are

⁵⁰ South African Human Rights Commission, “Transformation at Public Universities in South Africa”, 2016, p. viii, <https://www.sahrc.org.za/home/21/files/SAHRC%20Report%20-%20Transformation%20in%20Public%20Universities%20in%20South%20Africa.pdf> [Accessed, 19 March 2020].

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

various divisions, centres, and student-centred leadership structures, which act as representative structures of the university. This is demonstrated in the organigram below⁵²:



COLOUR	MEANING
Yellow	The State
Blue	Institutional Decision-Making Structures
Red	Institutional Structure Influencing Policy
Purple	Student Leaders Influencing Student Experience
Pink	Student Community
Orange	Support Structures for Students' Interests

Figure 1: SU Organigram of Structures

The 2000 *Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond* by SU reflected that SU committed to a broad process of self-scrutiny and institutional renewal. Through this document it acknowledged its historical ties with the people from whom, and communities from which, it arose.⁵³ Considering the future, the institution committed itself to “apply its capacities, expertise and resources to the benefit of the broader South African community”. By

⁵² Constructed by the author.

⁵³ SUA, *A Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond* (Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University, 2000), p. 9.

association the University committed itself to be language-friendly, with Afrikaans as the point of departure.⁵⁴ The framework indicated that the vision of the institution sets itself the aim – through critical and rational thought – to “pursuing excellence and remaining at the forefront of its chosen focal areas”. This was to be achieved in the spirit of “academic freedom and of the universal quest for truth and knowledge, and as an academic institution”.⁵⁵ It was committed to “gain national and international standing by means of its research outputs”; to “produce graduates who were sought-after for their well-roundedness” and for their creative and critical thinking; to be “relevant to the needs of the community” by taking into consideration the “needs of South Africa and of Africa and the world in general”. It promised to be enterprising, innovative, and self-renewing.

The significant part of its strategic focus was that of the repositioning of the institution.⁵⁶ One of the points to mention under this strategy was that the University committed to deliberate efforts to leverage the country’s diversity as an asset; to “advance interracial, inter-ethnic, multicultural and intercultural understanding, tolerance and cooperation”; and to bring about “a demographically more representative body of excellent students, teaching staff and administrative staff”.⁵⁷ One of the biggest commitments in this framework was the institution’s acknowledgement of its contributions to the injustices of the past and the critical appraisal of its accessibility.⁵⁸ The place of the Afrikaans-language, accessibility of other languages and the implementation plan within a framework were less-well articulated.

In 2001, the Institutional Forum (IF), which was established in August 1999 in accordance with the requirements of the Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997), investigated issues around first-year orientation practices after a student died during an initiation ritual. The IF is one of the University's three main statutory bodies; the other two being the Council and the Senate.⁵⁹ The functions and powers of the IF, laid down in section 31 of the Act, are to “advise the Council on issues such as the implementation of the Higher Education Act and the national

⁵⁴ *SUA, A Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond (Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University, 2000), p. 9.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.15

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁵⁹ SUA, “How does the IF fit into SU?”, 2 February 2001.

policies on higher education”; as well as race and gender equity policies. The IF also advises on the selection of candidates for senior management positions, and the “fostering of an institutional culture which promotes tolerance and respect for fundamental human rights which creates an appropriate environment for teaching, research, and learning”.⁶⁰ The 2001 investigation around orientation practices concluded that the observation of these practices needed to be monitored by individuals who were independent of university structures.⁶¹

Following on from the inception of the university’s new 2000 strategic direction, and the 2001 IF investigation, on the 15th of August 2001 the highest student representation committee for student communities, known as the Prim Committee (PC), along with the Student Representative Council of Stellenbosch University (SRC), had a discussion about the welcoming experience of students. This discussion came after the national call to create all-inclusive campus communities.

At this joint sitting of the PC and SRC, it was stressed that the University opposed and prohibited all forms of initiation and that the way in which first-year students were dealt with was subject to the Bill of Rights as contained in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996). Overall, the democratic values of freedom, equality and human dignity were to lay the foundation of the welcoming experience and be promoted by seniors and house committee representative members within the student communities.⁶² It was stated that the essence of the right of human dignity is that no one should be treated as the mere object of the exercise of power.⁶³ The realities, especially in residence spaces would, however, suggest otherwise. Nevertheless, an official “warning” was sent out stipulating the parameters of the welcoming period.

A letter was sent out on the 26th of September 2001 by the Division of Student Affairs, which conveyed a message that the university was very much aware of the underground initiation practices that were taking place. One point in particular was that:

⁶⁰ SUA, “How does the IF fit into SU?”, 2 February 2001.

⁶¹ SUA, *Annual Report*, 2001, p. 20.

⁶² SUA, Prim Committee & Student Representative Council, “The Rights of Students When Welcomed”, 2001, pp. 1-2.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

[...] no house committee member or any other student who is involved in the organisation, execution or undertaking of any activity which another student is involved, that is contrary to this regulation or other rules of the university, may claim that the participating party agreed voluntarily and participated in the specific activity at his/her own risk.⁶⁴

It was also stated that no individual could be enticed, willingly or not, to disregard any laws contained in the Bill of Rights. In addition, it was reiterated that “initiation” or “induction” or related activities toward newcomers was forbidden by the Council of Stellenbosch University. However, evidence of continued initiation practices points to the way in which this policy was regulated and how it was bypassed.

Another issue on the campus at the time that was raised was one of visibility within the staff component. Particularity how staff contributed to enable inclusive practices. An employment equity strategy was implemented by the University between 2010 and 2015 to address the inequalities of the past as well as for the future positioning of the institution. The University believed that it could only achieve its long-term vision with well-trained and motivated staff.⁶⁵ The Employment Equity Policy was considered as a tool to create an environment in which knowledge could be discovered, shared, and employed to the benefit of the community. It could be argued that the value the University put on the diversity and development of staff was to ensure that they contributed to the realisation of the University’s vision and demonstrate its commitment to creating an inclusive and diverse campus.

The 2013 *Transformation Strategy* claimed that the SU of 2013 was remarkably different from the one at the turn of the century.⁶⁶ The student and staff demographics had a significant shift: there was apparently greater gender sensitivity promoted, new progressive policies had been developed and existing ones were being reviewed, and multilingualism was being fostered. Despite these changes, the document indicates that the institution had not come to grips with the fundamental changes required to fully embrace values such as inclusivity and

⁶⁴ SUA, Division of Student Affairs, “Welcoming of New Students and General Group Activities of All Students and Residences and Private Student Organization (PSO) Wards”, 26 September 2001.

⁶⁵ Stellenbosch University, “Employment Equity Policy 2010 – 2015”, Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch University, <http://www.sun.ac.za/english/policy/Documents/Employment%20Equity%20Policy.pdf> [Accessed, 1 November 2020].

⁶⁶ SUA, “Transformation at Stellenbosch University: Future Strategies”, April 2013, p. 1.

equity.⁶⁷ The strategy was for SU to deliberately accelerate a robust dialogue about transformation, especially as the university's vision and strategic objectives were considered anti-transformation, as alluded to in the 2008 *Soudien Report*. The 2013 *Transformation Strategy* document indicated that there was a lack of coherence concerning transformation initiatives and strategies. These sentiments along with others were also centred on the notion that there is complacency.⁶⁸ A further concern was that the implementation and monitoring of institutionally directed transformation strategies had been weak.

The *Transformation Strategy* document contained an action plan for transformation in the institution. This included a variety of interventions. Firstly, a dedicated institutional transformation capacity which involved the allocation of resources to ensure coordination, management and support structures. Secondly, measuring and reporting transformational progress. Thirdly, establishing an inclusive learning and living environment. Fourth, putting an emphasis on transformational leadership and governance to create workshops on gender, disability, diversity and inclusive leadership, and to develop monitoring systems for institutional grievances along with the recommendation to create auditing processes and standardised procedures. Fifth, it was also recommended to establish an institutional climate survey and communication which prioritised visual renewal and redress initiatives. One of the final recommendations was to ensure employment equity and set diversity targets.⁶⁹

It is clear that the language debate, institutional and residence cultures, diversity of both staff and student bodies, monitoring and evaluation of transformation strategies as well as strong leadership structures were considered areas which were inhibiting the effective transformation of institutional spaces. What is of greater significance, and arguably of greater impact, is the role of specific rectors at the institution and the visions they had for the way forward.

⁶⁷ SUA, "Transformation at Stellenbosch University: Future Strategies", April 2013, p. 1.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.19-22.

2.3.1. Professor Chris Brink, 2002 – 2007

To align with the national directive as well as the *SU 2000 Strategic Framework*, in September 2003, the SU Council accepted the proposal for vision 2012 which was conceptualized by the Rector and Vice-Chancellor at the time, Professor Chris Brink (2002 – 2007).

Vision 2012 was derived from the 2000 Strategic Framework and was a five-point vision statement that the University would commit itself to an outward-orientated role within South Africa, in Africa, and globally. The first point of this vision statement was that SU was considered “an academic institution of excellence and a respected knowledge partner”. The second stated that SU contributed towards “building the scientific, technological, and intellectual capacity of Africa”. The third was that SU is an “active role-player in the development of the South African society”. The fourth was that SU has a “campus culture that welcomes a diversity of people and ideas”. The fifth stated that SU promotes “Afrikaans as a language of teaching and science in a multilingual context”.⁷⁰

Brink was considered an unlikely choice for the SU Council as he preferred English despite being a born Afrikaans speaker. There was fear that he would be unsympathetic towards Afrikaans. During his tenure as Rector and Vice-chancellor the debate around language was rife.⁷¹ What stood out about Brink, was his vision for *Maties*. Brink considered that language and transformation should not be contradictory but conciliatory. He did consider that SU could make a strong case for Afrikaans as a primary medium of instruction but, at the same time, did not believe that it could claim it as a necessary right.⁷² Brink critiqued the perception that Stellenbosch was unique; “a secluded paradise distant from the new world”. He believed there was a danger in this as, although Stellenbosch considered itself the “gatekeeper of paradise”, it would only open the gates, every now and again to let a select few in on the assumption that they would close the gate behind them.⁷³ His fear was that it was breeding complacency.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ C. Brink, *Anatomy of a Transformer*, Stellenbosch, Africa SUN Media, 2007, p. 104.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Brink left the university in 2007. Public opinion about his tenure had changed from “Brink the builder” when he began in 2001, to “Brink the wrecker”.⁷⁵ Professor Russel Botman, who succeeded Brink later in 2007 as the first black rector of the institution, described Brink as someone who was not afraid to take “unpopular decisions” and one who made the space accessible to “[...] people who could not study here before [...]”.⁷⁶ Botman further described Brink’s tenure as “[...] ringing the death knell for Afrikaans.”⁷⁷ For doing so, Brink was condemned by many stakeholders, but left a legacy of fostering equal opportunity and equity in the broadest sense – recording the history of the people of *Die Vlakte* is one example Botman shares.⁷⁸ On the one hand, it can be argued that Brink paved the way for tangible transformation at Stellenbosch University. On the other, as with most leaders, he was heavily criticised.

During his tenure Brink was accused of having no backbone. “Much of the public criticism of Stellenbosch University in the Afrikaans press was based on accusations of spineless conformity to political correctness”.⁷⁹ The Afrikaans media projected him as a “cold and calculating anti-Afrikaans rebel, hostile towards the University, taking decisions without thinking them through and without being transparent about them, as if he were merely serving his own interests without consulting others”. Brink considered this criticism inevitable considering his crusade to challenge the existing *status quo* of the campus. He considered that “change is difficult because people’s responses to it, and rates of acceptance, differ so radically”.⁸⁰

This, unsurprisingly, led to criticism. Despite his supposed efforts of consultation, “careful deliberation and careful management of the changes”, Brink claimed that it was never enough to satisfy those who were directly impacted by the change. Brink argued that change can never be sufficient in an environment – like SU at the time of his tenure – with such divergent interest groups.⁸¹ Various news articles further corroborated that Brink opposed a conservative faction at the university who were intent on reversing the T-Option policy which forced the use of

⁷⁵ C. Brink, *Anatomy of a Transformer*, p. 286.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

English alongside Afrikaans in lecture halls.⁸² Dan Roodt, considered one of Brink’s harshest critics, exclaimed that Brink’s departure was a win for the *taalstryders* – defenders of the language.⁸³

2.3.2. Professor Russel Botman, 2007 – 2012

Professor Russel Botman was inaugurated as the first black⁸⁴ Vice-Chancellor and Rector of Stellenbosch University from 2007 to 2012. He devoted his time in office to establish a multicultural university, with a pedagogy of hope in Africa. He further committed to the realization of SU’s stated commitment of 2000, to redress and development.

In his inaugural speech on the 13th of April 2007, Botman claimed that it was his mission to prepare the University, using *Vision 2012* as a point of departure, as an institution in Africa that strives to not only be different but better in its commitment to the future people of South Africa and the continent.⁸⁵ He promised to measure and monitor the progress and effectiveness of *Vision 2012* along four strategic indicators: excellence (academic performance, status and success), Africa (post-graduate enrolments and Africa involvement as senior lecturers), role-playing (innovation), and diversity (student enrolments and staff appointments). The purpose of the 2007 *Quality Development Plan* was to outline the standards, practices, resources, specifications, and the sequence of events that would lead to the establishment of *Vision 2012*, and to assess the execution of six organisational principles used by the University’s management: “student success, personnel success, financial success, research success, appropriate infrastructure”, and successful “role-playing infrastructure”. In his inaugural speech, Botman indicated his intention to re-direct the university towards the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.⁸⁶ The precision in the outline of this document is a clear

⁸² <https://www.news24.com/News24/Maties-rector-to-leave-SA-20060705> [Accessed 31 October 2020].

⁸³ <https://www.iol.co.za/travel/south-africa/language-gorillas-drove-brink-out-asmal-284423> [Accessed 31 October 2020].

⁸⁴ Botman, under the apartheid categories of race, would have been classified as a Coloured Afrikaans-speaker. He chose to identify as black.

⁸⁵ SUA, “Quality Development Plan (QDP)”, December 2007, p. 1.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

indication that Botman wanted to see through the implementation of the university's commitment stated in the *2000 Strategic Framework*, and the realisation of *Vision 2012*.

In the University's annual report of 2009, Botman admitted that SU was faced with the "challenge to take stock of the extent to which it had fulfilled the objectives of Vision 2012". He further expressed that it was time the University committed to a new long-term vision to position SU as an "excellent academic institution with an international research reputation", to be "innovative" and to provide "relevant learning programmes", and to embark on "community interaction that makes a significant and meaningful impact on the quality of lives of people both locally and elsewhere on the continent".⁸⁷

Botman further emphasised:

[To] ensure a seamless transition to a new long-term vision that logically [carried] out the [endeavours] and spirit contained in the University's Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond. Management, with the assistance of the deans and other academics, developed the Overarching Strategic Plan which was aimed at harnessing the University's strong points in order to have a maximum social impact on spheres that, at the time, [were among the greatest development challenges]. [These were]: eradicating poverty and related conditions; promoting human dignity and health; promoting democracy and human rights; promoting peace and security; and, promoting a sustainable environment and a competitive industry.⁸⁸

These challenges were framed in themes: "harnessing science to research burning social issues, discover new knowledge and apply this in communities across the country in such a way that it had a life-changing impact". The *Overarching Strategic Framework* was created to act as a natural bridge to a new vision that would make SU sustainable beyond 2015 to 2018.

The *Overarching Strategic Framework* led to the SU Council accepting seven broad points of departure for a new vision for the university at its meeting on the 4th of May 2009. These were to be:

[...] an excellent, international university; to maintain its position as a medium-sized, research-directed institution; to place sustained emphasis on instruction and community interaction that are of high quality and relevant; to exploit the full potential of its position as a residential university town; to extend its endeavour to be knowledge [ground breakers] with/for a pedagogy of hope; to

⁸⁷ SUA, *Annual Report*, 2009, p. 6.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

be an inclusive, value-driven university; to be known as a place where students can obtain an undergraduate qualification in either Afrikaans or English, with exposure to the other language; to offer optimal access with success to students; and, above all, to change the living conditions of people and lay a foundation for a new future filled with promise and hope.⁸⁹

Botman was essentially asking *Maties* to realise that they were part of a wider world. This mind shift was pivotal in harnessing a more inclusive spirit rather than an inward, “island-like” way of thinking, propped up by false perceptions of tradition which were, essentially, discriminatory.

During Botman’s tenure, the language debate was still ongoing. So too were concerns over the lack of visibility of students of colour.⁹⁰ The Language Centre was established at the start of Botman’s term. The primary objective of the centre at the time, was to meet the language needs of all students in a “scientific way”. This was in response to the growing diversity of the student body.⁹¹ It was also clear that there was a need to create a meaningful language policy for a more diverse and multilingual student community. The essence of the language debate at the time was to accommodate students who were not proficient in Afrikaans. The fear from opponents was that accommodating students would mean replacing Afrikaans with English as a medium of instruction. The rather dismissive argument was that those students who prefer English as a medium of instruction should apply to other universities where English is the primary medium of instruction.⁹²

Botman established various initiatives to support incoming students from previously disadvantaged groups. The First-Year academy was started by Botman in 2007 to provide further academic, language and integration support. In 2008, the cluster concept was created to establish a larger community which consisted of a collective of residences and PSOs. This was primarily done to incorporate PSO students – students who did not reside in residences – into the broader student community and involve them in “out-of-class” initiatives.⁹³ The establishment of cluster hubs and cluster-based residences was expected to encourage the

⁸⁹ SUA, *Annual Report*, 2009, p. 6.

⁹⁰ L. Botha, “As Vice-Rector (Teaching): 1 July 2002 – 31 December 2006”, in *Russel Botman: A Tribute 1953-2014*, (ed.) A. Grundlingh, R. Landman, & N. Koopman (Stellenbosch: African SUN Media, 2017), p. 117.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

integration of PSOs into a space where they could relax, socialize, study and eat. Essentially, they could become part of the *Matie* collective without attending its traditional residences.

Botman further supported the value-driven approach in the residential and out-of-class context. This contrasted with the hierarchical approach which bred unwelcoming practices. The characteristics of this value-driven management approach was friendliness, hospitality, and human dignity. It should be noted that Botman was a theologian, and this is evident in his conciliatory approach to his management style.

In 2012, Botman guided SU to the adoption of its new *Vision 2030*, along with a new institutional intent and strategy for 2013-2018. The strategy emphasized three overarching strategic priorities: “broaden access, sustain momentum on excellence, and enhance social impact”.⁹⁴ *Vision 2030* focused on the university being “[...] an inclusive, innovative and future-focused place of discovery and excellence, where staff and students are thought leaders in advancing knowledge in service of [...] stakeholders”.⁹⁵ The university aimed to achieve this through sustained transformation.⁹⁶ Some of the institutional efforts were to “maintain a student-centred and future-oriented learning and teaching approach that established a passion for lifelong learning”; “create an academic community in which social justice and equal opportunities would lead to systemic sustainability”; and leverage the inherent power of diversity.⁹⁷

The circumstances surrounding the death of Botman on the 27th of June 2014 has led to much speculation about what caused his untimely and sudden death. Botman faced increasing pressure about issues of transformation at the institution. At the core of the tension was the University’s Centre for Inclusivity, established in 2013 to advise and offer guidance to Botman on how to create a more welcoming and inclusive atmosphere at the university.⁹⁸ Jonathan

⁹⁴ SUA, *Institutional Intent and Strategy, 2013-2018*, 2013, p. 15. http://www.sun.ac.za/english/Documents/Strategic_docs/IP%20english%20website.pdf [Accessed 30 March 2020].

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁹⁸ <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2014-07-02-revealed-professor-botmans-torrid-final-week/> [Accessed, 31 October 2020].

Jansen wrote an article on the 11th of July 2014, where he expressed that “the voices of his persecutors are curiously silent for now”.⁹⁹ This was in reference to colleagues of Botman who claimed that the institution was the cause of this death due to his transformative agenda.¹⁰⁰ Botman’s tenure as Rector was characterised by many staff as stifling. His efforts at transformation were “vilified by right wing alumni and the Afrikaans press, in blogger postings, in alumni associations and in informal gatherings of the institution”.¹⁰¹ In the week of his death there were rumours that a vote of no confidence was being tabled by senior members of his team. Some argued that this was a result of his drive to increase diversity on campus, introducing a more flexible language policy, and the visual redress of buildings which only honoured white Afrikaans heroes. Botman hoped for a Centre for Inclusiveness to challenge previous racist practices.¹⁰² One of his greatest contributions, and quite relevant to this study, was the creation of Listen, Live and Learn (LLL) housing which would accommodate students in intellectual hubs outside of the structures of residence halls steeped in tradition. These LLL hubs were the preferred residence accommodation for students of colour.

2.3.3. Professor Wim de Villiers, 2015 – Present

In 2015, Professor Wim de Villiers was selected as the new Vice-Chancellor and Rector of Stellenbosch University and holds the position to date. At his inauguration, De Villiers emphasized that SU is not a university that belongs to any specific language or culture, rather that it is a multilingual South African university.¹⁰³ A new language policy adopted at the end of 2014 reinforced the institution’s commitment to Afrikaans as an academic language but acknowledged that English was a language of accessibility. It was also committed to the advancement of *isiXhosa*, “where feasible”. De Villiers further underlined that language is not

⁹⁹ <https://www.ufs.ac.za/docs/default-source/timeslive-documents/2014-07-11-the-big-read-who-killed-russel-botman-2526-eng.pdf?sfvrsn=0> [Accessed, 31 October 2020].

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ <https://www.politicsweb.co.za/opinion/my-vision-for-stellenbosch-university--wim-de-vill> [Accessed, 23 September 2020].

a barrier to access but a tool for success. He declared the need for an “open conversation”.¹⁰⁴ He also began the process of visual redress as promised in the *2000 Strategic Framework* and the process towards fostering a critical thinking and learning environment.

At the end of 2018, *Vision 2040* was formulated. It included a vision for Stellenbosch University to be “[...] Africa’s leading research-intensive university, globally recognised as excellent, inclusive and innovative, where we advance knowledge in service of society”.¹⁰⁵ The University would also strive to attract outstanding students, diverse staff and commit itself to full transformation. The promise was to offer a fully transformative student experience,¹⁰⁶ however defined.

There was, yet again, much contestation around the appointment of De Villiers as Rector and Vice Chancellor of Stellenbosch University in 2014. At the time, the spokesperson for the non-profit Higher Education Transformation Network said that the appointment of De Villiers was a “setback to transformation” at the institution.¹⁰⁷ The Network believed De Villiers had “failed to bring about any meaningful change at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in his former capacity as Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences”.¹⁰⁸ It was further suggested that disadvantaged students suffered under his administration at UCT and that some were excluded, denied enrolments and “victimised” under his watch. The Network expected an appointed such as De Villiers – who was evidently not perceived as progressive – given that the council of Stellenbosch University was in any case not fully supportive of the late Russel Botman. De Villiers’ tenure as Rector continued to be scrutinised and characterised by tension. His inauguration, which took place on the 29th of April 2015, was disrupted by the student movement known as #OpenStellenbosch who protested the need for more inclusive practices at the institution.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.politicsweb.co.za/opinion/my-vision-for-stellenbosch-university--wim-de-vill> [Accessed, 23 September 2020].

¹⁰⁵ SUA, *Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework*, 2019, https://www.sun.ac.za/english/Documents/Strategic_docs/2018/Vision-2040-Strategic-Framework-2019-2024.pdf [Accessed 31 March 2020].

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/alumni-warn-maties-of-legal-action-1795386> [Accessed, 31 October 2020]

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.news24.com/News24/Is-Stellenbosch-lost-in-transformation-20150829> [Accessed, 31 October 2020].

De Villiers' term coincided with the wave of student protests which unfolded in South Africa from 2015. At Stellenbosch, he was confronted by, amongst other concerns, the exclusionary role of Afrikaans in the lecture room and the hegemonic Afrikaans culture of the institution.¹¹⁰ This conversation was initiated by #OpenStellenbosch. They brought the almost snail-pace of transformation at SU to the fore.¹¹¹ It took two years to change the language policy, but resistance continued. After several attempts to reverse the policy, on the 10th of October 2019, the Constitutional Court ruled in favour of Afrikaans as a parallel medium of instruction rather than a sole medium of instruction.¹¹²

Later in 2015, a documentary was released which revealed the experience of black students on the SU campus. De Villiers had to respond in front of the portfolio committee on higher education and training.¹¹³ The #OpenStellenbosch movement indicated the contradicting actions of De Villiers and his administration. His actions, they claimed, did not align with what De Villiers said in press releases where he claimed his commitment to broaden access.¹¹⁴ He was accused of not entertaining an “activist” style of engagement; which he denied. He did attest that he had an issue with ultimatums. De Villiers' response to the *Luister* documentary was that, although he was saddened by the experiences of students, the documentary contained factual errors, bad journalism, and misrepresentation. In 2016, considering the #FeesMustFall protests, De Villiers was scrutinized for appointing a private security to handle protests on the campus and his administration's apathy and defensive response toward protest action. Student activists expressed that he disregarded student voices and prioritised the interests of the institution over its students.¹¹⁵

While it is evident that, theoretically, SU was on the path towards transforming the institution through its various policies and visions for the institution, as per the directives of the state, it could, however, also be argued that the ways in which discrimination continued to

¹¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sF3rTBQTQk4> [Accessed, 23 September 2020].

¹¹¹ <https://www.matiemedia.org/prof-wim-de-villiers-on-stellenbosch-university-his-past-and-his-future/> [Accessed, 23 September 2020]

¹¹² <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20191017160303180> [8 November 2020].

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ <https://medium.com/@johanpienaar/open-letter-to-prof-wim-de-villiers-rector-stellenbosch-university-gross-injustice-perpetrated-b63b02f6ce3e> [Accessed, 31 October 2020].

systemically manifest within student structures was only fully brought into the discussion with the advent of nationwide student protest.

2.4. Student Protest and the Student Opinion on Transformation at Tertiary Institutions, 2015-2016

The catalyst which demonstrated the frustration of the institutional landscape began in March 2015. At the University of Cape Town, Chumani Maxwele threw excrement at a statue of Cecil John Rhodes.¹¹⁶ The incident initiated the #RhodesMustFall (RMF) movement. RMF was a “collective movement of students and staff members rallying for direct action against the supposed reality of institutional racism at UCT”. RMF argued that UCT was still “rife with exclusionary institutional practices born out of colonization and apartheid”.¹¹⁷

Reportedly, the “presence of statues such as that of Rhodes symbolized, in their view, the remnants of colonialism at the institution”.¹¹⁸ It was formed as a “direct result of an open-air dialogue, the RMF movement articulated its main priority as being to create mechanisms for the manifestation of transformation”.¹¹⁹ Similar protests unfolded throughout the country.¹²⁰ At Rhodes University, the Black Students’ Movement called for transformation of the institution’s name through the #RhodesSoWhite campaign.¹²¹ Students at the University of Witwatersrand (WITS) campaigned through #TransformWits, launched when student fees were converted to study loans thus further disenfranchising financially struggling students.¹²²

The #TuksSoWhite – in reference to the University of Pretoria which is another historically Afrikaans Institution – social media campaign was launched in April 2015 by the South African

¹¹⁶ C.J. Rhodes (5 July 1853-26 March 1902) was a British businessman, politician and believer in British imperialism who donated the land upon which UCT is built. He served as Prime Minister of South Africa from 1890-1896.

¹¹⁷ L. Mpatlanyane, “New Student Activism after Apartheid: The Case of Open Stellenbosch”, Unpublished PhD dissertation, Stellenbosch University, 2018, p. 11.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/the-stream/2015/3/18/south-african-students-call-out-racism-with-rhodessowhite/> [Accessed, 1 November 2020]

¹²² <https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2015-10-14-a-timeline-of-student-protests/> [Accessed, 1 November 2020].

Student Congress Organisation (SASCO). The campaign aimed at highlighting, “experiences of cultural supremacy and marginalisation” at UP.¹²³ Later protests on the campus were also led by an emerging non-partisan faction of students called “UPrising” that identified as “a collective cause and movement of the students [...] that is not inclined to any political party but inclined to students’.¹²⁴ Later in 2016, UPrising protested the language policy of the University, which continued to spend millions of Rands every year to maintain Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, even though only about 17% of students, at the time, preferred Afrikaans as a medium of instruction.¹²⁵

The North-West University (Potchefstroom campus) – another historically Afrikaans institution – called for change through the #TransformPukke movement. The movement changed and challenged the implementation of the language policy as well as the culture of the campus.¹²⁶ From 2016, the University declared parallel language-medium classes would be available and that proficiency in Afrikaans would no longer limit a professional academic who hoped to be part of the NWU academic staff.¹²⁷ The spokesperson of the University stated that these changes were better aligned with the University’s academic mission which was to create a curriculum which better reflected Africa, her people, thoughts and dreams.

Efforts were made by the institutions to reappraise the broader issues of language, symbols, culture. Stellenbosch University had various challenges seeping through its walls on the issues of language and culture. On the 21st of February 2015, an incident at a McDonald’s involved a confrontation between black and white students at Stellenbosch University. It was reported that the white Afrikaans students involved were intoxicated and antagonising the staff by whistling, calling them dogs, and tugging at their hats.¹²⁸ The black students at the scene challenged the behaviour of the white students. An argument ensued and one of the white students told the black group that they “did not belong there because they could not speak Afrikaans”. An altercation took place between the two groups. According to the media, although the incident

¹²³ <https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2015-10-14-a-timeline-of-student-protests/> [Accessed, 1 November 2020].

¹²⁴ <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/university-pretoria-2015-2016-student-protests-timeline> [Accessed, 1 November 2020].

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ <https://allafrica.com/stories/201509030507.html> [Accessed, 1 November 2020].

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ <https://www.iol.co.za/news/stellenbosch-students-in-brutal-brawl-1822713> [Accessed, 1 November 2020].

was reported to campus security and senior university management for further investigation, there was reportedly “no immediate disciplinary consequences”.¹²⁹

The incident instigated wider discussions about race, belonging, and the university’s commitment to transform and non-racism.¹³⁰ It served as a catalyst to the formation of a collective of students and staff who united to “purge the oppressive remnants of apartheid in pursuit of a truly African university”.¹³¹ It was named #OpenStellenbosch. Like RhodesMustFall and the other movements, #OpenStellenbosch targeted systemic exclusion and marginalization in higher education.¹³² Particular attention was paid to racism, cultural and linguistic exclusion.¹³³ This marked the advent of greater visible transformation and the direct inclusion of the student-body in the discussion and monitoring of transformation at SU.

The idealistic visions and missions by the relevant rectors between 2000 to 2018 created a framework for the implementation of policy and practices conducted at the institution. They defined where the institution wanted to be, in terms of its character, culture and identity. While efforts must be acknowledged, the slow pace of rooting out explicit and, particularly, implicit discriminatory practices can largely be attributed to the student protest politics of 2015. While the students at SU were considered less vigilant and less violent in comparison to their national counterparts, the impact of their endeavours have resulted in change which will benefit future generations of *Maties*.

As mentioned above, many of SU students of colour preferred to reside in less traditional university residences. In part, this was due to the reputation of initiation practices within these spaces. In a further attempt to transform student spaces, the University embarked on a campaign to adapt these welcoming programmes. The monitoring of the Welcoming Programmes of student communities, which began from 2001, have been considered as one of the instruments to improve the welcoming culture of the campus.¹³⁴ Similar to state

¹²⁹ L. Mpatlanyane, “New Student Activism after Apartheid”, p. 12.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ SUA, *Report on Transformation at SU*, 2018, p. 23.

<http://www.sun.ac.za/english/transformation/Documents/Report%20on%20Transformation%20at%20SU.pdf>
[Accessed, 23 September 2020].

interventions and policies, SU established various investigations into the welcoming culture of its campus.

2.5. Stellenbosch University Efforts to Re-define Student Experiences

The *Report of the Panel on Student and Residence Culture* of 2003 suggested that SU was exhibiting the characteristics of any institution in transition. Reactions were mixed: “suspicion, confusion, uncertainty and emotions that range from fear of the unknown for what may be lost, to impatience to what is perceived as the slow pace of change and excessive veneration of the past”.¹³⁵ The Report was set up by an investigative panel who consulted across all borders of SU structures to re-develop and re-design a residence and campus culture for the future in line with the new external environment and strategic goals.

This strategic probe in 2003 into residence and campus culture came after a series of “vigilante” attacks involving Majuba, a male SU residence, and after four students from Wilgenhof Men’s Residence were arrested for shooting female students with an airgun. Dr. Van Zyl Slabbert, who chaired the panel, stated that these incidences were “proof [...] of a mind-set and value system that were in conflict with basic human rights and that exceed all boundaries of reasonable behaviour” and that “attempts to gloss over these incidences as a form of student fun deny the seriousness and more profound nature of the problem”.¹³⁶ The problems and challenges were not unique to SU.

The recommendations of this panel projected a series of structural adjustments and measures. It called for the development of a shared vision and set of common values for all student communities to commit and guide their conduct and practices. It also suggested a measure of accountability.

The 2008 *Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions*, welcomed the

¹³⁵ SUA, *Report of the Panel on Student and Residence Culture*, 2003, p. 2.

¹³⁶ <https://mg.co.za/article/2003-09-26-student-fun-in-conflict-with-human-rights> [Accessed, 23 May 2019].

shift in attention to a “value-driven culture” – which entailed a common set of defined values in order to govern the community. However, there was still a concern as to how values could be easily manipulated to suit a particular narrative ultimately preserving the traditional driven culture of student residences.¹³⁷ The Ministerial Committee advised the Department of Higher Education to ensure that student leaders be exposed to a process of training, orientation and sensitizing, in order to internalize the new value system.¹³⁸ The report concluded that if all the relevant role players and stakeholders at the university committed to re-design and re-define a student and residence culture at the university, the institution could engage with the process of transformation in a participatory and open manner.¹³⁹

According to the SU administration in 2012, residences, along with PSO wards, actively committed to the new vision by offering opportunities for the academic, personal and social development of students:

[A few of the objectives of these student communities was to firstly], create a student-friendly living and learning environment that promoted the academic objectives of Stellenbosch University. [Secondly, to be] a community of students from diverse backgrounds with a high degree of understanding for communal endeavours and mutual respect for differences in gender, opinion, culture, religion, heritage, life experiences and sexual orientation. [Thirdly, to foster] stimulation of thinking and broadening of their outlook on life through informal learning experiences and exposure to a diversity of innovative ideas and experiences. [Fourth, to foster] the development of leadership and management skills, as well as of personal and social responsibility. [Fifth, to create] a framework for participation in social, cultural, sport and other recreational activities. [Lastly, to continuously] encourage renewal within the context of the strategic framework and vision of the University.¹⁴⁰

The aim of the new adopted residence rules in 2012 was to “make the residence environment and accommodation as pleasant as possible”. It was also aimed at adapting itself to the value-driven management system. It was through these student structures that the institution could measure transformation within these student spaces. This was largely influenced by the change in student demographics.

¹³⁷ SUA, Department of Higher Education, *Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions*, 2008, p. 16.

¹³⁸ Department of Higher Education, *Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions*, 2008, p. 16.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁴⁰ SUA, Centre for Student Communities, “Residence Rules”, Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch University, 2012, <http://www.sun.ac.za/english/maties/Documents/Residence%20Rules.pdf#search=residence%20rules%202012> [Accessed, 30 March 2020].

2.6. Diversifying the Student Experience: Shifting the Student Demographic and Transformation Measures at Stellenbosch University, 2000-2018

Transformation of higher education has been grounded by policies which aimed to entrench, “equity and redress, diversity, social cohesion, social inclusion, institutional culture, curriculum and research, teaching and learning, and community engagement”.¹⁴¹ Concerted efforts were made to change the experiences of students.

The Centre for Student Communities – which manages, administrates, and coordinates all residence, PSO, and cluster activities at SU – has developed countless initiatives to advance an all-inclusive welcoming culture at Stellenbosch University. Their development and contribution to the student community has varied between systemic initiatives and strategic mechanisms to address the behavioural response to change.

One initiative that was recognized in the 2018 report is the cluster system, which has redefined the “organising principle” of students’ social and academic life to foster a greater sense of belonging. The cluster system has been viewed as an opportunity to challenge the traditional residence identity to incorporate the identities of other communities within their cluster – ultimately incorporating a larger diversity of other racial groups, religions, genders and so on – with the hope of changing residence cultures. It focused predominantly on students in their first four academic years; their formative years.

According to the report, approximately 95% of newly registered first year students that entered the university took part in the Welcoming programme at the institution. Welcoming was therefore deemed the most strategic moment to target the students. As the years progressed, the demographics of new students also changed, making the vision of inclusion more tenable.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Department of Education, “Education White paper 3: A programme for the transformation of higher education”, *Government Gazette*, Notice 1196 of 1997, p. 42.

¹⁴² These figures and those used to tabulate *Figures 2 to 5* have been accessed on SUN-i Business Intelligence (IBI) system: 20200330 UG and NF in SU residences. Information is available to registered Stellenbosch University users through the Student Enrolments tabular data model. Information is also available on request from the Division for Information Governance at Stellenbosch University.

Figure 2 reveals the racial proportion of newcomers at the university. Figure 3 reveals the racial proportion of newcomers who resided in official university residences. As Figure 2 indicates, white students continue to be the majority of newcomers, but there has been an

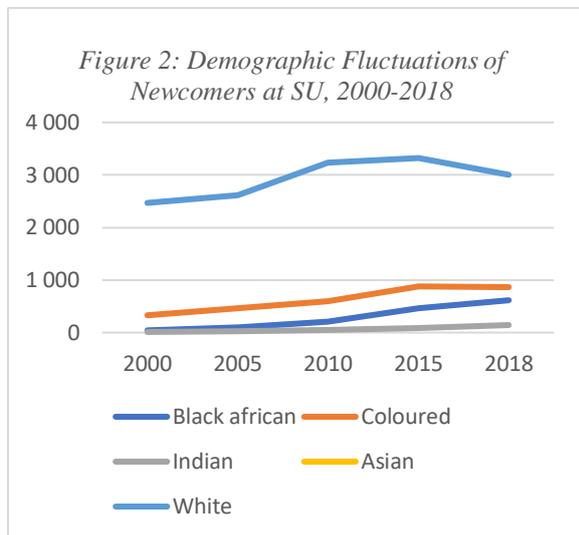


Figure 2: Demographic Fluctuations of Newcomers at SU, 2000-2018

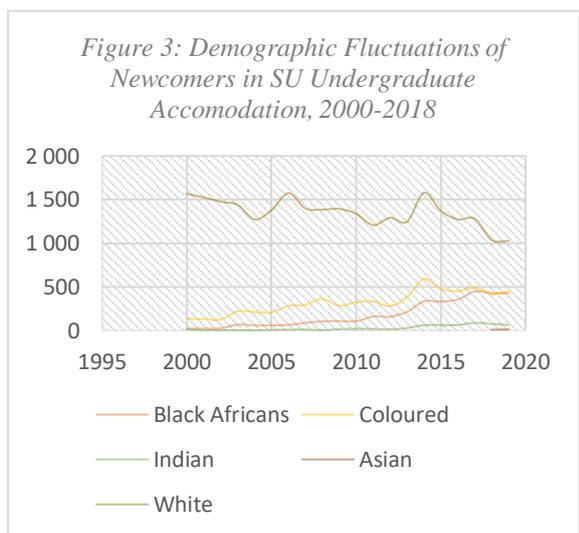


Figure 3: Demographic Fluctuations of Newcomers in SU Undergraduate Accommodation, 2000-2018

increase in coloured and black students over the years. The most populous racial group in the Western Cape is coloured. Post-2015, a tapering off of the coloured enrolments and a decrease in white

enrolments can be noted. This can be attributed to the media attention and student protest which revealed some of the systemic issues ingrained in the institution. This could also be the result of the quota system implemented by the institution to diversify the student body. The allocation into residence spaces in Figure 3 are unsurprising given the shift in demographics but is also attributed to the residence placement policy which took effect from 2013. The purpose of the policy was to actively diversify residence communities according to nationality, language, ethnicity, first or non-first generational student, and economic class.¹⁴³ This resembles the efforts made at UP and UFS, as discussed in Chapter 1.

¹⁴³ SUA, Vice-Rector Learning and Teaching, “Policy for Placement in Residences, and in Listening, Learning, and Living Houses, as well as Allocation to PSO Wards and Clusters”, Stellenbosch University, 2013, http://www.sun.ac.za/english/learning-teaching/student-affairs/Documents/Policy_Residence_PSO_LLL-houses_Placement%20Policy_Yearbook%20Part%201%202015_Eng.pdf [Accessed, 31 March 2020].

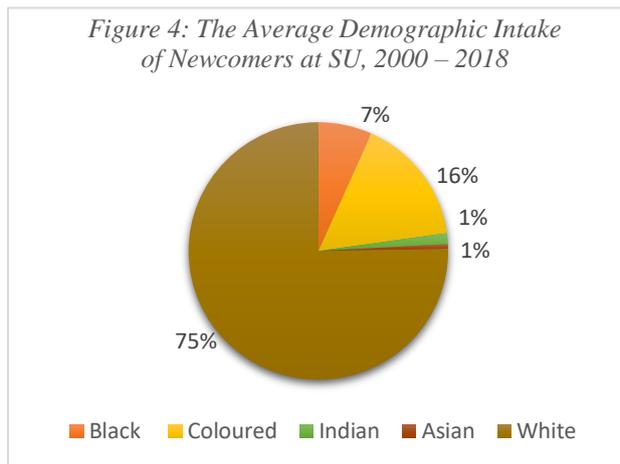


Figure 4: The Average Demographic Intake of Newcomers at SU, 2000-2018

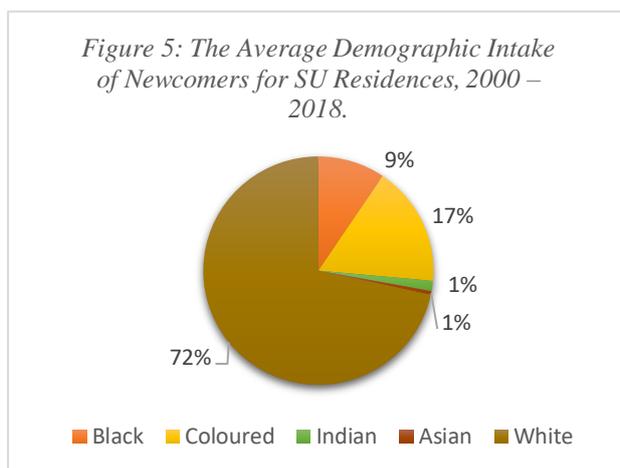


Figure 5: The Average Demographic Intake of Newcomers for SU Residences, 2000-2018

From *Figures 4* and *5*, between 2012 and 2013, there was an increase of 36.94% of black students, and after the 2013 placement policy was implemented, an increase of 55.35 % of black students were placed in residences.¹⁴⁴ This shift naturally fails to reflect the experiences of these students, which was clearly negative if one considers the narratives drawn out during the 2015 protests.

Statistics are only one of many indicators which measure transformation. The 2015 Second National Higher Education Summit: Reflection on Higher Education Transformation defines transformation as “[...] a comprehensive, deep-rooted and ongoing social process seeking to achieve a fundamental reconstitution and development of our universities to reflect and promote the vision of a democratic society”.¹⁴⁵ This supports the views of sociologist Tade Akin Aina

who defined transformation in the context of Africa as a system which is designed to address historical disadvantages and inequalities.¹⁴⁶ The Summit further revealed the objects of higher education transformation in South Africa. These consisted of “governance, management, leadership, the student environment, the staff environment, institutional cultures, teaching and

¹⁴⁴ SUA, Vice-Rector Learning and Teaching, “Policy for Placement in Residences, and in Listening, Learning, and Living Houses, as well as Allocation to PSO Wards and Clusters”, p. 2.

¹⁴⁵ https://www.dhet.gov.za/summit/Docs/2015Docs/Annex%205_UnivSA_Reflections%20on%20HE%20Transformation.pdf [Accessed, 24 September 2020], p.2.

¹⁴⁶ T. Aina, “Beyond Reforms: The Politics of Higher Education Transformation in Africa”, *African Studies Review*, (53), (1), 2010, p. 33.

learning, research and knowledge systems, and institutional equity”.¹⁴⁷ Additionally, the Summit clearly concluded that transformation was an ongoing process.

Given the multi-faceted approach to transformation at SU, the process demanded an integrated involvement of various student structures. Residence structures which, as indicated by the SAHRC of 2001, have historically been sites of contention. These structures were highlighted as largely endorsing exclusionary practices entrenched by outdated traditions.

A large part of this redress included the “targeted training of the leadership in the student communities [with focus on] structured conversations, [comprehensive] planning, and monitoring and evaluation of the execution of, especially, the welcoming period”.¹⁴⁸ The planning involved welcoming programmes for each environment which are integrated within the university’s overall welcoming strategy. Monitoring included observation of the mechanisms through which a programme is delivered and the essence of the programme itself.¹⁴⁹ Monitors are selected from the ranks of senior students who have leadership experience in various student structures, from faculties, societies, and student communities. Monitors submit reports and in addition, a general survey is conducted at the end of the first term.¹⁵⁰

The monitoring of the Welcoming Programme is a significant point of departure to understand the intervention strategies implemented and the collaborative approach of incorporating student leaders into the process.¹⁵¹ It was, and still is, deemed a necessity in order to monitor the practices of student communities in a bid to prevent unacceptable practices during initiation. The monitors are meant to serve as an objective party to the Welcoming Programme and assess the impact an activity or practice can have on newcomers.¹⁵² During the welcoming period, the monitors have complete access to all residences and report on their

¹⁴⁷https://www.dhet.gov.za/summit/Docs/2015Docs/Annex%205_UnivSA_Reflections%20on%20HE%20Transformation.pdf [Accessed, 24 September 2020], p.2.

¹⁴⁸ SUA, *Transformation at Stellenbosch University: Report Prepared for the Department of Higher Education and Training*, 2016, p. 22.
<http://www.sun.ac.za/english/transformation/Documents/Report%20on%20Transformation%20at%20SU.pdf#search=value%20driven%20management> [Accessed, 30 March 2020].

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

observations on a daily basis. Essentially, they provide an independent view on the implementation of these new strategies. The word “independent” here is clearly debateable. Complete transparency would necessitate observers from outside of the institution. However, these monitors, as will be shown in the next chapter, have not refrained from being critical of the systems.¹⁵³

Although the University has claimed that the independent monitoring structure has been instrumental in the advancement of the welcoming culture there are clear gaps in the intervention of practices. This is apparent through the examination of monitor reports – which will be discussed in the next chapter – which have revealed the sustained existence of specific practices over the last 18 years.

Essentially, the monitor system is a student structure within the broader institutional structure to ensure that there is a peer evaluation mechanism which can influence conversations amongst students. This structure falls under the Centre for Student Communities (CSC) and focuses on the application of the values-driven management system. The values-driven approach does not encourage a hierarchy of power and privilege on campus but strives for values-driven communities where students feel included, respected and welcomed.¹⁵⁴ The CSC is tasked with implementing these values amongst the elected representatives of each residence by allowing them to build a framework for a responsible system to ensure a safe channel of communication directly to the university or to accountable structures. Arguably there are downfalls to this as there is inherent pressure to conform to the University’s desired framework; thus all the work done by these leaders is within the confines of the university’s institutional culture.

However, the CSC considers that they enable student leaders to view themselves as “[...] active participants in the evolution of the welcoming period; [...] by providing a system for independent accountability for the responsible structures throughout the welcoming process.”¹⁵⁵ It could be argued that this provides an opportunity for these student leaders to exercise their own power. Nevertheless, the reports allow one to evaluate the institutional intent

¹⁵³ SUA, *Transformation at Stellenbosch University*, p. 23.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

within the residence spaces, the most dangerous space in which implicit discriminatory practices can continue to manifest and spaces which have provided many examples of the lack of transformation within previously white-only institutions.

2.7. Chapter Conclusion

According to Wessel Visser, historically the *Matie* identity up until the mid-2000's, was characterised through residence participation and traditional campus offerings. Most students were housed in residences, and this ameliorated the process. As more students were affiliated with PSOs and residence clusters, a more dynamic culture resulted in the *Matie* identity being more defined in terms of individual experiences.

As is argued in this chapter, the processes of change have clearly been framed by changing state policy and pressure placed on institutions to reform their outdated policies and practices. In the case of SU, the role of visionary rectors led to adaptations to the institutional framework, but the shortcomings were made more apparent by student voices which mobilised and reacted towards the slow pace of tangible change. In this regard, the individual can construct their own understanding of the *Matie* identity, but this does not necessarily remain at an individual level.

Student protests were constructed around institutions and problems endemic to their environment. As a collective, they were able to incite discussion and debate. The locality of the institution and the variations of entrenched discriminatory traditions are also influenced by the spaces in which these institutions are positioned. This echoes the reflections of Foucault's heterotopias and the ways in which place informs identity. It is this that makes the *Matie* identity stand apart from the broader changes at institutions across the country.

It could be argued that individual experiences have necessitated the need to reappraise the *Matie* identity. This has led to a nuanced understanding of what it *cannot be*. How it is *to be* is in a constant state of flux and change. As will be elaborated in the next chapter, individuals feel the need to belong to a collective. What has unfolded in the re-imagining of the *Matie* identity is an identity that, in the spirit of the Botman-era, fosters inclusivity. But, as was the case, the initial phases of De Villiers's tenure ensured that questions should always be raised.

In this regard, the *Matie* identity is still steeped in tradition but a new tradition which dictates social awareness, positionality of the institution within a wider society and a concerted commitment to the principles of the constitution. It is within this framework that concerted efforts have been made to entrench a similar spirit with residence spaces. Historically, they too held on to the adages of tradition and further entrenched this with their own residence identity. These were at times at odds with the broader *Matie* identity but were more aligned to the same spirit of exclusivity and isolation.

It is in the wake of this broader change that the residence traditions and archaic welcoming practices which enforce the old *Matie* spirit has resulted in strategies to change the residence space. Again, theoretically, many policies can be implemented but may not necessarily result in change. These are more secretive spaces. It is through the inclusion of more monitoring and evaluation structures that the extent of the challenge is made more apparent. This forms the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Three: A Brief History of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems and the Unearthing of Unhealthy Residence Practices at Stellenbosch University, 2001 – 2018

3.1. Introduction

The 2013 Task Team on a Welcoming Culture at SU, conducted a survey which concluded that there was a general sense of unease amongst staff and students about the language policy, levels of diversity, and other discriminatory symbols which were reminiscent of the past.¹ Specific concerns were raised about spatial exclusivity, facilities, symbols, rituals, interpersonal communication, culture and curriculum. As a result, an *Inquiry into Unacceptable Welcoming Practices* was launched in 2014. This was 10 years after the formal implementation of the Welcoming Programme within student communities and was the result of continued problematic practices since 2004. There was growing suspicion by various stakeholders that clandestine undesirable welcoming practices were prevalent, and this led to distrust between the monitoring system and the Familiarisation and Monitoring Working Group (FMWG).

The University hailed the monitoring practice a success as it was deemed to play a crucial role in the improvement of the welcoming processes from the early 2000s. However, the 2014 Task Team report on Unwelcoming Practices noted that the monitor system was becoming obsolete and was in desperate need of an update. As a result, the monitoring system was placed under the Division for Student Affairs (DSAf). The task team considered DSAf more adept at negotiating the welcoming programmes of student communities and managing the quality of the programmes in accordance with the University's broader expectations.² The task team proposed that the FMWG be replaced with a committee that would fulfil a "quality assurance" and "monitoring function". This led to the creation of the Monitoring Advisory Committee

¹ SUA, "Task Team on a Welcoming Culture at Stellenbosch University", 2013, p. 3. <http://www.sun.ac.za/english/Documents/Rector/welcoming%20culture%20at%20Stellenbosch%20University.pdf>, [Accessed, 8 November 2020].

² SUA, *Report of the Task Team on the Inquiry into Unacceptable Welcoming Practices*, 2014, pp. 28-29. [http://www.sun.ac.za/english/learning-teaching/student-affairs/Documents/ENG_Finale%20Verslag%20-%20Onaanvaarbare%20verwelkomingspraktyke%20\(Eng\)%20-%20IJR-weergawe.pdf](http://www.sun.ac.za/english/learning-teaching/student-affairs/Documents/ENG_Finale%20Verslag%20-%20Onaanvaarbare%20verwelkomingspraktyke%20(Eng)%20-%20IJR-weergawe.pdf), [Accessed 8 November 2020].

(MAC). The committee would “receive submissions from the monitors on their observations during the welcoming period, listen to the interventions implemented by the Centre for Student Communities (CSC), offer advice on how incidents during the welcoming period should be handled, and report on such advice to the Vice – Rector for Learning and Teaching (L&T)”.³

While the new entity was dubbed the “watchdog” of the institution, criticism was levelled against the fact that it fell under the very division which housed many of the protagonists who were upholding traditional practices. Nevertheless, the reports submitted provide valuable insights into a variety of structural issues. Firstly, they provide details on the different role players within residences as well as outlining their intervention strategies. Secondly, they document the dialogue of exchange between these various spaces. Thirdly, they provide details on adaptation of approaches. Lastly, they speak about the external factors which shaped the ongoing negotiations.

This chapter traces the evolution of the monitoring system at SU between 2001 and 2018. Furthermore, it provides details on some of the prevailing traditional elements which continued to be practiced in residence spaces, despite all the efforts of state and institution as outlined in the preceding chapter. These were strategically aligned to redefine the institutional *Matie* identity. Attention will be given to transformation issues in specific residences which are discussed in greater detail in the last section of the chapter. Here, evidence is provided on how residence-specific cultural traditions have led to transgressions against the desired *Matie* student. The crisis is evidence of an underlying desire by residence heads to institute a co-existing residence identity. This takes a variety of forms dependent on the actual residence. It will be argued that, firstly, the task of ensuring compliance to transformation of the idealised *Matie* identity was largely spearheaded by institutional policies and the corresponding task teams appointed to ensure compliance. Secondly, the existence of residence-specific transgressions against the *Matie* ideals clearly suggest that, despite the efforts of the aforementioned strategies and structures, residences operated as independent entities in the production of collective residence identities. This was not necessarily the result of poor leadership strategies but rather a continued presence of traditional “norms” promoted by seniors, alumni and the intersubjective socialisation of the environment. In effect, residences

³ SUA, *Report of the Task Team on the Inquiry into Unacceptable Welcoming Practices*, pp. 28-29.

contribute to the transformative student experience but arguably serve as one of the greatest hindrances to fully realising the politically palatable *Matie* of the 21st century.

3.2. From the Familiarization and Monitoring Working Group (FMWG) to the Monitoring Advisory Committee (MAC), 2001 – 2018

The creation of an essential task force that was designed to question the practices, culture and identity of structures was met with much contestation. As explained in Chapter 2 monitoring began between 2000 and 2001, but the structure was only formalized by 2004. Numerous student communities, especially residences, viewed monitors as the “watch dogs” of the University and were, therefore, suspicious of their intentions in their spaces. This resulted in some communities withholding information, while other residences were open to receive advice and guidance. The 2004 report revealed the monitors were advocating the promotion of a value-driven system for the welcoming period which could create a guideline for the welcoming process whereby residences could incorporate their unique identity, traditions and culture. The hope was that this would convert the role of the monitors from one that was “monitoring” to one that was “facilitating”.⁴

The Familiarization and Monitoring Working Group (FMWG), known as the *Bekendstellings- en Moniteringswerkgroep* (BMW) in Afrikaans, was a committee established in 2003 by SU, as suggested by the IF in 2001. Their mandate was to ensure that the overarching objectives of welcoming were met by the student welcoming communities and that the conditions for human rights were always upheld.⁵ The functions of this committee were to be transparent and accountable to the broader University community and the general public, through the publication of a report by the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC). This committee was required to report to the Vice-Rector of Teaching and Learning.

The committee consisted of a representative from the Stellenbosch University Student Representative Council (SRC), the Tygerberg Student Representative Council (TSR) which is

⁴ SUA, *Monitor Report*, 2004, p. 5.

⁵ SUA, Division of Student Affairs, “Familiarisation Monitoring Working Group”, 2003, p. 1.

the University's medical campus, the Prim Committee (PC), a female residence, a male residence and Private Student Organization (PSO) representatives. In addition to the student representatives, staff representatives were required from the Centre for Student Counselling and Development, the Division for Student Affairs, the Senate, the Institutional Forum, and an Expert of Human Rights. The committee consisted of a total of 13 members.⁶ The representatives would serve for one year. The committee was compelled to secure a nomination from each environment when selecting a monitor group for the respective orientation period.

The FMWG was in charge of approving the final welcoming programmes of the residence and PSO wards and managing the system of monitoring during the welcoming period.⁷ The monitors that were appointed were chosen – through an interview processes – on the grounds that they had adequate knowledge of student residence life, sufficient knowledge of the University's strategic values and policies, and the university's rules. Furthermore, the body needed to have an understanding of the possible barriers to which they may be confronted.⁸

The objectives of the Welcoming Monitors were to provide a balanced assessment of the welcoming period for each cluster and its student communities, as well as faculties. They would hold representative leaders and senior members of the house accountable for all activities. However, they were also charged with the contradictory role of having to “respect residence traditions and history”. This has been the very root cause of the various inquests and endless policy-reforms to eradicate unwelcomed practices. Monitors were also expected to support and guide the house committees of residences to critically contemplate the goals and outcomes of all welcoming activities by benchmarking them “against the standards set by the University to create a dynamic orientation process that promotes individual growth and development”.⁹

An additional stakeholder in the evaluation of the welcoming culture of residences is the Residence Education (ResEd) programme. ResED has played a role in strengthening and expanding the welcoming experience. The purpose of all these programmes is to ensure that

⁶ SUA, Division of Student Affairs, “Familiarisation Monitoring Working Group”, 2003, pp. 1-2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁹ SUA, *Transformation at Stellenbosch University: Report Prepared for the Department of Higher Education and Training*, 2016, pp. 23-24.

<http://www.sun.ac.za/english/transformation/Documents/Report%20on%20Transformation%20at%20SU.pdf#search=value%20driven%20management> [Accessed, 30 March 2020].

newcomers are adequately prepared for the new and unaccustomed cultures they might be immersed in on campus. The programme consists of a series of short workshops to help foster ongoing conversations about uncomfortable topics on race, class and gender; to name but a few.

The complexity of the role of the monitors was that their task was to observe and report, rather than intervene. In 2004, it was suggested that their role be changed to one that was preventative where they would support residences by recognizing probable problematic conditions before they ensued. By 2007, reports emerged that skewed interpretations of the role of the monitoring group existed. On the one hand, sceptics complained that the monitors scrutinized the “smallest” sign of a problematic issue; while on the other, some expected discretion and the handling of issues internally, in a bid to protect the reputation of the residence.¹⁰

In 2014, the *Report on Unacceptable Welcoming Practices* was published and proposed the establishment of a Monitoring Advisory Committee (MAC) as a substitute for the FMWG.¹¹ The MAC began operations in January 2015. The committee received feedback from the monitors, considered reports on the interventions implemented by the Centre for Student Communities (CSC), advised on the handling of incidents during the welcoming period, and reported its advice to the Vice Rector Learning & Teaching (VRL&T).¹²

The MAC consisted of a representative from the office of the VRL&T, a person who is well-grounded in the law, a representative from Senate, a representative from the Division of Communication and Liaison, a representative from the Centre for Career Advice, Admissions and Residence Placement, and student representatives – two SRC nominees and a student member not serving on a representative body. *Ex officio* members included the Director of the Centre for Student Communities and the Prim Committee chair. The *ex officio* members report on the details of a case but do not take part in any decision-making. The MAC meets three times during the welcoming period and then again once the monitors’ report is finalised. Thereafter, it is distributed to the relevant role players.¹³ The monitoring committees were

¹⁰ SUA, *Monitor Report*, 2007, p. 3.

¹¹ SUA, *MAC Report*, 2017, p. 1.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

formed in reaction to continued unwelcomed practices within residence spaces. The trajectory of the barrage of improper practices is delineated in the rest of this chapter.

3.3. A History of “Unwelcoming Practices” Across Stellenbosch University Residences, 2004 – 2018

In the beginning of the monitors’ observations, they concluded that the ambiguity in programmes and the synthetic execution of a transformative welcoming programme was predominantly due to the inability of residence heads to imagine an alternative to their own initiation confounded by intimidation within regimented power structures. The monitor structure clearly indicated that community leaders needed to have more intensive training and to be exposed to other mechanisms which could be implemented in their environments. Some successful programmes were based on a value system; as recommended in the 2003 Van Zyl report, and the 2001 SAHRC report. The MAC of 2017 remarked that as much as a standardization of welcoming programmes was necessary, there was enough room to adapt to suit specific residence cultures.¹⁴

In 2005, the monitors observed the facilitation of the welcoming values of friendliness, hospitality, and human dignity, from a collaborative point of view. They argued that the implementation and realization of these values required all role players involved to be part of a supportive system to ensure an environment that fostered sustained discussion and identify long term solutions. A contentious point for the House Committees (HC) of the residences was that monitors could be the judge of whether a practice was in the boundaries of being appropriate or not.

Since the beginning of the residential system at SU, the interaction of seniors with first years became a contentious point for student communities based on the indoctrinated identity seniors adopted based on their welcoming experience. In 2006, it was reported that there was a lack of sensitivity to multicultural differences in social interactions.¹⁵ A case which

¹⁴ SUA, *MAC Report*, 2017, p. 5.

¹⁵ SUA, *Monitor Report*, 2006, p. 66.

commonly arose during initiation practices was the “baptism” tradition which took place in male residences. To black male first year students this was completely unfamiliar terrain due to the cultural difference. This indicated a lack of multi-cultural awareness and sensitivity. This was identified as an area which required intervention by the division of Student Accommodation and the Division of Student Affairs, alongside the Centre for Student Counselling and Development.

The success of the welcoming programme was often determined by how well the newcomers were orientated to the university’s environment and to cultivate *Matie* pride to ensure students felt welcomed into the institution.¹⁶ However, a pressing concern reported in 2006 was the “emotional baptism” inflicted on newcomers where they were not necessarily made to feel unwelcomed; their needs were met but met with a different demeanour compared to after the welcoming process.¹⁷ This was a point of concern for monitors as it was not an obvious unwelcoming practice but one could recognize that it was not a friendly act. However, it was observed by the 2006 monitoring group that the issue did not so much lie with the HCs of student communities but rather with senior students who saw this as a rite of passage to earn respect and one’s place in the community.¹⁸ HC members began to be put in the position where they needed to “protect” newcomers from seniors during the welcoming period. The Manager of Student Accommodation (before the Centre for Student Communities was established in 2008/2009) had to formulate development programmes for seniors to recognize the “road of change” that was beginning to be paved.

A concern identified in 2007 around seniors, was that they did not recognize their responsibility to guide and mentor newcomers on how to adapt to their environment.¹⁹ Seniors’ view on initiation was that it created a space of belonging that earned one the right to be guided. Everything was done in the name of the “house” and “for the house”.²⁰

The collective was evidently a priority for residential leadership. This left little room for the expression of the individual. This was exacerbated in 2008, when language and culture

¹⁶ SUA, *Monitor Report*, 2006, p. 52.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹⁹ SUA, *Monitor Report*, 2007, p. 82.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

became a contentious point. It was observed that many first years tried to resolve this tension amongst themselves.²¹ In some cases, it led to constructive, critical conversation. In other cases, it led to intimidation. HC members were not equipped to facilitate these difficult conversations.²²

The monitoring system was continuously re-evaluated each year to ensure bias was eliminated as far as possible and that the report on practices was considered legitimate based on the precautionary foundations. From 2008 and 2009, in order to avoid conflicts of interest, monitors were not allocated to communities in which they had previously been a resident.²³ Each monitor was required to visit the community that had been allocated on a daily basis and two other communities. Every day during the welcoming period, a meeting was held where the monitors discussed the experience of the previous day.

The 2009 monitoring group, rather pedantically, complained that HC members were not friendly enough with the newcomers. Many HCs adopted a “strict professional” demeanour to ensure that they upheld discipline and respect from the newcomers. The monitors observed this as a short-sighted leadership model. Of greater significance was language and the integration of English students. This was not about language but rather culture.²⁴ It was evident that Afrikaans-speakers were the dominant social group and all others needed to adapt to integrate amongst them. Monitors reported that students identified this concern as something they needed to address with their HC, which was an indication that newcomers were comfortable enough to approach their leadership about difficult issues.

Seniors also continued to fight the system. In 2009, it was reported that HCs found the need to limit the access seniors had to newcomers to ensure their safety. Cases of invasion of privacy were reported as seniors barged into newcomers’ rooms and enforced certain initiation practices.

²¹ SUA, *Monitor Report*, 2008, p. 4.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁴ SUA, *Monitor Report*, 2009, p. 2.

The monitoring group of 2010 reflected on whether the existing structure still aligned with the needs of the campus environment.²⁵ It was determined that, although the monitoring system was still relevant, the objective of the system needed to shift from the assessment of whether student communities were following the “rules” to assessing the “quality of the content” of the respective programmes.²⁶ This was evidently needed as communities began to simply regurgitate a programme that had been previously followed, without critically re-evaluating its relevance and effectiveness on a regular basis.²⁷

Additionally, it was reported that the monitors began to oversee the entire experience of the welcoming programmes, and not just the actions of the HC.²⁸ It was emphasized that because communities had different monitors, it would not be possible to compare the reports of one community to another. During the 2010 orientation period, the monitors were to share their concerns with the relevant student communities before reporting on them. This was the first structural change with regards to the relationship monitors had with the communities. This allowed communities to make immediate adjustments, where necessary, to their programmes.²⁹

The monitor group of 2011 considered the monitor reports as a collective of dissenting voices and not an overt form of representation.³⁰ A trend started to emerge in 2011, where communities were adapting their traditions to suit the new paradigm, however, some of these practices were still harbouring old habits. The monitors assessed that students did not comprehend that values and rules were not mutually exclusive. Rules were to be the vehicle for implementation of the values. If students perceived values separate to that of the rules consistency could not be insured.³¹ This became evident with regards to a lack of multicultural awareness. The 2011 monitoring group also argued that the Prim Committee and the Student Representative Council needed to be more involved in the monitoring process, to lead to greater confidence in the monitoring system.³²

²⁵ SUA, *Monitor Report*, 2010, pp. 1-2.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁰ SUA, *Monitor Report*, 2011, p. 2.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

The 2012 monitoring group argued that the changes in the evaluation categories and their meaning reflected changing ideas about what was relevant. They affirmed that this continuous redefinition reflected the progress of welcoming.³³ The monitors advised that every programme should strive towards an inward-outward balance. This would entail evaluating whether the first years are informed and equipped to function within the residence or PSO (how the washing machine works, how to book meals, how to participate in events, etc.), as well as how to function on campus (being introduced to academic buildings, societies, clusters, etc.). The monitors recommended that interaction with the other clusters and communities was vital for first years to understand that their residence operated within a wider structure. The monitors shifted the reports' focus from "traditions and practices" to programme content. The reports now aimed to encourage student communities to re-evaluate their programmes each year to avoid complacency.³⁴

The monitors of 2012 reported on the extent to which first years' maturity and independent-mindedness were encouraged. This was to capture the growth in expectation around how first years were to be treated and ultimately how HC's of student communities viewed first years. It was no longer adequate to allow first years to make "[...] basic choices in a controlled environment or take 'initiative' within clearly defined parameters".³⁵ The monitors needed to *see* autonomy and individuality.

The monitors affirmed that welcoming was an opportunity for HCs to diffuse a particular way of thinking that looked towards self-expression, respecting diversity, plurality and richness of ideas, and the development of critical university-style thinking.³⁶ The monitors were critical of whether HCs promoted independent thought and accepted contributions from the first years, instead of patronizing them. In addition, the monitors focused on observing whether sufficient free time was given for processing and reflecting. Autonomy was therefore "[...] recognized to the extent that they had real influence in defining their own situation and experience".³⁷

³³ SUA, *Monitor Report*, 2012, p. 4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

In 2014, it was reported that there was a significant shift in seniors' attitudes towards the position of first years in their community. An acceptance of the need to treat first years as adults was evident. A trend that was observed was that many residences that had issues with seniors were male and had strong Afrikaans roots.³⁸ Further reports suggest that this continued to be a major obstacle to transformation in the residence space.

In 2014, two major additions were made to the evaluation system: The Monitors Council and the 2014 Task Team. The monitoring group of 2014 stipulated the vision of the "Monitors Council" which consisted of the monitors of residences, faculties, the head monitor and the Director of the Centre for Student Communities (CSC). The vision of the Monitors Council was "to create an environment of enjoyable, responsible welcoming into the University of Stellenbosch by all role players for the first years, ensuring accountability between all involved parties and providing a safe, objective framework to assess and continuously improve upon the welcoming process".³⁹ The mission was to provide first years with:

[...] a safe channel of communication directly to the university for being active participants in the evolution of the welcoming process, and by providing a system for independent accountability for the authorities throughout the welcoming process we will impart the respect, dignity and responsibility to the first years and the HK⁴⁰ that will build the framework for a responsible system where the role of the monitor will become a platform for positive growth and development.⁴¹

The goal was to provide an objective measurement of the proficiency of the welcoming process for each residence; and to provide accountability to the HCs and senior members of houses on the subject of their conduct for the duration of the orientation process. It aimed to assess the welcoming process holistically; and then improve the process of orientation through a system of feedback; and, to facilitate change under the guidelines of Stellenbosch University. The Monitors Council aimed to objectively report violations of human rights and ensure that the necessary steps were taken in response to these situations; to provide a safe channel of communication for first years; and to respect residence traditions and history. Moreover, it would guide HCs to critically consider the goals or outcomes of all the activities and compare

³⁸ SUA, *Monitor Report*, 2014, p. 10.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴⁰ In Afrikaans the House Committee (HC) is referred to as the "Huis Komitee" which is abbreviated to HK.

⁴¹ SUA, *Monitor Report*, 2014, p. 4.

them to, “the standards set by the University to create a dynamic orientation that promotes individual growth and development”.⁴²

An additional change to the monitoring process was the reporting of “highlights”, whereby the monitors describe extraordinary moments where HCs go above the call of duty.⁴³ This was seen as necessary to acknowledge the “first fruits” that were bared since the commencement of the monitoring process and a testament that monitors were more than policing officers. The hope was to shift the mindset of the residences away from “not getting caught doing something wrong” to “we would like to display what we do publicly, because we are proud of the work we are doing”.⁴⁴ The monitoring group of 2014 believed that a paradigm shift had taken place amongst student leadership, where they finally adopted the call for transformation.

A change from the formal monitoring structure was brought about in 2014. Monitors only met every second day but had to inform the head monitor every day with feedback from each of their residences.⁴⁵ It enabled the head monitor to remain updated with what was always happening in each residence and forced each individual monitor to keep a timeline of events for each of their residences. As a result, this made the writing of reports more accurate, easier, and more relevant to the immediate situations.⁴⁶ As much as great strides had been made toward adapting to the new welcoming culture of the University, there were still cases of stigmatization toward English-speaking students where the HCs were condescending, judgmental and did not make effort to create an inclusive environment.⁴⁷

In 2014, a task team – which consisted of both staff and student leaders – was formed to investigate the persistence of “unacceptable” welcoming practices.⁴⁸ The term “unwelcoming practices”, rather than initiation, was strategically employed as a marker to distinguish between explicitly malicious acts and more implicit discriminatory acts. The former was, therefore, much more akin to old forms of residence culture in contrast to the adapted, yet still unsavoury, practices of the so-called modernised residence. This task team used the 2001 SAHRC report

⁴² SUA, *Monitor Report*, 2014, p. 4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴⁸ SUA, *Report of the Task Team on the Inquiry into Unacceptable Welcoming Practices*, 2014, p. 4.

on *Initiation Practices at Educational Institutions* and a *Preliminary Report on Cultural Initiations* as a framework to define the welcoming environment the University was working toward. At the centre of this was the need to establish a programme which recognised human dignity and acknowledged the intrinsic worth of human beings. An unacceptable welcoming practice was defined as “any attitude, action, rule, or practice that typifies a hierarchical power system and does not promote a value-driven system”.⁴⁹

These practices were perceived as problematic because they were inconsistent with the constitutional order. They were also in contravention of the call by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) that initiation be abolished. It contradicted the ethos of “creating graduates who were ready for the modern knowledge economy and job market”, who were “thought-leaders, and who knew how to operate in a value-driven work environment”. It was also in contravention of the University’s Institutional Intent Strategy (IIS) of 2013-2018, which prioritised value-driven environments. The Task Team on the *Inquiry into Unacceptable Welcoming Practices* argued that one foul incident could jeopardise the entire transformation policy.⁵⁰

Practices which the SU task team catalogued as unwelcoming were drawn from experiences of various university campuses across South Africa. These consisted of “seniors disturbing newcomers’ sleep”, or “instructing them to do various tasks or physical activities in the middle of the night”; newcomers ordered to dress like sex workers or the homeless and to walk around the town; “seniors spilling water and beer on a tiled floor and then dragging newcomers through the spillage on their knees calling them human sponges”; “newcomers stripped of their clothes, tied to trees or lampposts with adhesive tape and then hosed down”; seniors not returning newcomers’ greetings to make their rank clear; or the “use of abusive language as forms of address for newcomers”.⁵¹

The categorisation of practices was divided into those which were inconceivable, unacceptable and undesirable. A few transgressions to mention which were considered inconceivable practices, and prohibited at SU, included: pulling pillowcases, bags or similar

⁴⁹ SUA, *Report of the Task Team on the Inquiry into Unacceptable Welcoming Practices*, 2014, p. 13.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

over students heads; emotional or mental humiliation; “depriving students of any privileges they would normally be entitled”, such as their cellular phones, make-up, laundry, shower facilities; forbidding newcomers to speak; taking an oath of secrecy; “expecting or encouraging newcomers to steal private property”; and calling newcomers by strange or humiliating nicknames.⁵²

Unacceptable transgressions included: any conduct, practice, action or attitude where a newcomer is not considered as a fully-fledged member of the student community until a series of events are complete. Examples of such provided were: to climb a mountain on their own; expecting newcomers to wear the same clothing for protracted lengths of time; and the calling of newcomers by a collective name rather than their individual, such as *jaar*⁵³ or *saad*,⁵⁴ which were considered as humiliating and degrading as they clustered all newcomers as worthless, inexperienced, and not fully developed.⁵⁵ Additional unacceptable practices were: restricting their freedom of movement as individuals; exploiting their lack of knowledge of the environment; using impersonal or hierarchical forms of address such as *meneer*⁵⁶ or *juffrou*⁵⁷; restricting their amenities such as the use of hot water; and, having them stand in rows, military style.

Practices which were considered as undesirable conduct, practices, attitudes or actions included: newcomers wearing name tags on campus; seniors adopting a stern attitude under the guise of professionalism; HC members wearing their blazers or high heeled shoes to create the impression of hierarchy of power; compelling male students to grow beards.⁵⁸

The characteristics and examples of inconceivable, unacceptable, and undesirable practices indicates that identity is a paradoxical concept. According to sociologist, cultural theorist and political activist, Stuart Hall, identity is constructed on the premise of an acknowledgment of “[...] some common origin or shared characteristic with another person or group, or with an idea, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on

⁵² SUA, *Report of the Task Team on the Inquiry into Unacceptable Welcoming Practices*, 2014, p. 44.

⁵³ Consider them lesser than. An abbreviation of ‘eerstejaar’ in Afrikaans.

⁵⁴ A seed.

⁵⁵ SUA, *Report of the Task Team on the Inquiry into Unacceptable Welcoming Practices*, 2014, pp. 8-9.

⁵⁶ Afrikaans for “Sir”.

⁵⁷ Afrikaans for “Miss”

⁵⁸ SUA, *Report of the Task Team on the Inquiry into Unacceptable Welcoming Practices*, 2014, p. 46.

this foundation”.⁵⁹ Furthermore, Hall argues that identity formation is a continuous construction and, therefore, always in the process of being formulated.⁶⁰ The identified categorization of practices also allude to the proposed classification of residence spaces as heterotopias of crisis, which, as discussed in Chapter One – according to Foucault’s first principle – are reserved for those in a vulnerable state.

Newcomers were evidently perceived as vulnerable, and easily coerced, based on the findings of the task team. Foucault’s fifth principle can also be considered, as these spaces were evidently considered as a closed but open system, and those who entered the space were expected to submit to existing systems, social practices and processes, to showcase commitment to the community.

The consideration of residences as heterotopic spaces can further be considered from incidences that took place at Stellenbosch University and where the Central Disciplinary Committee (CDC) were required to intervene. A few transgressions to mention prior to 2000 and post, include first years painting a statue on the *Rooiplein* (the main square on campus) because they were told that this was a common practice for first year initiation.⁶¹ While it was clear that these students were misled by the seniors, they were still reprimanded by the CDC and received one hour of community service.

Another case which emerged was where a Prim neglected his duty. First years under his watch got involved in a street fight with another residence.⁶² The brawl emanated from a longstanding tradition which originated at one of the more notorious male residences, Wilgenhof. In this instance, men from another male residence, Eendrag, hurled abuses at the Wilgenhof students and this ended in a fight.⁶³ While the Prim was not directly involved in the transgression, the fight emanated from outdated traditional practices which were drudged out from the archives. The Prim was dismissed by the CDC and received community service hours. This alludes to the fact the Prim was perhaps directly or indirectly involved in the altercation.

⁵⁹ S. Hall & P. Du Gay, “Introduction”, (eds.), *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: SAGE Publications, 2006), p. 2.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ SUA, *Report of the Task Team on the Inquiry into Unacceptable Welcoming Practices*, 2014, p. 49.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

Another incident was where a HC for Welcoming permitted practices that were neither part of the programme nor authorized.⁶⁴ This was done to please seniors who were not happy with the friendly welcoming of first years. These HC members were aware that seniors traditionally gathered first-years in the hall late in the evening and hurled abuses at them so that “they would know their place”. The parties involved were expelled from the residence. What this epitomises are the basic psychological processes of conditioning and modelling in which behaviour is observed, rewarded, and learnt.⁶⁵

In yet another instance, two HC members allowed first years of a section in a men’s residence to be showered as part of their sectional initiation. The parties involved were evicted from the residence, received community hours, and were expected to write letters of apology to the first years. In a more severe case, two men showered a first year from a lady’s residence and humiliated her. The men were evicted from the residence and university. Surprisingly, the sanction was suspended for the duration of their studies on the condition that no similar transgressions occur in the future. Letters of apology were sent to the women involved, and community service was completed.⁶⁶

The causes of these types of transgressions were highlighted by the SU task team. They suggested that, “students experience the University itself as a hierarchical power institution, where everyone needs to know their place and should act accordingly (and, by implication, will be reprimanded if they do not)”.⁶⁷ Students who are not first generation, or who had friends who attended the institution, could also read media reports on these transgressions.⁶⁸ Essentially, these reports suggested a deeper issue of students bowing to peer pressure”. This resonates with social belonging theory such as that espoused by social psychologists, Ray Baumeister and Mark Leary.⁶⁹ Students are also very competitive and competition-minded;

⁶⁴ SUA, *Report of the Task Team on the Inquiry into Unacceptable Welcoming Practices*, 2014, p. 49; <https://www.iol.co.za/travel/south-africa/students-plead-guilty-to-pellet-prank-122951> [Accessed 26 September 2020].

⁶⁵ A. Bandura, D. Ross, A. Sheila & A. Ross, “Transmission of aggression through imitation of aggressive models”, *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, (63), (3), 1961, p. 575.

⁶⁶ SUA, *Report of the Task Team on the Inquiry into Unacceptable Welcoming Practices*, 2014, pp. 50-51; <https://www.iol.co.za/travel/south-africa/students-plead-guilty-to-pellet-prank-122951> [Accessed 26 September 2020].

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ R. Baumeister, & M. Leary, “The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation”, *Psychological Bulletin*, (117), (3), 1995, pp. 497-529.

“qualities that often contribute to the persistence or even recurrence of certain practices on campus”.⁷⁰ They were also said to, “have an excessive sense of responsibility for newcomer first-years’ well-being which makes senior students feel obliged to “control” the newcomers to such an extent that some aspects of seniors’ behaviour turn into unacceptable practices”.⁷¹ An extremely important causal or mitigating factor which prompted many incidences was alcohol abuse.⁷² Quite importantly, the “uncertainty among seniors and student leaders about what exactly constitutes an unacceptable practice creates an obstacle, particularly where an overly tradition-oriented and single-identity house attitude (the [“res above all”] attitude) prevails”.⁷³

The impression in 2014 of the welcoming programmes was that it was in a process of change from the traditional hierarchical style of orientation to a more value-driven approach. The monitoring group also claimed that they observed that the residences were becoming complacent if it was reported that they did not do anything wrong.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the seniors persisted to present a problem to the “friendly, hospitable atmosphere” that was being strived for and were the culprits who maintained a vicious cycle of abuse and power.⁷⁵ Many incidences which arose in 2014 were mostly instigated by seniors, after the welcoming period, and in the absence of monitoring groups. One such example was the shaving of a questionable symbol into the head of one of the students.

In 2015, it was observed that communities were not informing monitors of changes in their programmes, which resulted in monitors being suspicious of whether practices were being conducted “underground”.⁷⁶ Recommendations were made to address topics about budgeting, alcohol, drug abuse and embracing different cultures.⁷⁷ This is suggestive that conversations around these topics were side-lined and that practices occurring within residence spaces were not educational.⁷⁸

⁷⁰ SUA, *Report of the Task Team on the Inquiry into Unacceptable Welcoming Practices*, 2014, pp. 50-51.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁷⁴ SUA, *Monitor Report*, 2014, p. 11.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ SUA, *Monitor Report*, 2015, p. 2.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

By 2016, it was reported that the residences mastered the skills to integrate the Stellenbosch University's welcoming values throughout the welcoming period. However, there was still a concern that residences were manipulating their own values to ensure a tradition could continue by "fitting" it into a value.⁷⁹

In 2018, much of the same was reported as per the previous years. Emphasis was added that HCs still did not understand the monitors' roles completely, and that a compulsory programme should be conducted between seniors and newcomers.⁸⁰ Additionally, it was suggested that monitoring process be implemented throughout the year.⁸¹ This would suggest that residence spaces had performed well during welcoming, but problematic practices continued to fester throughout the rest of the year.

The observations through the lens of the monitor reports revealed a continuous shifting paradigm of residence culture. One where there was a recognition to create a welcoming culture that focused beyond the integration of newcomers in their allocated residence, and even beyond their integration into the university itself. There was an apparent shifting paradigm of recognising the incubation that the University experience offered to foster professional and personal development of newcomers and to challenge their thought process about pertinent issues. This was something particularly apparent from 2015 onwards. However, there were still significant areas of concern. The MAC reports of 2017 and 2018 highlighted that seniors were still not aware of the welcoming ethos which caused the interaction between the newcomers and seniors to degenerate into a practice that was far from welcoming.⁸² It was further identified that not all stakeholders of the student communities – HCs, mentors, residence head and ResEd coordinator – seemed to be well-informed about the objectives and envisaged outcomes of each activity. Furthermore, the MAC stressed the ongoing involvement of residence heads and that was clearly discernible between those who were actively engaged with their residences and those who were not.⁸³ The MAC also identified the tendency towards intimidating behaviour at certain men's residences towards newcomers.

⁷⁹ SUA, *Monitor Report*, 2016, p. 2.

⁸⁰ SUA, *Monitor Report*, 2018, pp. 2-3.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁸² SUA, *Monitor Report*, 2017, p. 2.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

In both reports of 2017 and 2018, the MAC did not sense any significant progress towards practices where the HCs would grow beards and refer to the welcoming leader as the *doopkaptein* or initiation captain. Additional concerns worth noting in the 2018 MAC report, was that of “weddings” where a male and female head student would join in union as representatives of their respective residences to symbolise a partnership for a specific academic year. This was a practice deemed heteronormative and exclusionary to the LGBTQI+ community.⁸⁴

A second incident which was a concern was the so-called “kidnapping of the prim”, which was a long-standing activity started by a male PSO who only involved selected female residences each year. During this activity, the prim of a ladies’ residence is kidnapped by a men’s residence or PSO. The activity was reported to have been addressed for many years, but despite various discussions with residences and PSO’s, the activity continued and was identified as a possible traumatic experience for newcomers and one that could be observed by the outside world as endorsed by the University.

In 2018, the MAC reported the concern of a lack of the promotion of multilingualism. In addition to this, seniors were reported as a continuous threat to change, and not aware of the welcoming ethos.⁸⁵ It was also reported that residence heads needed to be consistent in their input in welcoming programmes to ensure there were no vague descriptions of an activity. Once again it was reported that men’s residences were still conducting intimidating behaviour towards newcomers.⁸⁶

These transgressions were clearly symptomatic of the history of residence culture. It is evident that many of them were done under the guise of tradition and to reinforce imagined structures of hierarchy and power. Although it is evident that HCs were very much aware of what was expected of them as representatives of the University, they were still pressured – in many cases by seniors – to turn a blind eye to underground unwelcoming practices. These transgressions also provide further enlightenment to the theory of imagined communities – as discussed in Chapter One. This theory was devised by political scientist, Benedict Anderson

⁸⁴ SUA, *Monitor Report*, 2018, p. 3.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

which defined imagined communities as spaces where the members that formulate a part of the community share an image of their association unbound by space or time.⁸⁷ These imagined communities have their cultural roots imbedded in symbols, rules, regulations, time and other practices.⁸⁸

Hall's consideration of identity as a continuous formation, signifies that in the context of student communities – residences in particular – there is a constant gap to be filled to shape the identity of students. However, the culture of residences at SU and other institutions – as per the SAHRC 2001 report and the SU Task Team *Report on Unacceptable Welcoming Practices* – has proven to focus primarily on their own community identity formation above that of the individual and even the institution. According to Pieter Kloppers – who has been involved in student affairs and residence culture at SU since 2004 and who has been the Director of the Centre for Student Communities since its establishment in 2008 – a group identity is said to help manage or order the group more easily to influence the behaviour of individuals within the groups.⁸⁹

The nature of a community is said to be defined by the actions used to receive newcomers, and how they integrate them into the group. The actions are aimed at continuing the existing rhythm of the community and not actually changing it. The newcomers are simply meant to integrate into the existing way of life of the said community. Initiation is a practice which demonstrates the power hierarchy within a community, as a rite of passage to ensure newcomers understand their place within the structure. Furthermore, the culture of the community becomes a social construct to which all who enter, are compelled to comply. Thereafter, they are to construct their own experience and personal identity according to the framework of the said community.

Hall argues that the question which remains is why individuals as subjects identify with specific circumstances or environments within which they are assembled (consciously or

⁸⁷ Y. Kanno & B. Norton, “Imagined communities and educational possibilities: Introduction”, *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, (2), (4), 2003, p. 241.

⁸⁸ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso books, 2006), pp. 9-36.

⁸⁹ SUA, P. Kloppers, “Initiation/Hazing”, Centre for Student Communities, 5 June 2006.

subconsciously) and submit to what is expected in some instances, and not in others?⁹⁰ Although, as has been discussed previously, philosopher, George Hegel, argued that identity is intersubjective, rather than subjective as individual identity is formulated through participation in social life.⁹¹ Thus, the “self” is framed by an individual’s inclusion in, or identification with, the collective.

Hall argues further that questions persist with occurrences where individuals are “[...] in a continuous, ‘antagonistic’ process of struggling with, resisting, negotiating, and accommodating the normative or regulative rules with which they confront and regulate themselves”.⁹² Initiation at residences has been regarded as a mechanism to introduce students to the identity and culture which defines the community. As the SAHRC 2001 report indicated, initiation has been a continuous practice and is preserved through intergenerational interactions, as students are coerced and are under the impression that it is simply a rite of passage. Essentially, the purpose of the monitoring programme was not only to protect newcomers from initiation acts inflicted on them, but to also protect newcomers from themselves, as they submit to these injustices which they have been conditioned to accept as a norm.⁹³

According to Kloppers, many initiation acts performed by the community are inflicted by seniors.⁹⁴ The acts of initiation they enforce are claimed to welcome the newcomers into the space of the community and foster a sense of group belonging to create friendships. When seniors were confronted by the University and provided feedback that newcomers experienced humiliation, seniors reflected on their own initiation experiences and admitted that they too experienced humiliation. It was thereafter recognized that the acts seniors enforced conflicted with what they intended to achieve. Kloppers further argues that the community organizes itself around the demonstration of power behaviour. It was therefore necessary to create an alternative symbol of this power. A value-driven community was seen as important to shift the

⁹⁰ S. Hall & P. Du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*, p. 14.

⁹¹ T. Golban & E. Yürükler, “Social Construction of Identity in Louis De Bernières’ Novel *Birds Without Wings*/Louis De Bernières’ in *Kanatsız Kuşlar Romanında Sosyal Kimlik Oluşumu*,” *Humanitas*, (7), (14), 2019, pp. 406-407.

⁹² S. Hall & P. Du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*, p. 14.

⁹³ SUA, *Report of the Task Team on the Inquiry into Unacceptable Welcoming Practices*, 2014, p. 23.

⁹⁴ SUA, P. Kloppers, “Initiation/Hazing”, Centre for Student Communities, 5 June 2006.

worldview of the community to one where the actions that were enforced to foster the nature of the community coincided with the values that were chosen by the collective. The shortcoming of this was that leaders and seniors were learning at the expense of the human dignity of newcomers.

The concepts of morality and ethics come into question and social psychologist, Jonathan Haidt defines moral systems as “interlocking sets of values, virtues, norms, practices, identities, institutions” which work together to suppress self-interest and make cooperative societies possible.⁹⁵ Haidt argues that this definition allows conservative and religious communities to qualify as moral communities as all acts are done to ensure the preservation of the “moral order”.⁹⁶ This relates to this study as residence culture was defined by its constituents who believed they were preserving the *status quo*. Haidt refers to Charles Darwin’s *The Descent of Man*; where Darwin raises the question around individuals’ behavioural change in group settings “if [...] the one tribe included a great number of courageous, sympathetic, and faithful members, who were always ready to [...] aid and defend each other, this tribe would succeed better and conquer the other...” and that “if selfish and contentious people will not cohere [...] without coherence nothing can be effected”.⁹⁷ Essentially, it is argued that those who challenge the organization of the community, pose a threat to the social cohesion and order. Therefore, the conviction to continue existing hierarchical structures, demonstrated that it was considered a mechanism to keep those who would otherwise threaten the social cohesion and order of the community, in check.

In the context of residences, Darwin’s theory along with Haidt’s principles of ethical behaviour, create a platform for the analysis and interpretation of residence spaces, which testifies to the complexity in the cultures and identities that are formulated within. This indicates why the establishment of an independent structure, such as the monitoring structure, was necessary as a lens into these spaces.

Haidt refers to the ethics of autonomy, which is formed on the premise that people are, first and foremost, autonomous individuals with wants, needs and preferences. In principle

⁹⁵ K. Weir, “Our Moral Motivations”, *American Psychological Association*, (43), (6), 2012, p. 24.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ J. Haidt, *The righteous mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2012), p. 116.

“[...] people should be free to satisfy these wants, needs and preferences as they see fit”.⁹⁸ This creates the nexus for societies to build “[...] moral concepts such as rights, liberty, and justice, which allow people to coexist peacefully without interfering too much in each other’s projects”.⁹⁹ This is the central ethic in idealistic eccentric societies, which is a utopian idea within “Western secular society”.¹⁰⁰ When individuals step out of this isolated world, they discover that morality involves more than one language.¹⁰¹

The ethics of community is founded on the premise that people are “[...] members of larger entities such as families, teams, armies, companies, tribes and nations”.¹⁰² These larger entities are prioritized above the individuals who constitute them; they are tangible, they matter, and they must be protected from threats that would shake the natural order. Therefore, the individuals that formulate part of the community have an obligation to play their allocated roles in these entities. Many societies and communities consequently develop “[...] moral concepts such as duty, hierarchy, respect, reputation and patriotism”.¹⁰³

In these collectives, the “[...] Western insistence that people should design their own lives and pursue their own goals seems selfish and dangerous—a sure way to weaken the social fabric and destroy the institutions and collective entities upon which everyone depends”.¹⁰⁴ The ways in which the role of ethics and morality unfold within a community is testament to the complex nature of residences. Change poses a threat to their social fabric. Challenging practices, traditions and rituals is a challenge to the very nature of their being. The role the monitoring system played was, therefore, an intricate part to measure transformative measures at Stellenbosch University.

The range of unwelcoming practices that took place in residence spaces is illuminating; especially when considering that representatives of these spaces considered them acceptable. The monitor reports indicate that some practices explicitly disregarded the human dignity of students. These practices provide a revealing lens to the hegemonic power dynamics of

⁹⁸ J. Haidt, *The righteous mind*, p. 116.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

residences and the imbedded indoctrination of their culture and identity. More so, it raises the concern of privilege and racial identities where cultural subjectivity and the inherent whiteness within these residences is prevalent, as it has been intertwined as the norm and desired form of socialisation.¹⁰⁵ The formation of an identity is said to be determined and shaped by social structures, through social actions which shift identities to meet new circumstances.¹⁰⁶ This relates to symbolic interaction theory which has the assumption that the self and identities emerge through social interactions and are intertwined with ethnicity.¹⁰⁷ The monitoring system was established to evaluate and change some of these practices. This dates back to 2003, which shows the complexity in transforming the space.

While these reflections pertain to the broader problems of welcoming on campus, it is necessary to assess how this unfolded in particular residence spaces. This will allow for some reflection on how the *Matie* identity had to be adapted in these residence spaces rather than the previous process in which the residence identity framed the constructs of the *Matie* identity.

3.4. Colliding Identities: Welcoming Practices in Specific Stellenbosch University Residences, 2000 – 2018

A relationship between the welcoming incidences within residences and the institution itself has resulted in an institutional categorisation as symptomatic or isolated to that of a specific residence's culture and identity. These binary comparatives prove useful for an institutional strategy but need to be developed along a continuum in a historical study such as this. There have been pivotal turning points, and some events have been significantly symbolic of a broader phenomenon. One could go as far as to argue that these practices have reflected the ineffective policies and desire to uphold the *Matie* identity – as prescribed by the various Rectors and institutional policies, previously discussed.

¹⁰⁵ R. Pattman, "Student Identities, and Researching These in a Newly 'racially' Merged University in South Africa", *Race Ethnicity and Education*, (10), (4), 2007, p. 482.

¹⁰⁶ F. Zakaria, "Everyday Talk: The Construction of Student Identities", *Englisia*, (2), (1), 2014, p. 32.

¹⁰⁷ C. Jaret & C. Donald, "Currents in a Stream: College Student Identities and Ethnic Identities and Their Relationship with Self-Esteem, Efficacy, and Grade Point Average in an Urban University", *Social Science Quarterly*, (90), (2), 2009, p. 346.

The monitor reports of four sampled residences will form the basis of this section. These are formulated through the observational lens of “positional” and “non-positional” student leaders from a variety of student structures and spaces around the University. Although there is a significant degree of subjectivity in these reports, the observations provide a platform for discussion. Through either archives or commemorative publications of these residences, one is able to evaluate the observations of the monitors in the context of their daily activities. These point to positive and negative observations within these residences and how these reflections suggest residence-specific traditions in the making of a residence identity, sometimes at odds with the universal *Matie* identity discussed in the preceding sections of this chapter.

3.4.1. Nerina, (est. 1968)

Nerina is a women’s residence which was established in 1968. The value of individuality has manifested over the years in Nerina beyond that of the community’s culture and identity. In 1995, the residence became the first hostel to allow men to visit the women’s rooms (restricted to Saturday nights, though).¹⁰⁸

Nerina’s 50th Commemorative publication is evidently a celebratory collection of its residence history and fundamental turning points of its commitment to contribute to the transformative student experience. In 2003, the residence students rewrote their manifesto and appointed a diversity committee. In the same year, they held a workshop to discuss the impact of HIV and AIDS. 2004 was the last year that the first-year students were called *knolle*¹⁰⁹, a derogatory term. In 2008 the residence saw one of its alumni appointed as the first woman on the Supreme Court of Appeal.¹¹⁰ In 2010, a group of Nerina residents organised a march at the campus *Rooiplein* (Red Square), in protest against the abuse of women on campus.¹¹¹ In 2013, the residence adopted a new leadership model to replace the traditional “HK” system. This was to be called the Nerina Community Council (NCC), and beyond this, it gave the opportunity

¹⁰⁸ SUA, Nerina Ladies Residence, “Nerina 50th Commemorative Book”, 2017, p. 7.

¹⁰⁹ They referred to them as tubers (short and thick underground storage stems).

¹¹⁰ SUA, Nerina Ladies Residence, “Nerina 50th Commemorative Book”, 2017, p. 7.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

for more students within the residence to take up leadership positions and develop their leadership skills. In 2015, Nerina's constitution was translated into English. Over the years the residence's students have claimed to take initiative to push boundaries and have taken leading positions in various aspects of student life and the wider community. In 2018, the residence adapted their house song to include all three main languages in the Western Cape. This was an intentional transformative shift, which aligned with the new university language policy of 2016.

As one would expect, the commemorative publication showcased only the "exemplary resident culture". This evidently indicates that their archive contains remnants of a history that favourably positions themselves in the new post 1994 paradigm. Their archives were difficult to navigate. However, both the monitor reports and an interview conducted, which will be discussed in Chapter 4, would suggest that these celebratory entries, are not entirely unfounded.

In 2009, however, Nerina was questioned about the level of freedom extended to first years in terms of personal time granted to them to explore the campus and town to their own accord. This was defended with arguments being made that it was for the safety of newcomers.¹¹² It should be noted that despite its size and relative harmonious façade, there have been several notable attacks which have occurred in the town.

In the monitor report of 2010, Nerina was recognised for their concerted efforts to adapt their welcoming programmes to include contemporary issues.¹¹³ They also had a vibrant mentorship programme run by senior students.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, there was a considerable and noteworthy collaboration between mentors, HC and the newcomers.

By 2012, the residence was complimented for consistently aligning its programmes with that of the institution. They were also acknowledged for the way in which they imparted the residence values. For example, a hike was organised up one of the Stellenbosch mountains, where newcomers were instructed on Nerina's ethos, history, and purpose of the welcoming period, as well as the HC vision and mission.¹¹⁵

¹¹² SUA *Monitor Report on Nerina*, 2009, p. 55.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ SUA *Monitor Report on Nerina*, 2012, pp. 74-75.

In 2014, Nerina leadership ensured that newcomers were geared towards taking initiative as a *Matie* within their residence. This was a shared characteristic along with Eendrag. Both introduced the students to different facets of development such as promoting diversity, how to accept one another's uniqueness, how to manifest dreams into reality and seize opportunities to enrich their lives.¹¹⁶ Of notable mention was "The Red and White Evenings" where newcomers could participate by celebrating other traditions and where inspiration, unity and acceptance were cultivated. The red night focused on the interaction with seniors, the white focused on the newcomers sharing their experience during the welcoming period.

By 2016, it hosted sessions that addressed topics such as "where is my place in SU?" and "where do I get my self-worth?" which facilitated an enabling and empowering welcoming space that aligned with the residence's values.¹¹⁷ A practice met with intrigue was a tradition where a senior would pose as a newcomer for a few days and would act very outrageously. The exercise was intended to encourage newcomers to judge others less.¹¹⁸

Nerina was one of the only residences where their HC was referred to as a "Community Council".¹¹⁹ This changed the perception of leadership within the residence and structure and emphasised the value driven environment. The community leaders demonstrated their experience within the residence and encouraged newcomers to self-reflect in a daily journal. Nerina's programme reflected significant practices such as the dedication of each day to a specific value as a theme for the day.¹²⁰ These were set as a backdrop to points for discussion which took place during breakfast times. The residence was clearly encouraging of independent thought.

They were also open to critique. In 2016 newcomers expressed how bored they were of the original greetings taught to them. The NCC suggested that they should then develop their own new greeting which was reported as a "great success and very impressive". Additionally, during a traditional activity known as the *Primontvoering* – an activity which involved a selected few female residence's and PSOs who would participate in a "hostage" situation and

¹¹⁶ SUA Monitor Report on Nerina, 2014, pp. 121-123.

¹¹⁷ SUA Monitor Report on Nerina, 2016, p. 88.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹¹⁹ SUA Monitor Report on Nerina, 2015, pp. 62-63.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

their communities would need to “rescue” them by getting past a human wall of men – a handful of newcomers respectfully declined. There was little visible evidence that they were ostracised for this.

Although none of their practices were frowned upon and some were even categorised as exemplary, it was observed that there was still room for improvement to create a conscious environment of global and national societal change and to expose the newcomers to what the University had to offer. An additional concern was the coordination of outfits by the NCC as they all wore identical outfits which was argued to possibly stifle the perception of individual diversity within the community. In large part, the reports were complimentary of the residence and support some of the self-reflections as observed in their Commemorative publications.

3.4.2. Eendrag, (est. 1961)

Founded in 1961, Eendrag Men’s Residence is a community which defines itself with pride. It is argued that Eendragters exude characteristics which foster unity. They are also proud of some of their traditions which continue to exist. Traditions such as *teekan*, for example, was established in 1968. During these “teatime” sessions, the inhabitants share their daily experiences with fellow housemates.¹²¹ The exact nature of the conversation is left to the imagination of the reader.

Other traditions are somewhat problematic. In 2011, a first-year student shared his experience of participating in the *Tour d’Irene*.¹²² Through this extract, one is confronted with the one of many ways in which residences can breed unhealthy habits. He recalls:

The sound still ringing in my ears, the essence of what we have just done sinks in. I have just run around Irene Ladies Residence in nothing but my birthday suit and running shoes for speed. I have just completed my first ever Tour d’Irene. The Tour d’Irene is a long-standing tradition amongst Eendragters and is willingly continued after every house meeting. The route is a simple 412.6m from the safety of the hostel back door, around Irene and back inside. Every step is taken for the pure enjoyment of it, we relish our recklessness and celebrate our young years (so much so that the tour has even been put into verse). In this day and age innocent student fun like this is heavily frowned

¹²¹ SUA, Eendrag Men’s Residence, “Eendrag Commemorative Handbook 2011”, 2011, pp. 98-99.

¹²² An annual gymkhana event that takes place in Irene, a ladies residence. It is fraught with questionable misogynistic practices.

upon and so many of these marvellous traditions have already been abolished... whoever thought of this ingenious stress-relieving, spirit building, uniting and outright thrilling tradition, this hostel is forever in his debt... Considering the University is trying to stop such an event, they seem to inspire our men to go the extra mile... Looking back at that night when I first ran, I honestly cannot imagine not doing it. How could I not run in front of what could be my future wife.¹²³

The resistance to change is alarmingly celebrated within this depiction and a disregard for authority as, at the time, they evidently rejected the university's call to stop the tradition. In response to calls to banish the practice, the Eendrag collective response was simply "the ladies have no complaints when it comes to our late-night antics, alas, one of the faired gender did get a bit fed up with the Tour [by claiming] 'Ek's oor kaal mans'"¹²⁴. This is after her comment was published in the student paper *Die Matie*, in May 2009.¹²⁵ There is a dismissal of the broader issue as well as deflection towards the comment made by one of the women in a bid to justify the practice. One cannot ignore that these practices are in part also encouraged by female residences under the guise of tradition and innocent fun. The socialisation process is therefore twofold. As the University body began to discuss issues of sexism, the practice was abolished.

The residence, like many others, also has a strong sub-culture amongst its sections, which are smaller communities within the broader residence. They have their own identities, cultures traditions and practices. Sectional identity was defined by the social activities taking place within the unit.¹²⁶ First year sections are separated from that of the senior sections. The names of these sections have changed over time. One such process occurred in 2015 after an alleged rape took place. This led to a radical re-evaluation of signs, symbols and behaviour which endorsed sexist or misogynistic acts, or which perpetuated rape culture. The sections were also dissolved in 2015 due to the toxic cultures being fostered within these smaller spaces.

To understand the initial phase of the welcoming culture the residence had been entering during the 2000s, it is worth noting that the welcoming leader was also known as the initiation captain (*doopkaptein*), whose role was to lead the orientation of first year students. It was a role that was vital to ensure that newcomers formed part of the community and understood

¹²³ SUA, Eendrag Men's Residence, "Eendrag Commemorative Handbook 2011", 2011, pp. 98-99.

¹²⁴ "I am over naked men".

¹²⁵ SUA, Eendrag Men's Residence, "Eendrag Commemorative Handbook 2011", 2011, pp. 98-99.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

traditions. Traditions were important to the residence as they defined the culture of the community because without them, so they argued, it was as though the residence had nothing but a “building”. *Figure 6* below is an illustration of a *doop-kaptein* saying “soet slaap...Jarre”.¹²⁷ The word *jarre* is considered a derogatory name for first year students. Furthermore, the look of fear on the faces of the students encapsulates the role of the “captain”. The image of the *kaptein* is reminiscent of apartheid symbols heavily criticised in the state reports discussed in Chapter 1. The objectification of women is foreground in the poster. Sadly, this is mockingly depicted in the commemorative publication of the residence. The role of a *doopkaptein* was deemed unwelcoming since 2001.



Figure 6: Eendrag 1998 "doopkaptein"

Many of these concerns were raised in the MAC reports. It should be noted that the concerns raised by first years can never be measured as a conclusive and all-encompassing reflection of a residence, but rather as dissenting voices which provides an alternative lens into these practices. In Eendrag, a frequent challenge posed to first years has been to strive for perfection and unity, which pressurises individuals to conform to the group.¹²⁸ This was guised

¹²⁷ SUA, Eendrag Men’s Residence, “Eendrag Commemorative Handbook 2011”, 2011, p. 99; “Sweet dreams...first years”.

¹²⁸ SUA, *Monitor Report on Eendrag*, 2008, p. 15.

as ensuring that the newcomers focused on their integration into the student community. Furthermore, newcomers were unaware that they had a choice to participate in activities.¹²⁹

The various ways in which salutations determined place within the structure were also visibly differentiated according to the residence in question. In Eendrag, alongside other male residences, referring to a newcomer as *meneer* (sir) was considered an act of friendliness.¹³⁰ In return, newcomers referred to their House Committee as *meneer* as well – but more out of enticed respect. However, in 2010, questions were raised about the way in which newcomers had to stand in rows in the quad listening to “elementary lectures”.¹³¹ Newcomers were instructed to respond with “yes, sir”. There is a clear distinction between newcomers and seniors within the student community and elements of hierarchical behaviour. The community’s traditions were by no means considered harmful, but the objective of their traditions was no longer “relevant”.

The monitors further reported that Eendrag demonstrated a lack of initiative and progress to creatively and critically re-evaluate their welcoming programme. This made it obsolete in the continuously evolving social climate of universities and the country, despite the endless resources available on the campus to create an expressive and challenging programme. Their programme was critiqued to be focused inward, and not enabling students to adapt and thrive in the larger University environment.¹³²

By 2011, attempts were made to implement the value of respect. It was emphasised to newcomers that, although the residence consists of various individuals with disparate interests and ideals, they were all connected via the bonds of mutual respect.¹³³ However, there continued to exist a disjointed correlation between the values and practices taking place within the community. It was reported that practices that seemed to stray from the value frame were merely meant to keep newcomers on their toes. The HC were further questioned. The residence was apologetic and committed to transforming this aspect of their programme. The residence also acknowledged previous recommendations from the monitors’ report, such as spending a

¹²⁹ SUA, *Monitor Report on Eendrag*, 2008, p. 68.

¹³⁰ SUA, *Monitor Report on Eendrag*, 2009, p. 13.

¹³¹ SUA, *Monitor Report on Eendrag*, 2010, p. 20.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ SUA, *Monitor Report on Eendrag*, 2011, pp. 33-35.

disproportionate amount of time lecturing newcomers about the outdated ethos, culture, and identity of the community. In 2011, these lectures were expanded to include activities such as a tour of the residence, a *potjie-kos*¹³⁴ event and alumni were invited to talk to newcomers about life goals.

In addition, there were clear signs of a continued hierarchy of privilege and power within the structure. Newcomers would have to stand in a military-style formation when they moved around campus as a group. These were practices not seemingly befitting for young adults who have a degree of self-discipline and minds of their own. The HC would argue that these practices had a symbolic and practical value.¹³⁵ The formation was said to assist the HC in checking whether all newcomers were present and symbolised the value of unity and togetherness. They were instructed to treat students in a “manner that reflects the station they have reached in life as a young adult”.¹³⁶

On the other end of the spectrum, in 2012, Eendrag seemingly blurred the lines of friendliness as it was observed that their individual interaction with newcomers differed compared to that within the group.¹³⁷ The issue of friendliness and power were once more raised.¹³⁸ More importantly were reflections on the sectional identities that were unfolding within the residence. These are generally upheld by seniors, the very people charged with violating their positions of power by the monitoring structures discussed above. They were charged with upholding the practices of traditions.¹³⁹

When seniors were addressed about their problematic behaviour toward first years, their justification was that their actions were performed out of ignorance rather than malice. The monitors who observed these intimidating acts of behaviour towards first years claimed that such behaviour was not in accordance with the example seniors ought to set.¹⁴⁰ The behaviour of seniors within Eendrag was a continuous concern since its establishment. It is important to be aware of this as it indicates that remnants of the traditional structure of residences was

¹³⁴ Food stewed in a three-legged black cast iron pot.

¹³⁵ SUA, *Monitor Report on Eendrag*, 2011, pp. 33-36.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ SUA, *Monitor Report on Eendrag*, 2012, pp. 26-27.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ SUA, *Monitor Report on Eendrag*, 2006, pp. 33-36.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

rampant. Seniors appeared to take on the role of the gatekeepers to of their residence’s identity and culture. Monitors even observed seniors in 2012 who were intoxicated and portrayed unpleasant and intimidating behaviour toward newcomers. Seniors symbolised the antithesis of the values the residence and even the institution sought to practice.

By 2016, it was reported that Eendrag made significant strides in re-evaluating their traditions. Those traditions which added value were kept, and others removed. This was met with resistance. An incident occurred where a handful of seniors rebelled against the HC of the residence. As a result, no seniors were allowed to participate in one of the University’s renowned events: *vensters* – an annual street theatre festival.¹⁴¹ This decision caused an uproar.¹⁴² In addition, in 2016, Eendrag committed to translating their house song from Afrikaans to English, to ensure that all newcomers could understand it.¹⁴³

It was acknowledged that Eendrag’s welcoming programme had shifted from “meaningless content” to informative and significant sessions. All the activities in this programme were structured around Eendrag and all that they encompassed. An interesting sentiment given the mandate conveyed to residences, was to create a welcoming experience that prepared newcomers to integrate into the broader campus student community.

Resistance, however, persisted. In 2017, splinter groups of senior students in opposition to the new residence leadership, demanded to be included in the programmes of the residence.¹⁴⁴ In the same year, the traditional Afrikaans *sokkie* (dance) station was accompanied by a *kwaito*¹⁴⁵ session. Furthermore, they incorporated several languages in their greeting to other communities, acknowledging the existence of other languages.¹⁴⁶ Despite these efforts, some traditions continued to reign, such as the wearing of formal attire, including University blazers, in the height of summer.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴¹ <https://www.news24.com/Channel/maties-rag-dramatically-altered-20110512> [Accessed, 26 September 2020].

¹⁴² SUA, *Monitor Report on Eendrag*, 2016, p. 31.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁴⁴ SUA, *Monitor Report on Eendrag*, 2017, p. 60.

¹⁴⁵ An African genre of music which emanated out of Johannesburg, South Africa in the 1990s.

¹⁴⁶ SUA, *Monitor Report on Eendrag*, 2017, p. 60.

¹⁴⁷ SUA, *Monitor Report on Eendrag*, 2018, p. 43.

In contrast to Nerina, Eendrag – quite expectedly – shows ways in which change lead to conflict and resistance. What is significant here is the reaction of seniors to these changes and the very close connection between alumni and students. Attention will now be given to one of the more notorious residences on campus, Wilgenhof.

3.4.3. Wilgenhof, (est. 1903)

Wilgenhof is the oldest men’s residence in Stellenbosch. The likes of Paul Roos (who led the first South African rugby team to tour overseas in 1906), Frederick van Zyl Slabbert (leader of the Progressive Federal Party, the official opposition parliamentary party, 1979-1986, and Chancellor of SU in the early 2000s), Christo Wiese (well-known former billionaire, chairperson of Pepkor), and Justice Edwin Cameron (a Justice of the South African Constitutional Court since 2009 and the current Chancellor of Stellenbosch University) have all walked its halls. Therefore, there are an array of prominent figures which have formed part of the residence, which alludes to the critical thinking nature of the residence. Some other alumni to mention who hold considerable reputations are Paul Harris (former CEO of FirstRand) and Markus Jooste (former CEO of Steinhoff), both members of the so-called “Stellenbosch Mafia”;¹⁴⁸ a term used to refer to a white, Afrikaans, wealthy and successful collective of individual businessmen who have allegedly controlled the state as puppeteers.

The history of Wilgenhof is rooted in the physical infrastructure of the building itself. The original farmhouse, dating from 1799, forms part of the bottom floor of the Old Bachelors building. In 1832, the Stellenbosch Spirit Association repurposed the building to a distillery.¹⁴⁹ The building changed hands numerous times and it was only in 1875, that the building expanded so that it could start offering accommodation to boarders in the town. Due to the many willow trees on the property, it was named Willow Grove or just “The Willows”.

In 1903 it was bought by the Director of the Board of Managers of Wilgenhof Boarding Establishment and the first Wilgenhoffers arrived. In 1916, Wilgenhof was bought by Victoria

¹⁴⁸ <https://www.polity.org.za/article/the-stellenbosch-mafia-inside-the-billionaires-club-pieter-du-toit-2019-08-06> [Accessed, 8 November 2020].

¹⁴⁹ <http://willows.sun.ac.za/oor-die-koshuis/geskiedenis/> [Accessed, 27 May 2020].

College (the University's predecessor) for £6000 and in 1918 the residence became University property after the SU was created.¹⁵⁰ In 1959, SU wanted to sell the property on which Wilgenhof stands to the Department of Education. Apparently Old Wilgenhoffers were shocked and appalled at the idea that *Die Plek*¹⁵¹ would be bulldozed and a chance for survival was negotiated; £15 000 saved the residence.¹⁵² According to their historical overview, the residence has claimed that newcomers are “no longer the same after the first few weeks” of which their welcoming takes place.¹⁵³ This could be for the better or the worse.

In 2002, Justice Edwin Cameron presented his thoughts on the debate regarding initiation, and an incident that occurred during the *Nagligte* tradition.¹⁵⁴ *Die Nagligte* was a disciplinary body and considered the highest authority in Wilgenhof.¹⁵⁵ This body had the power to reprimand students on matters they saw fit. These students would be forced to endure physical challenges, while drenched in water in the coldest hours of the night. The acts performed by the committee were considered to range from humiliation to low levels of torture.¹⁵⁶ It was considered that this tradition assisted in ensuring newcomers would remain submissive and humble.¹⁵⁷

An incident Justice Cameron addressed in 2002 with regards to *Nagligte* involved the HC of Wilgenhof and a student that was injured in this initiation process. The parties involved were brought before the Central Disciplinary Committee of Stellenbosch University. The case revealed numerous other incidents that dated back 30 years.¹⁵⁸ This served as one of the catalysts which led to the rector at the time, Chris Brink, declaring initiation unjustified and that it would not be tolerated at the institution as it infringed on the human dignity and basic human rights of individuals. Justice Cameron acknowledged that many within the residence

¹⁵⁰ <http://willows.sun.ac.za/oor-die-koshuis/geskiedenis/> [Accessed, 27 May 2020].

¹⁵¹ The place.

¹⁵² <http://willows.sun.ac.za/oor-die-koshuis/geskiedenis/> [Accessed, 27 May 2020].

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ SUA, Wilgenhof Archive, Justice Edwin Cameron, “Die Tradisionele Wilgenhof en die Handves van Mensregte”, 2002.

¹⁵⁵ R. Fourie, “Beyers Naudé 1915-1963: die vorming van 'n dissidente Afrikaner”, unpublished MA diss., Stellenbosch University, 2018, p. 53.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ SUA, Wilgenhof Archive, Justice Edwin Cameron, “Die Tradisionele Wilgenhof en die Handves van Mensregte”, 2002.

would argue that initiation served a positive experience, that the practices are well organised and supervised and, even if there was initial resistance by those who experienced the rituals, the students understood the objective once it was completed. However, Justice Cameron was clear in pointing out that these practices no longer had a place in the new South Africa.

Resistance was stiff. In an article which was published in *Die Bliksem*, which was the in-house residence Wilgenhof journal, the concern and ways in which the *dopkomitee*¹⁵⁹, preparing for the 2010 welcoming period, attempted to negotiate old traditions with new practices is clearly illustrated.¹⁶⁰ One example was the restrictions placed on attire. The initiation committee wanted to dress like homeless people. This was not out of empathy but rather done in jest. This was highly insensitive and thus scrapped. So too was the symbolic growing of beards to resemble “Boer leaders” of the South African War, 1899-1902. This resulted in much debate and resistance. But these forms of resistance were not simply at traditions being obliterated but a broader dislike of the institutional structures: the “Kremlin” (which refers to the University administration) in particular.

It could be argued that the independence of spirit and the questioning of authority suggests that the Wilgenhoffers were encouraged, in some way, to think critically, even if the motives were questionable. Of course, it could just as easily be argued that students may have been used as pawns in a much greater ideological battle between old and new ways of thinking and being. The student leaders insisted that the initiation practices were for the benefit of the students and that they overwhelmingly liked them.

Wilgenhof has a reputation of being a secretive residence. It is the oldest, established during the period of the Victoria College and has refrained from fully partaking in some of the more traditional practices such as Carnival since 2000. Carnival was established to replace Remember and Give (RAG) in 1965 as a fundraising activity, where the proceeds were allocated to various organisations.¹⁶¹ From 1991, Carnival began stagnating due to financial losses and from 2000, there were resignations from the organising committee, restructuring and internal disputes. From 2005, Carnival would once again be known as RAG, as under

¹⁵⁹ Drink committee.

¹⁶⁰ SUA, Wilgenhof Archive, Author unknown, “Die Menere”, *Die Bliksem*, 2010, p. 10.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115.

Carnival, there was no evidence as to how the *Matie* Community Service was benefitting.¹⁶² Later in 2011, it changed to MAD², (Making a Decision to Make a Difference). Instead of integrating with the *Matie* student traditions and administrative politics, Wilgenhof prioritised “enlightening” their first years about the history, culture, values, and traditions of the residence which took place during the tradition known as *vierkantsessies*.¹⁶³ This could be read as prioritising a sense of belonging focused on the Wilgenhof identity, in contrast to fostering a residence identity located within a *Matie* identity.

Wilgenhof has fostered a particularly residence-focussed sense of belonging. It also has a reputation of being “un-touchable”.¹⁶⁴ The exclusivity of the founding history of this student community, is one which is passed onto the newcomers of the community. As was made clear by a student in 2008, although all participation was voluntary it was “never really voluntary, within a group context”.¹⁶⁵

Newcomers to Wilgenhof are supposedly given relative individual freedom in comparison to other residences. The argument is made that this allows its adherents to grow their individuality and critical thinking skills.¹⁶⁶ In 2010, it was reported that Wilgenhof’s welcoming programme was formidable, compared to that of other residences, and that it stood out as more authentic and original than any other programme and it surpassed the guidelines provided to create an innovative introduction to the student community. However, at the same time it is debateable if it had extended its reach to the wider community. Questions were also raised about whether the programme had been structured in such a way as to simply tick the institutional boxes.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, by 2010, Wilgenhof was commended for its strategies and was even considered the residence which was shaping their students into open-minded world-class.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶² SUA, Wilgenhof Archive, Author unknown, “Die Menere”, *Die Bliksem*, 2010, p. 156.

¹⁶³ SUA *Monitor Report on Wilgenhof*, 2014, pp.152-154.

¹⁶⁴ SUA *Monitor Report on Wilgenhof*, 2006, pp. 42-43.

¹⁶⁵ SUA *Monitor Report on Wilgenhof*, 2008, p. 83; SUA *Monitor Report on Nerina*, 2009, p. 55.

¹⁶⁶ SUA *Monitor Report on Wilgenhof*, 2009, p. 68.

¹⁶⁷ Stellenbosch University, “2010 Monitor Report”, *Wilgenhof*, Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch University, 2010, p.102.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.102.

In 2012, Wilgenhof's welcoming programme was still highly regarded. However, it was becoming clearer that Wilgenhof's programme was geared towards manifesting the idea of the residence and those who reside within the building as being extraordinary. They also failed to engage with the broader Stellenbosch community, intentionally and meaningfully. The HC denied this claim and declared it as being unfounded. In addition, certain practices had the potential to marginalise some groups. There was a tendency for "minorities" to take on the dominant culture and to disguise where they are really from or how their identity differed from the "norm". Nonetheless, the residence was still admired for their application of critical thinking. One such example is when the HC would encourage the newcomers to consider challenging the idea of a first-year t-shirt and viewed it as a means of challenging the *status quo* to ensure that individual identity and expression was not disregarded.¹⁶⁹

There was a considerable shift in the observation of Wilgenhof, from being at the forefront of change of the new paradigm to being known as the most "mysterious and secretive residence" by 2014.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, the focus of the programme was to teach newcomers the history of Wilgenhof and share stories to foster a sense of belonging that "were told to some of the men's fathers in their time at Wilgenhof" – a practice which would inherently marginalise those who were first generation students and not legacies, the offspring of alumni.¹⁷¹ The overpowering sense of belonging was made visible when in 2015, students were offered the opportunity to wear their *Matie* shirt or not. Ten out of the 70 Wilgenhof newcomers wore their *Matie* shirt. Again, a testimony to the entrenched allegiance to the residence over that of the institution.

Wilgenhof is a residence shrouded in mystery and anomalies. On the one hand, "room swaps" which took place on a daily basis for newcomers to get to know each other and to also promote interaction with a diverse groups of people on the premise of race, language and other diverse markers.¹⁷² On the other, reports in 2018 which stated that the residence's house song

¹⁶⁹ Stellenbosch University, "2012 Monitor Report", *Wilgenhof*, Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch University, 2012, pp.97-99.

¹⁷⁰ Stellenbosch University, "2014 Monitor Report", *Wilgenhof*, Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch University, 2014, pp.152-154.

¹⁷¹ Stellenbosch University, "2015 Monitor Report", *Wilgenhof*, Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch University, 2015, pp.79-80.

¹⁷² *SUA Monitor Report on Wilgenhof*, 2016, p. 97.

had been in Afrikaans only which created an exclusive environment.¹⁷³ Again, as with Eendrag, tradition and alumni have played a significant role in the practices at Wilgenhof. In contrast, the last residence to be investigated here is the mixed residence of Metanoia.

3.4.4. Metanoia, (est. 2005)

Metanoia is seen as the exemplar of the Stellenbosch University transformation project. Established in 2005, Metanoia is the youngest undergraduate residence on the campus.¹⁷⁴ Metanoia claims to be is the largest unisex residence in the Southern Hemisphere, and the largest on Stellenbosch campus. The residence houses 501 people, all in single rooms.¹⁷⁵

As the residence is one of the youngest on the Stellenbosch campus, there are very few traditions yet established. Some which take place during the welcoming period are the raising of the national flag and residence flag and the newcomers alternate each day singing the house song or the national anthem.¹⁷⁶ Metanoia is a Greek word which can be directly translated as “a change of heart” or “a change of mind”. Their ethos stems from this ideal because they were founded on the principle that “the future will only truly live if each of us makes a conscious decision today to follow a new direction”.¹⁷⁷ All residents are expected to obey a set of values and strive to live by them within the community.¹⁷⁸ The residence was said to be founded on the premise of creating a new transformative student experience in an undergraduate residence. The preamble of the residence’s 2013 constitution states:

We, the residents of Metanoia, are a diverse and ever-changing group of students that stem from a highly divided society. Therefore, a flexible constitution, based on values instead of rules, is the yardstick by which we measure our actions. Our actions will strive to promote equality through ubuntu, love and mutual respect. Metanoia aims to produce students of excellence with integrity. New residents will embrace the change of heart and mind that Metanoia has to offer, because the future can only truly live if each of us makes a conscious decision today to follow a new direction. All residents of Metanoia choose to embody this set of values and strive to live by them. This is where the future lives.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷³ SUA *Monitor Report on Wilgenhof*, 2018, p. 42.

¹⁷⁴ <https://www0.sun.ac.za/metanoia/meet/about-us/> [Accessed, 27 May 2020].

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ SUA, *Metanoia Prim Report*, “Metanoia Traditions”, 2013, p. 34.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ SUA, *Metanoia Constitution*, 2013, p. 2.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

The constitution alludes to the fact that the residence was established bearing in mind the historical backdrop it was founded: “[...] a highly divided society”. Further to this the preamble provides insight into the fact that the residence prioritises practices that challenge its students’ mind-set to contribute to a better society.

At the start of its establishment, Metanoia’s newcomers were introduced to the spirit of the community, which was treasured above that of the residence’s values.¹⁸⁰ The residence portrayed a willingness to collaborate and foster a friendly, hospitable, and human dignified environment and did well to execute it. Yet, there were still inconsistent actions of the Stellenbosch University welcoming values by some HC members. In 2008, for example, the HC exerted control over the newcomers by limiting access to their cell phones, the smoking of cigarettes or restricting free-time and visitation with parents during orientation.¹⁸¹

In 2011, it was observed that Metanoia continuously developed practices and traditions which were dynamic, and which annually widened the scope of their identity and residence culture.¹⁸² Despite this, newcomers still considered that they were being treated as children. In 2014, Metanoia valiantly showcased their values which were integrity, pride, equality, excellence, love and *ubuntu*. All of which were geared toward relationship building, a sense of belonging and the fostering of a transparent environment.¹⁸³ Activities such as stand and declare, were included in their programme where newcomers were given the opportunity to speak their minds and listen to the opinions on relevant topics such as alcohol and University regulations.¹⁸⁴ The residence also hosted the *Mannekamp*¹⁸⁵ which was directly aimed at men in the first year group and served the purpose of teaching them to respect women. On this same night the women of the residence were entertained with a movie night and sleepover.¹⁸⁶ In 2016, the monitors encapsulated the significant culture of Metanoia. The value of *ubuntu* illustrated that the residence strived to create a truly transformative student experience, as they expressed the values as “I am what I am because of who we all are”. Given that Metanoia is

¹⁸⁰ SUA, *Monitor Report on Metanoia*, 2008, p. 58; SUA, *Monitor Report on Metanoia*, 2009, p. 47.

¹⁸¹ SUA, *Monitor Report on Metanoia*, 2008, p. 58.

¹⁸² SUA, *Monitor Report on Metanoia*, 2011, pp. 74-75.

¹⁸³ SUA, *Monitor Report on Metanoia*, 2014, pp. 109-111.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Men’s camp.

¹⁸⁶ SUA, *Monitor Report on Metanoia*, 2014, pp. 109-111.

the youngest undergraduate residence, it could be argued that they did not need to challenge old established traditions, as was the case in other residences.

Their programme was aimed at unifying their diverse group of newcomers, which was done through events such as “Cross the Line” and the “Transformation Discussion”. During such sessions, a vast array of insights were shared on the spectrum of life experiences, upbringings and worldviews represented by individuals within the group. Such practices were argued to have broken barriers and created relationships within the group.¹⁸⁷

In 2016 the residence was also commended for consciously trying to allocate religious time for those who were Christian, and those who were Muslim. Providing support to Muslim students was in its infancy at Stellenbosch University residences. The residence had various other significant events such as raising the South African flag every morning.¹⁸⁸ It was reported that the residence transcended not only welcoming newcomers to the residence and broader University environment, but on the overall transition into the development of young adults.

3.5. Chapter Conclusion

The developments in policies that have been established in the Higher Education Sector led to each South African university defining its own transformation indicators. The monitoring system for the orientation period at SU was clearly one of these indicators. There have been significant strides to ensure a transformative student experience; alongside this there have been numerous policies, reports and processes established to ensure an operational framework was created to bring to realisation the necessary changes. However, it is still questionable whether students understood the theories of change that have been applied to challenge existing constructs.

¹⁸⁷ SUA, *Monitor Report on Metanoia*, 2016, p. 77.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

The University of the Free State (UFS) initiated its approach towards institutional transformation, as such, multi-layered transformation as a theory of change was introduced.¹⁸⁹ It highlighted that transformation could not have been a standardised approach, rather, the strategies needed to be diverse in the pursuit of the same goals.

Educational change theories are centred on the need for students to be involved in their own educational development by creating spaces for participation.¹⁹⁰ In comparison, Stellenbosch University, using the monitoring system as a lens into the transformation of residence practices, highlights the relational transformative approach the university has undertaken. A qualitative study on social cohesion and discrimination in terms of race and gender within residences at the University highlighted the following:

It is important to note the impact residences have on student experiences at Stellenbosch University. In many formerly white, Afrikaans universities in South Africa, it is the residences which shapes, informs, and signifies this institutional culture. The fostering of institutional culture and maintenance of residential identity is prevalent in orientation practices and rituals performed by residences throughout the year...students outside of residences (private students) are only half a student. Many residence students themselves continue to believe that only once you are in residence do you experience the institutional culture in its entirety.¹⁹¹

The 2013 Residence Placement Policy was created to ensure the diversification of residences in terms of demographics. Since the published Task Team Report on Unwelcoming Practices in 2014, policies, and task team reports, one would assume that there has been an overt transformation experiences within the residence space. However, this has not been the case in all residences, particularly those that have inherent residence traditions. Micro-aggression in the form of subtle discrimination has been the new norm within a select few student communities to preserve the social fabric.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ P. Makae, “Theories of change steering transformation at the UFS: a conceptual analysis”, unpublished PhD diss., University of the Free State, 2019, p. 82.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ M. Robertson, “‘Real men’, ‘Proper ladies’ and Mixing In-between: A qualitative study of social cohesion and discrimination in terms of race and gender within residences at Stellenbosch University”, unpublished MA thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2015, p. 13.

¹⁹² D. van Reenen, “Maintaining Plausible Deniability: Detecting Mechanisms of Subtle Discrimination in a South African Higher Education Institution”, *Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice*, (13), (1), 2016, p. 18.

What is interesting about these communities is that they have fought to define the terms to negotiate change on their own terms. Whether for their own interests or that of their students, is still to be determined. On the other end of the spectrum, there have been residences that have been exemplary beacons of transformative change in the hegemonic culture of the residence system.

What becomes very apparent is that in some of these residence spaces the *Matie* identity, which is structured around the institutional goals of transformation, is allowed to coexist and even drive the residence identity. This is quite apparent in the cases of Nerina and Metanoia. In more traditional male residences, longstanding traditions have proven more difficult to overcome and their identity is much more geared towards a residence identity than the broader *Matie* identity. This is made even more challenging when alumni have intimate connections with the contemporary residence space. Furthermore, the combination of these factors along with the desire of senior students to embrace traditional practices has been the bane of irritation for many new student leaders attempting to effect change within these spaces. Here, there are also stark gender differences between the various residences. The next chapter will explore how student leaders have understood the process of change and provides overarching points of reflection on the ways in which institutional and residence spaces have been negotiated and the impact this has had on identity formation.

Chapter Four: Residence Spaces, Institutional Change and the Dilemma of Being a Student Leader, 2000 – 2018

4.1. Introduction

Stellenbosch is a university town. There is a symbiotic relationship between the permanent inhabitants of the town and the temporary inhabitants, the students. This relationship is best described by Foucault when he speaks of heterotopias as the space that is both imaginary and real.¹ He defines this relationship using six principles: firstly, that they are omnipresent, which conveys that they are present in every society; secondly, that they alter their form and function over time; thirdly, that they contrast multiple and contradictory layers of our society; fourthly, they are always connected to time (heterochronies); fifth, they have both an open and closed system which controls accessibility; and sixth, they have relationships with society.²

Foucault's theory of heterotopias compliments the concept of place attachment and argues that identity and the influence on human emotion affects individual actions.³ The different scales of human interaction with a place are "purposes of place". There are three levels to this interaction: "place" which represents continuity and a blend of individuals within places; "being in place" which relates to actual behaviour of individuals; and then "sacrifice for place" which is the highest level of sense of place where people are committed to the place. In this scale, people release their individual interests for larger interests of place.⁴

The previous chapters have shown how these various spaces have been negotiated at a structural level for the sake of the institution and the principles entrenched within the Constitution of South Africa. These negotiations have also taken into consideration the needs of the communities which reside within the geographical space of Stellenbosch. To a lesser degree, historically, the parts of the non-student population has been subject to appropriation

¹ M. Foucault, "Of other spaces", in M. Dehaene & L. De Cauter (eds.), *Heterotopia and the city: Public space in a post-civil society* (Paris: Routledge, 2008), p. 13.

² M. Foucault & C. Miskowiec, "Of other spaces", *Diacritics*, 16, 1986, pp. 24-27.

³ H. Hashemnezhad, A. Heidari, & P. Hoseini, "Sense of place" and "place attachment", *International Journal of Architecture and Urban Development*, (3), (1), 2013, p. 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

and compelled assimilation into the institutional culture. Some attempts have been made to address this and undoubtedly more will be done in the future.

The ways in which institutional identity and the various residence identities have changed over time have also led to instances of acceptance but also resistance. Policies, monitoring, evaluation structures and leaders within residences have contributed to the discussion. This chapter will focus on the various student and staff leaders who have expressed a wish to contribute to this discussion but remain anonymous in order to fully express their views on the transformation process in residence spaces.⁵ Thus far, the endeavors at SU have been largely complimentary.

This chapter argues that these student-leader narratives suggest an overlap – both in terms of time and content – with many of the institutional discourses presented in the preceding chapters. They also show signs of an oppositional narrative born out of their own uncomfortable experiences and frustration with slow forms of change and resistance to change which they sought to challenge, in their own respective ways. This leads to a hybrid in which both *Matie* and residence identities fuse. The liminal space between these various identities and roles, echoes the desired outcome of the new institutional identity which requires all other forms of identity to conform, but at the same time promotes individuality and the acknowledgment of diversity.

4.2. Student Leadership and Its Positionality within the Institutional Structure

A phenomenological understanding of response and responsiveness “is not limited to a behaviouristic interpretation of a reactive response following causally from a stimulus”.⁶

⁵ Please note that these 16 respondents were interviewed by the author between August and September 2020. This emergency deviation from the initial proposal was necessitated by Covid-19 lockdown conditions. The names and dates of these interviews will be released to the examiners. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms will be employed in the study and personal indicator markers will be redacted.

⁶ W.M. Küpers, “Integral responsibilities for a responsive and sustainable practice in organization and management”, *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, (18), (3), 2011, p. 138.

Rather “responsivity” comprises a variety of interpretations of “giving and receiving proactive reaction”; in essence, sensing, saying and doing.⁷

If this model is used to interpret the responsibility of the student leaders to shift their practices, it provides a tool to interpret the reaction of residences to changes in policy. Traditionally, the concept of “responsibility” has been referred to as an “individual justification”. It is used as a relational term.⁸ The monitoring process each year takes place through an observational and reporting process. It demands a level of response each year. Residences have had the expectation and responsibility to “productively” respond to the concerns identified within their programmes, as the monitor reports have created the opportunity to co-create and conceptualise a welcoming programme that bridges the gap between intention and effect.

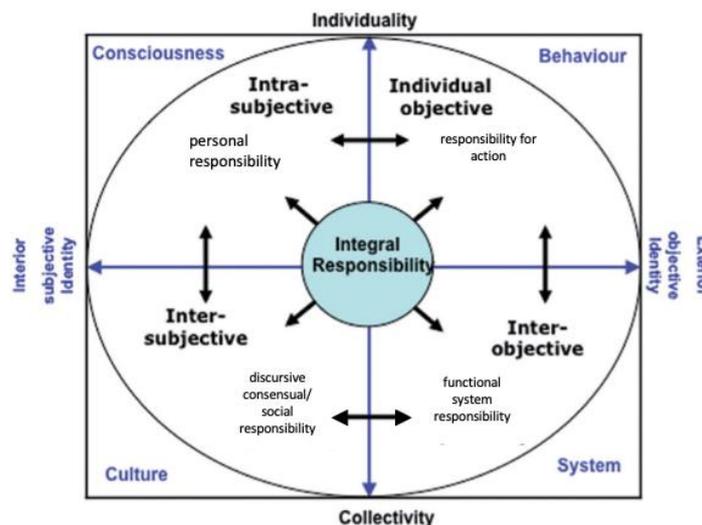


Figure 7: Küpers Integral Spheres of Responsibility

The diagram (Figure 7) refers to different types of responsibility on specific levels and areas of an organisation or entity. This model best explains the role of the individual and the role of the collective, with regards to responsibility in the intervention of practices.⁹

⁷ W.M. Küpers, “Integral responsibilities for a responsive and sustainable practice in organization and management”, *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, (18), (3), 2011, p. 138.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

Figure 7 shows “[...] the different spheres of responsibility in a nexus between individuality and collectively, with the subjective and objective identities, with their interior (intentions and attitudes) and exterior (functional responsibility of a system), dimensions and their inter-relational connections providing the base for an integral conceptualisation of responsibility”.¹⁰ This demonstrates that consciousness of an environment is the individual’s responsibility. Only through an awareness and observation of the realities of an environment can the individual recognise their social responsibility to the collective and, thereby, contribute to the creation of the culture.

Following on consciousness and established culture, the individual can adopt the appropriate behaviour to perform a specific action, which indicates their understanding of their responsibility to the space. Once the required behaviour and the social responsibility are identified, the necessary functional systems can be used to evaluate the environment to make the necessary interventions.

Leaders within residence spaces – both students and staff – contribute to culture and identity. As has been previously argued, that narratives of institutional identity shape the socialisation of people within the space, and what they are subjected to. Recommendations from the 2008 report of the Ministerial Committee on *Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions* indicated the need for the formalised training of residential leadership. To ensure that student leaders have adequate institutional knowledge to apply the institution’s values in how they construct the space. Stellenbosch University has since implemented various training programmes to ensure leadership within these spaces construct their social practices alongside the institution’s values, vision, and mission. The monitor structure is a prime example of the institution’s investment in collaborating with students to strive for a welcoming culture. Nevertheless, it can be argued that there is ambiguity in the relationship between the institution and student leaders. Although student leaders have institutional knowledge, how this knowledge is applied and manifested creates a convergence of power.

¹⁰ W.M. Küpers, “Integral responsibilities for a responsive and sustainable practice in organization and management”, *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, (18), (3), 2011, p. 141.

These initiatives can be considered an instrument to foster conformity to the institution's policies, structures, and frameworks. It could also be argued that the institution's investment in programmes for student leaders is a partnership formation for the benefit of the student community. Student leaders are positioned to collaborate directly with institutional stakeholders. Thus, it can be considered that they are part of designing the space. These leaders subjecting themselves to the institution creates a form of place attachment.¹¹ Their behaviour and actions are implicitly and explicitly constructed in the framework of the institution. This same attachment is also to their residence spaces. They have the power to construct their communities based on their institutional knowledge. Yet it is evident that there is friction between institutional identity and the residence identity. Although leaders become part of the system, the lack of continuity of leadership within residence spaces and the institution, lead to unsustainable initiatives. This leads to a continuous perpetuation of reverting to practices which do not align with the institution's objectives.

The friction between the institution and these spaces indicates that residences are places where the rules and rites might differ from those of the institution.¹² The lack of continuity of leadership leads to slow change. This results in residences relying on constructing their practices on generational knowledge and the wants and needs of students within the space at the time. This is where traditions have an opportunity to seep through and sets the progress back. The lack of continuity in leadership can also lead to complacency, which opens the debate of whether the space has changed enough. Naturally, this would be subjectively framed by the worldviews of individuals; based on their race, gender, culture, language, and various other indicators. The diversity in individual worldviews indicates the importance of leadership to provide direction and to create opportunities for dissenting voices to be heard. This would enable the construction of a dynamic and diverse culture. Attention will now be drawn to the narratives which speak to these theoretical observations.

¹¹ H. Hashemnezhad, A. Heidari, & P. Hoseini, "Sense of place" and "place attachment", *International Journal of Architecture and Urban Development*, (3), (1), 2013, p. 5.

¹² M. Foucault, & C. Miskowiec, "Of other spaces", *Diacritics*, 16, 1986, pp. 24-27.

4.3. On the Margins: Lived Experiences of Student Leaders, 2000-2018

The narratives produced by the 16 respondents are not simply recollections of past events or experiences but act as mediated textual narratives with interpretive viewpoints which shape their meanings.¹³ This echoes the level of interpretation expounded by literary and cultural studies scholars in the poststructuralist turn.¹⁴ It is not the objectivity or truth which is of significance but rather the meaning it gives to people's lives. Scholars have argued that organisational and institutional narratives influence people and they consciously or unconsciously restructure their own narratives to align with the collective organisational narrative in order to understand their experiences or even to have some sense of belonging to the group.¹⁵ Similarly, counter narratives challenge the dominant narratives of the institution which allow the respondent to position themselves in contrast to those discourses.¹⁶ Even if fragmented, these snippets suggest reconceptualized notions on sense of place, space and identity in which there are both overlaps and divergences. One is reminded here of Tade Akin Aina who argued, transformation "[...] entails going beyond reform [...]" as it demands a reappraisal of inherited institutions and a reconsideration of the socially accepted and constructed practices which take place within these spaces.¹⁷ Personal accounts undoubtedly add to this appraisal, even if it be of a limited nature.

Respondents were asked to reflect on their first experiences with university residences, the climate on campus, their impressions of welcoming week, noteworthy shifts in residence

¹³ M. Hyvarinen, "Analysing Narratives and Story-Telling", in P. Alasuutari, L. Bickman and J. Brannen (eds), *The Sage Handbook of Social Research Methods* (California: Sage, 2008), p. 448; P. Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 47.

¹⁴ See for example, P. Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); L. Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); H. White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural, Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), pp. 81-100; M. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

¹⁵ For example, Y. Gabriel, "Narratives and Stories in Organisational Life", in A. De Fina and A. Georgakopoulou (eds.), *The Handbook of Narrative Analysis* (Chichester: Wiley, 2015); C. Linde, "Narrative in Institutions", in D. Shiffrin, D. Tannen and H. Hamilton (eds.), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003).

¹⁶ See for example M. Bamberg and M. Andrews (eds.), *Considering Counter-Narratives: Narrating, Resisting, Making Sense* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004); M. Lundholt, C. Maagaard & A. Pickut, "Counter-Narratives", *Wiley Online Library*, 21 June 2018, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/9781119010722.iesc0201> [Accessed 4 November 2020].

¹⁷ T.A. Aina, "Beyond Reforms: The Politics of Higher Education Transformation in Africa", *African Studies Review*, (53), (1), 2010 p. 33.

practices and social interactions, and what intervention strategies were introduced and by whom.

4.3.1. Institutional and Residence Cultures

Respondent Alpha is a white male. He was a student at SU from 1981-1987, during which time he held a few student leadership positions. He later returned in 1992 as a lecturer and, in 1996, became the resident head of one of the first residences which catered for Coloured students. In 2004, he moved to the Division of Student Affairs and was involved in the renewal of student culture and residences. In 2008-2009 the Centre for Student Communities (CSC) was created, and he has played a prominent strategic role in the structure since its inception. This marked a shift in coordinating student culture.

He recalled that until the end of the 1980s, residences were separated according to gender and could be categorised as homogenous. Although there were small pockets of Coloured people, there was a clear lack of diversity on campus. By the end of the 1990s, as the institution racially diversified, attitudes changed accordingly. There was some marked resistance to the increase in the diversity demographic.

As a residence head he recalled that the integration conversation had just started on the campus in the mid-1990s, and with it the concept of value driven management. He experienced that the attitude towards change was conflicting. He recalled that some expressed that “[...] change can come as long as I do not sacrifice my own identity”. By the end of 2003-2004 student communities were required to define the values to which they would be held accountable. They were required to change and align their practices according to these values. The change in demographics and the political climate led to this decision. But the question was how to translate it into these residence spaces.

Respondent Alpha considers that initiation was used as an instrument to ensure that the residence community knew what to expect of people’s behaviour. This led to the University needing to address the idea of a hierarchical power system. This was deeply embedded in the institution, and only changed after constitutional democracy was achieved in the country after

1994. Thereafter, it was mandatory to ensure that values to uphold the constitution were constituted in all structures. Naturally, there was confusion over how this would unfold. He suggests that over the years, communities believed initiation provided a sense of continuity and pride. He adds that public perception of these acts were not necessarily a reflection of the initial intentions. Despite the ambiguity of intent, this did not negate the outcome of individual experiences.

He suggests that change was brought about through the implementation of the cluster system from 2008, other building boxes of identities, and a concerted effort by the institution. In large part, he attributes these positive changes to the CSC which attempted to provide alternative forms of welcoming which rivalled the traditional residence experience. They expounded the values of responsibility and accountability for one's actions. However, he feels that many students preferred to blindly follow tradition because it did not require challenging one's own sense of purpose and place. This changed from 2014 after the welcoming guide was implemented, and the monitor structure started playing a more significant role. This instituted accountability measures within residences which was important for public and internal scrutiny.

Respondent Bravo is a Coloured male. He was a first-year student at Stellenbosch University in 2001 and stayed in a residence in which he later served as the Vice-Primarius. Later in the 2000s, he joined SU as a staff member and became the residence head of two men's residences. In 2008, he was appointed as a visiting head for a PSO until 2010. From 2010 he was appointed as the residence head at a more traditional men's residence; a post he still retains. He has also become a leading figure in transformation at SU and has become embedded in many of the institutional structures on campus.

His first-year in residence was not quite what he expected. It was much "whiter" than he was led to believe. During his tenure as a residence head, his first post was in a residence he describes as rough, and the second, he describes as "prim and proper". He clearly points to the disparities between the various residences on campus. Furthermore, he notes just how white the campus had remained. He estimates that residences were roughly 86% white during the early 2000s. This period was also marked by rigorous discussions about unwelcoming practices and moments of crisis when grown men lamented about the loss of their traditions. Undeterred,

he insisted on change and became particularly unpopular in one of the residences he headed. On his departure, many would refuse to acknowledge his presence on campus. However, there were also those who appreciated his intervention and commitment to transformation.

By 2010, there was a wider institutional focus on cultural and identity renewal surrounding welcoming, growing diversity, and fostering multilingualism. On his arrival within his present residence, he describes the culture as “wild”. By 2015, the space became more open and friendly. Thus, the presence of a strong-minded leader is instrumental in ensuring change.

Respondent Bravo recalls that as more students formed part of the campus, the more diverse it became and, thus, there were more debates. Over the years there have been many conversations, many traditions, and many overlaps between the communities. He points to the importance of having central leading figures within the space who can lead by example. He also suggests that some form of uniformity or shared loss can also foster cohesion. Despite many efforts, practices such as humiliation and sleep deprivation were reported. However, this was no longer tolerated after the inquiry into unwelcoming practices in 2014 which instituted the consolidation of the cluster system and changes in PSOs and which forced residences to open their spaces to external voices and opinions.

Nevertheless, old traditions continue to take place. He is particularly disturbed by misogynistic practices which have taken the feminist agenda backwards. This is in reference to posters which were placed around campus which objectified women. He also asked questions as to why these women also became complicit in fostering these gendered stereotypes. The conversation around gender and gender-based violence, it should be noted, occurred during the student protests of 2015-2016. On the whole, however, Bravo believes that significant changes have occurred since 2014 but one cannot underestimate the power of tradition.

Respondent Charlie is a white female. She has worked at SU since 2003. She worked at a unit which led to her involvement in facilitating difficult conversations in residence spaces and was even invited to form part of the Monitoring Advisor Committee. Perhaps one of her most significant roles institutionally was her appointment in a transformation unit at SU.

She recalls that when she began working at SU, raising awareness about HIV, her work was considered contentious, and there was resistance by a largely conservative element of the student body. There was a strong sense of denial that students could become infected. She found it difficult to conduct workshops within residence spaces and had to find alternative, more supportive spaces outside of the confines of the University residences which wanted to censor her material. One of the strategies she considered was to upskill student leaders and create a peer education programme. At that time residences were not very educated on social issues.

She suggests that students felt unsafe and silenced through subtle forms of intimidation in residences. She recalls an incident where a parent telephoned her unit because they were concerned that their son had asked them to procure a gun because he was being threatened in residence. The parents were particularly surprised to hear this as their older son had quite enjoyed the residence experience and culture. What is suggested here is an inherent climate of fear and intimidation within residence spaces, but also the divergent ways in which individuals from the same background can experience that traditional culture. For Charlie, this testified to the way in which students felt unable to report such feelings to their resident head. In addition, Charlie believes that the reaction towards this report is also indicative of how deeper cultural problems were never really confronted as such. It was contained by pointing out that these were only individual and idiosyncratic reports. This was subsequently resolved with the implementation of the Equality Unit in 2016, which handles all cases of social injustice.

Respondent Charlie noted that she was often roped into facilitate and design critical and uncomfortable conversations. In some communities there was an appetite for conversations. In others, it was unpleasant. She always suspected an element of preaching rather than critical engagement with the material. Her greatest challenge was when she received an invitation to form part of the Monitoring Advisory Committee. While initially difficult, conversations became more meaningful over time. The major shifts were instigated by student movements such as #FeesMustFall and #OpenStellenbosch which shifted the dialogue across campus.

Respondent Delta is a white female. She was first year student in a ladies residence in 2007 and stayed until 2010. During this time, she served as a student mentor. As she came from a small conservative town, she did not know what to expect. She recalls feeling anxious but

excited at the same time. She was greeted by name, which took her by surprise. She later learnt that the leadership spent their time leading up to welcoming learning the newcomers' names to put them at ease. She considered this an indication that it was an intentional space.

Respondent Delta says that no critical conversations took place during her time in residence. She reflected that student life at the time was characterised by studying, getting engaged and then getting married. She further suggests that it was not a time on campus where people spoke out about injustices. Intersectionality was a foreign term. In essence there was no urgency for critical conversations. She imagined that such conversations took place at student leadership levels such as the Prim Committee. A significant intervention she does recall was that the Vice-Primaria of 2007 created the first diversity committee in the residence. The objective was to engage on different cultures, but this had no traction. It was only in 2010 when things changed.

Respondent Delta recalls only vague snippets of her welcoming experience. She remembers that the welcoming leader wore khakis with sunglasses and screamed at the top of her voice. She would not necessarily describe the treatment as bad but, in her words, there were triggering moments. All mirrors in the residence were covered with black bags and that they even had to ensure the mirror in their room was covered. They had to wear a *klingel* – a bell – on their left ankle whilst the House Committee (HC) wore bells on their right wrist, for differentiation and so they could always be identified and heard. The HC stressed that beauty comes from the inside not the outside, thus they were not allowed to wear makeup, and were forced to wear an oversized red shirt and navy pants. She recalled that they were also not allowed to wear a watch so they could not keep track of time.

For Respondent Delta, the residence head was largely absent. The HC was detached, not even taking meals with the rest of the residence. In contrast, she recalls that seniors never exercised unnecessary power and, as first-years, they were not obligated to partake in initiation. At the time the residence was predominantly white and Afrikaans. Traditions such as “spading” – where female residences did gestures to get male residences to choose them as partners for the annual *Vensters* festival – still took place. She recalled that when her residence's flag was stolen, they had to try take it back but when some of them got caught, they were involuntarily showered by men. She felt that it was difficult to challenge such traditions. She noted that it

was not the campus that exists today. There were no protests. If one was unhappy, they had to just get over it.

Interactions were confined to male residences. The “ladies” were expected to perform during a *skakel* – a social – where they had to usually write a song to greet the male communities. She recalled that her group performed poorly and were subsequently admonished. After her first-year experience she did not have the energy to run for a HC position. She rather took up a mentor position and often challenged practices in the residence from that position. She considered the Afrikaans culture very overbearing. It was only under the leadership of a new Prim in 2011, that any noticeable shifts were felt.

Respondent Echo is a white male. He was a first-year student in 2010 and resided in the residence until 2014, during which he held numerous leadership positions. He was a CV placement – based on his accomplishments – which he expressed was indicative of the privileged and the elitist nature of the residence space. CV placements were imposed on residences to accept students outside of the alumni in an effort to diversify the space.

He expressed that he did not know what to expect as he was a first-generation university student, had financial constraints and was on a bursary. He adds that he was in a boarding school in high school, which was a white, Afrikaans space, thus he was familiar with the practice of initiation. At the time he considered it normal and, therefore, was not intimidated by the space as he felt he knew what to expect. He recollects that the first day was a smokescreen. A friendly façade where HC would showcase their helpfulness by taking the suitcases of newcomers. He knew what was coming. Once his parents left, the space became unfriendly, especially if seniors were present.

Looking back, he would characterise the residence as a social space, and not an educational space. There was an emphasis on loyalty. He recalls that they were not allowed to be friends with students from a rival residence and were somewhat encouraged to damage their property. He suggests that the perception of what the space needed to be was different to what the institution thought it ought to be. Social interactions were limited and took place in their residence pub. The only other interactions they had with other residences was through social impact initiatives. There was a clear disconnect from broader critical engagement. At the time, the residence was not considered as prestigious as others.

Between 2010 and 2014, Echo had various leadership positions. He recalled that when he was elected as part of the HC, the first big discussion was the cluster system. Although it was already established in 2008, by 2010 the University was still figuring out how to structure it. There was also a tangible distaste towards the cluster system. At the time the University tried using limited resources to make it work. He recalled that there seemed to be a disconnect between the institution and student leadership. They were told: “[...] we are trying to achieve this” but it was not clear why. He considered that this disconnect was also more prominent amongst PSO residences.

The 2014 *Residence Placement Policy* was described by Echo as a “hot topic”; as the policy had a direct impact on residence identity. Reflecting on the reactions of the student leaders on the campus at the time, he considers it was because they were not involved in the rationale of why the institution wanted to implement it. Thus, the communities simply spoke out about how to stop it. He himself considered it, at the time, one of the worst things imaginable. Looking back, he understands why it was necessary. The policy limited the amount of time seniors could spend in their residence which fundamentally shifted their influence in the space.

He recalled the significance of the building projects at the time. The campus was expanding and continuously building and repositioning itself as an institution which was to be defined by conversation. At the time social issues such as wider acceptance of the LGBTQi+ community, Gender Based Violence and multilingualism were considered isolated issues which further indicated how severed the town was from broader social discussions.

2014 was also marked by safety concerns on campus. By 2015, the first protest action and student movement was made visible on the *Rooiplein*. It led to the first critical engagements amongst students and staff. The movements included #Luister, #OpenStellenbosch, and #FeesMustFall. Echo is sure that these movements led to the shift in pace amongst leaders on campus and the prioritisation of critical engagement and change. He recalled that some leaders felt it was too much too soon. For the first time management was placed in an uncomfortable position. He recalls that some argued that the campus was becoming political. These sentiments led to a refinement of what constituted leadership. For many years leadership on the campus was characterised by popularity. This was no longer sustainable.

Respondent Echo recounts that the internal placement policy of residences played a major role in the welcoming experience. There was the sentiment on the campus that first-years want to be comfortable. But the debate was whether comfortability prevented learning experiences. In the past the room placements and section placements were adjudicated by the HC. He recalls that the process was not pleasant. People of colour were considered undesirable and usually slotted in to ensure there was diversity in each section of a residence.

For him, personally, welcoming was the best experience of his life. Although, looking back, he considers that it was because he was conditioned to the culture. He expressed that he is not proud of what he did during his first and second years. He participated in practices such as rating women who walked past the residence. At the time rape culture was not being discussed. It was only later that he realised how complicit he was in maintaining these gender transgressions. The culture of residence life was welcoming if one fit the model of drinking, socialising, and having fun. If one did not, it was not a friendly place. Reflecting on his residence experience, he expressed his disappointment in himself for missing the opportunity to learn from the space and engage in challenging conversations.

House meetings were, in his words, a joke. They were required to wear suits and ties, and first-years were not allowed to speak. Some considered it camaraderie. No effort was made to adapt the rituals. This was indicative of the gap between what the University thought welcoming was and how it was defined as by residence leadership. He recalled that the plan on paper and the reality was vastly different.

These residence experiences led to his decision to become a welcoming monitor and discover other structures. He recalled practices such as having a *Doopkaptein* – baptism captain. Although there was never physical abuse, it was a “special time”. He believes that residences did not realise what they were doing was wrong. This, he suggests, was because they were so immersed in the traditions. Central to this was the drinking culture. At the time, he understood that the monitor structure was an opportunity to observe other spaces through different lenses. Here he realised how he had been trapped by what was normalised by his residence. It was not an enabling space to encourage one to voice their opinions and to challenge untoward practices. There was a common sentiment that “[...] it is not my place to stay anything”.

For Echo, the monitoring system also led to overarching changes and structures for monitoring and evaluating residence practices. He emphasised that there are many incidences on the campus that students are not aware of and many remain oblivious. Initially sceptical of the monitor structure his concerns were alleviated when training workshops were instituted in 2016 in preparation for welcoming and duties were extended to include examining the Annual Year Discussions. Over the years he has noted that although this data is collected by monitors to improve student communities, it is not clear who is taking responsibility for it and what action is being taken to implement the recommendations.

Respondent Foxtrot is a Coloured female. She was a first year student in a women's residence in 2012 where she remained until 2015, during which time she served on numerous leadership structures, the highest being elected as Primaria. She wanted to stay on for longer, but the Residence Placement Policy of 2014 did not permit seniors staying in the residence without a leadership position.

As a student leader, she was involved in some of the cultural transformations. 2012 welcoming was a significant shift as questions were being asked like “[...] how is it that we welcome, and how do we treat newcomers?”. This was largely propelled by public scrutiny and news reports questioning the human dignity of some welcoming practices. She, therefore, attributes many changes to the broader call for inclusion and the need to be responsive to individual concerns. This demanded a response from student leaders.

Respondent Foxtrot felt that welcoming was a subconscious emotional experience. At the end of her first year, she participated in the residence's *acapella* group. The experience inspired her to be more active. At the time she realised that people needed to expand their horizons and challenge their worldviews. As a first-generation university student she recalls that she was very “starry eyed”. As she entered the residence her section HC welcomed her. She characterised the space as a very welcoming experience, but she had mixed feelings about being in a female community. The HC was white and privileged, and Foxtrot noticed that she had no role models who looked like her that she could emulate.

Her first encounter with SU was in grade 11. She considered that its campus culture was very attractive and vibrant. Before coming to the University, she did an internship at a company. The only hierarchical structure she was familiar with was in a professional setting.

Prior to coming to SU she was not conscious about racial issues. While no overt forms of racism were apparent on campus, she remarks that students tended to flock with their own. She made a concerted effort to align with mixed white and Coloured groups.

Foxtrot considers her overall experience in the residence as very positive. She recalls questioning some of the traditions because she was older than some of her fellow first-years and was, therefore, not as intimidated by the leadership. She defined her welcoming experience as an emotional roller-coaster. She suggests that there were no explicit unwelcoming practices, but more emotionally unwelcoming incidences. She refrained from divulging more details.

Respondent Golf is a black male. He was a first year in a men's residence from 2012 and resided in the residence until 2015 during which time he also served as a student mentor. He was on a recruitment bursary, which was an initiative the University launched to intentionally recruit people of colour to increase the institution's diversity profile.

He recalled that he never knew much about Stellenbosch University. However, he knew people who went to Simonsberg so that was his first option for a residence. He was accepted at his second-choice residence. To his dismay, there was an exclusionary nature about his second-choice residence. Their website was only in Afrikaans, and he recalled receiving a pamphlet about prominent alumni; including Hendrik Verwoed and other prominent apartheid Prime Ministers. He was in shock. Nevertheless, he decided to keep an open mind and enrolled.

His first impression of the space was uniformity. Everyone was wearing the same clothing. He immediately felt "fraternity vibes", but he did not mind as he had previously been in a boarding school. The HC were formally dressed and had full beards which gave the impression of "apartheid vibes". When he was greeted in Afrikaans this solidified his sentiments. He found it interesting that they immediately greeted in Afrikaans despite the fact they could speak English. He recalled that the mentors were at least friendly.

Very quickly he realised that the purpose was to destroy any form of individuality to ensure conformity. He was familiar with it as a strategy to ensure the release of one's individuality and to imitate the collective. At the time he did not necessarily mind such practices but was aware that it made the space hostile for some. Especially the language barrier. The impression

he had of the space was that it was not a place that was going to go out of its way to accommodate the individual.

Respondent Golf recalled that his first-year welcoming experience was simply not welcoming. Looking back, he believed it would have been easier if he knew people. As a black student he was in the racial minority in his residence at the time. For him, *skakels* were exclusionary because he could not speak Afrikaans.

At the time, he experienced the residence head as very hands off but this changed as time went on. He recalled that he had an attitude of “*hou net da*, do not rock the boat”. Essentially, he considered that his residence was not necessarily against change, but promoted a sense of “if you want to change, let us not be radical, let’s keep things rolling, let us leave what is working”.

He defined the HC relationship as hierarchical which signified how engagement took place in the residence. Privileges within the residence were decided by age and clear demarcations were made between juniors and seniors. This was a dominant practice during welcoming. He expressed that the rest of the year was more open.

Golf initially found a general apathy by leadership within the residence toward the University’s interventions. The leadership demonstrated that they did not endorse anything from the University. This changed with the Annual Year Discussions, which led to the abolishment of spading and showering women.

Respondent Hotel is a white male. He has been the resident head of a male residence since 2013 to date. He characterised the space as one with different cultures, and different groups attracted to different activities. His first impression of the space was that the HC were fearful of the house head. He recalled a strong internal focus and drive for excellence.

Hotel recalls that the discontent for the establishment of the 2014 Residence Placement Policy led to a planned protest by men’s residences across the campus. This was in response to the perceived loss of control. Since then, change has taken place. There have been numerous visions established to open the space which he believes would not have been possible without the change in the selection process enforced by the placement policy. It forced diversification of the residence space. He recalled numerous expectations from SU for change and an emphasis

on welcoming and belonging within the residence. This marked the beginning of a shift from a hierarchical structure to a value driven leadership structure.

He considered that the #FeesMustFall movement changed the pace of change. It burst open dialogue and resulted in critical engagement on the campus about issues from Gender Based Violence and the LGBTQi+ community. Though these were not very well attended by all students, he recalls that some significant interventions were embarked upon such as changes in the residence section names which previously held sexual connotations. Hotel also remembers that 2013-2014 was characterised by a hierarchical culture in which seniors wallowed in pools, binge drinking. Some traditions seemed to encourage verbal acts of abuse toward other residents which was often executed by seniors. Alcohol was a major mitigating circumstance for this behaviour.

The relationship between different stakeholders has never been hierarchical. He considered them as part of the same managerial group. While Hotel always practiced an open-door policy as resident head, building a trust between students and management, all decisions made within the residence were value driven. However, he noticed that the HC had always been intimidated by seniors even though strategies such as the establishment of the *Oumanne*¹⁸ group attempted to ensure that the older seniors made a positive contribution to the community. The residence used to have an *Oubond*¹⁹, but it was decided at the end of 2013 that it was not necessary to include them in decision-making. Hotel acknowledges that the alumni offer financial support, such as bursaries, but those who show more concern for transformation are newly graduated students.

Respondent Indigo is a black male. He was a first year in a mixed-gender residence in 2014 and resided there until 2016. He became acting resident head in 2018. His first impression was that it was a diverse space. He recalled that the First-Generation²⁰ camp represented the

¹⁸ This refers to the oldest seniors in the residence who are usually in their final year. It directly translates as ‘Old Men’.

¹⁹ This refers to an ‘Old Board’ in relation to an alumni board that serves as an advisory body.

²⁰ The first-generation camp began in 2012 and is aimed at students who are the first members of their family to study at SU. These students are assisted to overcome various personal and academic challenges and are offered support to succeed in all spheres of student life, <http://www.sun.ac.za/english/Documents/Rector/welcoming%20culture%20at%20Stellenbosch%20University.pdf> [Accessed, 10 November 2020].

desired diversity of the campus. Indigo makes it very clear that this residence was very different to the more traditional residences.

Changes between 2014 and 2016 are largely attributed to the #OpenStellenbosch and #FeesMustFall movements. One major point of discussion was that of white privilege. In addition, some autonomy was granted to residences. In 2016, the residence created its own leadership short course with the Frederick van Zyl Slabbert Institute. It fostered engagement, social consciousness, and commitment to transformation within this multilingual residence.

The residence also began to investigate the implementation of co-ed bathrooms and mixed gendered sections. This was particularly important for cis-gendered students. This residence was a direct product of the diversity project. It was not built on archaic traditions but rather in response to these impeding practices. As such, the vision and mission of the residence has not changed since its establishment.

Respondent Juliet is a white male. He was a first year in one of the oldest men's residences in 2015 and resided there until 2018, during which time he served in various leadership positions. He describes the culture of this residence as being steeped in tradition, having a particular identity, shrouded in secrecy and mysterious. As a first-generation student, he had no terms of reference before entering the residence. His initial impression of welcoming was one of confusion. Some practices were borderline intimidating. The residence excluded itself from university traditions, such as *Vensters*, which gave it room to consolidate its own identity and create its own welcoming practices and programme. Juliet remarks that it was very effective.

Like many other respondents, Juliet remarked that the resident head was largely absent, which he considers a dereliction of duties. The HC was more welcoming, and the entire experience was improved with the induction of mentors from 2017. Juliet also remembers various policy changes during his time in residence. He too acknowledged that #FeesMustFall sparked debate, but the residence allowed things to transpire freely, and did not get very involved in campus movements but rather used them as a framework for conversation.

He recalled that the residence only interacted with alumni at certain events. Although there was an alumni committee, they played more of a mentoring role and were largely supportive

of the decisions taken by the leadership. Amongst some of the more significant shifts he recalls was the cessation of prayers before lunch, which was replaced by a moment of silence. This was instituted to be more inclusive of different religious and cultural groups. The residence also removed paintings of dubious alumni who served as apartheid Prime Ministers from the dining hall. Furthermore, the official language policy for all communication was changed to English. The house song and constitution were also translated into *isiXhosa*. Quite remarkably, the voting system was adjusted so that minority groups could have a larger say on policies within the residence. The house was 60% white and Afrikaans. Concerted efforts were made to encourage less drinking of alcohol and smoking of cigarettes and the leadership strategies shifted to one of nurturing students rather than humiliating them into submission. Juliet concludes by acknowledging that this residence has a history of being mysterious and rebellious but recent shifts have proven beneficial to the new intakes.

Respondent Kilo is a Coloured male. He was a first-year student in a male residence in 2016 and resided there until 2019, during which time he held numerous leadership positions and was one of the few coloured students who held such positions in the residence's history.

He initially did not want to be in the residence. Having attended Paul Roos Gymnasium High School in Stellenbosch, many of his peers would refer to the "bad things" of the residence. Despite these warnings, his mother convinced him to go. Once he arrived, it was not as bad as he expected. Students were treated like men and gentlemen. His immediate perception of the space was that it was very masculine. For him, the welcoming experience made him feel unworthy. He felt a sense of intimidation from the HC but more, so he felt a sense of unattainable success, though he felt that the formal nature of the space and requirement to wear *dagdrag* – "day wear": khaki pants and white shirts – helped one assimilate and feel associated with the space.

He recalled a ceremony at Coetzenberg where they received their official first year shirts. A tradition known as the *Hempie* Ceremony. He described it as a feeling of unity. The first-years stood in a circle and the seniors of the house would run towards the group from the dark field, making noises and getting ready to circle the first-years. He emphasised that no physical harm took place. The ceremony served as a symbol to express the importance to be united as a group.

2016 was a year of “dipping into conversations”. He got the impression that the campus was “resting”. He knew that the previous year was filled with many movements such as #OpenStellenbosch. Yet he observed a quietness about the campus. Then a “blackface” incident occurred at Heemstede later that year. Despite the overwhelming discussions which ensued on campus, his residence was rather tepid.

Respondent Lima is a Coloured female. She is a first-generation student and was a first year in a women’s residence in 2016 and resided there until 2019. She characterised it as a typical leadership environment but very competitive. There was an emphasis on where one came from, where they planned to go and a strong emphasis on academic success.

Lima arrived on campus in the midst of the 2015-2016 protest movements. Her residence was hesitant to get involved, and so the residence felt far removed from national concerns. Channels were established if one needed to talk about the unfolding events. She considers her welcoming experience as textbook. A residential unification ceremony took place, a senior pretended to be a first year. The HC would yell when the first-years disappointed them and then they had to earn back their trust. There was also a clear chain of command between seniors and leadership.

Her moving experience was very pleasant, and the leadership were very engaging. But, as the official welcoming programme progressed, the leadership felt very far removed. The mentors played a major role in bridging the gap between the first-years and HC. She recalls feelings of isolation from the seniors, and distrust of the leadership when they dictatorially nominated a senior into the leadership structure. For Lima, this indicated a lack of transparency and credibility.

She also recalls some odd traditions in the residence. As a first year, one had to comply with a resident curfew up until March and were compelled to have academic support sessions. In contrast to the reflections of Kilo, sections existed in this residence. Another example was “the marriage” of two communities. There was no evident purpose for it. Later when she formed part of the leadership group, she knew she did not want that experience for others. The traditional “marriage” ceremony was a heteronormative practice, especially as it was clear that it was only practiced with male residences. She experienced that traditions were something that had to be balanced out. To remove them, something had to be given in return.

For Lima, the residence head only paid attention to the leadership. She encouraged traditional practices such as learning the names of first-years before they arrived to emphasise a feeling of belonging. She recalled the residence head stating that the HC became independent over the years, which led to her taking a supporting role.

Respondent Mike is a white male. He was a first year in a co-ed residence in 2017 and left the residence in 2018. His first impression was that it was diverse in gender identity, race, sexuality, and religion.

Mike vividly recalls the #MenAreTrash movement which took place across South Africa in 2017. In that year, his residence created a Women Empowerment portfolio and led the first Start Letting Us Talk (SLUT) walk. It was during this movement that he realised how divided his residence truly was. A video was released of women who took part in the movement, many of whom were from his residence. An incident occurred where a letter was thrown out a window while some of them were standing in the quad. The contents of the letter referred to those who took part in the movement as “sluts”, “whores” and “ugly”. Those who stood up for acts of Gender Based Violence were also ostracised. He also received hate mail and was emotionally abused for being vocal about the toxic masculine and patriarchal nature of the residence space.

Mike believes that the HC were open to critique, and gender-neutral terms were encouraged. Instead of addressing the first-years as “ladies” or “gentlemen” they were called “honourable members”. He does, however, believe that there existed contradictory practices. On the first Friday evening of welcoming there was a Ladies’ Camp, and a *Manne* Camp. He expressed that this immediately excluded those who identified as part of the queer community. This alluded to the gender divide in the residence, particularly given the programme of each camp. The Ladies’ Camp focused on their health, and the *Manne* Camp on respecting women. He did not understand why it could not be one camp. He considered it a problematic offering, as it did not acknowledge the wider gender spectrum.

The residence head, according to Mike, had a very *laissez-faire* approach to leadership. He felt that the HC ran the residence with support from the assistant residence head. He recalled that, as a first year, he only saw the residence head at house meetings. When he became a mentor, he observed how the residence head was more involved in the administrative aspect of

the residence and the leadership group. The interests and concerns of seniors were represented by the seniors committee, and he did not recall much involvement by the alumni.

As with many respondents, Mike acknowledged the heavy drinking culture in his residence. He further suggests that this residence was also considered campus-wide as a “party and have fun residence”. Some measures were eventually put in place to limit the amount of alcohol allowed at events such as the International Food and Wine evening each year.

Respondent November is a Coloured female. She was a first year in a women’s residence in 2017 and resided there until 2019, during which time she held various leadership positions. She is from a small family and was very unfamiliar with residence life. She did not consider it a free space. Everyone seemed to gravitate to one another which made it difficult to integrate. However, she recalls that someone was always willing to help and there was an air of friendliness. It seemed to be a genuine space. November, unlike many of the other respondents, believes that the residence head played an active role in the residence. Another observation was her view that seniors disengaged from the community after their first year. They often would not attend section meetings and house meetings.

In this residence, seniors shared their #FeesMustFall experiences. All discussion forums in the residence related to #FeesMustFall topics such as racial discrimination, gender identity, sexuality, language and cultural barriers. The latter two were of particular concern. There existed a Dialogue Board in the residence, where people could share their thoughts anonymously. It was here that November witnessed the divide: a student wrote “[...] if you do not understand Afrikaans you should not be at Stellenbosch University”. This sent shock waves through the residence and was concerning giving the values of the house which were: Ubuntu, Compassion, and Empathy.

November had imagined the SU campus as a diverse space. To her dismay, she was confronted with many realities at a social event with a male community. Women had to line up and the men from the male residence had to choose one of them as a partner to do a *Sokkie* – a traditional Afrikaans dance. She recalls that there was one genre of music, which demonstrated the dominant culture. This experienced motivated her to stand for HC.

Respondent Oscar is a black female. She was a first year in a ladies, residence in 2017 and resided there until 2019, during which she held numerous roles, and was one of the few black students who held such positions.

As her sister was previously in this residence, she already had some indication of what to expect. Watching the news, and reading articles gave her an impression of SU and its political space. Her first impression of her residence was that it was white. She characterised it as a “*Poppie*” culture, and a space filled with white girls who came from privileged backgrounds. Even the HC were white. Her residence head was prominent, but she believes that resident heads in male residences have far less power.

However, Oscar recalled many conversations about inclusivity. The space was evidently dominated by white Afrikaans culture, especially as there were few black people in the leadership structure. She felt the implicit segregation of cultures. She joined the Women Empowerment committee, which was about women claiming space. In 2017 there was the Start Letting Us Talk (SLUT) walk. She recalled that hardly anyone went from the residence. This was followed by the shuttle protest, which was not very well supported, again indicating a general student apathy towards movements at SU.

She describes the Stellenbosch University community as oblivious, and one that perpetuates the same rhetoric. She has witnessed two ends of the spectrum; one where some are concerned with mundane things, and another where people are making sure they have a space that they can feel included. She considers that the difference between these two groups indicates a whitewashed culture, alongside a heteronormative residence space.

For Oscar, welcoming needs to be critically analysed. She considers it a homogenous experience where all first-years arrive lost. Her personal welcoming experience was exhausting. There were some good moments, but ultimately, she did not feel prepared to tackle the SU environment. She felt that white people always took the lead and described many practices as cosmetic and superficial. There seemed to be a disregard for preparing the individual for university life and life after university.

One of her memorable moments was a tradition by Pieke PSO known as the *Prim Ontvoering* – Prim Capture. They would invite specific female communities to participate, and

the objective was to get their first-years to help the leadership rescue the Prim. She knew there was a lot of issues with such a concept as it could be triggering for many. She knew it was simply an activity so went along for the sake of camaraderie. When her residence arrived at the rescue site, she recalled white Afrikaans boys interlocked with their arms and the women needed to break the human wall. She tried to climb over them, and one white Afrikaans boy said “*sies!*”²¹ She was astounded and immediately reported the incident. As she expected, a group of white leadership were apathetic and simply said “that is so wrong”. Nothing further was done about it. One of the white Afrikaans girls accused her of lying. In that moment she understood why her sister warned her not to come to the Stellenbosch.

She decided to stand for leadership because she knew the community would not be progressive without a black Primaria. During her term she did not use intimidation as a tactic to gain respect and for this she was favourably judged.

Respondent Papa is a white male. He was a first year in a notorious male residence in 2017 and resided there until 2019, during which time he served on various leadership structures within the residence.

He experienced it as a place for growth, a space to make connections, and “the place to be!” He described it as an institution with a lot of history, a very intentional space, with an element of mystery, and he felt lucky to be there. He considers it one of the best experiences of his life. At the time, it was a well-curated experience intended to make one think and to form solid relationships with diverse people.

The welcoming centred around “Four Wise Men” which was a theatrical representation to inspire learning about the residence, and an introduction to the residence culture. He insists that the residence is inspired by a value-driven culture.

He recalls various mechanisms implemented to create cohesion. An example of this was the sharing sessions, competitions, and activities which encouraged interaction with a new person daily. There were evidently several goals the residence had for welcoming: to have first-years develop a strong connection to the group; to learn the residence history; and to understand

²¹ An expression of disgust.

its practices, what the rules were, so that when seniors moved, they would be equipped to assimilate.

Papa believes that the relationship between the residence head and the HC was contentious. The HC ran the residence, and the residence head would be there in a supporting role. He was not hands-on so the house could be run by the house. Papa believes this to be a positive characteristic.

Alumni would often reminisce with nostalgia about their time in the residence and conflict would only arise between them and the current cohort when change is suggested. Historically, the residence was known for partying in the pub every night, which no longer happens out of respect for others. This upset some alumni. Senior alumni, he believes, plays a more prominent role, which is seen through the *Oubond*. It serves as a committee for alumni relations management. While they do not play a managerial role in the residence, they assist in keeping many stakeholders informed on how the residence is progressing, and they allocate bursaries.

There is a hierarchy of leadership in the house which Papa considers to be emblematic of all men's residences: the Prim, Vice-Prim, HC, and Mentors and then the house. He considers that this is a healthy recipe for working one's way up the ladder and to develop credibility.

He expressed that over time, there was a larger gap in the age of leaders which was an effect of the 2013 Residence Placement Policy. This meant that one could only stay in a residence until the end of one's undergraduate degree. Postgraduates had to have a leadership position to stay longer. This bridged the hierarchy in a residence to one that was healthier and more relatable. This requires more commitment and determination by men barely 20 years of age.

The conclusion that can be drawn regarding the first impressions of residence spaces, was that they were socially constructed and intentional. To have a sense of belonging, one needed to try to recognise its history, tradition, and a heteronormative culture. It is evident that although there was a theoretical understanding that the space was diverse – in terms of religion, race, and gender – there was little intentionality to acknowledge that the desire to create an “equal” space, neglected acknowledging the individual narratives. Essentially, the collective identity was prioritised. Although, it should be considered that these first impressions would

have changed over time, particularly after their full welcoming experience. Other points of reflection point to the most notable turning points within these spaces.

4.3.2. Observed Turning Points and Intervention Strategies within Residence Spaces

Respondent Alpha expressed their observation that in 1999-2000, the gender demographics changed at SU. As a result, more spaces were needed. This resulted in men's residences defending their past for fear of the change that was arising. At Tygerberg campus, the composition between men and women also changed. Men's residences at Tygerberg were required to open their doors to women, which would result in co-ed spaces. Although they did not resist this change, they also did not acknowledge the gender differences. They simply accommodated integration into the space but showed no interest to create a co-habitable space. This coincided with discussions around the establishment of co-ed residences. The campus, he argues, was shaken when the building commenced for Metanoia towards the end of 2002. The building project was set to be complete by 2005 and Metanoia would be considered the first real co-ed residence of the campus. He recalled that his engagement with students indicated that they were "mad!" and "strongly against it!". Alpha's reflection paints a picture of a rather conservative student cohort at the time.

He reflected on the significance of political conversations and social media entering the fray. Social media offered an alternative platform for engagement which led to more groups being vocal about other identities. The values driven system was officially implemented in 2004 but did not have clear rules and guidelines as to how values would be measured. The solution to this was to create a conversational space. At the end of 2004, the first Annual Year Discussion – *Jaargesprek* – took place, where the student communities were required to start the value conversation. He considered this as one of the most important interventions. The objective of the conversation was for communities to indicate how they would apply their values to their practices.

He noted that the design of the cluster system was a further intervention to improve residence practices and the student experience. In 2008-2009, the concept of clusters was

introduced to identify strengths of the different communities, but also to incorporate more genders and cultures. The concept of the cluster system was to serve as an additional accountability mechanism. He remarked that the cluster system was a significant project as the priority for the University at the time. It was important for students to feel safe but also to regulate any unwelcomed practices. This was in contrast to previous methods of punishment which entailed humiliation of the transgressor. One such example involved a student who was compelled to wear a traffic cone on their head, in the same fashion as a dunce's cap. Over the years there was a marked shift from physical assault to public humiliation, to later adopting strategies to keep them accountable in an adult manner. These were largely regulated through peer conversations within the cluster. It instituted a culture of conversation which helped with conflicting conversations such as the language policy, #OpenStellenbosch and #FeesMustFall which manifested on the campus and were absorbed within these communities.

Respondent Alpha suggests that the role of the residence head needs to be periodised. In the 1950s, the role of the residence head was paternalistic; "we behave like children, and the authority figure will reprimand us". In the 1990s, the decade was marked by the student development phase and the University was forced to consider what type of student they wanted on their campus. In the 2010s, co-curricular development became a focus. The residence head facilitated student development. Their roles have evolved over time, but elements have been imported from each generation.

The role of the Residence Head was not to lead but to guide the community. They were responsible for how students perceived the residence and they ensured compliance. It was one of facilitating, mediating, mentoring, and advising. Alpha emphasises that it is a difficult role as they need to allow students to grow. He further expressed that a residence head serves as an institutional representative and sets the tone of acceptable behaviour. Furthermore, seniors need to be part of the peer facilitation process in the quest to shape good citizens. However, herein lies a dilemma in which seniors are leading others in the community while simultaneously solidifying their own place within the structure and continuing their own developmental path.

Alpha reiterates that residences are places which should foster citizenship, but the parameters are often misunderstood. Some, he adds, consider the relationship between the student and the residence in a consumerist manner; "I pay you to tell me what to do". They fail

to see the value in responsible citizenship; “you participate for free”. He expressed that now more than ever, students are not ready to be citizens. The consumerist attitude indicates that “you tell us what values you want or what rule we must follow”. They, therefore, fail to take ownership over their decisions. This leads to a lack of accountability.

In addition, Alpha suggests that alumni – not clear what year group of alumni – play a mystical role in a residence space. There is a strong student perception and assumption that alumni want practices unchanged, and thereby are used as a symbol, to indirectly guide behaviour, although they are not physically a part of the space or aware of the day-to-day functions. So, when change is suggested, there is a knee jerk reaction; “what will the alumni think”. He feels that the younger generation should challenge this. He surmises that it is a survival instinct as there exists the impression that the community has survived until now because of its traditions. They believe that if they stray from that path of what they know, the community will not survive in the future. Alumni also provide networks and employment opportunities. He considers that this is what makes residences a negotiating space. As most residents are the same age, persuasive power is minimal. So, they consider alumni as a tool to keep behaviour in check. Alumni serve as an additional set of invisible eyes, a negotiating tool, and a metaphorical tool – not necessarily a positive tool, it should be added. Though, this is not the case for all residences.

Some alumni, Alpha adds, are indeed present within some of the structures, and play a role in the day-to-day offerings of the residence. He urges students to realise that if they rely purely on the alumni, they will not fully realise any tangible forms of transformation. Blaming the lack of change to the presence of the alumni, however, has also proved useful to those student leaders who themselves are averse to change.

Respondent Bravo suggests that the public perception that alumni have a strong influence in residences is a myth. In his experience, his encounter with alumni was always fresh and open. He considers that alumni call for more positive interventions. They help steer conversations on how the residence should adapt its practices. Furthermore, he points out that a residence never has only one culture and that the residence head is not the only driver of change. A residence needs conversational partners, and all stakeholders to be committed. It is clear that there are stark differences of experiences between respondents Alpha and Bravo.

Respondent Bravo also believes that there have been various turning points for SU and its residences. The first being the death of a first-year student in 2001. The event prompted Chris Brink, who became Rector in 2002, to push for a formalised welcoming structure along with a monitoring structure and reporting process. Secondly, the expansion in residences and PSOs led to more diverse engagement between residences. Thirdly, the 2013 Residence Placement Policy, which impacted diversity and understanding in terms of language, demographics, and socio-economic status. Lastly, the 2015/2016, #FeesMustFall movement which pushed transformation forward as it expedited the pace of change at the institution.

Respondent Charlie is cognisant that some residences have adopted a new philosophy of how to be a community. However, the philosophy is adapted from one year to the other which leads to a continuation of certain practices. She alluded to the lack of continuity in leadership which at times leads to superficial window dressing under the guise of transformation. This is particularly prevalent when there is weak leadership which relies on the romanticisation of traditions to mask their inherent inadequacies.

Charlie has likened the operations of residences to that of a private school. Some have adapted but some are so deeply entrenched with tradition that radical changes need to be implemented. She remarks that no female residence head has ever been appointed to oversee a men's residence, as one example. The argument is that men will not accept a female residence head. She considers this indicative that women accept the institution they are a part of whereas men dictate the terms of that engagement.

Respondent Charlie has observed that over the years, the attitudes, and reactions toward the formation of certain policies has not been without challenges. The Residence Placement Policy of 2014 which led to a debate at one of the University's Convocation meetings, led to male residences strongly mobilising alongside their alumni, in protest against what they considered to be a dictatorial decree by management. Nevertheless, the policy was accepted and she attributes this to the joint efforts of staff, the SRC and some residence leaders.

In addition, Charlie expresses concern over the abusive power meted out on first-years by seniors. This power differential is exacerbated by the stripping away of any autonomy and rights when newcomers arrive into the residence space. This is particularly evident in male

residences imbued with traditions. Those with celebrity status, such as top performing students of colour, are more readily consumed into the culture.

Charlie suggests that SU and its residences can be characterised by a strong combination of a shared vision to create a space which is energised by various stakeholders. Residence heads, she adds, do need to listen to dissenting voices. Change in residence spaces needs to be facilitated by those who care about the space, and those not afraid to change the space. This requires both intelligence and maturity, and a healthy collaboration between various stakeholders. She also adds that while the monitor system is designed to sort out a problem, it is still designed for the University to address its own problems. It is used as a tool to address these issues but she argues that there has been a lack of continuity in the monitoring process which is more problems-based rather than culturally sensitive.

She considers that one of the ways transformation takes place is through a dramatic leadership change. She expressed that this is a huge transformative injection, which begins to ripple into strategy. Chris Brink was considered the transformer, and the rector needed to make way for Russel Botman. Botman was the sign of transformation. She considers that after Botman, people were appointed to simply stabilise the system. Later these people began to take ownership of the environment. Instruments to measure transformation were instituted, such as barometers and additional monitoring structures. She suggested that some transformation factors can be counterproductive. The welcoming monitoring structure, for example, should be read beyond welcoming and used as a peer learning and accountability mechanism.

Respondent Delta expressed that there were no significant turning points during her time at her residence. She characterised it as a bubble. It consisted of good obedient girls who did what they had to do. She loved being in residence. She had fun and enjoyed making friends. At the time one had to make the space work. Life was simple. They simply enjoyed the space. She emphasised that it was not a violent space, but it was also not entirely welcoming.

Respondent Echo recalled that his residence head was largely absent. The relationship between the alumni structure and the existing residents was coagulated around traditional practices. He noted that they were quite entitled and placed undue pressure on the residence head. In contrast, the residence head now plays a larger role in guiding the process of change compared to 10 years ago. At the time the residence was not diverse, the space was evidently

more welcoming for white people, and there was no attempt at changing unwelcoming cultural practices. These were characterised by acts of drunkenness, shaved heads, and the notion of becoming a hypermasculine and somewhat misogynistic man. Practices clearly reflected the dominance of a single culture; others were excluded and there was no consideration for others.

In 2012, Respondent Foxtrot thought that the residence head served a purely ceremonial role as they were only present at big gatherings. They never seemed to have active involvement unless there was a particular issue that was raised. It was only once she took up leadership positions that she understood the role of the residence head. This was a very strategic position which could determine welcoming experiences and effect change in the broader community.

For Foxtrot, alumni involvement was minimal, and in those instances it was limited to past Prim heads. She notes that from her experiences, women seem to move on and do not get easily attached to traditions. In her residence, there was a constant shift in culture and leadership. Overall, she feels that a residence is an exceptional place for learning but that does not mean that the individual is not challenged. She considers that residences are a microcosm of society. Social cohesion is possible but in some spaces power is toxic. However, she has noted that those who lived in residences have a higher attachment to the institution suggesting that it is a much more engaging space.

Between 2012 and 2013, conversations around the tradition of spading and courtship were circulating which had previously been accepted as innocent fun. Spading involved women performing gestures to attract male residences. This sparked controversy. She recalls that Irene and Eendrag, for example, had a tradition known as the *Tour d'Irene*. The women would wear a bikini and run around Eendrag. If they got caught, they would be forced under a shower. They could opt for a hot and cold shower – she could not recall what the significance of it was. She surmises that traditions were upheld out of a sense of curiosity and a sense of duty. There is no place to hide if this occurs in a lesser-populated residence and, as such, students felt obligated to participate.



Figure 8: Irene Spading for Dagbreek, 2013.

Spading came under fire in 2013. Foxtrot recalls that Irene wanted Dagbreek as their *Vensters* partner. News broke as a picture circulated of topless girls in jeans with Dagbreek's Eiffel Tower on their backs. She realises that today these images could provoke notions of female empowerment but in this instance, questions were raised about the intention behind the picture. The outcry led to an intervention by the Prim Committee. One is also confronted with the ways in which notions of beauty are framed in this photograph, *Figure 8*. All the models are white females with long straight hair. There was a clear shift in consciousness and the discussion brought about a structural change of past traditions. It also led to engagement within residence spaces. She recalled that first-years began speaking up in 2013. They started challenging the decisions made by HC. Finally, they were being heard. By 2014, spading was replaced by a treasure hunt. Nevertheless, there was resistance and tensions were rife.

At the end of 2014-2015, Foxtrot was elected as the first Primaria of colour in her residence. Two black HC members were also elected making it the most diverse HC in the history of the residence. While the *Tour d'Irene* was stopped in 2014-2015, the men from Eendrag, however, continued to run naked into the women's residence of Irene. The Prim Committee officially banned spading at the end of 2015. This decision trickled down into the residences. This also led to broader discussions around gender identity. To her, Irene was instrumental in this transformative process. She also attributes these changes to the 2015 document on unwelcoming practices.

2015 signalled a significant shift in the development of leaders. The cluster system also became more structured and there was a higher level of accountability between the residences by 2015-2016. This did not mean that all undesirable activities were halted. Majuba, for example, objectified the women of Irene in a poster for one of their social events. This was

severely criticised by the leadership structure of Irene and led to another discussion on gender sensitivity.

For Foxtrot, there is a clear indication that residence spaces were more reflective of the broader social issues unfolding outside of Stellenbosch and this led to new socialisation strategies around campus. Residences no longer had a monopoly on what the individual did with their time. As student societies increased in visibility, the cluster system became more prominent, there were various shifts in power hierarchies and more PSOs were established. It was an emergence of a collective ownership from people within informal structures whereas in the past the individual's voice was only publicised through the residence or the institutional leadership. This led to more people feeling that SU belonged to them which gave them agency.

For Respondent Golf, one of the most significant events he recalled was when the Prim of 2012 went to the newspapers and made a public apology for the residence's involvement in the Battle of Andringa Street. This signified a process of renewal and redress in the residence. A process of critical appraisal was also evident when the residence decided to remove the names of prominent apartheid Prime Ministers from their pamphlet. He recalled that the residence museum also had an old South African flag at the time was only removed in 2014. Conversations around the historical attachment to symbols began, as one of the names of the rooms was a former apartheid minister, the Voster family he recalled, who donated a lot of money. It was argued that they could not have such symbols if the residence was not willing to have the difficult conversations about the legacy it left behind. He recalled that if any change of the residence was made public, the old boys would react to it. Traditions ran strong.

Golf recalled that the 2013 Residence Placement Policy caused a lot of tension on the campus. His residence's leadership were particularly against it. It was indicative that the residence concerned itself with trivial things, because when protests and movements began regarding safety on the campus later in 2014 the residence made it clear that it would not be participating. They closed the doors and shut out protesters which was an indication that the residence did not see anything wrong with the *status quo* of the campus.

He recalled that 2015-2016 indicated growth in the residence and a more purposeful celebration of life. He considered that 2015 indicate the need to be part of critical conversations and participate in the cluster and broader campus community. These sentiments led to their

interactions with other men's residence. Despite competitive interactions, there was a strong sense of camaraderie at the time. He admitted that his recollection of 2015 might be biased as he was part of the residence's leadership structure as a monitor. He recalled his interaction with their welcoming monitor. He considered it the first time the residence did not treat them as a spy, but rather involved him in decisions. He feels that many men's residences have a fear of conversation and that the leadership determine how open the community is, and the how the culture is morphed.

He remembers that the University's critical engagement initiatives and programmes were only promoted by leaders. Then there seemed to be a competitive nature between the residences to get involved on campus as Wilgenhof seemed to have many students involved in different campus committees. His residence decided to give room points for students who became involved in campus activities. The leadership of a residence has the ability to insulate the residence and ignore the outside world. His residence started to realise that if they continued this approach they would not be able to participate on the campus as they would not be familiar with the conversation and therefore would not be able to proffer any valuable or significant contributions.

For Hotel, one of the biggest changes took place when an alleged rape took place in in one of the residence's sections, *Prostraat*, in 2015 at the residence's pub opening. After the incident, the event was scrapped. This led to a complete overhaul of the residence's behaviour, names of sections, and sexist attitudes. Of particular importance was the 2014 Residence Placement Policy which shifted the linguistic demographics. Particular mention was also made of the #FeesMustFall movement and the ensuing range of conversations which changed engagement in the residence.

Kilo recollects a clear divide between the residents and the leadership of the house. Many were in search for representation, and it was difficult for the leadership to navigate between representing the majority and minority groups. He expressed that specific HC members would have different relationships with certain parts of the house which was strategic for when big decisions of the house needed to be made.

He often felt that the residence head was not always aware of what was happening on the ground. He considered that the role was instrumental for change and continuity. Yet they were

very busy, and not very attuned to the residence and, therefore, put pressure on leadership to implement the required institutional change. As a result, the leadership of the house would suffer the backlash as it would be clear that they do not agree with certain interventions. Instances like this made Kilo realise that the residence head was at times out of touch. Certain interventions and reaction to these also indicated the disunity in the house and disparity between its members.

The residence did not have a formal alumni committee but had a group known as “Section 13”. It was open to anyone who left the residence. Those who wanted to be part of Section 13 were required to follow a specific code of conduct. The alumni HC portfolio focused mostly on reunions. Kilo believes that there is a strong misconception of the role of the alumni. He admits that the alumni fund and sponsor certain initiatives but, in his residence, no *Oubond* and no alumni get involved in formal decision making policies. He suggests that decisions are rather manipulated by senior students to intimidate the house.

Kilo also reflects on certain toxic spaces such as the sectional residence group known as *Prostraat*. This was considered an exclusive group with admission by invitation. They were infamous for their drinking culture. In 2015, *Prostraat* was shut down but there was severe backlash from some portions of the residence. Kilo suspects that the residence head was very involved in the decision to close this section to ensure that the residence was an inclusive space for all.

While the leadership expressed the desire for more diversity, the demographics of the residence remained largely white. In this residence, section identity and culture was sacred. In 2017-2018 there existed a prevailing notion that the section should take precedence over the residence identity. The leadership began to recognise the danger and it was concluded that the identity of the section should be made up of the individuals. Ironically, many individuals seemed to want to lose their personal identity and assume that of conformity.

Sectional identities were predominantly associated to male residences. Kilo suggests that this was more of an organisational tool, to differentiate between the various groups in a bid to coordinate activities. Often, this revolved around a drinking culture in what was termed “party sections”. Resistance to change was predicated on an unfounded plea to sustain longstanding traditions.

Certain traditions did change. In 2016, for example, the first-year house meetings within the residence were conducted in English. At the end of 2018, the residence's house song changed. While many have embraced the changes, just as many are reluctant. The changes were solidified with the election of the first Primarius and Vice-Primarius of colour. They were the fifth and sixth HC of colour in the 56-year history of the residence. The HC of 2018-2019 were one of the most diverse in the history of the residence. Gender discussions also unfolded with the arrival of the first transgender student which, apparently, caused a "big stir". He recalls that the residence did not handle the conversation perfectly, but he does add that the men were in unfamiliar territory. One major milestone was also reached with the introduction of a female advisor.

Kilo concludes that his residence is one of conflicting identities. There is friction between liberal and conservative beliefs and the residence seems to continuously blur the lines of which side they position themselves. Over the years the residence has focused less on words and more on action. He is unsure how to characterise the essence of the residence, but refers to a line in their house motto which states "our home".

Lima was dismayed by the residence's investment in alumni. She recalled the 50th year reunion in 2018. She states that excessive amounts of money were spent on a group of people she believed had done very little for the residence. This included gin tasting, customised glasses and the HC put on a mock house meeting to entertain them. House members were selectively chosen to participate in the festivities. This was a moral conundrum for Lima. She did not appreciate the efforts made to reminisce about "the old Stellenbosch" when so much effort had gone into recreating a value driven transformed space.

Despite yearly feedback on ways to improve the residence, Lima feels that little attention was given to ways in which this could be improved. She argues that many traditions are still the same and that nothing of substance has really changed. There are still dances which often exclude people financially or are not inclusive to everyone in terms of music and other factors. She finds the space excessively heteronormative and there exists a perpetuation of a drinking culture.

Lima describes 2018-2019 as a significant period. She recalls that Dagbreek wanted to "marry" her residence. Despite the residence head emphasising the practice would no longer

be allowed, Dagbreek argued that it was their tradition and that there would be consequences if their request was denied. The situation was escalated to the Director of the Centre for Student Communities. Dagbreek thereafter accepted the rejection of the ritual and, in its place, wanted to serenade them. Once again, the leadership did not want to endorse this because it perpetuated a heteronormative narrative. Lima did not want the residence to be associated with such a practice.

Many traditions, she states, benefit only a few members of the group. During her tenure, she wanted to scrap the concept of residence dances, especially senior dances due to the lack of racial diversity and initiated with poor intentions. She wanted to place all members on equal social and financial footing. She believes that residences are unique and are given the autonomy to use the space and adapt to the people in that space at the same time. But alumni decide the fate of transformation and the speed and pace at which it is to happen.

Respondent Mike considers that the introduction of a Women Empowerment Portfolio indicated a concerted effort towards gender transformation. In 2018, all floors were integrated to ensure gender neutrality and gender-neutral bathrooms were also established. Despite there being various tools of intervention in the residence space, he questions whether recommendations are implemented.

Respondent November recounts that the *Groot My* – a song sung as a rite of passage in welcoming each year – was under scrutiny. In 2018 the value and purpose of this practice was re-evaluated. It was considered that it was a primitive courtship practice. This changed the attitude toward the song. The meaning was explained, and then newcomers decided to make their own song. Later in 2018, their house song changed to *isiXhosa*, Afrikaans and English. She considered that the HC started being more intentional with the behaviour they attached to the values which opened up discourse and discussion.

Language and cultural barriers were prominent features due to critical engagement in the house constantly attracting the same group of people. The Dialogue Board incident that took place forced discussions of language and cultural barriers and the exclusivity of certain spaces. She observed that people began to make an intentional effort to use inclusive language, and this enhanced a feeling of inclusivity.

Oscar suggests that SU has based its change on manufacturing significant moments. Yet these moments do not foster a measurable change. She has gotten the impression that diversity is measured by demographics and academics, and not by the social and cultural inclusion of individuals. She believes that belonging has been cosmetically constructed. She believes that welcoming experiences will not occur if queer bodies, women, and blacks are not made welcome. She adds that this is inhibited by residences which are gendered spaces, built to perpetuate a heteronormative culture. Socials are designed to encourage courtship. Male residences sing songs to female residences, but it is never done for same sex communities.

Respondent Oscar recalled that alumni in her residence do not have a particularly dominant presence. She has the impression that male residences are dominated by their alumni in their decision making as well as financially. Here they are a crutch which prop masculinity. She observed that seniors make it difficult to change the narrative of a space and seem anti-change. The cycle seems to repeat itself every five years. She considers that residence culture has an influence on the SU climate which itself seems patriotic. She expressed that although residence heads are meant to hold people accountable this does not seem to happen, and they evidently do not protect the students.

Oscar feels that it is significant that she was the first black prim of the residence after 80 years, although there was one coloured Prim in the past. She also had one of the most diverse house committees, in terms of gender, race, language, nationalities, and all areas of life. Together they had a collective of stories. She does not consider that this made them perfect, but they were symbolic of the collective of individuals. She believes that many now take up the space intentionally to fight for the inclusion of minority groups. She is very clear, however, that she has never identified as a *Matie*, because she is not sure what a *Matie* identity is meant to be. Especially as change seems suggestive.

Respondent Papa recalls certain movements and social rights protests that took place on campus and nationally. He states that there were various conflicting beliefs on campus around the movements. He considered this healthy as different views allowed for internal debates. He argues that his residence was pushing for progress at times, and at other times were being pushed.

Papa was in this residence when questions were raised about inclusivity. These issues rely heavily on the leaders in these residence spaces. He believes that there is a lot of ambiguity about the expectations of the institution. They want residences to decide what their space, culture and identity should be but then expect them to follow a directive where they need to enforce something they did not create. This makes the work counterproductive.

Papa believes that the residence has transformed from an intimidating space to one which embraces change. He believes that if enough responsibility is afforded to the individuals in the space to learn about themselves, one that is not protected but rather authentic, this will lead to a positive transformative agenda.

These student-leader narratives have been intentionally left unmediated in the spirit of allowing the individual to reflect on how they have experienced the various institutional and residence spaces. It is not the intention of the author to corroborate nor deny these observations. Here, the evolution of Oral Histories and the significance of dominant memories and even misremembrances as indicative of what is of significance to that person becomes central.²² What is of greater importance are the trends that appear through these depictions.

4.4. The Significance of the Intersectionality of Residence Spaces

There are numerous themes which can be extracted from the respondents' oral contributions to this study. Similar to the sociological study conducted by Megan Robertson on the social cohesion and discrimination in terms of race and gender within residences at Stellenbosch University, practices within residence spaces, even in less conspicuous ways, continue to entrench misogynistic and heteronormative hegemonies.²³ "Tradition" within residence spaces becomes the conduit to justify and endorse practices which implicitly unwelcome those who find themselves on the margins racially, religiously, linguistically, or in

²² A. Thompson, "Fifty Years On: An International Perspective on Oral History", *The Journal of American History*, (85), (2), 1998, pp. 581-595.

²³ M. A. Robertson, "'Real men', 'Proper ladies' and mixing in-between: a qualitative study of social cohesion and discrimination in terms of race and gender within residences at Stellenbosch University", Unpublished PhD diss., Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, 2015.

terms of gender normativity. Although this thesis does not explore individual identity formation, it does explore the influence of collective identity formation itself and the influence of the collective on the individual, and the influence of space and the institution on identity formation.

As has been discussed, identities are intersubjective, fluid, and paradoxical. The rhetoric of these personal narratives has both alluded to and explicitly illustrated that there are multiple factors that contribute to the sense of belonging within residence spaces. Residence spaces are socially constructed spaces, i.e., socially negotiated. The individuals' experience are largely influenced by gender, masculinity, sexuality, and race. The significance of this, can be explained through social constructivism, which suggests that learning construction of knowledge is the product of social interaction, interpretation and understanding.²⁴ It further suggests that the creation of knowledge cannot be separated from the social environment in which it is formed and thus learning is viewed as a process of active knowledge construction.²⁵ The "truth of knowledge" is attributed to what is socially agreed upon. Thus, it can be argued that as residence spaces have a limited diversity profile, the knowledge construction and engagement within these spaces is socially negotiated by the nature of the space and the hegemonic group that dominates it. However, it does also need to be highlighted that the power relations and dynamics within the space add a deeper complexity.

According to professor of pedagogy and qualitative research method, May Britt Postholm, Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) and social constructivism, consider learning as knowledge construction between the mind and the world, and between the "acting subject and the object world".²⁶ It is further argued by education experts, Najma Agherdien and Nadine Petersen, that not only do rules both implicitly and explicitly shape engagement, but so do power relations which are inherent in the hierarchical structure of the environment.²⁷ They further argue that the power imbalances within these spaces do foster hegemonic practices, but

²⁴ P. Adams, "Exploring social constructivism: Theories and practicalities", *Education*, (34), (3), 2006, p. 245.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

²⁶ M.B. Postholm, "Cultural historical activity theory and Dewey's idea-based social constructivism: Consequences for educational research", *Outlines. Critical Practice Studies*, (10), (1), 2008, p. 38.

²⁷ N. Agherdien, and N. Petersen, "The challenges of establishing social learning spaces at a Johannesburg university student residence: Student views", *Africa Education Review*, (13), (2), 2016, p. 67.

also have the power to facilitate transformation or change within the environment. Thus, the complexity within residence spaces lies in the intersectionality.

Intersectionality recognises the myriad and multiple articulations of social power and is used as a concept to capture the complexity of social identities.²⁸ It is argued by Gender Studies expert, Benita Moolman, that social relations are continuously reconstituted through different operations of power. It can be argued that this is applicable to the power dynamics within residence spaces. As many respondents alluded to, student leaders influence the nature of social relations within these spaces as they coordinate student activity. Intersectionality further explores how the meaning, experience and power relations of gender and masculinity vary for different racial, ethnic, age, and class groups.²⁹ For instance, it is evident from the respondents who resided in male residences, that these spaces were characterised by hegemonic masculinity practices. According to pioneer in Critical Masculinity Studies, Robert Morrell, hegemonic masculinity is the establishment of a norm for male behaviour, appearance, attitude, and ability to maintain distinctions between men that grant power and privilege to those who conform.³⁰ Though the concept of intersectionality makes it crucial to consider that when race intersects with masculinity, it creates a marginalised form of masculinity.³¹ Moolman, however, offers the argument that both forms of masculinity support, sanction and legitimise different masculine practices in different spaces.

The intersectionality of race, gender and sexuality need to be looked at by considering the experience within residence spaces. Albeit that certain intersections are more marginalised, the manifestation of these identities constitutes the social relations and thereby engagement within the space. This adds a complex layer to the power dynamics.

²⁸ B. Moolman, "Rethinking 'masculinities in transition' in South Africa considering the 'intersectionality' of race, class, and sexuality with gender", *African Identities*, (11), (1), 2013, pp. 93-94.

²⁹ A.D. Christensen and S.Q. Jensen, "Combining hegemonic masculinity and intersectionality", *NORMA: International Journal for Masculinity Studies*, (9), (1), 2014, p. 69.

³⁰ R. Morrell, "Touch Rugby, Masculinity and Progressive Politics in Durban, South Africa, 1985-1990", *International Journal of the History of Sport*, (34), (7-8), 2017, p. 622.

³¹ B. Moolman, "Rethinking 'masculinities in transition' in South Africa considering the 'intersectionality' of race, class, and sexuality with gender", p. 96.

4.5. Significance of the Personal Narratives

These student-leaders have had the benefit of shifting between spaces and even being involved in major policy making and the implementation of these policies within residence spaces. It is worth noting that SU believes strongly in “Growing Our Own Timber”, also known as the GOOT initiative. This allows for guidance based on lived experience, but it also contributes to maintaining the “bubble” mentioned by several respondents.

The previous chapters have clearly identified seminal issues that need to be addressed. These stemmed from state directives, commissions, and national outcry. Policies were drafted and implemented and concerted efforts were made by the institution to rectify these issues. Through the narratives of the various stakeholders in a variety of leadership positions, the purpose of this chapter has been to investigate how and in what ways— policies manifested within these residence spaces.

The residence experience has been characterised in many ways. As the respondents reflected and summarised their experiences, the residence was clearly framed as a space the individual had to make work. It is a space that has been defined by intentionality to get the full experience and to make long lasting connections. In the eyes of some it was not considered a violent space, but also not a welcoming space. Others describe residence spaces as a “tick box” structure, where structures and policies are put in place to present the image of productivity, yet these efforts are undervalued and do not manifest within these spaces.

Respondent Foxtrot considers a residence an exceptional place for learning, but that learning will take place through the challenges undertaken. She viewed residences as a microcosm of society and that social cohesion is possible but in some spaces power is toxic. Foxtrot expressed that student’s who live in residences have a higher attachment to the University because of how engaged the space is or is required to be. Her experience is that in the faculty space, there is no sense of community, and people come and go. She believes that leadership plays a dominate role in creating an attachment to the residence space. It is evident that the residence space cannot be defined by one year, but rather by the collective experiences of many years.

Respondent Indigo considers – having been a part of the youngest mixed-gender residence – those residences that are not built on traditional social practices, prioritise values to constitute its culture. However, complacency in values also threatens to build a disjointed sense of belonging and unity, as the space changes each year. Enforcing values can also encroach on individual experiences. Respondent Juliet offers the consideration that spaces defined by secrecy hold good things for those in the space and who are familiar, but to those who are not a sense of transparency is required to intentionally showcase the desire to be part of the broader community.

The respondents do, however, consider that tradition also offers thought provoking engagement and allows a community to define their own status. Respondent Kilo considered that many residences jump between the liberalism and conservatism. There is a desire for people to feel at home, and over the years students have wanted “less words and more action” and they consider their residence in particular as one which is characterised by its current people.

Respondent November considers that it is important to reflect on the expectations of the residence space and to consider how you value others and value the opportunities the space presents. It is also important that the individual knows themselves. Respondent Oscar raised questions about the *Matie* identity and what it is characterised by. Her experience of Stellenbosch University is that change is suggestive; its stakeholders are aware change is required but only demonstrate it in selected areas of the institution. Respondent Papa characterised their residence as a space where enough responsibility is afforded to individuals to learn about themselves. He expressed that their residence space is one that is not protected but “real”, where there is a fine line between pushing boundaries of what is chaotic and what is easy: “walking on that fine line is where the magic is found”.

It is evident that the residence experiences intersect and have many similarities between all the respondents. Practices are symptomatic of the broader residence experience of SU, but also – given the reports gathered by the South African Human Rights Commission – experiences of students at other institutions. However, it is evident that Stellenbosch has been characterised by its student experience. Although the residences were, historically, the original contributors of developing student life, they have since metamorphosed.

It is also clear that the ownership to implement this ideal is put on student leaders. This is considered a flawed strategy due to the lack of continuity in leadership space; the nature of the role of the residence head being a facilitative, and not directive, role; and that newcomers in the space change the characterisation of the welcoming experience each year. However, there is an evident complexity to these spaces as these limitations are also their strengths. The lack of continuity of leadership presents the opportunity for innovation, the residence head playing a facilitative role allows for independence and mentorship, and the constant insertion of newcomers allows the residence to define its welcoming experience.

There are clear overlaps between the structural problems and implementation within residence spaces. Not all respondents agree which, unsurprisingly, points to the diverse experiences and viewpoints on what constitutes transformation and enjoyable experiences. The one major hurdle at both an institutional and residence level was that of language and the use of Afrikaans. All respondents have spoken to the benefits of adopting a more universal language. There are undoubtedly as many voices which would argue otherwise.

The second point of contention is initiation practices or welcoming practices. The divergent experiences have largely depended on race and previous links with the residence in question. Of significance was the leaning towards embracing the experience either in an attempt to adapt or even conform, but also when previous high school experiences equipped the student for what they were to confront at SU. There are various ways in which these practices have evolved depending largely on the gender catered for at the residence. Again, male residences tend to transform at a lower rate and rely on narratives about tradition and the alumni, much more than in female residences. The newest co-ed residence produced the expected results. What is significant in these narratives is the existence of sections within a residence which certainly appear to have been more toxic and exclusionary than the residence space. Hence, many were abolished. The role of the alumni and the impact it has on the transformation process has also been largely contested within these narratives. The full extent will never really be known.

The unprecedented number of references to poor leadership and the role of the seniors in residences also suggests that they have a distorted amount of authority and appear to be the main instigators of both unwelcoming practices but also serve as bastions of the elusive

traditions of the residences which are so often cited as reasons not to change. *The Placement Policy* and the decision to cap the number of years a student may remain in a residence if not involved in the leadership of the residence has not only alleviated some of these issues but has also placed younger students as resident heads. There are many narratives that these younger heads are more in touch with the members of their residence and this generational similarity appears to alleviate some of the humiliating practices of previous generations.

As with language, conversations about racism and systemic racism permeate these narratives. In addition, discussions around plurality and spectra have also become more apparent. Discussions around Gender Based Violence, heteronormativity and queer identities have managed to open debates in some unlikely spaces. This has evidently manifested in movements such as the 2017 SLUT Walk. Reportedly it has been considered more than a moment in campus discourse but a movement.³² The objective was to raise awareness on rape culture and body shaming on campus. This movement was initiated on the global perception that rape culture is context specific, and that rape occurs because of the position women put themselves in and dressing like a “slut”.³³ The movement called for policy implementation to ensure the protection of women on campus. It is also evident that these narratives, while applauding institutional policy changes for the most part, have attributed the pace at which conversations have resulted in tangible changes, such as better representation in leadership structures, to student protests, nationally but also locally.

These movements have characterised campus discourse, and one can argue that without student agency many residence spaces would still be characterised by mundane and trivial affairs. These movements signify the power of peer learning and peer facilitation. They are movements which necessitated students to listen to experiences of others and realise that they have a responsibility to create learning spaces. The University has evidently provided a structural framework to manifest the ideal of residences being educational spaces.

³² <https://www.matiemedia.org/slut-walk-not-a-moment-but-a-movement-2/> [Accessed, 11 November 2020].

³³ *Ibid.*

4.6. The Counter-Narrative, Student Protests and the Making of a New *Matie*?

Many of the student-leaders were involved, observed or were privy to the stories which emanated from the media around student protest politics of the 2010s. The #Fall movements across the country were the catalyst leading up to one of the biggest student movements after the Soweto Uprising (1976), which placed a spotlight on the inaccessibility and exclusionary nature of the higher education landscape. In 2015, universities across the country were proposing a fee increment of 10-15% for the 2016 academic year.³⁴ This presented financial exclusion for many students which led to the #FeesMustFall movement which gained traction from both historically advantaged and disadvantaged universities in 2015. It began when the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS) announced a fee increment of 10.5%.³⁵ As a result, protest action took place from the 14th of October 2015. This led to a sit in and lock down of the University by some students and staff. The University thereafter entered negotiations with students and did not reprimand any student who participated in the demonstrations.³⁶ As protests started escalating across the country, and protest actions escalated, the response by many institutions intensified.

As time went on #FeesMustFall was characterized by various tactics to demonstrate the severity of the movements concerns. On the 19th of October 2015 tuition fee protests spread to Rhodes University and the University of Cape Town (UCT).³⁷ Students at Rhodes barricaded the entrances and demanded a cut to the proposed 50% increase in the initial payment of tuition fees.³⁸ Students at UCT followed suit.³⁹ UCT management obtained a court interdict and riot police were called-in when students occupied administration buildings.⁴⁰ 25 were arrested the

³⁴ <https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2015/10/26/south-african-students-protest-education-fee-hike/> [Accessed, 2 November 2020].

³⁵ <https://www.enca.com/south-africa/wits-fee-increase-suspended> [Accessed, 2 November 2020].

³⁶ <https://ewn.co.za/2015/10/17/No-punishment-planned-for-protesting-Wits-students> [Accessed, 2 November 2020].

³⁷ <https://ewn.co.za/2015/10/19/Fee-protests-shuts-down-3-of-SAs-biggest-universities> [Accessed, 2 November 2020].

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ <https://mg.co.za/article/2015-10-19-four-things-you-need-to-know-about-feesmustfall/#.Vih8l2qxP0o.facebook> [Accessed, 2 November 2020].

⁴⁰ <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/uct-students-to-protest-over-fees-1931927> [Accessed, 2 November 2020].

evening of the 19th of October leading to over a thousand students camping outside of Ronderbosch police station, calling for the release of their comrades.⁴¹

Although there were also reports of protests at Stellenbosch University and the University of Fort Hare, neither institution confirmed this at the time. The SU spokesperson expressed that the University had undertaken to provide the Student Representative Council (SRC), in addition to the meetings and discussions they had already held, with a written explanation of the reason as to why an increase of 11.5% in study fees was essential. The state's response to the protest action across the country was that their long-term objective is free education but that it required stakeholder input from both the government and universities.⁴²

On the 21st of October 2015 protesting students gathered outside parliament in Cape Town to await the outcome of negotiations between the Minister of Higher Education, Blade Nzimande and university councils.⁴³ Reportedly, students managed to gain access to the parliamentary precinct. Eyewitness accounts attested that the students did not appear to be carrying any weapons, and their only intention was to have a discussion with Nzimande.⁴⁴ As they gathered in front of the National Assembly, they were met with riot police, which suggested that Parliament had requested the public policing order in advance.

By the 23rd of October 2015, President Jacob Zuma announced a 0% fee increase for 2016.⁴⁵ Students, however, continued to protest demanding free education as opposed to a 0% fee increase and other separate issues, such as outsourcing. Despite this victory for students, on the 26th of October, universities seemed divided as to whether they were to reopen and recommence examinations. Students at WITS, UCT, University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN) and Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) continued to protest for free education and outsourcing of labor many of these protests turned violent.

⁴¹ <https://10and5.com/2015/10/20/imraan-christians-firsthand-account-of-the-feesmustfall-protest-at-uct/> [Accessed, 2 November 2020].

⁴² <https://ewn.co.za/2015/10/19/Fee-protests-shuts-down-3-of-SAs-biggest-universities> [Accessed, 2 November 2020].

⁴³ <https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2015/10/26/south-african-students-protest-education-fee-hike/> [Accessed, 2 November 2020].

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ <https://www.news24.com/News24/feesmustfall-timeline-where-are-we-now-20151026> [Accessed, 2 November 2020].

The #movements revealed a contentious relationship between university administrators and the protest methods of student activists. At Stellenbosch University, there was a distinct characteristic how its management engaged with students. The relationship between management and the #OpenStellenbosch collective was indicative of the expected sophisticated nature of negotiation at the institution. Although there was ambiguity in the University's statements with regards to the discontent with the movement's methods. According to members of #OpenStellenbosch, they had given the Stellenbosch University community every opportunity to engage with students.⁴⁶ Vice Chancellor and Rector of SU, Wim De Villiers attended their first mass meeting. The second invitation was to listen to and respond to the oral testimony of black students. He apparently did not attend the second gathering and chose to read the pre-typed speech.⁴⁷ Later, the movement compiled a memorandum which contained an extensive appendix documenting the written submissions they had received regarding academic issues with Afrikaans. Despite their case being taken to the Student Parliament of the University, their lived experiences were dismissed as unprecedented. The only invitation they had received, to a round table, was one from student bodies which they proclaimed were not committed to the transformation process. One could argue that the attitude and perception of the movement toward student representative structures, indicates that they dismissed the experiences of marginalized students and that these formalized student representative structures simply maintained the *status quo*.

It could be considered that this was a mimic response of the attitude of the institution. When the University's management responded to the #OpenStellenbosch memorandum on the 17th of July 2015, their demands were firmly rejected. This contemptuous response, led to the movement deciding, seven months after its inception, to resort to more vigorous methods.⁴⁸ After the rejection of the memorandum the #OpenStellenbosch collective took to protest. On the 21st of July 2015, De Villiers criticized a protest which broke out in a lecturer hall at SU led by #OpenStellenbosch.⁴⁹ Although De Villiers proclaimed that, since his inauguration, he endorsed the right of students to protest, he argued that the methods needed to be in compliance

⁴⁶ <https://www.enca.com/opinion/open-stellenbosch-university-education-exclusion> [Accessed, 8 November 2020].

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ <https://www.news24.com/News24/students-protest-in-stellenbosch-over-language-20150727> [Accessed, 2 November 2020].

with processes and procedures applicable to all university entities. One could argue the irony in this statement, given that protest in itself, sends a message of non-compliance. The collective evidently had granted the institution numerous opportunities to engage which they did not entertain. The draft of a memorandum, and collecting evidentiary stories of student experiences, instead of immediately resorting to protest means, further indicates the intellectual nature of the movement. Afrikaans was seemingly considered an academic barricade for many students. Students could not comprehend how they were supposed to get their degrees if they could not understand what they were being taught. Despite these grievances, De Villiers further proclaimed that students had no need to resort to mass action as the management team was eager to engage with the student community at round table discussions.⁵⁰ One could argue the ambiguous response of De Villiers considering that #OpenStellenbosch only resorted to protests after he rejected their invitations to engage and their memorandum of concerns.

This ambiguity could be considered revealing of the hierarchical nature of the University's institutional culture. It can be interpreted that the institution was adamant to have negotiations on their own terms. It is also indicative as to why #OpenStellenbosch, a non-formalized structure, took to represent those that felt underrepresented. The agency of these non-positional leaders can be commended as they navigated the institutional bureaucracy. By the end of 2015, English as the primary medium of education at SU was proposed by the rector's management team.⁵¹

One of the significant outcomes of #FeesMustFall was the establishment of a *Commission of Inquiry into Higher Education and Training* which was launched in 2016 to assess the feasibility of providing free tertiary education.⁵² In response to the uncertain state of affairs regarding fee structuring for 2016 and recovering from the protest actions of 2015, which caused millions of Rands of damages across all institutions, universities contracted private security firms in preparation for the 2016 academic year.⁵³ Stellenbosch University, being one

⁵⁰ <https://www.news24.com/News24/students-protest-in-stellenbosch-over-language-20150727> [Accessed, 2 November 2020].

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² <https://www.politicsweb.co.za/news-and-analysis/commission-to-inquire-into-higher-education-fundin> [Accessed, 2 November 2020].

⁵³ <https://www.iol.co.za/capetimes/news/universities-employ-men-in-black-1970279> [Accessed, 2 November 2020].

of the institutions to employ private security, attested that it was not a management decision, but one aligned with a directive from the government.⁵⁴ Universities such as UCT, SU, University of Western Cape (UWC) and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), had sent out correspondence to students regarding a no tolerance policy for violent protests and that there would be a strong security presence on their campus placed at key strategic positions. Student movements claimed that armed security guards were antagonistic and made students feel “unsafe”. Protest action was quiet until the 12th of August 2016, after the Council on Higher Education recommended a fee increase for 2017.⁵⁵

After the 2015 and 2016 #FeesMustFall protests, it was evident that there were various stakeholder power dynamics at play. The largest being the actions of the management bodies of institutions toward their students. The actions of universities have required critical reflection by the institutions in question.⁵⁶ The response by universities towards the protests was questionable in terms of whether they protected the constitutional rights and freedoms of those engaging in the protests, and their response compared to that of police. Some news reports further characterized the protest actions as violent, while others considered them peaceful and highly disciplined although disruptive.⁵⁷ The movement had also served as a proxy for conversations on decolonisation of the educational system and transformation.

Protest action at Stellenbosch University was considerably different from other universities.⁵⁸ Although the Stellenbosch arm used similar tactics as other institutions – such as occupying administration buildings – the Stellenbosch protests were largely characterised as peaceful compared to other institutions such as UCT and WITS. It has been argued that SU students were accused by protestors from other campuses as being too “bourgeois”.⁵⁹ It can be stated that the movement of SU was evidently organised and calculated. This was evident in October 2015, when members of the Stellenbosch #FeesMustFall movement occupied an

⁵⁴ <https://www.iol.co.za/capetimes/news/universities-employ-men-in-black-1970279> [Accessed, 2 November 2020].

⁵⁵ <https://ewn.co.za/2016/08/13/Council-on-Higher-Education-recommends-inflation-related-increase-for-universities> [Accessed, 2 November 2020].

⁵⁶ <https://mg.co.za/article/2015-11-09-the-question-of-human-rights-violations-against-feesmustfall-protesters/> [Accessed, 2 November 2020].

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ N. de Jager & U. Adams-Jack, “Stellenbosch University’s Born-Frees: Responsibly engaged”, *Modern State Development, Capacity, and Institutions* (Stellenbosch: SUN Press, 2017), p. 138.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

administration building, which they had renamed Winnie Mandela House. During this occupation, they drew up guidelines and rules of conduct.⁶⁰ Despite these comparatively passive demonstrations, the University responded with force, as they deployed riot police into the occupied building. Although one of the Stellenbosch #FeesMustFall leaders of the movement gave herself up for peaceful arrest, they were brutalised and criminalised.

Similarly, in September 2016 Stellenbosch #FeesMustFall movement occupied the J.S. Gericke library under the banner of #Occupy4FreeEducation and #SFMFDefianceCampaign.⁶¹ Reportedly, the Stellenbosch branch of the movement never used violence as a tactic. The occupation of the library was meant to be a form of defiance for the operations of the institution, and to get the attention of the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Wim de Villiers. There were allegations that he had misrepresented the interests of the movement. A member of the movement stated that De Villiers would publicly claim that he consulted with students and key members of the movement and that the outcome of these discussions was that free education was impossible. These statements suggested that the institution was focused on its public image rather than the issue at hand. Supposedly, meetings that were held by the Rector that were by invitation only. It was expressed that De Villiers and other stakeholders did not understand the rules of engagement for students. They considered engaging in confined spaces as violent.⁶²

Despite the majority of demonstrations being peaceful, the University Chief Operating Officer issued a letter stating that the movement was in contravention of the Trespass Act, and the demonstrator would be charged if they did not leave the building.⁶³ According to the students, this act was conceptualised during apartheid, and this is why students did not acknowledge or comply with it. Additionally, members of the movement stated that the University insisted on engaging with student leadership which they considered an issue due the underrepresentation of black students. Furthermore, the University's stance, according to De Villiers, was it supported free higher education for "[...] financially needy, academically deserving students". Reportedly, various staff members of faculties attempted to urge the

⁶⁰ <https://www.news24.com/citypress/news/new-activist-generation-profiles-20151025> [8 November 2020].

⁶¹ <https://www.thedailyvox.co.za/stellenbosch-students-occupy-library-in-protest-for-free-education/> [8 November 2020].

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ <https://www.news24.com/citypress/news/stellenbosch-students-peppersprayed-manhandled-in-feesmustfall-protest-20160916> [Accessed 8 November 2020].

University to engage with students in an open, transparent manner. This was not successful. They argued that they felt the institution had not learnt from lessons in 2015.⁶⁴

The #FeesMustFall demonstrations at SU indicated the contentious relationship between the University and student activists. It further revealed that the institution did not respond kindly to the disruption of their institutional operations and spaces. The fierce response of the institution toward peaceful demonstrations at SU in comparison to other university campuses indicate why the #FeesMustFall SU movement adopted a more organised and refined approach to the movement. Their priority was to engage with the University's management team and have open, transparent conversations that were representative of all students and not a selective elite. The underrepresentation of marginalised groups of the institution indicates the limited support for such social grievances. These events were inextricably linked to the resurgence of later protest movements, critical engagements and student led initiatives, as mentioned in the narratives of the interviews.

4.7. Conclusion

The experiences, observations, and reflections of the various student-leaders and staff who have been at Stellenbosch University for over 20 years indicate that even a good system cannot change itself. As expressed by Respondent Charlie, although the monitor system was designed to tackle issues within student community spaces, it was essentially designed for the university to address its own problems.

After 2014, there existed a *Matie* identity that was steeped in an institutional culture that was value driven based on the needs of inclusivity of the collective. Residence cultures and identities were largely conceptualised around residence and sectional differences. From 2014, and especially by 2015-2016, the *Matie* identity became a protest identity on two levels: the conservatives based on traditional values and the progressives who were encouraged to be more outward looking. Within residence spaces, there were also the traditionalists, but their numbers

⁶⁴ <https://www.news24.com/citypress/news/stellenbosch-students-peppersprayed-manhandled-in-feesmustfall-protest-20160916> [Accessed 8 November 2020].

dwindled. Some practices continue but this is no longer politically correct and is in all likelihood more an underground or clandestine identity. The individual-thinking residence culture expected each individual to think of the residence identity in relation to the new and supposedly improved *Matie* and broader collective.

The specific protest agendas brought up in student protests is suggestive of institution specific transformative issues that were high on the student agenda. There were some overlaps with other institutions but distinctive elements which made the SU protesters appear, quite unfoundedly, passive. They brought to the discussion the systemic issues experienced within spaces unoccupied by management but clearly in existence, as seen through the narratives of the student leaders. However, they challenged the institution and in the spirit of dialogue, made significant demands which permeated both the public institutional space but importantly the private spaces of the traditional residences on campus.

It is, therefore, argued that there exists a new somewhat fractured *Matie* culture and identity, which is a protest identity either for or against change. While this study could have been ameliorated by probing deeper into the residence archives, evidence suggests that any noteworthy incidences would have been excluded from the official archive. The position of Stellenbosch University within the broader institutional cultures across South Africa would also have allowed for a stronger argument of a distinct SU culture and identity. Nevertheless, it is clear that state policies and institutional policies, commissions and forums certainly paved the way for transformation, student leaders introduced these into residence spaces but the student politics of 2015-2016 ensured not only a rapid broader institutional change but also that this was executed at a grassroots level in the bastions of traditional practices: its student residences.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This study has evaluated the *Matie* and residence identities through an institutional lens alongside leadership perspectives. The institution's interventions have largely complied with Higher Education reform in South Africa, reforms which have been profoundly shaped by procedures which climaxed in the construction of numerous documents such as the 1996 *National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) Report*, the 1996 Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation, and the 1997 Education White Paper. These subsequently led to various commissions of enquiry across the South African Higher Education landscape.

Alongside instituting these state reforms, Stellenbosch University has had to reflect on its own *Matie* identity and reposition it to contribute to a transformative student experience in South Africa. Residence culture, through the lens of their welcoming practices, is evidently both symptomatic of the larger Stellenbosch University culture and a collective-perpetuated system of the space. Welcoming is seemingly a staged manifestation of residence culture and identity, based on intentional design. There is an apparent symbiotic relationship between residences, the institution and student activism in the broader campus student community, though the relationship between these entities is fractured.

The contextualisation of this study has made it apparent that much academic attention has been focussed on recognizing the demand of the democratisation of higher education in South Africa since 1994. Moreover, the focus has been on institutions preoccupying themselves with defining the parameters of their institutional culture. This supports the impression that universities are said to mirror societal experiences to become vehicles of social restructuring.

The history of Stellenbosch University is strongly intertwined with the town of Stellenbosch. This has made it synonymous with aspects of Afrikaans cultures. This suggests that the institution itself is a heterotopia, with residences being a by-product. Various literature has indicated that the concept of socially produced spaces and the significance of space and place has been a dominant area of enquiry with regards to the remnants of tradition manifesting

within heterotopic spaces, such as residences. This results in residences being considered heterotopias – spaces with their own rules, culture, and context.

Institutional identities have evidently challenged the student's personal identity depending on how they immersed themselves in the student community. As a result, one cannot speak of a single identity. Due to the ambiguous nature of social interactions, all individuals undergo identity shifts and the co-existence of multiple identities is an expected occurrence. This study has revealed that the expectation for an institutional identity involved a process of negotiating fossilized ideas of established traditions and the need to create the ideal and conforming collective. Instrumental to supporting the entrenchment of the collective identity was the residence space. This has been a conflicting relationship for many who have willingly –or not – subjected themselves to their residence's practices.

State policies have propagated all institutions of higher learning to construct a socially responsive and critically engaged institutional culture to expand the country's democratic practices. Although strides have been made, it has been argued that change within institutions has settled alongside traditional systematic practices and cultures, which have threatened the longevity of the transformative agenda of universities in South Africa. The South African *Human Rights Commission Report* of 2016 reaffirmed that patterns of systemic exclusion, marginalization and discrimination have persisted within these spaces.

It has been suggested that there is a mirage of transformation at institutions, Stellenbosch University being one of them. In order to grasp the positionality of the University's institutional culture according to the national benchmark, this study examined the various missions and visions set out by the different rectors – Brink, Botman, and De Villiers – between 2000 and 2018. These mandates influenced the conceptualization of policies, decision-making and structures which, supposedly, have re-defined the character, culture and identity of the University, and have endorsed the idea that the University has intentionally and consistently, made efforts to work towards transformation of the institution's culture.

A critical report for this study, the *Student and Residence Culture Panel Report* of 2003, chaired by Dr Frederick van Zyl Slabbert, reflects on an authentic examination of the campus culture. It targeted the influence of the student culture on the broader institutional culture. It

called for the development of a shared vision and set of common values to which all student communities were to commit. The core of these values was framed against the constitution of the country and juxtaposed alongside the University's values. The recommendations of this report did not only call for this on paper, rather, it suggested the embodiment of these values needed to be scrutinized alongside the practices of the student community.

The objective was to ensure that traditions and practices could be manifestly reconcilable with this proposed value-driven management system. The 2008 *Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions*, revealed a valid concern of this strategic initiative, which was that values can easily be interpreted to suit a particular narrative to preserve the traditional driven culture of student residences. However, the report did affirm that if this initiative were to be coupled with the formalized training of student leaders, it would ensure the internalization of this new system alongside a commitment by various stakeholders to re-design and re-define a student and residence culture. This would demonstrate its transformation process to be participatory and open.

It is, however, questionable whether the emphasis on a value driven system merely serves as a transformation barometer to showcase the institutions commitment to transformation. Literature has alluded to the argument that, explicitly and implicitly, historically white universities have been occupied with measuring the progress of change to predict when transformation will be accomplished. This has signified a superficial standard of investment in the cause for the sake of reputation and stakeholder evaluation. However, SU has committed to the value driven system as one of its biggest successes. In the 2018 *Transformation Report* of SU, the efforts by the Centre for Student Communities (CSC) to redefine the organizing principle of students' social and academic life was commended. Though, as this study continued to discuss the partnership formation between students and University administration, it was evident that there is tension around the enforcement of a value-driven system, and the authentic representation of it.

It has been further suggested that the value driven system assisted in shifting the politicized conversation around race and culture. It is evident through various policies and reports, that the

state observed an exclusive culture at historically white institutions. At SU, the language debate was seen as evidence of its exclusivity. It was evident that the use of Afrikaans as a primary medium of instruction, reflected an exclusive and homogenous culture. One which did not promote diverse opinions and engagement, and unable to adapt to the new dynamic of the Higher Education landscape. Thus, numerous strategies and interventions by rectors have been geared towards the establishment of an inclusive *Matie*-identity; although some may argue that striving for this inclusivity has left behind those who still pay homage to a traditional Stellenbosch.

It was identified that fostering a sense of belonging would shift the perception of the *Matie* identity to one that is not singularly defined, but rather dynamic and diverse. Thus, the welcoming period was identified as the most strategic point of contact for the University for incoming students. These programmes, facilitated by the CSC, are fitting given the racial demographic fluctuations of newcomers in undergraduate accommodation. Furthermore, the programmes address the need to bridge the gap between the cultural differences of students, which their individual residences do not always have the capacity or understanding to do.

Although the *Residence Placement Policy* of 2013 sought to bridge the demographic gap and dismantle legacy placement, it brought about limited change within residence spaces. The *Language Policy* of 2017 was notably the most significant transformative effort by the University, as it addressed the inherent cultural dominance of Afrikaans at SU at a structural level. This fostered an enabling and all-inclusive multilingual environment. As has been previously discussed, this also evidently spread into the residence space which created conflicting conversations around the change in traditions. The tensions between seniors and residence leaders is indicative of the fact that not all students resonated with the shifting paradigm.

This conflict can be explained through the relationship between residences and the CSC. The CSC is tasked with implanting the University's values amongst the elected representatives of each residence by allowing them to build a framework for a responsible system to ensure a safe direct channel of communication to the University or to accountable structures. Arguably, there are downfalls to this, as there is inherent pressure to conform to the University's desired

framework and, thus, all the work done by these leaders is within the confines of the university's institutional culture.

In the case of SU, the role of visionary rectors led to adaptations to the institutional framework, but the shortcomings were made more apparent by student voices which mobilised and reacted to the slow pace of tangible change. In this regard, the individual can construct their own understanding of the *Matie* identity, but this does not necessarily remain at an individual level. The student protests were constructed around institutions and problems endemic to their environment. As a collective, they were able to incite discussion and debate in 2015-2016.

The locality of the institution and the variations of entrenched discriminatory traditions are also influenced by the spaces in which these institutions are positioned. This echoes the reflections of Foucault's heterotopias and the ways in which place informs identity. It is this that makes the *Matie* identity stand apart from the broader changes at institutions across the country.

It could be argued that individual experiences have necessitated the need to reappraise the *Matie* identity. This has led to a nuanced understanding of what it *cannot be*. How it is *to be* is in a constant state of flux and change. What has unfolded in the re-imagining of the *Matie* identity as an identity that, in the spirit of the Botman-era, fosters inclusivity. But, as was the case during the initial phases of De Villiers' tenure, debates ensured that questions should always be raised. In this regard, the *Matie* identity is still steeped in tradition, but a new tradition which dictates social awareness, positionality of the institution within a wider society and a concerted commitment to the principles of the constitution. Conversations were started, not shot down. It is within this framework that concerted efforts have been made to entrench a similar spirit with residence spaces. Historically, residences held on to the adages of tradition and further entrenched this within their own residence identity. These identities were at times at odds with the broader *Matie* identity but were more aligned to the same spirit of exclusivity and isolation. It is in the wake of this broader change that the outdated residence traditions and archaic welcoming practices, which enforced the old *Matie* spirit, resulted in strategies to change the residence space.

Theoretically, although there have been many policies implemented, these have evidently not resulted in complete change. The third chapter of this thesis examined the nature of interventions. In conjunction with examining the monitor reports, it connected and interpreted the change of residences' welcoming practices over time and explored how power and negotiation also shifted over time in the student community structures. Through this chapter it was made evident that universities are socially constructed, which defines their institutional structure and identity.

Although the CSC has emphasized student engagement at the core of what they do, this study has revealed that the negotiation between student leaders and staff within these communities has been leveraged to ensure the preservation of aspects of their traditions, which is further unveiled in chapter three. Essentially, the role of this group served as the institution's "watch-dog" to ensure the re-conceptualized efforts to creating a welcoming culture, as recommended by the 2013 Welcoming Culture Task Team and the 2014 *Inquiry into Unacceptable Welcoming Practices* Task Team. These efforts were realized and implemented within all student communities. This study has revealed that the monitor reports have been side-lined although they have endorsed the idea of progress within student communities. This study has, therefore, centralized these reports as a significant lens into the process of adapting practices amongst the residences sampled. Chapter 3 provided evidence on how residence-specific cultural traditions have led to transgressions against the desired *Matie* student.

This study has drawn attention to the orientation monitoring structure – as a tool to observe and evaluate the consistency in redress of residence culture at the institution. It has notably been an insurance policy for the degree to which the institution has been transparent in terms of transgressions which take place within residences. The monitoring group has also served to certify quality control and eliminate public scepticism of that which transpires "behind the walls". Although the University has claimed that the monitoring of welcoming activities has been instrumental in the advancement of its welcoming culture, it is still undetermined as to why there are gaps in the intervention of practices which have been exclusionary for years, and are thus unwelcoming.

It has been argued that, firstly, the task of ensuring compliance to transformation of the idealised *Matie* identity was largely spearheaded by institutional policies and the corresponding task teams appointed to ensure compliance. Secondly, the existence of residence-specific transgressions against *Matie* ideals clearly suggest that, despite the efforts of the aforementioned strategies and structures, residences operated as independent entities in the production of collective residence identities. This was not necessarily the result of poor leadership strategies but rather a continued presence of traditional norms promoted by seniors and alumni. In effect, they contribute to the transformative student experience but, arguably, serve as one of the greatest hindrances to fully realising the politically palatable *Matie* identity of the 21st century.

Throughout this investigation, it was fundamental to identify the structures that interconnected and revealed the systems and processes established to protect the rights of all students, and to work toward changing identified practices of concern. The Familiarization and Monitoring Working Group, established in 2003 and later known as Welcoming Monitors, were one of the monitoring and evaluating structures used to measure the progress of change within student community spaces – residences and PSOs specifically in the case of this study.

It is crucial to emphasize that the founding mandate of this committee was to be transparent and accountable to the broader University community and public. Although the mandate of the group is significant, it can be argued that the criteria for the formation of the monitoring groups ironically endorsed the hegemonic student culture of Stellenbosch University as adequate knowledge of student residence life, University values and policies was needed. This does somewhat limit the scope of scrutiny of the structure in question, but also serves as an insurance policy that the selected group recognizes the nuanced and complex nature of these student residence spaces.

The criteria also revealed the requirement of cautious observations of welcoming practices due to the paradoxical nature of identities. The formation of group identities has indicated its influence protecting and continuing the existing rhythm of the community and demonstrated the organization of a community around the demonstration of power. It can, therefore, be argued that the efforts by the Centre for Student Communities to create value-driven

communities has been fundamental to shift the worldview of the community to one where the actions and practices that were prescribed to foster the nature of the community coincided with the values that were chosen by the collective. Though, this has also indicated an institutional design of the *Matie* identity which evidently does not resonate within all in residence spaces, which is clear from the recurrence of unwelcoming practices within residence spaces.

This is proven through literature, as previously discussed, by social psychologist Jonathan Haidt who indicated that, to create a moral and ethical community, there needs to be an interlocking of values, virtues, norms, practices and identities to formulate cooperative societies. However, when individuals step out of the isolated “world” they find themselves in, they discover that morality involves more than one language. This is demonstrated through the collected experiences of various student leaders in numerous residences; these experiences showcase the complexity of trying to change the *status quo*.

The 2003 Van Zyl Slabbert report of the investigation into the SU *Residence and Campus Culture* propagated transformation initiatives on the campus. This report called to question the synthetic measurements of successful interventions in tackling change. The observations identified in this report inferred that institutional structures, such as the monitor group, were required to be more critical than ever of their observations and ensure that the relevant role players, systems and processes were involved to address signs of dissent. The Van Zyl Slabbert report further emphasized the necessity for increased training for student leaders to expose themselves to alternative mechanisms to implement in their environments to execute a welcoming programme free of initiation.

Over the years, the monitor structure focused on the effect of welcoming programmes rather than the planned intention. The monitor reports revealed the contradictory nature of their role: one was the threat of their credibility and legitimacy due to their lack of representation in the decision-making process of interventions taken toward certain practices. This garnered them the reputation of being the “watch-dogs” of the institution, as it has been perceived that they are merely informants to the University; serving to confirm the nature of a residence space and nothing more. The image and relation of the structure has influenced the effectiveness of

the role the structure served – and still serves – on the campus and the spaces the group has entered.

There is much scrutiny around the structure and the perception of monitors as a policing body. It cannot, however, be neglected to mention that the purpose of the monitor structure was to examine and report on practices within residence spaces, which clarified the residence culture of Stellenbosch University. Throughout the analysis of the monitor reports, it was evident that there was a lack of multicultural awareness within residence spaces on the premise of culture, language, religion, gender and race. Furthermore, the reports revealed that senior students are a consistent threat to changing practices within residence spaces as they safeguarded traditions.

A noticeable trend the reports have revealed is that residences have valued and fought to define the terms of negotiating change on their own terms, from year to year. This negotiation further raises the question as to whether values and practices have been misconstrued as a natural repercussion of suggested diverse social structures. The theory of heterotopic spaces explains the attachment of residence students to their traditions. The theory provides understanding that the “place” represents continuity and socially governs the behaviour of the individuals within the space and the sacrifices they are willing to make for the place. The encouragement of individual interests, forfeited for the larger interest of participating in traditions in order to be a part of the collective, is evident throughout the reports.

Chapter 3 revealed that change in residence spaces requires responsive behaviour from student leaders. The responsibility of the monitoring process is to critique practices and initiate conversations around the relevance of these practices according to the welcoming values – hospitality, friendliness, and human dignity – and to focus beyond intention to the effect of practices.

The reporting of these observations was intended to initiate a conversation and, thus, required a response from student leaders to reconceptualise their welcoming programmes and experiences. Trends in practices that have been identified from the monitor reports and required attention were: methods of intimidation to maintain the perception of power and control; the

degree to which value-driven leadership was embodied; the influence of seniors on the preservation of practices; and the implicit act of safeguarding traditions. These themes reveal the continuous shifting paradigm of residence culture, and that residences did acknowledge the need to create a welcoming culture that focused beyond the integration of newcomers in their allocated residence and beyond their integration into the University itself. Residence spaces served as an incubation system to foster professional and personal development of newcomers and to challenge their thought processes about pertinent issues. This was particularly apparent from 2015 onwards.

What is interesting about these communities is that they have fought to negotiate change on their own terms. Whether this has been done for their own interests or that of their students, is still to be determined. On the other end of the spectrum, there have been residences that have been beacons of transformative change in the hegemonic culture of the residence system.

What becomes apparent is that in some of these residence spaces, the *Matie* identity – which is structured around the institutional goals of transformation – can coexist and even drive the residence identity. This is quite apparent in the cases of Nerina and Metanoia. In more traditional male residences, longstanding traditions have proven more difficult to overcome and their identity is much more geared towards a residence identity than the broader *Matie* identity. This is made even more challenging when alumni have such intimate connections with the contemporary residence space. Furthermore, the combination of these factors, along with the desire of senior students to embrace traditional practices, has been the bane of irritation for many new student leaders attempting to effect change within these spaces. This creates a nuanced climate for negotiation and tension between leaders who have to negotiate change between their residence and the institution, and their students and the institution.

The student leader narratives of Chapter 4 are indicative of a fractured *Matie* identity. Although some narratives indicate support for the University's interventions, there are those who are not satisfied with the pace of change which borders on resistance; even though there is an evident hybrid of the *Matie* and residence identities which indicates a symbiotic relationship. At the same time, there is evident tension in this relationship. This leads to the negotiation of place, which either inspires the individual to transcend it or to sacrifice their individual interests and subject themselves to the space.

It has been argued that there is an inherent responsibility of the role student leaders should play in residence spaces. Although the monitoring and evaluation processes examines the space, this examination requires reflection. This demands a response to rectify the ambiguity of intent in residence practices which does not negate the outcome of their effect. The monitor reports offer the opportunity for leaders to co-create the space. As previously discussed, Wendelin Küper's *Integral Spheres of Responsibility* describes the responsibility of the individual to be aware and observant of the realities of an environment to recognise their social responsibility to the collective. This speaks to the responsibility of leaders who have greater burden of responsibility to their environment. It also indicates the value of engagement as, once the individual understands their responsibility, they can adopt the appropriate behaviour for specific actions of intervention.

Leaders within residence spaces – both staff and students – contribute to the construction of the culture and identity. As has been previously argued, narratives of institutional identity shape the socialisation of people within the space and what they are subjected to. This necessitates the need for structures of support and adequate institutional knowledge to apply the University's values in these spaces. The recommendations from the 2008 *Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions* indicated the need to formalise training of residential leadership. Student leadership at SU has been used as a vehicle for its social restructuring and the institutionalisation of its vision and mission. The way in which this knowledge is applied and manifested within residence spaces creates a convergence of power between all stakeholders involved.

It has been argued that these initiatives can easily be misconstrued to suit an institutional agenda, to foster conformity to the institution and present the façade of a united front between students and the University. It has been further argued that this can be considered a demonstration of the institution's investment in partnership formation for the benefit of the student community. Student leaders at SU are favourably positioned to collaborate directly with institutional stakeholders, although the lack of continuity leads to unsustainable interventions and initiatives. This further leads to complacency which opens the debate of whether the space has changed enough. An answer to this question depends on the individual's

worldviews and is shaped by various diversity indicators. This is indicative of the necessity of leadership to provide direction and create spaces for dissenting voices to be heard.

The narratives produced by the 16 respondents have challenged the dominant narrative of the institution. This has allowed the respondents to position themselves in contrast to the dominant discourse. Though fragmented, these snippets have reconceptualised notions on sense of place, space, and identity in which there have been overlaps and divergences. Respondents were asked to reflect on their first experiences with university residences, the climate on campus, their impressions of welcoming week, noteworthy shifts in residence practices and social interactions, and what intervention strategies were introduced and by whom. These reflections provided an experiential historical lens. The impression and experiences of these spaces was that they were socially constructed and intentional. To have a sense of belonging, it was necessary to try to recognise the residence's history, tradition and heteronormative culture. It is evident that although there was a theoretical understanding that the space was diverse, in terms of religion, race and gender, there was little intentionality to acknowledge that the desire to create an "equal" space neglected acknowledging the individual narratives.

There were numerous significant turning points and intervention strategies noted by the respondents. The shift in gender demographics in 1999-2000 demanded more space and initiated the construction co-ed residences and discussions on gender identity. In 2004, the commencement of Annual Year Discussions initiated a culture of conversation within residence spaces about the role values could play in socially restructuring these spaces. The conceptualization of the cluster system in 2008-2009 was to institute a peer driven accountability system and to challenge the homogenous nature of a residence identity to one that was dynamic and diverse.

Residence heads were a bone of contention for many respondents. Some have considered the role undefined, while others expressed that it is a facilitative and advisory role to encourage peer driven leadership. This is particularly necessary as students have indicated their disengagement from their environments over the years which indicates a lack of agency and citizenship. Alumni were considered a metaphorical negotiating tool for change by some respondents, and simply an advisory body of support in decision making for others.

Policies and movements played an evident role in instigating change within residence spaces. The 2013 *Residence Placement Policy* impacted diversity, language and socio-economic status of students entering residence spaces. Protest movements such as #OpenStellenbosch and #FeesMustFall have propelled transformation forward and expedited the pace of change at the institution. Despite residences adapting new philosophies of how to be a community, it has been considered that there is a lack of authenticity in their commitment. This expresses why there is an emphasis by the CSC on leadership to direct the implementation of change within these spaces. There is also the impression that change is suggestive within residence spaces and SU. It has also been discussed that residence spaces are places of learning which can explain the delayed process of change. It was expressed by one respondent that a residence is a space for the individual to discover themselves. This suggests that residence spaces are also unfiltered which feeds into the pace of change as they are self-negotiated alongside the collective.

The narratives of the respondents reflect divergent experiences and viewpoints. This indicates contradictory encounters which constitute transformation and enjoyable experiences. Firstly, there was consensus that adopting a more universal language policy indicated a willingness to embrace the diversity of the student community. Secondly, the implicit and explicit nature of welcoming practices which mirror subtle signs of initiation is still a contentious point. Evidently, given that the monitor structure is still a crucial structure, it alludes to the concerns of practices within these spaces. Thirdly, conflicting power dynamics seem prevalent. The relationship between leadership and seniors seems to constrain change in the space.

The greatest shift in conversations in residence spaces was attributed to student protests. These movements have signified the power of peer learning and facilitation. It necessitated the need to listen to the experiences of others and consider the responsibility of leaders to create learning spaces. The University has evidently provided a structural framework to manifest the ideal of residences being educational spaces. Though, ironically, protest action revealed tension between the methods of engagement of student activists and university management. These methods demonstrated a challenge toward the systematic and organised methods of engagement by the University and resulted in the emergence of more transparent modes of engagement.

Protest actions at SU were arguably labelled as more passive than similar actions at other institutions. This can be attributed to a focussed strategy to erode obstacles on campus. These methods prioritised conversation and were framed by narratives to create points of reference as to where and how systemic exclusion was manifested on the campus. The demands of these movements permeated through the institution and, even more so, in residence spaces.

Residence spaces are unscripted. The space is characterised as conversational which allows individual expression. Though the diversity of experiences and opinions is both a strength and weakness to progress. This creates a staggered progression of change, but it allows robust debate and dialogue. Observationally, there is a burden on student leaders, one which potentially fractures the student leadership experience. Leaders are often persecuted for not complying with the very system they are encouraged to challenge. There is an evident ambiguity in the relationship between the institution and its students, which is showcased in movements such as #OpenStellenbosch and #FeesMustFall. However, leadership within more formalised structures, such as residence spaces, creates a nuanced experience of the institution. These student-leaders are equipped with the institutional knowledge to understand the expectations of the institutions vision, mission, and values. It can be argued that these leaders subject themselves to a rhetoric which creates an impressionable and exclusive perception of leadership.

Stellenbosch University residence spaces are a collective-perpetuated system and symptomatic of the institution's culture. The *Matie* identity today can be characterised as a protest identity which consists of fractured opinions due the intersubjective nature of social interactions on the campus. This is framed by the way in which the student immerses him/herself and critically engages in the broader campus community with a clear understanding that traditions are indeed brittle and that we belong to a broader collective; a comprehensive heterotopia of shared space as described in the words of Foucault.

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