

**An examination of activism and ‘political listening’ during the year of
student protest at the University of Cape Town from 9 March 2015 to 9
March 2016**

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by

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A doctoral study is a long and earnest journey into unknown territories. Like in any long journey, the traveller, the author in this case, seldom travels alone and is also received by many hosts along the rocky and often treacherous pilgrimage. It is these traveller-to-traveller and traveller-to-host interactions that I want to particularly memorialise in this section.

There are many historical accounts of the interactions among travellers, and between travellers and their hosts. These relations between hosts and travellers have for centuries been held in such high regard, even in society's so-called underworld where, as the biblical saying goes, there is no honour among thieves. For example, when Kaplan and Durbo (2003) traced the roots of Japan's so-called honourable outlaws – the Yakuza – to the gamblers (bakuto) and peddlers (tekiya) of Japan's Tokugawa era, they discovered a system of travellers that was symbolic of the high regard the gamblers reserved for their fellow comrades-in-arms.

They explained:

Despite official cooperation by some groups, and occasional bloody disputes over territory by others, the early bakuto generally helped one another. Indeed, at times they resembled an **underworld mutual aid society**. Of particular note, was the bakuto system of "travellers", a custom by which itinerant gamblers would visit the boss of each region on their route, stay for several days, and receive a small amount of money for expenses. The traveller was treated with the great courtesy reserved for an invited guest: according to bakuto etiquette, although host and visitor were strangers, they were in the same profession. The travellers were among the most colourful of the Tokugawa era ... (Kaplan and Durbo, 2013:16).

Unlike in Kaplan and Durbo's (2013) account, my hosts, fellow travellers and I were not always in the same profession, but we were all part of the same journey in our own right. My hosts and fellow travellers were just as colourful in their support and advice and unmatched in their generosity.

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Abstract

This study sets out to examine democratic participation in South Africa and the role that ‘political listening’ could play in making participation more equitable. It considers protest action on a South African university campus, which at times not only resulted in significant and swift concessions from the university leadership but also sparked national political action which got an equally swift response from the South African government. It considers the social movement, the RhodesMustFall movement (RMF), as one way in which students can organise themselves to get a better hearing from the University of Cape Town (UCT) management in their attempt to make a meaningful contribution to the university’s micro democracy.

This study examines whether the interaction between the UCT management and RMF could be considered ‘political listening’, and the possible role of the *Cape Times* newspaper within this context of participation. Using data gathered through interviews, written communications, observation and newspaper articles, the study shows that in all of the interactions between RMF and the UCT management, both groups were seldom willing to forego their power to engage in genuine listening. Instead, the two parties guessed at what power the other party might have and acted to reduce that power. It is in this context of guessing at and figuring what power the other party has that listening occurs. Furthermore, the study shows that during the RMF protest, the UCT management viewed their responsibility for the institution mainly through the lens of Private Property Law which framed protest as something to be dealt with by restoring law and order. The study also details the role of the *Cape Times* newspaper in the interactions between RMF and the UCT management and considers if this role could be political listening. The study is exploratory and demonstrates how political listening could work more optimally in real-life instances.

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Acronyms

ANC	African National Congress
CMD	Communication and Marketing Department (UCT)
CPS	Campus Protection Services (UCT)
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DSA	Department of Student Affairs (UCT)
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (UCT)
EE	Equal Education
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
EU	Employee Union
FMF	Fees Must Fall movement
GSB	Graduate School of Business (UCT)
IAAC	Intersexuality Accountability Audit Committee (UCT)
IJR	Institute for Justice and Reconciliation
INMSA	Independent News and Media South Africa
MK	uMkhonto we Sizwe
NEHAWU	National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
POPS	Public Order Policing Services
RMF	Rhodes Must Fall movement
SANCO	South African National Civic Organization
SAPS	South African Police Services
SASCO	South African Students Congress
SASO	South African Student Organisation
SETT	Senior Executive Task Team (UCT)
SJC	Social Justice Coalition
SPRM	Ses'khona Peoples Rights Movement
SMSC	Sekunjalo Marine Service Consortium
SRC	Student Representative Council

STC	Strategy and Tactics Committee
SU	Stellenbosch University
TAC	Treatment Action Campaign
UCT	University of Cape Town
UCTAU	University of Cape Town Academics Union
UCTABA	University of Cape Town Association of Black Alumni
UCTEU	University of Cape Town Employees Union
UFS	University of the Free State
UWC	University of the Western Cape
VC	Vice-Chancellor
VCMAG	Vice-Chancellor's Management Advisory Group (UCT)
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand
WOAC	Works of Art Committee (UCT)

Chapter 1: Introduction and context of research

“Democracy is when the indigent, and not the men [or women] of property, are the rulers” –

Aristotle.

1.1. Introduction

This study examined the relevance and efficacy of the theory of ‘political listening’ during protest action on a South African university campus. It used the RhodesMustFall movement’s (RMF) protest action at the University of Cape Town (UCT), the resultant interaction with the UCT management, along with the *Cape Times* newspaper’s involvement as a player in the unfolding of the study and coverage by the *Cape Argus* newspaper, as a case study to examine the role of political listening during these highly politicised moments¹.

1.2. Research questions

This study will attempt to answer the following questions:

- In considering the examples of protests that led to demands being met, are there any indicators that political listening took place? If so, what were some of the characteristics of these protest moments? What were the outcomes of these moments?
- Were there other moments in which protests led to what the protesters would consider successful outcomes without anything like political listening taking place? If so, what would account for the success of these outcomes?

¹ For my Master of Arts thesis, I investigated the interaction between Equal Education (EE) and learners in the struggle for equality in basic education in post-apartheid South Africa and whether that interaction could be considered ‘political listening’ in that it operates in such a way as to allow young people who are seriously disadvantaged by the public education system to nevertheless speak out and act as citizens. I treated this case as an example of citizen participation in democratic processes in highly unequal social circumstances. I also examined the news coverage of the social movement in the *Cape Argus* and the *Cape Times* newspapers and discussed the relationship between EE and the media with both members of EE and journalists to consider the role of the news media within a context in which it is vital that the national government address the severe inequities of the education system. The current study is a departure from the ideal **listening context of Master’s** study to a highly conflictual listening during student protest. Although the current study leans on the methodological work done in the **Master’s**, **the two studies are independent** of each other.

- When protest actions took place that did not have positive outcomes from the perspective of student protestors, what might explain this? Was there a failure of political listening (a communication breakdown); and what are other explanations for these failed protests?

1.3. The focus of the study

The study focused on RMF's protest campaigns, which took place between 9 March 2015 and 9 March 2016. At times, these campaigns not only resulted in significant and swift concessions from the university leadership but also sparked national political action which got an equally swift response from the South African government. The three RMF protest actions, the mediation between RMF and UCT management, and relations between members of RMF, were examined. Each of these focus areas is presented in detailed stand-alone analysis chapters. The first protest action examined was the 2015 protest against the statue of Cecil John Rhodes at UCT's Upper Campus. Through this campaign, RMF demanded changes in the university's symbolic material (names of buildings and roads, artworks and statues on campus), an increase in black academic staff representation, the decolonisation of the university's curricula, and an improved student financial aid system, improved facilities which deal with sexual assault and psychological trauma, and an end to outsourcing of workers at the university. The second protest action considered was the historic 2015 student protest against the proposed university fee increases (better known as FeesMustFall protest). Thirdly, the protest against the lack of sufficient accommodation at UCT at the beginning of the 2016 academic year is examined. Although the protest action against the university's policy of outsourcing workers culminated in the historic decision for UCT to abandon this policy, it will not be examined as part of this thesis due to the lack of sufficient interview data to give the campaign the thorough and detailed treatment that all the other campaigns received². Fourthly, I chose to interrogate the mediation between RMF and the UCT management, facilitated by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR). Fifthly, it would be remiss to investigate RMF's activities and not consider the interaction and relations within

² Although the campaign against outsourcing was one of RMF's key campaigns, it is not covered in this thesis due to difficulty in securing interviews with key individuals in that campaign. It is my hope that this campaign will be included as a chapter when I publish this thesis as a book upon being conferred with a doctoral degree that this study is a requirement for.

RMF given the diversity of groups that made up the social movement and its success in getting the media and the world to pay attention to its activities. It is important to assess how the movement took decisions given its flat leadership structure and the diversity of student interest groups it represented. These protest campaigns, the mediation and the chapter on interaction within RMF will be presented in the chronological order in which they occurred.

I chose Bickford's (1996) theory of 'political listening' to examine protest action because of the theory's focus on communication between citizens/political actors during highly conflictual moments and its concern with making democratic politics truly representative of all citizens. This theory is premised on the conflict being inevitable because human beings are inherently different. Bickford argued for a particular kind of politics that is "constituted neither by consensus nor community, but by the practices through which citizens argue about interests and ends – in other words by communication" (1996:11). Citizenship in this sense is not merely a legal status that one assumed by residing in a particular country, but a practice that crucially entailed an engagement in political talk with others in the political realm.

I chose to examine moments of protest because of the protest's long history as a vehicle for practising citizenship in South Africa. Protest is arguably the most popular form of expression for citizens who feel as though their voices are not being heard by decision-makers in South Africa. Protest, by its nature, represents highly conflictual political moments. Mapping political listening to these moments of protest at UCT not only revealed the kind of communication that leads to positive and negative outcomes but also offered real-life lessons on how democratic politics unfold. The kind of listening that occurred during these highly conflictual moments tested and expanded on the circumstances the theory was designed to address. This study is particularly important in the case of South Africa, given the popularity of, and citizens' over-reliance on, protest to get their voices heard.

Although this is a Journalism and Media Studies thesis, I did not study the media as simply a platform for everyone to speak, but I wanted to explore the nature of relations between those who speak and those who listen as mediated by the media. This is partly because of the unequal distribution of power in both 'voice' and 'listening' as mediated by the media (Dreher, 2012; Couldry, 2009; Friedman, 2011). Often those who hold positions of power are given a voice and listened to by mainstream media to the detriment of those who are marginalised. Studying the media as a platform for everyone to speak overlooks this nuance

and has the potential to perpetuate the unequal distribution of media attention given to powerholders and the powerless in society. In this regard, I chose to solely focus on the *Cape Times* newspaper's coverage of RMF activities at UCT because a reporter this newspaper decided to cover almost all of the social movement's activities and in this way another dimension entered into the study which was that of sympathetic and unsympathetic media attention.

The other rationale for choosing to focus on the nature of relations between those who speak and those who listen as mediated by the media was the fact that the mainstream media has a history of focusing on violence and portraying protesting citizens as homogenous violent mobs with little regard for the issues being raised through protest. Given that this is a thesis that looks into a social movement that used protest and disruption as a strategy to get a hearing, it is important to focus on the interaction between those who were protesting and those with decision-making power. It is also equally important to also focus on the interactions between members of RMF itself because this movement is also famous for protesting against itself.

This study treated UCT as a micro-democracy which is a reflection of power relations within the broader South African society where power is stratified along race, class and gender lines, accompanied by ritualized citizen participation that does not have an impact on decision-making and which often results in protest. This characterization of UCT as a "microcosm of power relations in South African society where power remains vested in a hierarchy along grounds of race and gender" (Omar, 2015:2) is also important because RMF had considerations of race and gender at the centre of its ideology; and the movement spoke out explicitly on issues of both race and gender. As a mini-state, UCT has its own Traffic Department, policing staff and investigators, its own 'justice system', and constantly sets up Task Teams (which are the equivalent of government commissions) to investigate and make recommendations. This characterisation of UCT as a mini-state is particularly important because RMF's protest at UCT also escalated to the national level (through the Fees Must Fall protest) and inspired similar protests internationally.

However, this study acknowledges that campus-based politics and the national political sphere, as Luescher-Mamashela (2011:5) explained, are distinct domains in which students participated. This study was interested in campus-based political involvement with a specific

focus on protest. I contend that RMF's activities at UCT should be located within the broader context of democracy and participation in South Africa even though the activities being studied took place within a higher education institution. This is partly because higher education institutions have proven to be the place where students learn to practice their citizenship. Furthermore, just as is the case for the country, protest is also an important feature of South Africa's higher education. Likewise, not enough attention has been paid to how decisions are taken during protests in higher education institutions. While it is tempting to consider RMF's activities at UCT as random episodes of protest, I contend that these activities should be located within the broader scope of participation in democracy. Positioning protest this way contextualises the phenomenon and acknowledges its role as a vehicle for practising citizenship within a democracy. I will now discuss the citizenship and democracy nexus in South Africa to paint a picture of the broader national context within which RMF and UCT are located.

1.4. Democracy, participation and citizenship in South Africa

The link between participation and democracy is a normative one based on what participation ought to contribute positively to democracy. It is based on the assumption that "participation by civil society can only be a good thing in terms of the products of participation – that is, more deliberative institutions which better represent the needs of all, especially poorer communities" (Thompson, 2007:96). Furthermore, Hilmer (2010:56) points out that participatory democracy has greater benefits for citizens in that they get a say on decisions that have an impact on their everyday lives. Participation empowers citizens to take greater control of the social, political and economic institutions that have an impact on their lives. Hilmer provides a comprehensive summary of the benefits of participatory democracy: "frequent participation in self-governance increases citizens' sense of political efficacy and empowerment; the frequent participation in self-government produces a more politically astute citizenry; the expansion of democratic participation into traditionally non-participatory sectors of society tends to break the monopoly of state power and engender a more equitable and humane society" (2010:56).

Heller (2012) argued that South Africa had a high degree of representative electoral democracy but a low citizen participation rate in that democracy. The country's democracy

would only be strengthened by citizens' ability to practice citizenship and to participate in both the daily governance issues and democratic processes in a manner that elicits real consequences (Wasserman, 2013). Habib (2013) contended that a viable democratic system did not exist in South Africa. Electoral democracy had been a single-party race since the first democratic elections in 1994. The transition to democracy also saw the previously strong civil society organisations, such as the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO) and Community Policing Forum (CPF), dismantled, some absorbed into the ruling party and others caving under pressure from the ruling African National Congress "leaving a vacuum of authority" (Glaser, 1997:7). Heller concluded that although the *status* of citizenship is guaranteed in South Africa – in the sense that all citizens are guaranteed all rights, can vote and electoral democracy is guaranteed – the *practice* of citizenship is not (Heller, 2009). Ordinary citizens find it difficult to engage with the state in a manner that translates into having an effect on decision-making processes about issues that affect their lives.

By **status of citizenship**, Heller (2009) referred to the guarantee of the basic structures of electoral democracy and basic rights, free will, freedom of association and a vote. The **practice of citizenship**, on the other hand, is when citizens can participate in decision-making processes about issues that affect them and public policy issues (Heller, 2009). He further explained that the distinction between the two was necessary because representative democracy in the developing world is often confused with effective citizenship. In a higher education context, the status of citizenship would refer to all the privileges that come with being a student, such as voting for the Student Representative Council (SRC), the right to be educated and an expectation for the university to provide a conducive learning environment. The practice of citizenship would refer to participation in decisions about who teaches, what is taught, the nature of the space where one is taught, who is accommodated in university residences, how the residences are run and who is admitted to study at the university.

Similarly, Dahlgren distinguished between **received citizenship** and **achieved citizenship** (Dahlgren, 2009:62-63). By received citizenship, he referred to formal citizenship because it is guaranteed by the state, while achieved citizenship is an attained set of practices and approaches citizens used to make claims. This distinction, argued Dahlgren, is necessary because state-based citizenship (or received citizenship) is often the necessary pre-condition for achieved citizenship, which is agency-based. In a university environment, being a registered student enables one to make claims and to participate in decision-making, except in

the case of the annual protest against the implementation of fee increases that have usually happened before students register for the new academic year in previously black universities. A protest by someone who is not a registered student can easily be dismissed as trespassing.

There is a “bifurcation of civil society” in South Africa between those who are organised, into labour movements, non-governmental organisations and social movements, and those who are not (Heller, 2009:144). Citizens who are affiliated with organised groups have a better chance of engaging the state than citizens who are not organised. The most notable example of superior engagement with the state was the Treatment Action Campaign in its fight for the mass distribution of antiretroviral drugs (Robins, 2006). The unorganised citizens are usually poor rural and township dwellers. For these unorganised members of civil society, there are fewer points of contact between them and the state and there is a lack of a set procedure that they can follow to engage the state (Heller, 2012). With a narrow possibility for voice or intervention they “have increasingly resorted to contentious action, including widespread ‘services protests’ that have become South Africa’s most challenging political problem” (Heller, 2012:658).

For the poor and mostly uneducated rural and township dwellers, civic participation not only means mastery of the English language but also learning bureaucratic language and procedures. Robins et al. (2008) argue that language used for participation plays a deciding role in formal democratic institutions or state-provided spaces. The linguistic codes and tools that are used to communicate in these spaces are inaccessible to those who have no engagement experience and who are not trained to take part in ‘disciplined’ engagement. Those who are not familiar with this mode of engagement are often regarded as “incoherent and unruly” (Robins et al., 2008:1082). One option that might guarantee effective engagement or get their voices heard is through representation by ‘educated’ members of their societies who can understand the bureaucratic language required. These elite citizens act as the go-between for both the state and its poor citizens. They relay democratic messages from their poor communities to the state and from the state to these communities. This is the role that Equal Education played as a go-between for learners and the national Department of Basic Education in South Africa. However, in emerging democracies, elite citizens who are part of civil society can also play a repressive role. Robins et al. (2008:1083) argue that civil society in developing countries is made up of a group of elite, middle-class citizens whose views masquerade as the views of all citizens. In the South African university context that

this study is focusing on, students create various student movements that lobby for certain issues on behalf of students who are unable to get their voices heard in the corridors of power. In the case of UCT, lobbying seems to happen on three fronts. First, the movements raise their issues with the SRC for these issues to be taken through the university's formal decision-making structures. This is a common tactic used by student political parties and movements whose members have been elected to SRC office. Second, some movements lobby university management directly through protest to get a hearing on issues. Third, some of these movements try to win the sympathies of the broader university community and the public. Such movements or student formations tackle issues of national and international significance without engaging with the SRC or university management.

Voltmer (2010:139) argues that “the ability and willingness of the citizens to engage in political life alongside the quality of public communication play an important part in strengthening the link between those in power and the citizenry”. Dahlgren (2009:63) argues that it is only when people see themselves as citizens with the agency that they can act as citizens. In other words, citizens have to see themselves as being capable of making claims or having social agency. A recognition of this ability is particularly important in a higher education context for two reasons. One, students' time at a university is temporary, meaning that they are only at the institution for the duration of their qualifications in which the timeframe of completing that qualification is also regulated. Two, what is in the domain of what students can change and how they can change them is greatly regulated at a university level. Universities have rules stipulating what students can and cannot do as contained in the Student Code of Conduct. A recognition of one's agency is necessary to push the boundaries of the Code of Conduct and fight for change that could outlast a student's time at university. Put differently, student activism for policy change within a university could mean transgressing the Code of Conduct, which could lead to disciplinary hearings. It is this kind of activism and protest that I am considering for this study.

Dahlgren (2009:57) argues for a view of citizenship that not only sees the notion as a “formal, legal set of rights and obligations” but also as a “mode of social agency” and as a subjective identity that resonates with other elements of identity. This view of citizenship draws on the work of TH Marshall who developed the three dimensions of citizenship: “the civil, which aims to guarantee the basic legal integrity of society's members; the political, which serves to ensure the rights associated with democratic participation; and the social,

which addresses the general life circumstances of individuals” (Dahlgren, 2009:58). In a higher education context, this conception of citizenship means that students not only have the right to participate in electing the SRC every year, but they also have the right to participate in decision-making over such matters that have an impact on their lives as university students.

Isin and Nielsen (2008) and Isin (2008) explained that a study into citizenship does not mean reducing it to an investigation into either status or practice. But it is rather “a focus on those acts when, regardless of status and substance, subjects constitute themselves as citizens or, better still, as those to whom the right to have rights is due” (Isin and Nielsen, 2008:2). It is through acts that citizens are constituted. Isin (2008:39) refers to “acts of citizenship” as “acts that transform forms (orientations, strategies, technologies) and modes (citizens, strangers, outsiders, aliens) of being political by bringing into being new actors as activist citizens (claimants of rights and responsibilities) through creating new sites and scales of struggle”. To investigate acts of citizenship is to study their grounds and consequences which include the formation of activist citizens. The distinction between activist citizens and active citizens is that the former takes part in “writing scripts and creating the scene” while the latter merely “follow scripts and participate in scenes that are already created” (Isin, 2008:38). Certain actions can be considered acts of citizenship even when they may be considered irresponsible or be in direct contravention of the law. This means that acts do not have to be legal to be considered acts of citizenship, what matters is that citizens are making a claim (Isin, 2008). This is important in that many of RMF’s activities being considered in this study are in contravention of the university’s Code of Conduct³ which the students are supposed to abide by.

But in South Africa, participation in democracy and decision-making occurs in seven modes (Booyesen, 2008). These are participation in core institutions; elections and voting; civil society in advocacy and challenge; extended community engagement, access and participation; co-optive or co-operative participation driven from the centre; protest action and communicative participation (Booyesen, 2009:8-10). These modes of participation have

³ The Student Code of Conduct regulates behaviour of students and prohibits the obstruction, disruption or interference with the teaching, research, administrative, custodial or other functions of the University. With this broad list prohibition, it would be impossible for students to behave politically without contravening the Code of Conduct.

manifested themselves since the transition to democracy in 1994 in response to the entrenchment of democracy and its slow impact on social transformation. These modes, which encompass both top-down participation driven by officials and bottom-up led by ordinary citizens, are not mutually exclusive and often citizens use them interchangeably depending on the nature of the goal of participation (Booyesen, 2009:9). For this thesis, I will only discuss protest as a form of participation because of its significance to the study and repeated use by students at UCT in the period that I am focusing on for this study. It is through protest that the RhodesMustFall movement seems to have managed to get the UCT leadership to respond to its demands and issues. I contend that the wave of protest which started on 9 March 2015 and continues to this day at UCT has its roots in the broader South African society's use of protest to get a better hearing by those in power.

1.4.1. Protest as a form of participation in the South African democracy

Duncan defines protest as “expressive acts that communicate grievances through disruption of existing societal arrangements” (2016:1). These acts include occupations, marches, disrupting meetings, strikes, jamming shopping tills and other modes, and they are common in day-to-day South Africa. She further points out that protest is used by citizens as a last resort. There should be little need for protest in a functioning participatory democracy where public representation and participation are foregrounded both at the local and national government levels, as is the case in South Africa (Duncan, 2016).

But protest is deeply embedded in South African society with its history of apartheid. Historically, protest has been a seminal method used by South Africans to forge democracy and therefore its continuance in the post-apartheid era has a generational character. Although the roots of protest as political action go as far back as the 19th century, in the 1980s, through the United Democratic Front (UDF) and Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), protest worked as a participatory and democracy-creating process (Petrus and Isaacs-Martin, 2011). Over the years, protest in South Africa has “acquired certain identifiable characteristics that could be likened to the characteristics of culture” (Petrus and Isaacs-Martin, 2011:52). In this protest ‘culture’, members of a protesting group not only learn specific ways of carrying out protest from the previous generation through enculturation, but they also share common values, perceptions and attitudes, which elicit common behavioural responses. The violent actions associated with contemporary protest in South Africa are also rooted in the culture of

apartheid-era resistance. That is, “under the influence of the same value system that justified violence against the apartheid regime, strike and protest groups in contemporary South Africa continue to use violence as a symbol of the struggle against injustice and inequality, which symbolise the ‘new apartheid’” (Petrus and Isaacs-Martin, 2011:58). Perhaps the most identifiable feature of protest in South Africa is the burning of tyres and government infrastructure, which has become a distinguishing characteristic of the so-called ‘service delivery protest’. Until 2015, student protest, on the other hand, was characterised by forcing university operations to stop as opposed to destroying university infrastructure.

Protests also create an alternative space for public participation. It is in the processes and build-up to protest where the culture and practice of participatory governance can be strengthened and expanded, as was the case in the apartheid era. While this phenomenon has been growing in intensity, Ramjee et al. argue that “there does not seem to be an explicit recognition from the state that these organic spaces of voice expression are an important feature of a vibrant local democracy” (2011:24). There seems to be a reluctance by the state to recognise activities which occur outside the formal structures of public participation as legitimate expressions of voice and agency in a democracy (Ramjee et al., 2011).

Duncan argues that protest actions are more than just an important form of democratic expression, they have a significant purpose as “communicative acts that disrupt the everyday functioning of society to draw attention to grievances” (2016:vii). Viewed this way, protest not only challenges power relations but it shifts the balance of power to ordinary people at a grassroots level giving them a voice and often guaranteeing a hearing by those in power. It is an expressive medium of choice for the poor and voiceless because it provides an opportunity for direct and often a relatively unmediated form of expression for those whose issues might not otherwise be afforded attention. It is this role of protest as an expressive mode that makes the right to protest important enough to be protected given South Africa’s high level of inequality and limited access to the media and civic society (Duncan, 2016).

Brown argues that “politics occur when a group that has not been recognised as belonging to the social order acts as if it nonetheless has a place, acting as if it were equal to those already empowered, challenging the naturalness of the order, and exposing its contingency” (2015:5). This argument stems from Ranciere’s postulation that politics only starts when people disrupt an established order by making claims based on equality. In other words, politics happens

when people demand to be recognised as citizens or as having as equal a stake as other citizens. It is this assertion of agency that brings politics to life.

Protest has been a distinctive feature of the South African political sphere both during the apartheid years and in the post-1994 era. As a mechanism and tactic for the marginalised majority in society to react to the workings of power it spans the years of anti-apartheid action and the era of constitutional governance. In particular, theorists of social movements and dissent have remarked that since 2004 – ten years into democracy – protest increased dramatically (Alexander, 2010; Atkinson, 2007; Booysen, 2007; Pithouse 2007) and spiked in 2012 (De Visser and Powell, 2012), a year after local government elections. There were 28 protests per month in the first eight months of 2012 as compared to 11 protests per month from 2007 to 2011 (De Visser and Powell, 2012), underlining the fact that protest has not dissipated with the entrenching of democracy, as was generally expected. The effectiveness of protest can be assessed by observing the response that it elicits. It is protest's success in getting a response from powerholders that, according to Nielsen, "even if citizens had not directly participated in the protest, they would rate protest on par with voting in terms of leveraging service" (Booyesen, 2009:17).

Prominent protest scholar and sociologist, Peter Alexander (2012), contends that South Africa is arguably the "protest capital of the world". He calls protest "the rebellion of the poor" (2010:31). This 'rebellion' intensified between 2009 and 2012. According to police statistics, there were just under 22 000 protests for this period – which comes down to an average of 2.9 protests a day for three years, although the bulk of these protests happened in the first eight months of 2012 (Alexander, 2012). However, these police statistics are derived from instances where people requested permission from the police for a gathering for such gatherings to comply with the Regulation of Gatherings Acts. Brown (2015) explains that what police classify as a protest in the statistics above demonstrate the diversity of political actors in the South African political sphere. These actors include those who are organised into church groups, community groups, trade unions, student movements and other groupings. Brown argues that what has been classified (at least in police statistics) as protest in South Africa captures "a snapshot of a dynamic in the country's politics: of a relationship between political expression and repression that is not resolved – and is, possibly, unresolvable" (Brown, 2015:16).

There are a growing number of theorists who view protest as not only an integral part of South Africa's particular form of democracy but also as a necessary and inclusive form of political participation for the marginalised. Duncan's approach to protest is important in understanding moments of protest within the South African context. She defines protest as "gatherings that are directed towards state institutions or other power holders, and that seek to influence or contest decisions made by them" (Brown, 2015:16). This definition locates protest squarely within politics of public engagement where protest can best be understood as "formal politics conducted through informal means" (Brown, 2015:16). Booysen, who views protest as playing an integral role to the country's democracy, argues that protest is an "unconventional" form of political participation, and as such it provides a vehicle for poor, marginalised and voiceless citizens to make enough noise to be heard (2009:17). Robins and Von Lieres (2009) takes this argument a step further by arguing that not only do such forms of participation support and strengthen democracy but they also serve as the much-needed link between marginalised citizens and state institutions. When formal structures fail, "the poor use extremely innovative strategies, which create alternative channels and spaces to assert their rights to the city, negotiate their wants, and actively practice their citizenship" (Miraftab and Willis, 2005:207).

It is this positioning of protest as a form of participation and a vehicle for political expression for citizens whose voices are not heard or taken seriously that makes the phenomenon an important feature of democracy. Miraftab explains that protest, in South Africa's democracy, should be viewed as "part of a broader repertoire of political expression, one among many different forms of politics that may be made use of by a wide range of groups at any given time" (in Brown, 2015:18). Piven and Cloward agree with Miraftab's view on protest and argue that the phenomenon is distinct from other forms of political expression because it is "**contentious** and **conflictual**" (in Brown, 2015:19). These two defining characteristics of protest play a fundamental role in asserting the phenomenon as a political act. As Brown points out:

...unlike participation in official institutions, for example, the urgency, solidarity, and militancy that conflict generates lends movements distinctive capacities as political commentators. At least for a brief time, marches and rallies, strikes and shutdowns, can break the monopoly on political discourse otherwise held by politicians and the mass media. This is protest's significance: it is the form of political activity that is most likely to open up new possibilities for action on the part of the state (Brown, 2015:19).

Since the transition to democracy in South Africa, citizens have used various conventional forms of participation to get a hearing from the government. Booysen explains that as trust in elections and formal democratic institutions dwindled in the second decade of South Africa's democracy, there was a growing belief that it was necessary "to use unconventional forms of public participation to achieve two principal goals: to pressure public representatives to improve the representation of citizen interests, and for citizens to focus government's attention on continuous deprivation, despite progress in delivery" (Booyesen, 2009:17). Chipkin (2013) agrees with other theorists paying attention to protest that it is inequality that drives such actions, but he goes further by claiming that protest is also the process through which 'the people' of democracy are formed and that therefore a necessary process of citizenship formation is taking place within the phenomenon. Chipkin argues that protests are "moments of often violent insurgency by people 'calling out' or speaking directly in their own name" (2013:6). It is in these moments of insurgency where "democracy's people" are constituted, Chipkin claims (2013:6). In other words, it is only in the moment when the masses "seek to rule in their own name" or when they evoke the notion of 'people's power' that they become a 'people' (2013:6).

Cottle (2008:854) contends that protest is not only important for the development of democracy but it is a phenomenon through which democracy is enacted. In liberal democracies, like South Africa, protest "constitute(s) a bridge helping to overcome possible disconnects between publics, opinion formation and policy-makers" (Cottle, 2008:854). Democracy is a process of "hearing stakeholders and resolving conflict through inclusive and empowered processes of collective decision-making" (D'Arcy, 2014:5). This is an idealised view of what democracy should be. In practice, there are factors such as power relations and institutional failure to accommodate citizen voices into decision-making processes. Viewed this way, democracy is undermined when citizens are denied a voice (D'Arcy, 2014:5). Though an important vehicle for voice, protest often results in violence and violent confrontations with the police.

Petrus and Isaacs-Martin (2011:58) argue that the kind of violence that is associated with contemporary protest in South Africa resembles the violence used in the struggle against apartheid. Violence, as a form of retaliation against the state, became not only a justifiable response to a repressive regime but also an acceptable response against dehumanising violence. However, violence as a symbol of resistance against the apartheid system has

become internalised through enculturation. Petrus and Isaacs-Martin sum up the use of violence in contemporary South Africa well when they argue that “For strike and protest groups, violence symbolises a particular value system inherited from anti-apartheid struggle culture, a justifiable means of reacting to the structural violence of an unjust system that exploits and undermines the dignity of South African citizens, and a means of communicating the frustrations of the striking or protesting groups” (2011:58).

In addition, Duncan (2016:2) points out that many protestors she interviewed for her book, have argued that “peaceful forms of protest do not work, as the state simply ignores them”. As a result of this perception, South African activists choose more disruptive modes of protest. Though these can put the protesters at the risk of police/state repression the trade-off for these activists is that the media will pay attention to such extreme acts and powerholders will listen (Duncan, 2016:2). Viewed in this way, protest presents an important duality for listening. It demonstrates that the onus is not just on the powerful to respond but it is also important for the less powerful to have a voice and be heard.

1.4.2. Characteristics of protest

In her analysis of the Zapatista Movement in Mexico and the anti-globalisation movements in the United States, Ruiz (2014:86-87) argues that the choice of the location where the protest is to take place and walking (or marching there) are important features of a protest. The location where the protest is taking place is important for symbolic purposes. When a movement undertakes protest in prominent sites or sites that are associated with major political and or political events that act shifts the movement “from a marginal position on the edge of national debates to and to occupy, albeit temporarily, the mainstream arena of power” (Ruiz, 2014:86). The act of walking or marching as a group to the location of the protest is equally as important. Ruiz (2014:87) argues that walking in this context is symbolic of the protesters ‘lack of a place’ and their quest for a socially and politically better place in an attempt to move from the periphery to the political mainstream.

Other characteristics can be observed during the protest itself. Protests are usually led by the movement’s most vocal or recognisable members (Ruiz, 2014:89). These leaders (and other participants) usually carry banners which articulate their demands and what the protest is about. The leaders are followed by a group of less-known protesters who are usually organised into groups/subsections of organisations they belong to. Their banners pronounce

the organisations they belong to. Ruiz (2014:89) points out that the division of protesters into subsections during a protest follows the hierarchy of demonstrations where protests are “headed by the most committed local activists who are then followed by less active core supporters”. Non-affiliated individuals are left to follow at their back with their placards demonstrating support (ibid). The written text is important to protest. Ruiz (2014:89) explains:

Political ends tend to be articulated via banners, placards and flyers which spell out the protesters’ demands. Pamphlets and leaflets offering a more detailed account of the demonstrations aims are also distributed amongst the crowd in the hope that these text-based forms of communication will initiate dialogue between activists and non-activist members of the community (Ruiz, 2014:89).

Writing about protest in South Africa, Petrus and Isaacs-Martin (2011:50) argue that reliance on protest as a tool to get powerholders to listen has resulted in South Africans developing characteristics of protest that could be likened to a culture. Just like in a culture of a particular group, members of a protesting group or a movement share common values, attitudes and perceptions that lead them into taking part in a protest. Examples of such protesting groups with shared values and perceptions would be social movements such as the Unemployed People’s Movement and Abahlali baseMjondolo. Another characteristic of culture is that it is learned through enculturation. The post-apartheid forms of protest in South Africa have been inherited from the protest culture of the apartheid era. Petrus and Isaacs-Martin (2011:52) argue that “the use of violence, the destruction of property and the burning of tyres and blocking roads were very much part of protest activities during the apartheid period”. The difference is that the new generation of activists is not homogenous, unlike groups that were unified by protest against the apartheid regime. However, most protests in post-apartheid South Africa are led by new social movements.

1.4.3. Social movements and protest in South Africa

Social movements have long been rooted in South African society. In apartheid South Africa, citizens organised themselves through social movements. Many social movement theorists have come up with several definitions of these movements focusing on different aspects. Ballard et al.’s (2006) and Tarrow’s (1994) definitions of social movements provide a starting point for understanding social movements.

Ballard et al define social movements as “politically and or socially directed collectives, often involving multiple organisations and networks, focused on changing one or more elements of

the social, political and economic system within which they are located” (2006:3). Furthermore, Ballard et al. (2005:617) explain that these movements are usually located in civil society where they make claims on behalf of those who are unable to represent themselves. These movements are agents of democracy and they often use their legal resources to force the government to respond to the plight of the poor. Their membership can be formal or informal and scattered across a geographical landscape (ibid). Tarrow, on the other hand, defines a social movement as a group of people with common purposes and solidarity, who mount a collective challenge against elites and those who are in power, through sustained interaction (1994:4). Tarrow also identifies four characteristics that define a social movement. These are collective challenge, common purpose, solidarity and sustained interaction.

Social movement theorists Della Porta and Diani view the ultimate goal of the social movement as having a say on policy by convincing powerholders. Some movements are more successful than others in capturing the attention of or pressurising institutions that are responsible for implementing laws and policies. These movements are also instrumental in appealing against government decisions on behalf of civil society. In their constant interaction with the government, they represent themselves as “institutions of democracy from below” (Roth, 1994 cited in Della Porta and Diani, 1999:237).

Many social movement theorists have argued that emotions play a significant role in social movement mobilisation and actions (Aminzade and McAdam, 2001; Jasper 1998 and 2011; Brown and Pickerill, 2009; Zembylas, 2013). These theorists argue that ignoring the role of emotions when studying social movements could risk misunderstanding the dynamics of collective action itself. Earlier studies on social movements and their activities assumed that emotions and rationality were incompatible (Aminzade and McAdam, 2001:107). This assumption led to a narrow focus on emotions during what has been characterised as outbursts of protest. Jasper (2011:286) points out that historically, the role of emotions in social movements has been overlooked. Although emotions play a significant role in the success or failure of movements’ mobilisation, strategy and success, it has only been examined in relation to social movements in the last decade and a half. Chatterton (2006:260) explains that “by acknowledging that protest encounters are emotionally laden, relational, hybrid, corporeal and contingent, possibilities open up for breaking the silences that divide us and overcoming ontological divisions such as activist and non-activist. From the

conversations, questions arise such as what roles do we adopt in protest situations, what are our emotional responses, and how can we go beyond pre-determined identities and problematize our identities?" (Chatterton, 2006: 260). Cox (2009:52) argues that it was erroneous to separate emotions from social movements. Although emotions can be used to maintain the status quo, they are also a powerful force in challenging the status quo. Wilkinson (2009:36) argues that social movements use emotions to mobilise greater support in society.

Social movements have the potential to challenge the state's hegemony but their success partly depends on the number of people they can mobilise (Thompson and Tapscott, 2010). Most of these movements do not necessarily challenge the political order instead, their struggle is about changing the position of their members within that social order. This usually takes the form of helping citizens to stake a claim on certain rights that come with being a citizen, such as the right to land and housing. Social movements that have adopted this role operate as "new forms of citizen engagement with the state" (Thompson and Tapscott, 2010:20). Thompson and Tapscott (2010) argue that in Third World countries (sic) social movements have surpassed political institutions as institutions of choice for the attainment of democratic rights for citizens, particularly for the poor and marginalised in society. However, social movement scholars have argued that there has been an emergence of new social movements that can be set apart from their older counterparts.

Under decades of apartheid, South Africa was a fertile ground for social movements to operate. Ballard et al. (2006:15) argue that when considering what makes the new social movements so new in South Africa, it is important to take note of the fact that social movements that served as the vehicle for opposing government have been swallowed into the post-apartheid government. This co-option of social movements left a vacuum in that those structures and organisations, such as SANCO, left citizens demobilized. Communities also exercised a level of patience and hope that the government would deliver on its promises (Ballard et al., 2006:16). This gap meant a limitation in terms of the power of citizens to hold the government to account beyond the periodic elections.

Furthermore, post-apartheid social movements are "by no means unitary and uniform" (Ballard et al. 2006:17) unlike their predecessors who were all fighting the apartheid regime (Ballard et al, 2005:623). The issues that these movements represent are diverse; they include

gender equality, land redistribution, housing, eviction, education issues, privatisation, the environment, labour issues, lack of service and delivery of unwanted services. These movements also vary according to their geographical scales (Ballard et al., 2006:18; Ballard et al., 2005:624). While many of these social movements start with a local issue and build across geographic scales, they also create links and networks with other movements nationally and internationally (Ballard, 2005:624).

Many of these new social movements operate within the new democratic status quo (Ballard et al, 2005:630). They do not necessarily challenge the status quo but they are committed to the constitution and to forcing the government to deliver on the promises of democracy. Cape Town, where UCT is located, is home to many significant social movements that engage with the state on behalf of citizens. Some of these movements have achieved enormous success in forcing the government to respond to its citizens through protest and litigation. Examples include the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), which forced the government to make anti-retroviral drugs widely accessible; and Equal Education (EE), which forced the government to commit to Minimum Norms and Standards for basic education infrastructure (see Mufamadi and Garman, 2017; Mufamadi, 2014). These two social movements are important because at some point before RMF was formed they were the political schools that groomed some of the RMF protagonists' activism in Khayelitsha, Cape Town. Chumani Maxwele, who started the initial protest against the statue of Rhodes, and Masixole Mlandu, a prominent figure within RMF, both started their activism with the TAC and EE in Khayelitsha. Their background in political activism with the two social movements is important in that they connect the struggles at UCT with the earlier struggles in Khayelitsha. I will briefly discuss this role of political grooming by the TAC, EE, the Ses'khona Peoples Rights Movement (SPRM) and the Social Justice Coalition (SJC) on RMF members from Khayelitsha in **Section 1.5.1**.

1.4.4. Media coverage of protest in South Africa

The relationship between protesters and the news media in South Africa is a complex one filled with distrust and dependency. Harber argues that people take to the streets “when they don't see other ways of making themselves heard and seen” (2010:88), thus underlining the need for media attention among protesters. However, South African mainstream media encourages the view of protest as reactionary and a danger to democracy (Friedman, 2010).

Commentary and journalistic reportage that explain protests by labelling them as ‘service delivery protests’ silence the voices of protesters (Friedman, 2010). This short-hand explanation is undemocratic in that it “assumes, inaccurately, that people at the grassroots are passive recipients of government ‘delivery’, rather than choosing and thinking citizens who demand to be part of the discussion on the way in which government should serve them” (Friedman, 2010:125). It is not the delivery of services that citizens protest against when they take to the streets instead they are protesting against the failure of South Africa’s democracy to provide adequate channels which they can use to be heard (Harber, 2010). This misdiagnosis of protest is a result of what Friedman has dubbed the mainstream press’ “view from the suburbs” (Friedman, 2011:109) which misunderstands the dynamics of life in townships and informal settlements and which refuses agency to marginalised and poor people. It is important to note that in addition to a long history of protest, South Africa also has a long history of alternative media (which, in the form of the press, dates as far back as the 1880s) which has supported marginalised citizens and their struggles (Switzer, 1997).

The mainstream media’s lack of interest in marginalised citizens and their attempts to get heard by their government (Wasserman, 2013) often renders them a “communicative barrier, which stands between the public and the articulation of dissent” (Ruiz, 2014:2). Switzer (1997:2) points out that under apartheid, the South African mainstream English-language press followed their Western counterparts in constructing middle-class versions of modernity for their readers. Although they considered themselves as an opposition press, they focused on safe stories, self-censored themselves and omitted or downplayed news that would threaten the interests of their owners. They represented a largely-white, English-speaking readership. Before 1980, only a few of these newspapers would consistently criticize government policy because of the fear of being banned (Switzer, 1997). Although the South African news media enjoys a greater level of media freedom since 1994, their stories are dominated by official sources or voices of authority (Wasserman, 2013). This positioning is often a result of established journalistic routines and practices. When journalists are aligned to powerful sources the powerful position is often presented as a neutral one. A journalistic example of this alignment with power is the reporting on the 2012 Marikana massacre, where the South African Police Services opened fire and killed 34 mine workers who were protesting low wages. Duncan has referred to this alignment of mainstream journalists to power as ‘embedded journalism’: “a range of practices whereby journalists align themselves

with authority or power, instead of taking an independent position” (Wasserman, 2013:69). The voices of the powerless are often missing in stories by mainstream media, and when they appear they are presented as “social problems to the rest of society” (Christians et al. 2009:131). I will now turn to student participation and democracy in higher education to demonstrate how student participation came to be embedded in university governance to give students a voice in university decision-making.

1.5. Student Participation and Democracy in Higher Education

This study treats democratisation as an ongoing normative project, for which its advancement or deepening requires a willing citizenry. This means that “if citizens are ignorant about political issues, do not make an effort to have a say, despite their representatives, and do not believe in democratic values, the viability of that democracy might be seriously at risk – even if the institutions are perfectly designed” (Votmer, 2010:139). In addition, Luescher-Mamashela (2011a:2) contends that democratic institutions only form half of the requirements for democracy to function effectively. The other half required for the consolidation of democracy is citizens who are committed to its advancement, or who view themselves as having a stake in democracy. By citizens who are committed to democracy, Luescher-Mamashela is referring to a “critical mass of educated people who believe in and support democracy and have the cognitive skills to act as critical citizens and the organisational experience and the relevant expertise to take on democratic leadership roles in state and civil society” (Luescher-Mamashela, 2011a:2). In other words, higher education is expected to contribute to democracy through, at the very least, the socialisation of students into critical citizens who recognise their stake in the democratisation project.

Furthermore, Nie et al. (in Luescher-Mamashela, 2011a:3) argue that formal education operates in cognitive and positional pathways to impact/influence citizens’ democratic attitudes and behaviours. Formal higher education contributes to cognitive pathways in that it enhances students’ cognitive skills concerning politics. Formal education should not only equip citizens with the skills required to gather and process political information, but it should also enhance citizens’ proficiency in understanding the political system and its alternatives (Luescher-Mamashela, 2011a:4). Positional pathways, on the other hand, refers to mechanisms where formal education positions individuals at a central position in society.

For Nie et al., citizens who are positioned centrally in society are more likely to be at the centre of a political network (Luescher-Mamashela, 2011a:4). Dahlgren (2009:77-78) makes a similar point; he argues that the distribution of power in society is never equal. Expert citizens have more power to influence policy than their counterparts. Highly educated citizens are in an even better position; not only are they closer to the centre of politics but they are also equipped with the skills necessary for the articulation of political demands (ibid). Luescher-Mamashela explains that:

...education in new democracies may have the mandate to contribute to democratisation and produce not only critical citizens, but constructively critical citizens and active citizens who may act as agitators of deeper democracy - transformative democrats, if you will – who are critical of the extent of current democracy, supportive of deeper democratisation and eager to see change happening. Thus, education may actually need to create more demand for political emancipation and democratisation and accordingly stimulate constructively critical evaluations of current regime performance in order to play its emancipative role of citizenship development as mandated within this context (Luescher-Mamashela, 2011a:4).

Furthermore, Habermas (1971:3) argues that in addition to equipping students with functional skills in their area of studies and the task of transmitting, interpreting and developing cultural traditions of society, a university is also expected to fulfil the difficult task of helping to develop the political consciousness of its students. Using 1945 West Germany as an example, he points out that this consciousness can be developed through courses designed to educate university students into reliable citizens in a democracy. This kind of democracy would also welcome student political organisations and encourage discussions of political issues. However, the modern university can achieve this task through the democratisation of university. Democratisation would mean that the university would use “one form of decision-making according to which all decisions are supposed to be made equally dependent on a consensus arrived at in discussion free from domination – the democratic form” (Habermas, 1971:5). The Habermasian notion of democratic form rests on the assumed rationality of those who will be deliberating, which is not always the case when it comes to discussions of a political nature.

Holdsworth (in Mbambo, 2013:11) argues that not all participation practices qualify as meaningful participation. “Student participation is only meaningful when it empowers students so that they can influence or propose education policies and practices” (Mbambo, 2013:11). This means that meaningful participation only occurs when students have as much

power as all the other university stakeholders in influencing university decisions. Although being members of decision-making bodies is a step towards meaningful participation, it does not guarantee that students can participate meaningfully. Furthermore, Wilson (in Mbambo, 2013:11) argues that in meaningful student participation or “deep participation” students are not only treated as valuable but their voices, ideas and opinions are treated as important. This practice, Mbambo argues, ensures that students listen to the views of other constituencies with the view of benefiting and contributing to the decisions that are taken at the end.

In their study of student representation and multi-party politics in African higher education, Luescher-Mamashela and Mugume (2014:500) note that student participation in politics has been an important feature of the continent’s higher education systems. This is primarily because developments in higher education have been linked with both national and international political developments with African students playing a fundamental role in both. Student participation and the mode of protest by students have been informed by politics in these specific contexts. Activism against colonialism has greatly informed student politics in higher education so much so that student politics in many African countries has been focused on non-institutional participation as opposed to institutionalised forms of student participation within universities (Luescher-Mamshela, 2014:500).

1.5.1. Student participation in university decision-making processes in South Africa

In new democracies the assumption has always been that universities must be just as representative as government since they are expected to play a fundamental role in supporting democracy and its institutions (Badat, 2010:3). Universities in these new democracies are attributed with the “development of a democratic citizenry and democratically-minded leaders”, along with equipping the public with knowledge vital for the operation of democratic institutions (Luescher-Mamashela, 2011:2).

South Africa’s transition to democracy in 1994 ushered in new efforts toward university democratisation and institutionalised student participation through the Higher Education Act of 1997. As a result of this Act, Student Representative Councils have been formally included in the highest university decision-making bodies (Council, Senate and Institutional Forums). This formulation was meant to minimise the power that rests with university managers and student protests while promoting decision-making through deliberative democracy (Koen et

al, 2006:406). University democratisation has failed to create a system of decision-making where power is evenly distributed between university management and students. Within this system, students can only effect change or get a favourable decision if they strategically lobby university managers to vote with them when decisions are taken. In other words, the Act failed in diluting the power that institutional leaders hold when it came to decision-making (Koen et al, 2006:406), especially when decisions are taken through voting. As things stand, students are underrepresented in university decision-making bodies or structures. This means that decisions that students may perceive as being against the wishes of the greater student population can be passed through these democratic structures with or without students' approval.

1.5.2. Student protest in South Africa's higher education

Protest continues to persist as a popular form of informal participation in the South African universities' political sphere despite student participation having been formalised through the inclusion of SRCs in decision-making (Koen et al, 2006). It has always been a feature of the higher education's political sphere (Nkomo, 1984), just as it has been a distinctive feature of the South African political sphere both during the apartheid years and in the post-1994 era. The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that South Africa's tertiary education sector is still suffering from problems inherited from the apartheid regime (Luescher-Mamashela, 2011:2; Jansen, 2004). The legacy of apartheid on universities continues to manifest itself through historical inequalities in terms of "the often uncaring institutional cultures and, of course, the stubborn race and class-based inequalities of student access, overall participation, and success in higher education" (Luescher-Mamashela, 2011:2).

Some studies conducted on students' struggles in universities have focused solely on student protest against both academic and financial exclusions whilst ignoring activism aimed at forcing universities to include the broader student population in decision-making beyond finances and exclusions. This has certainly been the case for protest in previously white institutions where recent contestations have been about "issues of institutional culture as opposed to financial issues" and as a way of showing "solidarity with under-paid contract workers and for cross-national solidarity" (Koen et al, 2006:411). These protests have been around issues such as the lack of transformation of staff demographics, curriculum reform and an end to outsourcing of services to private companies.

1.6. Protest and student participation at the University of Cape Town

In apartheid South Africa the University of Cape Town, the oldest university in South Africa, was one of the two centres where the majority of protests against the apartheid government took place. The university was also home to the most memorable sit-in protest in South African history in 1968 when the UCT Council withdrew the appointment of Archie Mafeje (Erbmann, 2005:5). Most of the student protests at UCT during the apartheid era were organised by the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). Student activism was largely limited to the confines of campus about issues of academic freedom. Academic freedom at the university was famously defined by TB Davie as “freedom from external interference in (a) who shall teach, (b) what to teach, (c) how we teach, and (d) whom we teach” (Hendricks, 2008:427). This pre-occupation with academic freedom created a narrow focus for student protest in the grand apartheid scheme, as Erbmann (2005:12) explains below:

Whilst in theory, even the most conservative within the student movement recognised the necessity of pursuing ‘academic freedom in the wider context of human freedom,’ in practice, the emphasis on matters concerned with the university as an institution led the majority of students into a narrow, reactive posture. Protests were aimed solely against intrusion of the apartheid regime onto their campus, rather than against the concept of apartheid as a whole (Erbmann, 2005:12).

Furthermore, Erbmann (2005:12) explains that many students who participated in protest at UCT during the apartheid years identified themselves as liberals in line with the Cape English Liberal tradition with its pursuit of freedom, justice and equality in direct opposition to Afrikaner Nationalism. This liberal tradition had a significant impact on the modes of protest that students adopted. They used protest modes that were associated with the liberal tradition. For instance, in a protest against the banning of NUSAS president, Ian Robertson, in mid-1966, student protests followed a legal framework appealing for redress from the government (Erbmann, 2005:15-16). Students also held candlelight vigils (a tradition that continues in previously white institutions across South Africa), and a significant number of students wore academic gowns to the protest, while their protest was a form of a “well-reasoned plea” (ibid).

1.6.1. The Archie Mafeje sit-in

However, 1968 to 1970 marked an important shift from the liberal tradition to Marxist and Black Consciousness ideas. This period also paints the university as an institution with a complicated history of both “co-option” by and “resistance” against the apartheid powers (Ndelu, 2017:63). The 1968 Archie Mafeje affair remains an important moment in demonstrating the UCT Council’s capitulation to the apartheid regime. It also highlights an important moment in the history of relations between black UCT staff and students. In response to verbal threats from the then Minister of National Education, the UCT Council decided to rescind the appointment of Archie Mafeje as a senior lecturer in 1968 because of his race. Mafeje’s appointment had gone through all university processes that were followed when appointing a staff member and “was legitimate in terms of the university’s recruitment and selection procedures” (Hendricks, 2008:427-428). While the demand for Mafeje’s appointment to be reversed came from the Minister, it was the UCT Council that ultimately rescinded his appointment. The Mafeje debacle was an important moment because unlike other cases of students and staff members who were banned from UCT prior, Mafeje’s appointment was not rescinded because of something he had done but solely because he was black. It is also important to note that at the time “there was no law prohibiting black academics from teaching at white universities” (Hendricks, 2008:432). The Extension of University Education Act, 45 of 1959 barred black students from attending the same university class as their white counterparts. This moment also marked a rupture with past modes of protest into more radical forms. Students and staff staged a sit-in in the Bremner Building to protest the decision to rescind Mafeje’s appointment. Erbmann (2005:20-21) explains:

Over 300 students slept in the administration building that first night, beginning a process of self-organisation, with committees set up to organise food, education and a ‘police force’ to guard against intruders. The sit-in went on for nine days and functioned as an alternative university. Lectures, tutorials and teach-ins were held in over seventeen subjects, ranging from student power and academic freedom, to homosexuality and power structures (Erbmann, 2005:20-21).

The Mafeje sit-in, which lasted over 10 days, also marked a turning point in UCT student activism (Burrow, 2003:62). For the first time, hundreds of UCT students saw political change off-campus as the primary focus of their student lives and adopted a more radical approach to student protest. The formation of the South African Students’ Organisation

(SASO)⁴ also meant that the multiracial and liberal National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) had to be reformulated into an organisation that empowered all citizens, de-centring white students as the embodiment of the struggle (Erbmann, 2003:23).

1.6.2. Protest against lack of student participation in university governance

The 1960s was also a period that was characterised by protests over claiming a stake in university governance. In response to a wave of student protest for the democratisation of the university that swept across European and United States universities in the 1960s, UCT students also joined in. At UCT this protest saw students demanding greater participation in the governance of the university (Van der Horst, 1979:28). As a result of concessions made during these protests, student representatives sat on all faculty boards, and five students ‘with full speaking rights’ sat on Senate and students also sat on planning and budget committees. Representatives of lecturers in the Senate committee also grew to eight, from the original two representatives that lecturers were permitted between 1918 and 1971. Some departments operated under rotational heads of departments. This rotation of heads of departments meant that the most senior professor did not automatically become head until he retired. Although these changes may seem minimal compared to the changes in European and American universities, Von der Horst points out that they represent a “considerable breakthrough, especially as they run counter to the general trend of giving the executive greater power” (1979:29).

Amoore, who was a member of the UCT SRC in 1971-1972 and later on a Registrar at the same university, explained that UCT as an institution of higher learning relied on “an extensive system of committees, participation and consultation in its governance” (1979:159). An important factor that helped with the growth of student representation came from the Vice-Chancellor of the time, Sir Richard Luyt. According to Von der Horst (1979:30), Luyt not only understood the need for greater participation by students within university decision-making bodies, but he also encouraged participation by other university constituencies. Von

⁴ SASO was formed in 1969 as an organisation for only black students to give them a voice to communicate their struggles. It was formed after Black Consciousness Movement founder and leader, Steve Biko, rejected the multiracial and liberal National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) with its largely white leaders, who empathised with the struggles of their black counterparts.

der Horst also noted that student participation was effective in demanding relevant teaching and course evaluation. The SRC president was also allowed to sit on university committees including Council. The level of effectiveness was different for individual staff members. The SRC played an important role in representing students in university governance (Amoore, 1979:159). The departmental democracy and the ability of staff members to effect change were dependent upon the attitude of the head of that specific department. The rotation system for heads of departments helped bring a greater level of democracy to individual staff members (Von der Horst, 1979:30).

1.6.3. Mahmood Mamdani and curriculum contestations at UCT

Another critical moment in UCT's post-apartheid history was what became known as the 'Mamdani Affair' concerning not only teaching African history but also thinking about decolonising university curricula (Mamdani, 1998a; Mamdani, 1998b). The contestation started when then chair of the Centre of African Studies, Mahmood Mamdani, developed an *Introduction to Africa* course. At the time, the Faculty of Humanities administrators deemed the course to be "too theoretically difficult for incoming students" (Kamola, 2011:147). Mamdani argued that the real reason for the Faculty of Humanities' reluctance was its unwillingness to accept knowledge produced by African scholars as just as valid as that produced by their white European counterparts. The course that Mamdani developed was eventually replaced by a substitute course, which he referred to as the new home of Bantu Education (Mamdani, 1998b:74). Mamdani's characterisation of the substitute course drew continuities with an apartheid past which was supposed to have ended in 1994. Kamola contended that it was important to take cognisance of the fact that this contestation happened at a time when UCT was busy with "efforts to brand itself as a 'World Class African University,' attract greater funding from foreign institutions, privatise its campus services, and adopt National Qualifications Framework (NQF) standards" (Kamola, 2011:147). The Mamdani Affair gave students the necessary tools to talk about the nature and form that curriculum decolonisation could and should take at UCT.

It is against this historical and political backdrop that I locate RMF's struggles at UCT. Although the SRC exist as the democratically-elected voice of students, it is issues that the SRC is unable to solve and those that are outside the scope of the SRC which make student social movements necessary at universities. These issues include decisions on symbolic

material at an institution, what constitutes knowledge and who produces it, and the identities of those who teach, among others, that social movements can interrogate within universities beyond the confined role of the SRC. The protest under consideration in this study was led by RMF, a student social movement at UCT. I will now provide a brief account of RMF.

1.7. The Rhodes Must Fall movement

On 9 March 2015, UCT student Chumani Maxwele threw human excrement on the statue of Cecil John Rhodes (Bester, 2015), which “was erected in 1934 in Rhodes’ honour, primarily for his ‘gift’ of the land on which UCT now stands” (Mulgrew, 2015:338). Rhodes was a former governor of the Cape colony when it was under British rule. He was one of the most successful entrepreneurs of his time having started and run De Beers, the world’s biggest diamond producer. Rhodes was instrumental in the exploitation of cheap black labour through racist colonial practices. The Rhodes statue was located just above the UCT rugby fields, at the foot of Sarah Baartman Hall (then Jameson Memorial Hall), overlooking the Cape Flats and the rest of Africa. The prime location of the statue explained RMF, elevated Rhodes to a hero’s status as if the university was celebrating him and his success. Maxwele explained that “by throwing poo at the statue of Rhodes, we would symbolise the filthy way in which Rhodes mistreated our people in the past. Equally, we would show disgust at how UCT, as a leading South African institution of learning, celebrates the genocidal Rhodes” (Maxwele, 2016a). For Maxwele, throwing human excrement on the statue would not only draw attention to the man behind the statue but also force the university community to come to terms with how the other half lived in Khayelitsha. The faeces that Maxwele threw on the statue was collected from Khayelitsha, intentionally drawing a link between the struggles of the people of Khayelitsha and UCT students’ struggles.

1.7.1. Social movements in Khayelitsha and student struggles at UCT

Maxwele’s choice of poo as an instrument of protest played a significant symbolic role in connecting the struggles of the residents of Khayelitsha and those of UCT students. In Khayelitsha, protests were led by social movements such as the Ses’khona Peoples Rights Movement (SPRM), the Social Justice Coalition (SJC), the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), and Equal Education (EE), among others. The SPRM holds a special position in the South African protest and activism landscape for being the first social movement to use

human excrement as an instrument of protest. Eight SPRM members dumped buckets of human faeces at the Cape Town International Airport in August 2013 in protest against the use of portable toilets in Khayelitsha. The nine individuals were eventually sentenced to three years in jail, which was suspended for five years. Members of SPRM also emptied buckets of human faeces on the steps of the Western Cape Legislature in the same year. Its influence on Maxwele's action cannot be denied.

Robins (2015) argued at the time that although the use of poo created debate on university transformation and Cecil John Rhodes in the media, what was striking was the “silence about the relationship of Maxwele's act to the recent history of sanitation activism in Cape Town”. Robins argued that Maxwele's use of poo as a medium of protest should be seen as part of “the ongoing politicisation and mobilisation of human waste that began in 2008 with the Social Justice Coalition's sanitation activism, then took a rather unanticipated turn with the ANC Youth League's 2011 open-toilet protests and, more recently, Ses'khona People's Rights Movement's full-blown ‘poo wars’ of 2013”. This link between protest at UCT and the social movements in Khayelitsha Township was further highlighted by the presence of Andile Lili, leader of SPRM, who was given a platform to address students outside the Bremner Building, UCT's main administration building, on 20 March 2015, a few minutes before RMF occupied it. Maxwele and a few other members of RMF were members of EE, TAC and SPRM at some point growing up in Khayelitsha. These social movements not only gave citizens and young people a voice, but they also provided the necessary socialisation and grooming needed to create active citizens. (See Mufamadi (2014) on the role of EE in Khayelitsha schools.) Maxwele's poo protest was also against the slow pace of transformation at UCT.

1.7.2. The slow pace of transformation at UCT

For Maxwele, the statue symbolised UCT's lack of racial transformation of the professoriate and the student body, racism and exclusion of black students from the institution, among other things (Maxwele, 2016a). Like all previously white institutions in South Africa, the staff and student demographics at UCT leading up to Maxwele's actions (in 2015) paint a picture of a university that had failed to transform its demographics to mirror that of the country's population. In 2015, white students were 8,148 or 35,8% of all South African students at the university, and 29.3% of the entire student population factoring in

international students within the institution (UCT, 2015). In the same period, South African African⁵ students were 6341 or 27.9% of all South African students, South African Coloured students were 3 919 or 15.9% of all South African students while South African Indian students were sitting at 1 845 or 8.1% of all South African students at the institution (UCT, 2015).

UCT, like many previously white institutions in South Africa, continues to battle when it comes to transforming its academic staff cohort. Although the university has come a long way in trying to grow the number of South African academics and researchers at the institution, this number remains in the minority compared to white academics and researchers who make up the lion's share of UCT's academic and research staff (Ndelu, 2017:61). While the number of South African African academics and researchers continues to grow in the university, 2014 statistics showed that they remained at 5% compared to their white counterparts at 55% (ibid).

Furthermore, UCT gained a reputation for being a home for children of the elite and those who were economically well off, so much so that the popularity of RMF's protest was particularly puzzling for some students. In an interview on the South African Broadcasting Corporation's *The Newsroom*, Maxwele explained how he was surprised by the protest that followed his initial poo protest spreading to other previously white universities where "the elite kids who are affluent joined the movement that is deemed for poor students" (Maxwele, 2016b). This perception of previously white institutions, and UCT in particular, as a home of economically elite black students was also referred to by Luescher-Mamashela (2010:274) in his study on managerialism at the university. He explained that "while the student body became considerably more racially diverse (under Dr Mamphela Ramphele's tenure as Vice-Chancellor of UCT), an internationalisation and gentrification of the black student body, in particular, was also underway (along with improvements in academic performance), which meant that the overall class-race and race-academic success correlations in the student body grew less pronounced" (2010:274).

1.7.3. The birth of RMF

⁵ UCT, like all public universities in South Africa, distinguished between five broader racial groups – African, Chinese, Coloured, Indian and White. For the purposes of transformation, students (and staff) from other countries are not considered regardless of their race.

A few days after Maxwele threw human excrement on the statue, a wave of protest started at UCT and the Rhodes Must Fall movement was formed. The social movement was agitating for the statue's removal from the university's Upper Campus and the broader 'decolonisation' of the institution. These initial protests spread to other universities locally and internationally, including Rhodes University, Stellenbosch University, the University of Johannesburg (UJ), the University of the Western Cape (UWC), the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), and Oxford University in the United Kingdom (Laurore, 2016:61). Laurore explained that it was a cumulative experience of marginalisation felt by black students within universities that became a catalyst for the movement. It was only a matter of time before a movement like RMF was formed given "decades of racist social, political, and economic policies and attitudes too deeply entrenched to be erased by changes in legislation" (Laurore, 2016:87).

According to its website, the RMF movement was a UCT-based social movement formed by students who called for the removal of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes and for university management to decolonise the university (Rhodes Must Fall, 2015). RMF was a new social movement which used picketing, occupation of buildings, graffiti, causing disruption and putting up crosses on campus as its modes of protest (Rhodes Must Fall, 2015). RMF was innovative in the way it used protest which generated a lot of media coverage. An example was the movement's occupation of the Archie Mafeje Room inside UCT's Bremner Building. This was an important moment for the movement's success (Ndelu, 2017:67). It was during this occupation that students realised the media attention they were receiving and in turn organised themselves into committees to maximise their presence in the public sphere. Students also used the space to invite thought leaders and academics to facilitate discussions "on topics ranging from intersectionality and decolonised curricula to Pan-Africanism" (Ndelu, 2017:67). RMF members who self-allocated/volunteered to serve on various strategic committees became identified as de-facto leaders by the media, UCT management and private security alike (ibid). RMF members decided in a plenary session during the Bremner Building occupation that:

...the movement (RMF) was to be instructed by three pillars, namely pan-Africanism, Black Consciousness and black radical feminism; white people were incorporated into the space as mere allies and were frequently reminded that they ought to be aware of their positionality when engaging in the space and should anticipate being asked to leave the space from time to time; the movement had no 'leaders' or, more accurately, the movement was 'leaderful' (Ndelu, 2017:67).

It is difficult to accurately state the number of members that RMF had for two reasons. One, the movement did not have any formal membership where there was a record of who was a member and who was not. Two, the number of people who joined RMF in fighting for different causes changed along with the cause in question. For example, the number of people who were involved in the protest against the statue of Cecil John Rhodes was significantly higher (thousands) than those who were involved in the protest against the lack of accommodation (Shackville protest) and the many protests calling for the divestment of UCT Retirement Fund away from the mining industry. Laurore (2016:84) pointed out that these protests played an important role in likening the movement's struggles to struggles under apartheid through protest songs associated with struggles against apartheid.

Although RMF was not an elected representative of students, it generated enough coercive power to force the university to the negotiating table. In the beginning, members of RMF also included members of the SRC. When the movement was founded, the then SRC president (Ramabina Mahapa) was one of its influential members. Whether members of the SRC were there in their official or personal capacities remains unclear.

Furthermore, RMF followed the organising trends of the Arab Spring in its use of social media networks (Facebook and Twitter) to mobilise extensively, and communicate and report what was happening on the ground during a protest (Bosch, 2016; Laurore, 2016:70). RMF also proved to be savvy in its use of these platforms, and at the height of protest RMF Facebook page was averaging 15,000 likes for the movement's posts while the movement's Twitter was sitting comfortably with 6,000 followers (Laurore, 2016:71).

1.8. Reflexivity and Ethical Considerations

It is important to acknowledge that what I was able to view and study was informed by my position in relation to the study subject and the cultural resources at my disposal. As a researcher, I believe that it is essential to acknowledge that "our knowledge of the world is always mediated and interpreted from a particular stance and an available language, and that we should own up to this in explicit ways. The self is not some kind of virus which contaminates the research. On the contrary, the self is the research tool, and thus intimately connected to the methods we deploy" (Cousin, 2010:10). As part of this positional stance, I will not present this research in the third person or be absent from the text to evoke some form of authoritative voice signified by the absence of the author's voice from the text.

Instead, I will present this study in the first person where possible to signify that it is my narrative account. Like Eisner (1991: 4), “I want readers to know that this author is a human being and not some disembodied abstraction who is depersonalized through linguistic conventions that hide his signature”. However, this approach may have implications for the validity of the study.

Creswell and Miller (2000:124) define validity as “how accurately the account represents participants’ realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them”. Hammersley (1992:69) argues that validity in qualitative research means that an account in question “represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain or theorise”. I relied on my knowledge of RMF and UCT in selecting my interview participants.

Another possible element that could compromise the validity and reliability of the study is response bias, which encompasses a range of responses to interviews or questionnaires that bias the response. Sampling bias includes “social desirable or faking-good response as well as its opposite, faking bad (or mad), acquiescence or yea-saying (the tendency to agree irrespective of the question) or its opposite or nay saying, extremity response set (always choosing extreme opposites) or its opposite, mid-point response set” (Furnham, 1986:385). This study is essentially about protest. Many of the respondents from RMF had either been arrested or suspended from UCT because of their involvement in these protests. Most of these respondents could only speak openly upon being guaranteed anonymity.

The insider-outsider positionality of the researcher in relation to the community they are researching can have an impact on the validity and reliability of the research. Labaree (in Chavez, 2008:476) points out that the advantages the researcher has in knowing the community being researched can be “...weakened or strengthened based on the ways in which our various social identities may shift during interaction with participants, or based on the degree of perceived or real closeness to participants as a result of shared experience or social identities”. This means that the researcher might have to shift between different identities when they interact with the communities they are researching. It was easier to set up interviews with UCT staff members (from CMD, DSA, SETT and the Executive) because many of these staff members knew me from my work at CMD. Being an employee made it

easier for colleagues to make time for interviews with me and for CMD to grant me unreserved access to its resources. Because I was an insider I was allowed access to Council minutes and documents that would otherwise not be available to an outsider.

Furthermore, being an insider also meant knowing who was key to interview at the institution about various protest. But it was harder to get interviews with members of NEHAWU because for many of these workers I was an outsider. This is because as a staff member at the university's communication machinery, I was viewed as the embodiment of management. The fact that I was quoted as a spokesperson in some stories on RMF's activities contributed to strengthening this outsider status and the management characterisation. At the timeframe under consideration in this study, UCT was largely polarised between those who were considered to be in support of RMF and those thought to be in support of UCT management.

I met many of the students I interviewed through my observation during protests. Being there during a protest and being familiar with some of the issues that RMF was fighting for helped to solidify my position as an insider. It gave me a sense of belonging to the group. I had a shared life experience with many RMF members. The fact that I am black and I belonged to the relatively same age bracket made it easier to establish rapport with members of RMF. I only attended two plenary sessions. Not attending many plenary sessions gave me an unintended advantage in that I stood a better chance of interviewing black feminist activists in that they gave me the benefit of the doubt. Although I would have been considered a patriarch and or raw patriarch⁶ due to my working class rural upbringing and schooling, my absence in plenaries where patriarchy mostly manifested itself meant that I could not be associated with what happened in plenaries.

1.9. Conclusion

I have used this first chapter as an introduction to the study and to provide the context in which the research problem is located. I also introduced the subjects of the study and how they relate to other players within the political context that they share. Although this chapter did not go into details of the complexities of UCT as a political space with competing interest, it introduced the space as one that is complex and suitable enough to gauge the

⁶ I will discuss this in detail in Section 8.3.2.

theory of political listening. The next chapter will provide a detailed account of the theory which will be used to make sense of RMF's activism at UCT.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Frameworks: Political Listening

“Listening is an art that requires attention over talent, spirit over ego, others over self” – Dean Jackson

2.1. Introduction

As I have argued in the previous chapter, participation is necessary for deepening or advancing democracy. This is also more the case in universities, which I contend, are to be best understood as microcosms of bigger national democracies where students learn to practise their citizenship. It is important to investigate how political actors/citizens interact with each other while practising their citizenship and how powerholders react to their claims. Susan Bickford’s (1996) theory of ‘political listening’ offers insight into how politics could become more representative by focusing on the communication between citizens. It is through listening that citizens or political actors with conflictual views can hear each other without negating their positions, which is what politics requires. This study aims to explore the possibilities of ‘political listening’ between RMF members, RMF and UCT, and RMF, UCT and the media. From observation, the interaction between RMF and UCT was a highly conflictual one, which renders listening necessary. This chapter will discuss Bickford’s (1996) theory of ‘political listening’ and other research that builds on her work to show how it can be used as an appropriate theoretical lens for this case study.

2.2. Political Listening

Susan Bickford (1996:2) argues that politics in general, and democratic politics in particular, require ‘political listening’ in order to work properly and to be truly representative of all citizens. This is the type of listening that allows actors to pay attention to one another. Unlike other psychological conceptions of listening which invoke notions of compassion and empathy, political listening is “not primarily a caring or amicable practice” (Bickford, 1996:2). This is because political actors are not sympathetic to each other in situations of conflict. For Barber (1989:356) listening, in adversarial communication, does not mean to tolerate one’s adversary and allow them to say whatever they want to say or scan their arguments for weakness and trade-offs. It instead means that “I will put myself in his place, I will try to understand, I strain to hear what makes us alike” (Barber, 1989:356). It is in these

conflictual contexts where communicative interaction is important, not necessarily for resolving the conflict, but for actors to engage with each other's thoughts and ideas (Bickford, 1996:2). This interaction enables political actors to democratically decide on the best way to deal with the conflict at hand and to spell out a solution. It is in these conflictual contexts where Bickford's conception of listening functions as "a central activity of citizenship" because she argues that the willingness to listen in a communicative process is the only way which guarantees the possibility of continuous engagement or discussion (1996:02).

Dreher (2009:446) argues that there is a growing emphasis in research and advocacy work on the "democratic potential of voice, representation, speaking up and talking back in the media". Due to this potential, non-governmental organisations in many countries, for example, Australia and the United States of America, have been involved in developing strategies for members of minority groups to speak up and talk back through the media. Although a lot can be and has been achieved through the politics of voice and giving marginalised people a voice, Dreher (2009:451) argues that it is important to address the lack of attention to listening to complement the limits of voice in these programmes. Who gets to speak in the media is just as important as who gets heard and the outcome of being heard, because speaking alone does not guarantee being heard unless there are willing listeners.

Thompson (in Dreher 2009:451) insists that dominant groups should learn to listen to unfamiliar voices and confronting stories and histories because listening means engaging with the tough questions. This kind of listening is only possible in instances where those who are used to setting the agenda and having their interests dictate interaction are prepared to cede this control. Dreher explains that:

...listening across difference need not aim at understanding or knowledge of 'others', but might instead gravitate towards understanding networks of privilege and power and one's location within them. This shift may also enable a politics of listening to avoid the pitfalls of identity in favour of a politics of interaction. A focus on listening and privilege thus highlights incompleteness and connection rather than knowing and mastery. In this sense listening entails the recognition of knowing as well as not knowing. As opening up possibilities through listening can require decentring and denaturalizing, it might mean unlearning as well as learning. For those who enjoy the prerogative of not listening, it means giving up the privilege (Dreher, 2009:451).

This emphasis on unsettling privilege brings about a type of listening where discomfort, ceding control and insecurity are at the centre of the interaction. Dreher (2009:451) warns

that unsettling privilege can also lead to ‘unproductive guilt’ on the part of those who are privileged. Krista Ratcliffe (in Dreher, 2009:451) argues for an ethical imperative where instead of adopting a guilt/blame listening logic, individuals are aware of their privileges and lack of privileges and act to address the situation. This means that the type of listening that is proposed is not one which simply focuses on the responsibility of the privileged nor should it imply a lack of responsibility on the part of marginalised speakers (Dreher, 2009:451).

To acknowledge listening as a major activity in communication is to also tackle the intersubjective nature of politics (Bickford, 1996:10). Politics is premised on both the separateness and the relatedness of different beings. The separateness or difference between beings could be a source of conflict. Here, Bickford (1996:10) is arguing for a particular kind of politics that is “constituted neither by consensus nor community, but by the practices through which citizens argue about interests and ends – in other words by communication” (Bickford, 1996:11). Citizenship in this sense is not merely a legal status that one assumes by residing in a particular country, but a practice that entails an engagement in political talk with others in the political realm. This is an important distinction to keep in mind especially for this study because it assesses political moments in a university directed to the management of the university as opposed to a government.

Furthermore, Bickford (1996) argues that oral exchanges in public settings can and should help citizens sift through conflicting claims and become aware of the consequence of certain actions. This interaction should help citizens to better understand themselves and their interests because, argues Bickford (1996), it is through acting politically together that citizens may become aware of the link between their personal interests and the interests of the political community at large. In other words, participating in public affairs should help citizens understand how their individual interests and the interests of their community are bound together. Participation should equip citizens with skills and qualities necessary for democratic participation. This transformation is only possible through the kind of communicative interaction that does not involve just talk but one that “must require a particular kind of attention to one another” (Bickford, 1996:12) or what she calls listening.

The kind of listening that Bickford argues for is based on “civility, empathy, and respect towards one another” (1996:13). This practice enhances equality between actors since it is mutual. The emphasis of this listening is not analysing what is being said or merely tolerating

other actors' views but it is geared towards figuring out what unites actors through empathy. Listening creates an opportunity for a different outcome or for something else to happen (Bickford, 1996). This new possibility is only possible when actors surrender the desire to control the outcome of an interaction. This practice of listening is useful in situations of adversarial interaction because it does not repress conflict for the sake of reaching consensus, but instead provides citizens with the possibility of finding common ground. It is through the presence of conflict that communicative interaction is rendered necessary. Communication takes place between two or more individuals. The separateness and difference of both these parties could be a source of conflict, but communication can also narrow the divide between these parties by getting them to engage with each other. What makes interaction possible is not "bonds of civic friendship" or shared interests, but the quality of attention that citizens give each other (Bickford, 1996:19).

Furthermore, Mutz (2006:2) argues that it is important to hear the viewpoints of others to exercise effective citizenship. This is because hearing conflicting political views helps citizens expand their "capacity to form an opinion by considering a given issue from different viewpoints, by making present to my mind the standpoints of those who are absent" (Arendt, 1968:241 in Mutz, 2006:8). These interactions with others who hold different viewpoints are essential for citizens to get a complete understanding of the situation at hand. As Mutz (2006:8) explains, "the more people's standpoints I have present in my mind while I am pondering a given issue, and the better I could imagine how I feel and think if I were in their place, the stronger will be my capacity for representative thinking⁷, and the more valid my final conclusions, my opinions". Hearing other views is not only important for comprehension of other views to evaluate one's own but it is also an important kind of political knowledge because of its relationship with legitimacy. It legitimises policy decisions in the eyes of citizens, since in a situation in which deliberation has taken place results in decisions that are arrived at through public inputs from all citizens (Mutz, 2006:9). This idea is important to hold on to for this study because universities govern through a combination of managerialism and consent and participation by the different constituencies that make up the university. It is important to evaluate what kind of listening and hearing is possible during heightened political and conflictual moments and to investigate who the university listens to

⁷ I turn to this concept of Representative thinking in Section 3.2.5.

before taking decisions on issues raised by students. Conflict is central to these political moments, but it is precisely in these highly political and conflictual moments that listening is beneficial. Deliberation is one such political process where the significance of conflict in political interaction can be explained.

2.2.1. Listening and deliberation

To highlight the centrality of conflict in political interaction, Bickford turns her attention to Aristotle's analysis of deliberation. Deliberation is a highly contested political concept. The contestation extends to the for that deliberation should take, who can take part and how accessible it is to citizens. Mutz (2006:4) provides a useful summary of the arguments for deliberative ideals:

...some suggest that in order to qualify, political discussion must take place among citizens of equal status who offer reasonable, carefully constructed, and morally justifiable arguments to one another in a context of mutual respect. Participants must provide reasons that speak to the needs of everyone affected. Such interactions must exclude no one, **or at least provide "free and equal access to all,"** so that no person has more influence over the process than the next. Strategic behaviour is also forbidden. In addition, all participants must be free of the kinds of material deprivations that hinder participation, such as lack of income or education. And according to some definitions of deliberation, this process ultimately should lead to consensus (Mutz, 2006:4).

Mutz's idealized form of deliberation, listed above, is unlikely to be realized in natural social contexts. This ideal type excludes informal everyday conversations between citizens, which can take the form of storytelling, jokes, greetings, among others (Mutz, 2006:4). In other words, deliberation should extend beyond the Habermasian 'ideal speech situation' (Habermas, 1989) to include both rational and emotional forms. Barber offers better insight into how inclusive deliberation would look. This kind of talk, explains Barber, would be characterized by "creativity, variety, openness and flexibility, inventiveness, capacity for discovery, subtlety and complexity, eloquence, potential for empathy and affective expression, and a deeply paradoxical character" (1989:355). Viewed in this manner deliberation is inclusive. Opening deliberation to include everyday talk not only increases the contexts of political talk that researchers can study but also takes cognizance of the fact that political talk also occurs as part of the mundane everyday conversations and activities. This more inclusive conception of deliberation is important for this study because it allows, for example, RMF gathering/plenary sessions and interaction between RMF and university management to be considered as deliberative.

However, Aristotle's version of deliberation is inclusive of all citizens because it recognises that they not only have something important to contribute but they are also committed to politics as a way to solve public problems. His analysis of deliberation is particularly important in understanding how deliberation could take place among political adversaries because "it is precisely when conflict is present that communicative interaction among citizens is most necessary" (Bickford, 1996:25). Bickford contends that Aristotle views politics as "a realm of conflict and interaction among imperfect, diverse, and sometimes unequal citizens" (Bickford, 1996:52). The politics that Aristotle refers to here is not held together by the bonds of 'civic friendship' or a sense of shared interests but rather the quality of **attention** that is built into the practice of deliberation itself (ibid). Aristotle viewed deliberation as a distinctive activity focusing on specific subjects and to achieve a specific goal (Bickford, 1996:26). This means that there are topics or things that cannot be deliberated about. These are eternal or unchanging, like natural processes and matters of fact, because they can be resolved with certainty through means that do not involve deliberation. However, Aristotle (in Bickford, 1996:27) explains that deliberation can only be about uncertain things that are in our power to be changed or realized through action. In other words, deliberation is not about ends but rather the means to achieve ends.

However, deliberation is inherently conflictual and the question at hand can be the source of the conflict (Bickford, 1996:29). In other words, deliberation is a form of figuring things out using practical reason. Deliberation is the process of paying attention to others. But conflict can also stem from the very people who are part of the deliberative polity. This is because, according to Aristotle (in Bickford, 1996:30), a deliberative polity "includes people whose interests, needs, and opinions conflict" like the conflict between the rich and poor which centres around questions of who should rule and on what grounds. The wealthy think, by virtue of their economic superiority, they should be superior in all the other areas as well. While the poor, since they are equal to the wealthy in terms of freedom, think they should be equal in every regard. This example is particularly important because it illustrates the central element of politics, which is the "the ability to attend to citizens' perceptions of their needs and interests, their evaluation of current circumstances, their interpretation of others' actions" (Bickford, 1996:33).

What Aristotle is concerned with here is how to keep the conflict between the rich and the poor a political one as opposed to a mortal one. This conflict can only remain a political one

by exercising a particular kind **attention** in legislation and in interaction. This example of rich and poor is also an indication of how, for Aristotle, citizens' perspectives are rooted in their socio-economic positions. This means that in Aristotelian deliberation, citizens could only speak and be listened to from the position of their material condition. To borrow from Arendt, they only speak as a 'what'. Bickford (1996:53) cautions that attention to material conditions can replace listening. I will explore this idea of speaking and being heard from one's material condition in **Sections 2.2.2.** and **2.2.4.**

Bickford (1996:35) argues that the kind of attention, which is also central to deliberation, plays a fundamental role in political deliberation. It entails paying attention to the perceptions of fellow citizens. This attention is what holds citizens together in a political argument. This means that what members of a political community have in common is "the practice of deliberation together and the attention that makes it possible" (Bickford, 1996:35). However, such attention is not derived from friendship. Friendship is relational, while deliberation is often between citizens who do not view themselves to have common interests. In fact, deliberation is even more necessary in instances characterized by lack of well-wishing and goodwill. In the absence of friendship, it is the kind of attention that makes political interaction possible without erasing the conflict (Bickford, 1996:40). This kind of attention is an essential element because listening is not concerned with reaching an outcome but rather sustaining the process of hearing each other or seeing from each other's perspective.

Dobson (2014:90) argues that the key problem in democratic theory and governance is how to "handle" deep disagreements or conflict. Bickford points out that "...diverse, unequal, and conflictual states require a kind of interactive attention that, even if unfriendly, serves as a political bond" (Bickford, 1996:52). But there are two kinds of attention; emotional and mindfulness. **Emotional** orientation to attention is about being "considerate and caring" for the subject of attention while the other kind of attention is about "a sense of **focused awareness**, of **being mindful** or **observant** of something or someone" (Bickford, 1996:41). The second attention is about commitment to our partners in deliberation and less so to public problem-solving or politics. This means that attention does not have to be kind, but could also be strategic and manipulative. Even when listening is strategic or manipulative, argues Bickford (1996:41), "it creates and sustains the conditions necessary for politics and the expression of political conflict". This emphasis on sustaining the conditions necessary for politics even through strategic and manipulative listening is important to evaluate in

mediation processes between the Rhodes Must Fall movement and UCT. This is because mediation by nature is about solving problems and involves a lot of strategic and manipulative listening to ensure that each party does not ‘over-compromise’ when the agreement is reached.

2.2.2. Plurality and political action

In her discussion of Hannah Arendt’s work, Bickford (1996:33) argues that plurality and political action are inseparable, because they both require attention to others in order for individuals to realise the capacity to make their presence felt in the world. Politics, for Bickford and Arendt, is when individuals act and speak together. What is central to politics “is the ability to attend to citizens’ perceptions of their needs and interests, their interpretations of others’ actions” (Bickford, 1996:33). It is also imperative to recognise the individuality and uniqueness of each citizen. What connects politics and plurality is that the former forms the basis for speech and action but plurality is characterised by both equality and distinction. She explains that without equality it is not possible for human beings to understand each other, their pasts or to even plan for their future. The kind of equality that Bickford is arguing for is one that individuals afford each other in the public realm. The kind of equality that human beings may exercise towards each other in the public realm is political equality. Bickford (1996:57) argues that “political equality is an equalising of unequals; it gives equal standing to those who may otherwise be unequal. Political equality makes peers out of those who are different”. Speech and action are only possible when individuals have an equal standing and see each other as peers. Political equality creates an environment where individuals can listen and be listened to by others (Bickford, 1996). It is because of every individual’s distinctiveness that they require voice or speech to communicate their uniqueness. This uniqueness of each citizen appears through speech and action. Although plurality is the fundamental feature of what it is to be human, it can be under threat during “conditions of tyranny, mass society, or anytime the public realm and its attendant political equality is supplanted or destroyed” (Bickford, 1996:59). In these conditions of socio-economic inequality the basic factor that is required for plurality, which is equality, is trampled and there is no room for individuals to speak, act or even be recognised as unique beings. Unique individuals are homogenised and seen as a mass with a similar identity and perspective. Individuals appear as a mass ‘what’ instead of a unique ‘who’ in the public realm (Bickford, 1996:59).

Solidarity is important to political action because of its ability to treat “the oppressed as actors and equals, not merely as victims” (Bickford, 1996:77). Solidarity means assuming that others have taken an interest in the world, treating them as though they are capable of speaking for themselves and capable of political action rather than treating them as though they must merely be cared for. Solidarity guides how we talk and listen to one another in the public realm. It does not only apply to how the poor must be treated but it applies to society as a whole; the rich, the poor, men, women and so forth. All these different social groups can only be brought together by solidarity. Arendt regards the kind of attention that citizens should show each other in the public realm as respect (Bickford, 1996:80). Respect, she argues, enables us to see past ‘what’ a person is to ‘who’ the person is. Respect enables us to see others as different from us, yet as a unique ‘who’, just like us. This respect is not just about seeing but it also has to do with hearing in the public arena. Bickford (1996:80) argues that individuals possess the ability to represent others in mind and opinion. She refers to this ability to represent others as representative thinking. (See **Section 2.2.5.** for more on representative thinking.)

The unique self that human beings reveal in the public realm is one that is difficult to define. Arendt (in Bickford, 1996:58) cautions that the words that we use in attempts to say ‘who’ somebody is steers us into ‘what’ they are. We get trapped into explaining the qualities they share with others like them and as a result they lose any sense of uniqueness. The claims and opinions are only considered as part of what they are rather than who they are. They only speak as, for example, the poor, the unemployed and so forth. The unique ‘who’ (self) is revealed in public through what one says and does, speech and action, because when an individual speaks in public he/she reveals his/her opinion which belongs exclusively to that individual (Bickford, 1996:60). These opinions make up a story in which the individual making claims is in the centre. The identity of the person making claims does not only stem out of what they say or do but from the context in which the claims or actions were made. In this sense, it is not the content of one’s opinion that shows one’s uniqueness or what makes them who they are but it is the context in which the opinions are made. However, who individuals are, depends on others who see individuals as they cannot see themselves. The appearance of individuals differs according to spectators’ perspective (Bickford, 1996:61).

The multiple perspectives of others can help individuals to make sense of the nature of reality that the world offers. Bickford (1996:63) explains that “it is not that a multiplicity of

perspectives lets us perceive a reality that is beyond appearance; rather the multiplicity of perspectives on what appears is what constitutes reality”. In other words, being in the company of others who see and hear the same things as we do strengthens our sense of reality. The quality of reality comes from knowing that we are talking about the same thing and that our perspectives are directed at a common subject matter. In this sense, it is imperative that revealing one’s uniqueness or distinctiveness through speech and action happens in the presence of others. It is not merely the presence of others which makes real one’s public self but rather their active attention. Without paying attention to each other, human beings do not meaningfully appear to each other even though they might be present in the same geographical space at the same time. Appearing meaningful to each other requires that we “make ourselves present to each other through what we say or do” (Bickford, 1996:64).

What democratic politics needs are individuals who feel compelled to speak and act from their distinctive perspectives and for these individuals to accept that their perspective will be challenged and altered by others who are also present and taking part in the discussions (Bickford, 1996:65). These individuals should also negate any desire to control or impose their ideas on other individuals. In this sense democratic politics is characterised by unpredictability and messiness. Taking the risk of participating in such activities is part of the democratic character. It is this intertwining of “individuality, uncertainty, and togetherness” that makes politics democratic (Bickford, 1996:66). However, individuality and uniqueness are not always guaranteed, there are a number of ways in which citizens can be denied individuality and uniqueness as explained below.

2.2.3. Factors that deny individuality and uniqueness

Citizens or political actors can be kept out of the public realm through stereotyping. Bickford (1996:101) argues that the marginalised are made invisible in the public realm through stereotyping by the dominant culture. Stereotyping denies individuals their uniqueness and complexities by presenting the dominant culture’s perspective and experience as universal or the norm, whilst presenting a distorted image of individuals who fall outside the boundaries of dominant culture. These individuals appear in the public realm as objects. Bickford points out that “what makes some people invisible as citizens in the wider public realm is not their literal absence from the scene but rather the imposed ‘masks’ that present a false face and

prevent what the mask covers from being audible and visible” (1996:101). These masks conceal the ‘who’; the citizen with unique identity and perspectives. Individuals are denied plurality by being seen as members of a group rather than individuals with unique thoughts and stories.

Stereotyping, as a way of denying individuality, is important to highlight especially for this study because of its focus on political moments that include protest. In South Africa, journalistic reporting on protest seems to perpetuate the view that protest is a failure of democracy by placing an emphasis on violence (Duncan, 2014). This media narrative may construct protesting citizens as “faceless masses otherwise constructed as the ‘angry black mob’” (Haith, 2015).

2.2.4. The private, public and social realms

Drawing on Arendt, Bickford (1996) draws a distinction between the private and public realms. The private realm, she argues, is defined by needs which cannot be ignored. This is where the body’s needs, such as food and shelter, are met. The public realm, on the other hand, is a space where individuals can exercise freedom and public action. Arendt’s public realm is similar to the public sphere, mentioned in Chapter 1, in that it is also a realm where citizens can engage each other in political talk and matters of common interest. For Arendt, the problem with the contemporary world is that the public realm has been taken over by the social realm. This social realm is a hybrid realm where household needs or the body’s needs appear in the realm reserved for freedom and public action. This is often caused by the problem of poverty. However, two problems arise when poverty becomes a political issue. Firstly, participants are no longer perceived as plural, unique individuals but instead, they become “interchangeably alike, with identical and predictable needs – in effect a mass” (Bickford, 1996:72). Participants are no longer perceived as unique ‘whos’ but instead they are seen as ‘whats’. The ‘who’ is the unique character that every individual possesses, and the ‘what’ is the social or economic conditions that individuals may find themselves in. The ‘who’ is the unique self, while the ‘what’ is the socio-economic characteristics that may be used to describe individuals as a group. In this sense, when poverty enters the public realm it is used by those who are in power to rob the poor of their individuality and uniqueness and their ability and need to speak for themselves. They all get lumped together into a category of ‘the poor’ as though they all share identical experiences and perspectives (Bickford,

1996:73). However, in the case of South Africa, Garman and Wasserman (2017:9) remind us that while we can be critical of the news media's tendency to only pay attention to marginalised during times crisis, it is important to consider the history of political struggles in South Africa and the creation of suffering groups that were used for political reasons:

In South Africa the very successful bonding of classes of people into whats (the black masses', 'the majority, 'the poor', 'the rural', as well as 'women' and 'youth') in the apartheid period, bedevils the present by keeping those classified this way as batches of human beings who are administered as such under the present political regime and reported in this way by the news media. Of course, those powerful group identifications were also mobilised successfully for the purposes of anti-apartheid struggle but they have present-day repercussions which are not always positive. If an individual from such a what stands out to speak, s/he can only be as a representative of their group and not as a broadly representative South African speaking on a national platform or international platform in this larger way as a 'who' with ideas and opinions. S/he can never be as an individual who speaks on their own behalf with no connection to their group, geographical location or motivating event (Garman and Wasserman, 2017:9).

Other socially-defined categories such as race, gender, class and so forth have a direct impact on our appearance in the public realm (Bickford, 1996:96). This is an extension of Arendt's argument that 'who' we are in the public realm is affected by what others perceive us to be. By disclosing who we are through speaking in the public realm we also reveal elements of 'what' we are. The way one speaks may reveal their race, gender and cultural identity. In diverse countries, different languages and dialects could also point to different identities.

Numerous publics exist within the public realm. These publics stem from common struggles, experiences and a shared identity (Bickford, 1996:97). It is in these spaces that individuals learn to speak and act in public. These publics and the relations within and between them take place in a context of inequality. As a result of this prevalent inequality, the norms of various subaltern publics may conflict with the norms of the dominant culture, as conveyed by the media, teachers, public officials, or other figures of authority. The norms of the dominant culture not only affect how people speak but also distort what they say. They create 'beliefs' about how certain groups of people speak, to keep their voices outside the dominant public realm (Bickford, 1996).

2.2.5. Representative thinking and 'making-face'

Bickford (1996:82), in her discussion of Arendt's work, argues that the thinking self can represent multiple interests in thought without losing its uniqueness and individuality.

Representative thinking emulates dialogue in that an individual represents the interest of others, which they would voice themselves in the context of interaction, without negating their interests and perspective. This enables the individual who is representing others to voice out the difference. However, representative thinking should not replace paying actual attention to others, which is the backbone of listening, because individuals cannot attribute viewpoints to others without hearing them speak. This is important because we do not enter the public realm with ready-made opinions but instead:

...we also must reach some sort of judgement about how to act together. The formation of this kind of judgement (particularly if it is to be not partial) must be formed through actual political communication with others, and not simply through the imaginative and necessarily limited act of representative thinking (Bickford, 1996:87).

This means that as much as representative thinking is important, it is through listening practices that individuals get to understand the interests of others and can empathise with others. Communication with others allows individuals to formulate opinions that encompass others' contributions and enables them to represent others in an impartial manner (Bickford, 1996:87).

Anzaldua (in Bickford 1996:122) argues that politics requires individuals with "multiple-voiced consciousness, a plural self". These are individuals who can stand for more than one perspective at any given moment without having to relinquish their perspectives, irrespective of whether it conflicts with the other perspective or not. This representation of two perspectives represents a struggle within the self. Anzaldua argues that the third element of this representation is the ability to switch between the two modes without being fragmented. But switching modes requires "courage to be open to the possibility of contradiction and conflict within oneself, to hear different voices and see from different vantage points, but to move beyond those shared vantage points to a unique view" (Bickford, 1996:123). This process is not just limited to a specific group of people, but it involves recognizing one's experience and challenging its conventional constructions. This process of switching mode is externalised through speaking and acting. Anzaldua calls this external switching of identity 'making-face'. 'Making-face' is different from the imposed stereotypical masks, which fragment us. Identity, in this sense, is constantly getting constructed through being present in the public realm rather than just internally. This identity is created through speech and action in the public realm (Bickford, 1996:123).

2.2.6. Listening and power

Bickford (1996:97) argues that what is considered to be the norms of communication are just ways of speaking that are used by powerful or dominant groups. What tends to be heard in the public realms are the ways of speaking of those who control or dominate the political, social and economic institutions. There are four components or ways of speaking or linguistic phenomena that are used to distinguish the social status of the speaker. These are structure, voice quality, affective disposition and framing of utterance (Bickford, 1996:97). Structure is the logic and grammar of the way an argument is packaged and delivered to listeners. What is seen as ‘model’ speaking closely resembles written speech, which means that those who cannot read or write are already at a disadvantage. This so-called model speaking benefits highly-educated individuals in society. Second, voice quality can also be used as a tool for discriminating against those who do not speak with a dominant accent and pitch. The third component is effective disposition when speaking in a public setting. Bickford (1996:97-98) argues that “in many public settings, an objective, rational demeanour is often favourably counterposed to emotional or passionate expression”. The ability to speak dispassionately is favoured against being emotional. The final component is the framing of utterance, which points to whether it is asserted, qualified or phrased as a question. A more hesitant way of speaking or a questioning way of speaking is seen as a sign of insecurity. Interactive context, which is “who is speaking, who is listening, and what is being talked about”, plays a significant role when it comes to the recognition of other ways of speaking (Bickford, 1996:98). This discussion of the different ways of speaking and the respect or esteem afforded to them suggest that when Bickford (1996:98) talks about speaking and listening, she is referring to them as physical activities rather than as a metaphor for something else.

Levin (in Lloyd 2009:480) argues that listening can also mend the breakdown in communication infrastructure which is necessary for the advancement of “rational consensus, legitimation, equity and justice”. He argues that better listening is an ethical responsibility for every individual and it is a necessary pre-condition for voice. Royster (cited in Lloyd 2009) argues that the listening that Levin refers to can only occur when the resources of listening, speaking and being understood are evenly distributed amongst all in society. Listening in this sense must not foreground speaking or voice, but it should pave the way to being heard and forging shared meaning (Lloyd, 2009:481). For Bickford (1996:66), listening focuses on the

structure of the relationship between the self and the other. This view of listening is useful to political listening because it frames political listening as:

...an activity that does not require self-abnegation or a radical suspension of my own perspective. Rather, in listening I must actively be with others. Listening as an act of concentration means that for the moment, I make myself the background, the horizon, and the speaker the figure I concentrate on. This action is different from trying to make of oneself an absence that does not impose on the other (Bickford, 1996:23).

This relationship of interdependence between the speaker and listener, who are different but equal, makes this type of listening to a matter of agency and practice of citizenship. As stated elsewhere in this chapter, voice received and continues to receive more attention in democratic studies than in listening. Some theorists have argued that the focus on voice had a tremendous impact on the way democracy is studied. Jeffrey Green (in Dobson, 2014:18), for example, argues that throughout history politics has always been understood in terms of voice and as a result, democracy has been studied and theorized from that point of view. Although this emphasis on voice is not wrong, it is narrow. Many efforts have been made to give marginalised and poor citizens a voice, explains Green, not so much has been done to ensure that they are listened to. Nikolas Kompridis (in Dobson, 2014:20) takes this argument further and points out that the focus on the voice at the expense of listening stretches into our ideas of agency. Kompridis points out that we are unaccustomed to thinking of agency in terms other than mastery and that democracy might require another kind of agency rooted in receptivity (Dobson, 2014:20). The failure of receptivity is a failure of recognition of unheard voices. As Kompridis explains:

Receptivity is thus an activity that brings previously unheard voices to our attention the manner of disclosure rather than discovery. This is to say that the voices were already there, and it is simply a question of being open to the possibility of hearing them. Once these voices are present, listening still **has an active and agentic role to play...** (in Dobson, 2014:21).

Being heard is a conferring of power while withholding listening is an expression of power (Dobson, 2014:22). The level of power one has can be deduced by looking at how many people listen when that said individual speaks. But restorative justice becomes the great equaliser in such instances because it does not only give voices to those who were previously unheard but it also obliges others to listen. This is because restorative justice is an approach to justice which create space for those who have been harmed and those who take responsibility for actions that led to harm to communicate and address each other about the

harm caused to create some form of redress. But “both speaking and listening are central activities of citizenship” (Bickford, 1996:4). Emphasizing listening does not mean undermining the role of speech or voice in political engagement because they are interdependent processes.

Scudder et al. (2021) argue that part of the problem with power not listening is foregrounded in how many democratic systems tend to view the process of connecting issues that are debated in public spaces with formal institutions as the sole responsibility of actors located in the public sphere. This approach, explain Scudder et al., “...ignore[s] the onus of powerful institutions to attend to, value and respond to these voices, especially those of the marginalised” (2021:3). This approach focuses on citizens’ responsibility to exercise their voice as far having a voice automatically guarantees a hearing. Scudder et al. identify **institutional listening** as a potential solution to this problem. They define institutional listening as “an active practice of listening enabled by formal institutions; an empowered space structured to listen, recognize, and respond to citizens’ voices, particularly to the marginalized and vulnerable” (Scudder et al., 2021:5). Institutional listening occurs through spaces that are designed for listening by the institution or at the insistence of citizens and incidental spaces of listening. These spaces tend to take the form of hearings and commissions.

Tacchi (2016:117), on the other hand, argues that it is important to pay “attention to both processes of voice and the valuing of voice” to have voice that matters or is listened to. It is through understanding these processes beyond a superficial level that the nature of voice and how that voice is valued can be determined. In other words, it is important to complicate our understanding of voice and how voice is experienced.

2.2.7. Voice and listening

Media theorist, Nick Couldry (2009:579) argues that it is important to understand the relationship between speaking and listening and their interdependency as opposed to valuing one over the other. Listening, for Couldry, is not dependent on hearing. He argues that listening is “the act of recognising what others have to say, recognising that they have something to say or, better, that they, like all human beings, can give an account of their lives that is reflexive and continuous, an ongoing, embodied process of reflection”. In this sense, listening can also be practised by those deprived of hearing or even through reading what

others have written. Emphasis on voice without listening is not only contradictory but incomplete (Couldry, 2009:580). This is an important point to consider because voice is not just about speaking or the desire to do so, as Couldry explains elsewhere:

For 'voice' is about more than just speaking and the growing incitements to speak. An attention to voice means paying attention, as importantly, to the conditions for effective voice, that is, the conditions under which **people's practices of voice are sustained and the outcomes** of those practices validated (Couldry, 2010: 113).

Furthermore, Couldry (2010:01) distinguishes between two common ways in which the concept of 'voice' is used. Firstly, voice is used to refer to the sound that is produced when someone speaks. The problem with this type of voice is that it does not account for the different ways in which one can give an account of themselves using sound. People can and do use other ways than speaking to tell their stories as has become evident with writing, painting and other forms of mediated communication. Secondly, in the political sphere 'voice' is used to refer to "the expression of opinion, or more broadly, the expression of a distinctive perspective on the world that needs to be acknowledged" (Couldry, 2010:01). Using voice in this way is useful in situations where certain groups have been denied an opportunity to narrate their perspectives or their stories have gone unnoticed. This approach lays the foundation for media which seeks to address the inequalities in the representation of different groups. But this approach to voice, warns Couldry, could become banal. It could lead to a situation where every individual acknowledges that they have voice and they all celebrate the voice they have instead of looking at what that voice can do or achieve. Couldry (2010:01) uses the term voice differently. He distinguishes two levels of voice: voice as a value and voice as a process.

2.2.7.1. Voice as a value

This refers to the "act of valuing and choosing to value, those frameworks for organising human life and resources that themselves value voice (as a process)" (Couldry, 2010:02). This means favouring ways that enable voice to be perceived as a central to everyday activities. It also means discriminating against frameworks that organise the social, economic and political sphere, like neoliberalism, which undermines or denies voice. Couldry argues that neoliberalist discourses privilege a view of economic life that does not value the ability for one to have a voice and imposes this framework on politics. Thus, neoliberalism effectively reduces politics to the mere act of implementing market functions and eliminates

the place of the social in politics. Valuing voice means discriminating against an organisational framework that devalues and prevents voice, and favouring processes that allow voice to be expressed efficiently. Here, voice is seen as a value. (Couldry, 2010:02). This value of voice is central to human life irrespective of the political or economic system in place.

2.2.7.2. Voice as a process

Voice as a process refers to the process through which individuals give accounts of their lives and the condition of those lives (Couldry 2010:07). This is a process which allows individuals to tell their stories or narratives, which are the defining features of what being human means. By extension, to deny voice is to deny an aspect of human life. However, defining voice as the ability to tell one's narrative and being acknowledged as doing so raises several principles that should be recognised.

Firstly, voice is socially grounded (Couldry, 2010). Couldry (2010) argues that voice cannot be practised by individuals in isolation from other individuals. This is because the ability to have a voice is dependent on a range of resources. These are practical resources, such as language, and symbolic status required for recognition by others as having a voice. Both these are part of the material nature of voice. Voice is impossible without its material nature, even though it is unequally distributed throughout society. In addition, voice as value means that a purely individual account of voice without any involvement by others is not only unimaginable but would also miss the social aspect of life.

Secondly, voice is a form of reflexive agency (Couldry, 2010:08). This means that voice does not just emerge randomly into a given space but it is a result of thinking and taking responsibility for one's narrative. In this sense, voice is always interlinked with individuals' actions. This means that voice entangles individuals in the back-and-forth exchange of narratives. This back-and-forth also serves as a reflexive process where individuals talk about their actions in relation to those of others. They make sense of their own lives through these exchanges (Couldry, 2010:08). This reflexive nature of voice relates to Bickford's (1996) and Arendt's ideas of plurality of individual citizens. What Couldry, Bickford and Arendt are saying is that citizens depend on other citizens' perspectives to make sense of their own lives and situations.

Thirdly, Couldry (2010:08) argues that “voice is an embodied process”. This means that voice cannot be separated from the experiences of the individual who bears it. Voice is an expression of the world from an individual position, which is shaped by their experiences. Voice involves a claim that every individual’s experience of the world is unique, an ‘embodied uniqueness’. However, an individual is shaped by an array of experiences, which creates an internal plurality of each voice. This internal plurality of voice means that when individuals reflect, they make sense of an aspect of their lives with reference to other people’s lives and experiences. This elevates voice from just speaking to speaking and listening, an act that allows individuals to express their unique narratives in relation to others (Couldry, 2010:09). This idea of internal plurality of voice is similar to Arendt’s conception of the plurality of individuals discussed in **Section 2.2.2**.

Fourth, “voice requires a material form which may be individual, collective or distributed” (Couldry, 2010:09). The material form of voice is not under the exclusive control of individuals because individuals rarely create the means through which they narrate the stories but they make their contribution as subjects of a narrative form. When such means to narrate one’s story are available, it becomes difficult to separate individual input from collective or distributed input. However, a denial of voice occurs when there is an unequal distribution of narrative resources in such a way that certain groups of people do not have access to these resources to create and distribute their narratives (Couldry, 2010:09). This creates a situation where those who do not have access to narrative resources view themselves through the eyes of those who represent them. Bickford (1996) uses the metaphor of a ‘mask’ to warn us of the dangers of representation. She argues that when individuals from marginalised groups are represented they are represented with a ‘mask’ that is representative of every member of that group. This ‘mask’ conceals ‘who’ they are and instead reveals ‘what’ they are.

Five, voice is undermined by practices that do not take the expression of voice as fundamental to everyday activities (Couldry, 2010:10). Voice can be undermined by the principles of the organisation of social life, such as neoliberalism. These models undermine the expression of voice not only by failing to recognise a place for individuals or citizens to voice their perspectives but by also blocking any alternative narrative that might render the expression of voice useful or valuable. Such a narrative model is referred to as ‘voice-denying rationality’ (Couldry, 2010:10).

2.2.7.3. Listening, voice and rights

Just as voice is treated as a right foregrounded by the freedom of expression, Husband (in O'Donnell 2009:425; Dreher 2009:447) argues for the 'right to be understood' to accompany this freedom to communicate. Husband (cited by Downing, 2007:12) argues for 'the right to be understood' as a 'third-order' human right. By being human, every individual has the right to be understood irrespective of what they are talking about or how they choose to express themselves. This is an extension of the 'right to communication' which places great emphasis on speaking while ignoring the fundamental issue of listening. Without the 'right to be understood', all the communication technology or instruments will not bear any communicative engagement. Everyone will speak but no one will understand, since listening is a conscious act. The 'right to be understood' should be the guiding principle that media practitioners and those with power operate by (Downing, 2007:12). This will allow the diversity of issues into public debate. He argues that this obligation can and should be facilitated by the media.

Husband (2009:442) argues that understanding should be followed by relevant behaviour. This argument creates a link between understanding (listening, being heard) and action as a response to hearing. Our inability to act works to undermine or corrupt our initial understanding. Understanding in this regard becomes a means towards something rather than an end. As Husband explains:

Understanding in the absence of follow through is a form of cognitive masturbation: it is self-focused in both activity and outcome. This can easily be normalised as a form of self-congratulatory moral rigour, where the fact of understanding is itself the only socially valued process. Such understanding can be an end in itself, a moral voyeurism (Husband, 2009:442).

Husband seems to agree with Dreher (2012) that one of the indicators of listening should come in the form of a response. In addition, Lipari (2014:102) considers listening as a shared gathering because it is through listening that we become. It is through listening and not speaking that social communities are formed. Listening is constitutive in this regard. As Lipari explains:

For, it is in listening that we become, together. Not that we will come to agree, or to see things the same way, or even come to understand in the same way. But we share the experience of being listening – and up from the listening bubbles a speaking. In this way listening can be understood as a kind of dwelling place from where we offer our hospitality to others and the world. It is an invitation – **a hosting. I don't have to translate your** words into familiar categories or

ideas. I don't have to "feel" what you feel, or "know" what it feels like to be you (Lipari, 2014:102).

In addition, Dobson points out that it is in listening together where a direct relationship between listening and power plays itself out. As Kay Pranis (in Dobson, 2014:21) explains, "we can tell how much power a person has by how many people listen to their stories". When powerholders speak, they are listened to by many. But when the poor, the young and women speak their voices are mostly ignored. Power, in this regard, is about being listened to when you speak. Dobson suggests restorative justice as a potential solution to give unheard and ignored voices a hearing and to compel powerholders to listen to these voices (Dobson, 2014:22).

2.2.8. Listening and privilege

Thompson (in Dreher, 2009:451) argues that powerful or dominant groups in society must listen to painful and confronting stories, histories and criticism. In this way, listening becomes about engaging with difficult questions as opposed to avoiding them. This kind of listening is only possible "when those accustomed to setting the agenda and to having their interests shape the interactions are prepared to put those expectations aside" (Dreher, 2009:451). This would mean transforming the desire to be in charge of the conversation and how it unfolds to listening not only to others but also to one's complicities and privilege. In this way listening to those who we perceive as different from us, or listening across differences as Dreher refers to it, could move towards interrogating "networks of privilege and power and one's own location within them" (Dreher, 2009:451). Listening across the difference means giving up the privilege of not listening to those who are accustomed to it. This also means that as much as listening opens up new possibilities, it can also be decentring and denaturalising for those who enjoyed the privilege of not listening. Krista Ratcliffe (in Dreher, 2009:451) warns of the unproductive guilt and the guilt/blame logic and argues for an ethical imperative to acknowledge our privilege/non-privilege and act accordingly.

However, Dreher (2009:451) points out that while the focus on privilege is important in understanding listening that can undo injustice and oppression, it also has its shortcomings. She cautions that attention to listening must not mean changing the focus of listening to solely be on the responsibilities of the privileged. It should also not mean that those who are not privileged do not have any responsibilities. It is important, in this regard, to avoid the

essentialised binaries of privileged and marginalised, silencer and silenced, and instead focus on “the complexities of the workings of privilege and power, their relational character and how oppression operates differently and is negotiated differently in various contexts” (Dreher, 2009:452). This would mean the kind of listening that is cognisant of power, inequalities and the conflict that shapes relationships between speaking and listening. As Dreher explains:

The politics of recognition demands a shift in entrenched patterns of cultural value and social esteem, pulling focus and interventions to the institutions that produce and maintain inequalities of attention and respect, including media institutions and their hierarchies of news value, entertainment value, interest and credibility. If the politics of voice emphasised the (re)distribution of means and opportunities for speaking, a politics of listening would seem to align more closely with struggles around recognition (Dreher, 2009:454).

What Dreher (2009) is referring to above is a conscious decision to focus on who is listened to as opposed to who is given a voice to speak. This is important because being given a voice alone does not count. It is only when individuals are given a hearing that they are recognised and treated as though they have something important to contribute. One of the most instrumental institutions in facilitating listening is the media.

2.2.9. Listening and the media

Dreher (2009:447) argues that media organisations have well-established “hierarchies of value and esteem” which they assign to various individuals and organisations depending on social statuses. As a result of these hierarchies, the marginalized and less powerful can only speak as representatives of their identity markers and will never get the same recognition that the mainstream media accords powerholders. This, according to Dreher, is the limitation of focusing on voice alone. Focusing on listening offers a way of thinking about media and multiculturalism without falling into the trap of the desire to empower marginalized citizens. Attention to listening opens the possibility of changing media treatment of the poor and marginalised beyond a focus on speaking up and without pushing the responsibility for that change on those who are victims of media reporting. Attention to listening also shifts the focus to “conventions, institutions and privileges which shape who and what can be heard in the media” (Dreher, 2009:447).

Dreher (2010:98) argues that the difficulty with trying to change how journalists frame and represent certain groups of people is not so much the inability to speak on the part of victims

of the representation but rather the “refusal to listening” on the part of media producers and their assumed audience. This ability to speak in the media is shaped by what media producers assume their audience would want to hear, leaving stories that do not fit into the news discourse outside the news. Focusing on listening could mean learning new ways, on the media’s part, to facilitate listening by those who hold power rather than just creating a platform where the marginalized can speak without a guarantee that they would be listened to (Dreher, 2010:99). The challenge for the media in this regard becomes the question of “how to undo the privilege of not listening at multiple levels – including the news conventions which structure journalists’ hearing stories, and the presumed interest of the assumed audience in listening to others” (Dreher, 2010:101).

About Bickford’s work, Dreher (2009:448) argues that how we listen shapes how others can speak and be heard. Bickford takes this argument further in her discussion of Aristotle’s modes of persuasion. She argues that since all the modes of persuasion (character, emotions and reason) require the speakers to give attention to their audience, the audience must also pay attention to the speaker to evaluate their opinions and formulate a response (Bickford, 1996:51). This kind of listening is at the centre of deliberation and the collective figuring out.

Couldry (cited in O’Donnell et al. 2009:431) argues that media practitioners and those who study the media should put aside the position of principal ‘knowers’ to hear the others. Couldry points out that the relationship between media scholars or practitioners with their audiences should be based on paying attention to the previously ignored voices and the voices of those negatively affected by the unequal distribution of symbolic material. This means changing the way media practitioners relate to their audience and making the audience the centre of that relationship and interaction. It is only by foregrounding the audience that media scholars and practitioners can listen to the other side which might disagree with some of their preconceived ideas and practices. This way, everyone affected by the media can contribute to the realities being mediated and could enhance the media’s contribution to the “more culturally inclusive goal of global social well-being” (O’Donnell et al., 2009:431).

The ability to speak up does not necessarily guarantee that those voices will be heard by the media or by extension the powerful in society (Dreher, 2010). Whether a voice is heard or not by the media is dependent on what media practitioners assume the audience will want to listen to. These assumptions often lead to stereotypical reporting about issues of

marginalisation and citizenship. News values and predetermined story angle/focus may work to obstruct any possibility of dialogue between those who are reporters and the subjects of those reports (Dreher, 2010). Those who speak within these reports are only granted a voice as a stereotypical representative of the group that they belong to. As a result of this framing, Dreher (2010) explains, representatives of these groups often trade contesting these stereotypes for getting coverage, even though it might be their stereotypical representation.

Furthermore, individual journalists have always been privileged with the autonomy which comes with their profession. Dreher (2010:101) argues that the power that the media hold “might entail the privilege of choosing to listen or not to, the power to enter into dialogue or not, to seek to comprehend the other or not to, the privilege of demanding answers and explanations and justifications”. She explains that challenging the media to listen, let alone listen to other voices than those of powerful groups can be seen by the media as an attempt to challenge their privilege of not listening. This challenge will also extend to the conventions of news which have a bearing on the way journalists hear stories and the interest of readers, listeners or viewers (Dreher, 2010).

Wasserman (2013:79) argues that media should play a vital role in democratic politics, which depends on listening. The news media’s duty in these instances should not only be to provide a form of stage/platform where citizens can engage each other, but it is their duty to connect these discussions from the grassroots level to political power. ‘Listening’ journalists and a media that listen can and should facilitate politics through “the amplification of voices needed to take local struggles to the national or global arena” (Wasserman, 2013:79), and contribute to the struggle for visibility and to being heard (Couldry, 2010). Couldry (2010) acknowledges that media institutions are effective in voicing counter-democracy and not so good in reporting on new forms of political cooperation and political acts that could arguably be considered ordinary democratic acts.

2.2.9.1. Practices that help journalists to become better listeners

In her research on Special Broadcasting Services radio programmes, Penny O’Donnell (2009) discovered three journalism-related listening practices. These are **purposeful listening**, **hearing dissent** and **intercultural dialogue with strangers**. She explains that **purposeful listening** is when the media makes a conscious decision to listen to alternative voices that will not usually make it into mainstream media. These are people with opposite or alternative

views to the dominant ones. The purpose of such an exchange is not about reaching a consensus but rather to open debate and for all the parties to listen and engage with each other's views.

Hearing dissent involves mainstream media granting space to radical messages from marginalised groups. In print media, these messages could appear on pages that carry the so-called 'major stories'. They can be aired during prime time on broadcast media. This strategic positioning will ensure that the messages are listened to. However, this could prove a costly exercise for marginalised groups since the media would only give these messages prominence as advertisements or advertorials. It would only work with major organisations that represent these groups. Effective listening on the part of the media can be measured by the number of citizens' stories that would not usually be published by mainstream media (O'Donnell, 2009:513).

Intercultural dialogue with strangers involves packaging a story explicitly for an audience that is not familiar with the context of the stories (O'Donnell, 2009:513). These stories are often written using language that is not the same as the language where the stories were produced. The main goal of this strategy is to get listening in other communities.

Furthermore, for Lipari (in Garman and Wasserman, 2017:12) a commitment to listening would require the development of an 'attunement'. Lipari (2014:214) identifies four themes, each paired with ethical virtues, which offer a way to deepen the practice of listening or attunement. I contend that these themes are primarily relevant to media practitioners if they want to foreground listening in their work. These are interconnection and generosity, impermanence and humility, iteration and patience, and invention and courage.

Interconnection and generosity: We are not consciously aware of the many interconnections and interdependencies that manifest themselves through our day-to-day interactions (Lipari, 2014:215). We fail to see interconnections, we fail to listen or even respond. We instead turn away from the possibility of hearing. "Even though we may be blind to the specifics", as Lipari (2014:216) explains, "our awareness of the invisible inevitability of interconnection can nurture a kind of practical generosity that acknowledges the unknown (and perhaps unknowable) while also attesting to the validity of other points of view engendered by other circumstances and other intentions". Acknowledging

interconnection in our listening is not only an act of generosity but it is also an act of opening oneself to the possibility of a different outcome.

Iteration and patience: Lipari (2014:217) posits that “repetition calls for the patience to sit listening in the lap of our ignorance, willing ourselves not to rush further ahead but to deepen into the present without falling into the intoxicating habitual trance of well-loved and familiar already known”. As Garman and Wasserman (2017:12-13) explain:

Recognition of repetition of different lives, different eras and different places can foster greater identification with those considered the other, and teach journalists humility about their own knowledge and understandings. This orientation asks of journalists to develop the ability to see the world from different perspectives, recognising the similarities between people and their experiences, but remaining aware of the limits of their understanding and knowledge (Garman and Wasserman, 2017:12-13).

Invention and courage: Listening requires courage to move beyond the familiar and known into the unknown which might be characterised by contradictions and paradoxes (Lipari, 2014:218). Inventing creative ways of listening as opposed to speaking is also important in developing better listening. But invention requires courage to listen to the unknown and to reveal our weaknesses.

Impermanence and humility: Accepting that one’s knowledge is not permanent or complete can encourage better interaction with and listening to others (Garman and Wasserman, 2017:13). For journalists, this means rejecting the assumed certainty of operating on facts of reality accepting the incompleteness of their knowledge, which would require them to listen to others (Garman and Wasserman, 2017:13).

2.2.9.2. Strategies to get the media to listen to the voices of ordinary citizens

In her research into community media projects aimed at getting mainstream media to listen to voices that have previously been ignored, Dreher (2010:89) observed five strategies that ignored communities use to get the media to pay attention to their plight. These are: checking the performance of the news, learning the game, building networks, talking back to news media, and projects that work outside the news conventions.

Checking the performance of the news: This strategy has been used and continues to be used by ignored communities around the world to monitor how they are covered by the media. Checking the performance of the news involves monitoring the news media to identify

the aspects of the news that warrant complaints for discriminatory coverage or reward for positive coverage (Dreher, 2010:89). This strategy is primarily reactive and focuses on incidences that occurred rather than trends over a longer period. It relies on standards that are set by the media and therefore “they police and reproduce the conventions of news rather than necessarily challenging those conventions or developing new possibilities” (Dreher, 2010:89). The problem with reactive complaints is that they do not challenge the ‘symbolic hierarchies’ of news media production which frames such complaints as being made by disgruntled customers. In other words, such complaints challenge the media using standards that are set by the media.

Learning the game: This strategy, argues Dreher, involves learning media skills and news conventions and production to improve the coverage of community representatives and issues that are affecting that particular community. This strategy involves ongoing “media monitoring, training of media spokespeople, developing contacts and background information, networking and building professional relationships with journalists, letters to the editor, media releases, media events, fact sheets, interviews, writing op-ed pieces and editorial board meetings” (Dreher, 2010:90). It can also lead to the production of own media. However, although this strategy can lead to a diversity of voices being used as news sources it often does not change the media framing or news agendas. These voices are used within pre-determined storylines and they are often framed as representing special interests.

Building networks: This strategy involves building relations with media professionals and journalism students who are yet to join mainstream newsrooms aiming for long-term changes in news media coverage (Dreher, 2010:91). Building these links with journalists, especially students, can often take the form of delivering seminars and conducting workshops on how to report on a specific media. Communities and organizations can create toolkits for the media with the 'dos and don'ts' of reporting a specific issue. While this strategy is good at building relationships with journalists, its long-term impact on changing the way certain issues are reported is not always guaranteed (Dreher, 2010:92).

Talking back to news media: This strategy involves communities and organizations creating projects that talk back to the news media (Dreher, 2010:92). Unlike the previous strategies which highlight the possibility of intervening to improve news coverage, it represents the limit of that influence. In a bid to reclaim symbolic power from news organizations,

communities stage media events which not only critique media but offer counter-narratives (Dreher, 2010:92). What makes this strategy important is that it goes beyond demands for inclusion into the politics of representation, allowing aggrieved communities and organizations the power of presenting their narratives as they wish to be represented. Furthermore, this strategy can challenge the convention of news by shifting attention to the media practice of naming and framing issues and demonstrating how "news criteria of relevance are not self-evident or natural, they are constructed and unevenly applied" (Dreher, 2010:94).

Projects that work outside the media: This strategy involves creating activities or projects that work outside the news as a response to the difficulty of challenging news conventions and agendas (Dreher, 2010:94). Although these projects respond to news media coverage they aim to create an alternative narrative to that presented by the media. Such projects have the power of getting communities or organizations to be seen in a different light than their shallow representation by the news media. The significance of this strategy in its ability to bypass "the structured break between news producers and consumers by using alternative medium" to respond to the media reports (Dreher, 2010:95). This strategy gives a platform to speak for those voices that would be excluded by using journalistic conventions and news values highlighting the limits of news.

2.2.10. Indicators of listening

The theoretical perspectives detailed above provide arguments for how voice and listening can strengthen democracy by paying attention to the interaction between political actors. This study examines some of the RMF-led political and adversarial moments at UCT in 2015 and 2016 and whether the interaction that occurred during these moments how evidence of political listening. It is thus imperative to understand what factors are required for such listening to take place in the context of a university and what the indicators or evidence of listening would be.

Bickford (1996:153) suggests three factors that could be used to judge if listening has taken place. One, **silence** can be used as an indicator of genuine listening. Silence is the basis through which dialogue comes along; for it is in silence that "reflection is matured, and empathy can grow" (Barber, 1989:356). This silence is not the absence of sound, but it is the opposite of speech. The two are interdependent processes. Silence is "an effort to make room

for a variety of expressions which may surprise and challenge” whoever is listening (Bickford, 1996:154). But silence can also be the opposite of listening. It might indicative of the decision by others not to engage with others’ viewpoints. In other words, it could be an intentional silence. This could be motivated by a desire to manipulate the other by listening to the other’s point-of-view while one remains shielded. This could also be a “wilful silence” that actors use to protest against what is being said by others (Bickford, 1996:156). As a result, all that is being said falls on deaf ears and loses any meaning since message and meaning are not the same things. Powerful groups can also use silencing to deny a voice to other groups or not listen. This is the case when oppressed groups are exempted from a duty to listen and a greater emphasis is placed on giving them a voice. Exempting a group from listening based on that group’s oppression is excluding them from political action (Bickford, 1996:156).

Listening can also manifest itself through **question-posing**. Bickford (1996:156) argues that by posing questions and digging deeper, political actors show their desire to understand what is being said. Questions assure the speakers that the audience is paying attention to what is being said by constantly trying to understand when what is being said is not fully clear. This question-posing may be evidence of contradiction or result in a contradiction of views between the speaker and the listener. This is not necessarily a bad thing since conflict paves way for communication and the goal of communication is not consensus. However, asking questions could also be a form of a lack of engaged listening. A question can demonstrate one’s unwillingness to listen because it “puts forth the terms of discussion in some specific way” (Bickford, 1996:157). These are questions that demand excessive clarity in an attempt to avoid paying attention to meaning. These questions are designed to evade and obscure those remarks. This could often lead to the final measure of listening, arguments.

Arguments are central to political listening and figuring out issues as a collective (Bickford, 1996:157). Arguments show that there is listening and even though the responses do not show any consensus with what the speaker said they show a desire to engage with the speaker. Like question-posing, arguments could also be a sign of the unwillingness to listen. It can be used as a defensive mechanism to divert from the responsibility of engaging with what is being said. These factors are not definite indicators of listening and what could be seen as a sign of listening could be the opposite of listening (Bickford, 1996:157).

Thill (2009:539) explains that the signs of listening, especially in the contexts of diversity and inequality, are when there is evidence of “**backgrounding of the self**” and a “**foregrounding of the other**” by citizens, especially those who have historically enjoyed the privilege of being listened to. This is when individuals acknowledge and give up their privileged positions as speakers and listen to others who usually occupy the position of listeners. In this case, the hierarchy of inequality is reversed. But listening also requires a “**broader notion of responsiveness**” (Thill, 2009:540). This responsiveness requires citizens to recognize others and treat them as though they have something important to say. Furthermore, Dreher argues that to focus on listening we need to pay attention to the significance of “**response and recognition**” (2012:157), “**attention and response**” (2012:159), “**openness and recognition**” (Dreher, 2012:159), and examine who is being “**treated as a resource**” and being given “**recognition and authority**” (Dreher, 2012:160) (see **Section 3.3.1.1** on how these concepts will be used in this study).

A discussion of the different ways of speaking and the possible responses to them detailed earlier in this chapter and a discussion of the indicators of listening in this section suggest that when these theorists talk about speaking and listening, they are referring to physical speaking with a voice and making a sound in a face-to-face encounter, rather than using the two words as metaphors for something else. In this study, the theory of ‘political listening’ will be used to make sense of a face-to-face context, interview data and journalistic texts. This study stretches the theory beyond physical speak to include mediated forms of communication such as press statements, journalistic texts and meeting minutes. To assess mediated communication, the study will borrow concepts from Mufamadi and Garman’s (2017:189) attempts to develop an external language of description for listening. I will discuss how these concepts will be used in greater detail in the next chapter (see **Section 3.3.1.1**).

2.3. Conclusion

The theoretical framework discussed above is particularly useful in trying to understand how citizens can interact with each other in a manner that is democratic and encourages participation by all irrespective of their political views or social status. Studies on participation have mostly focused on encouraging an equal distribution of voice to all citizens but there has been little focus on ‘listening’ as an important feature in politics and participation. It is important to investigate whether the interactions/engaged as part of RMF’s

activism at UCT can be considered 'political listening' because of the theory's potential to support democracy by focussing on the interactions between actors. Using this theory to assess democratic practices in the context of a university is even more pivotal given that universities are contested spaces for debate, and where the youth can learn to practice their citizenship.

Chapter 3: Research Methods and Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will detail the journey I undertook and the methods I used to collect data for this study. It will discuss various data collection methods, and how and why they were used in this study. I will also discuss the validity and reliability of the data I collected, reflect on my position as a researcher and an employee at UCT's Communication and Marketing Department during the study focus period and the impact of this positioning on the study. It will start by locating the study within the Case Study methodological approach, which explains the focus on a specific case within a set time frame. I will start by discussing the aims of the study will be my point of departure for this chapter.

3.2. Aims of the study

This study aimed to investigate if and where the most effective 'political listening' took place among RMF members, between RMF members and the UCT management, and between RMF members, UCT management and the *Cape Times* newspaper. It also considers what role the *Cape Times* newspaper played in reporting on RMF-related news and whether its role could be considered political listening. To do this, the study will attempt to answer four **research questions**:

- In considering the examples of protests that led to demands being met, are there any indicators that political listening took place? If so, what were some of the characteristics of these protest moments? What were the outcomes of these moments?
- Were there other moments in which protests led to what the protesters would consider successful outcomes without anything like political listening taking place? If so, what would account for the success of these outcomes?
- When protest actions took place that did not have positive outcomes from the perspective of student protestors, what might explain this? Was there a failure of political listening (a communication breakdown); and what are other explanations for these failed protests?

- Using the analysis of RMF’s activities over a year to critique the theory of political listening, what can we learn about the kinds of contexts that enable or hinder this kind of listening?

3.3. Case Study methodological approach

This research project will use the case study approach to investigate RMF’s protest and the responses to this protest by the UCT management, alongside the media reporting on these activities by the *Cape Times* newspaper. Although there are many definitions of a case study, Simons’ (2009) definition encompasses all elements of what a case study is supposed to. Simons (2009:21) defines a case study as “an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a ‘real life’”. Simons further explains that the case study is not a research method but rather a design frame which allows researchers to employ various research methods to examine a particular case (ibid). In terms of credibility, Stake points out that case studies get their credibility by triangulating and focusing on the “experiential knowledge of the case and close attention to the influence of its social, political, and other contexts” (2005:444).

What makes a case study particularly useful for studying a social movement like RMF is this methodological approach’s five requirements as identified by Stake (2005). These are “issue choice, triangulation, experiential knowledge, contexts, and activities” (2005:444). These requirements allow the researcher to use multiple sources of data to produce an in-depth understanding of the case being studied. In the context of studying RMF’s activities at UCT, sources of data include written communication by both RMF and the UCT management, interview data, documents, observation notes, and media coverage, which is considered alongside the influence of media ownership, journalistic routines and economic pressures on the media. This data will be used to produce an in-depth case study on RMF in relation to UCT management as an example of ‘listening’ dynamics within a South African university.

3.4. Research Methods

In this study, I leaned on qualitative research methods to collect data. I conducted in-depth interviews with participants from RMF, UCT management, Communication and Marketing Department at UCT and a reporter from the *Cape Times* newspaper. I also conducted participant observation of the activities of the CMD and simple observation of RMF

activities. I also conducted a listening theory-informed exploratory description or summary of media coverage, along with other documents produced between 9 March 2015 and 10 March 2016 in relation to this case.

3.4.1 Listening theory-informed description or summary of mediated communication

Lincoln and Guba (in Hodder, 1998:110) draw a useful distinction between documents and records based on “whether the text was prepared to attest to some formal transaction”.

According to this classification, records will include marriage certificates, contracts, and banking statements, among others. Documents, on the other hand, are texts that are prepared for personal use as opposed to formal use (Hodder, 1998:111). Documents include letters, diary entries and speeches. This study used both records and documents. The records analysed in this study include minutes of UCT SRC Statements, UCT statements, UCT Council meetings, and Senate meetings. The documents analysed include personal accounts of what happened during the Rhodes Must Fall movement’s campaigns and protests.

However, there are other texts analysed in this study which transcend the distinction between documents and records. These are documents such as members of the UCT executive’s communication (VC Desks and DVC Desks) to the university community. Although these texts are (by definition) letters (documents), they also are formal records that serve as an official account of activities within the university. Both documents and records are important in qualitative research because the information they provide “may differ from and may not be available in spoken form, and because texts endure and thus give historical insight” (Hodder, 1998:111).

I conducted a listening theory-informed exploratory description or summary of documents and records referred to above, along with interview data and media texts. For this approach, I leaned on the work I have done in my Master of Arts research thesis (Mufamadi, 2014) and the book chapter (Mufamadi and Garman, 2017) published out of the Master’s work. My study on Equal Education (Mufamadi, 2014), identified that the method or rubric for measuring ‘political listening’ was not fully developed. As was the case for O’Donnell et al.’s study, my study’s “rubric for listening research is deliberately an open and dynamic one” (2009:424). Since my earlier research project aimed to consider whether the relationships between Equal Education and learners and between Equal Education, learners and the media

could be considered ‘political listening’, I was looking for data that showed factors that were identified as indicators of ‘political listening’. These factors were ‘response and recognition’ (Dreher, 2012:157), ‘openness and recognition’ (Dreher, 2012:159), ‘being treated as a resource’ (Dreher, 2012:160), recognition and authority (Dreher, 2012:160), ‘backgrounding of the self’ (Thill, 2009:539) and ‘foregrounding of the other’ (Thill, 2009:539), ‘responsiveness’ (Thill, 2009:540), ‘silence’ (Bickford, 1996:153), ‘question-posing’ (Bickford, 1996:156) and ‘argument’ (Bickford, 1996:157). I also looked for data that contained indicators of limited listening such as ‘a form of censorship’ (Dreher, 2012:164), ‘the presents and engagement of VIPs at events (Dreher, 2012:164) and the reduction of authority. I took some of these concepts and broke them down into one-word phrases, which I defined to further develop the external language of description for the theory of political listening for it to be used in the analysis of situations and instances that it was not developed for.

3.3.1.1. Developing an external language of description for ‘Political listening’

During my Master’s research, I discovered that the theory of political listening was developed for face-to-face interaction, rather than mediated communication, which I wanted to use the theory to make sense of. To overcome this research hurdle, I consulted Bernstein’s work on theories with varying degrees of both external and internal languages of description. is required. A theory that is difficult to apply to empirical circumstances has a strong internal language of description and a weak external language of description because it makes more sense as abstract concepts rather than empirically (Maton, 2011). Once the external language of description is “established for the specific object being studied, then the basis for analysis is visible for other researchers to engage with” (Maton, 2011:72).

To develop an external language of description for the theory of political listening, Mufamadi (2014:56-8) and Mufamadi and Garman (2017:189) used categories developed by Thill (2009) and Dreher (2012) to further develop indicators of political listening as discussed in **Section 2.2.10**. This was a messy process of trying to make meaning of categories that are often abstract and only make sense for face-to-face encounter. Tables 1 and 2 below show the external language of description for ‘political listening’ from Mufamadi (2014: 56-57) and Mufamadi and Garman (2017:189).

Table 1: Indicators of the presence of political listening/concept and their definitions

Indicator of the presence of political listening/concept	Definition
Response	When there is evidence of reaction, follow-up, plans or actions that are reaction to something.
Recognition	Evidence of seeing from another's perspective and understanding their view.
Openness	Where there is a plurality of individuals, backgrounding of self, foregrounding of others and empathy.
Resource	Being treated as having something to contribute.
Authority	When all participants or individuals have equality in a specific context (not related to position, role or power outside of this context).
Political equality	When actors who hold unequal social statuses are treated as though they are equals or with the same esteem for them to engage in political talk and action.
Different outcome	When actors are open to different results which they arrive at as a result of the interaction.
Solidarity	Treating others as though they are capable of speaking for themselves and they are capable of political action. This can take the form of recognising their point of view/claim as legitimate and speaking out in support of that claim or point of view.
Being given a voice	When actors are allowed to express their issues or views.
To be engaging/engagement	When actors' demands, claims or issues are met with a sense of wanting to discuss and debate the issues thoroughly.

Table 2: Other concepts used in the analysis and their definitions

Other concepts used in the analysis	Definition
Representative thinking	When individuals can represent multiple interests without losing their uniqueness and individuality.
Uniqueness	This is 'who' individuals are rather than 'what' they are.

Stereotyping	When the distorted image of individuals is presented in the public realm. It is when ‘masks’ that present a false face and prevent what the mask covers from being audible and visible are imposed on individuals.
Rational way of speaking	The ability to speak dispassionately objectively and logically.
Emotional way of speaking	Passionate expression of ideas without any adherence to rationality.
Checking the performance of news media	Monitoring mainstream news media for irresponsible reporting and commending them for fair and balanced reporting.
Learning the game	When citizens learn media skills and news conventions to get better coverage of their issues from mainstream media.
Building networks	Building networks with journalists
Talking back to news media	When community or groups affected by a certain issue create media (and media events) to address this issue.

3.3.1.2. Sampling

Listening theory-informed exploratory descriptions or summaries were developed on various RMF campaigns depending on the material produced and available for each campaign. Campaigns that ran for longer generated more material than shorter ones. The material analysed will be explained in detail in the chapters that look at specific campaigns. To give you an idea of the documents that will be analysed I use the campaign against the statue of Cecil John Rhodes as an example below.

For the campaign to have the statue of Cecil John Rhodes removed from the UCT campus, I developed listening theory-informed exploratory descriptions or summaries of media coverage on the following communications:

- The 12 newspaper articles published by the *Cape Times* on RMF and the statue,
- SRC statements on the statue,
- Executive communication statements issued by the Communications and Marketing Department (CMD) on student protest around the statue,
- Video footage of a student meeting to discuss the statue,

- Video footage of the Seminar on Heritage, Signage and Symbolism,
- Video footage of the student assembly to discuss the fate of the statue,
- Video footage of the university assembly (for both academic and support staff) discussing the statue,
- Statement on the outcome of the Senate meeting where the fate of the statue was tabled as an agenda item,
- Video footage of the UCT Convocation Special General Meeting,
- UCT Council chairperson's statement on the decision-making body's vote to determine the fate of the statue, and
- Video footage of the UCT Association of Black Alumni's seminar on transformation.

These media texts were analysed for evidence or characteristics of 'political listening' as identified in my previous study (Mufamadi, 2013:56-59) using Bickford's (1996) and Dreher's (2012) explication of how to detect political listening. These categories include 'response', 'recognition', 'openness', 'resource' and 'authority' and other indicators as listed above.

3.4.2. Observation

Deacon et al. (2007:249) point out that observations are useful in revealing the social realities of the subjects of research in their social contexts. It helps open a window for the researcher to peep into the lives of the subjects in their natural settings. The researcher has access to first-hand experience rather than relying on subjects' accounts. This helps the researcher to observe behaviour which cannot be extracted through other methods which rely on questioning subjects. It also gives the researcher access to what the people observed understand and believe in by looking at their behaviour (Deacon et al., 2007:249).

Observation allows the researcher to make an independent assessments of the research subjects, which helps to substantiate or dispute what came out of question-based data collection methods. This method also allows the researcher to observe non-verbal behaviour, such as body language, attitude and togetherness, which cannot be accessed through other methods. The information generated through this method is colourful and in-depth which helps the readers and researcher to understand the subjects better (Deacon et al., 2007:250).

There are three types of observation; simple observation, participant observation and ethnography.

I joined the media liaison team at UCT's Communications and Marketing Department (CMD) at the beginning of May 2015, just under two months after Maxwele threw human excrement on the statue of Rhodes. Being a member of staff at CMD allowed me to conduct participant observation of the department's activities. Participant observation is the type of observation where the researcher takes part in the undertakings of the people who are being observed (Deacon et al., 2007:250). This kind of observation is usually used in situations where the necessary data can only be generated through participation and would not be possible to get without participation. I notified the director of the department of my research on RMF and informed her that I would also be observing CMD's activities when it comes to communicating RMF-related issues as part of my research. I took notes in meetings and documented the approach that was taken especially when it came to communicating to campus and responding to media enquiries on RMF.

In as far as RMF's activities are concerned, I used simple observation during RMF's protest, imbizos and press conferences. Being present when these activities were happening offered an opportunity to see first-hand how members of RMF interact with each other during these highly political moments and the reaction from members of the UCT management. Being part of RMF activities meant that "verbal and non-verbal behaviour (body, togetherness, interruptions, parallel activities) could be observed as they happened" (Deacon, et al. 2007:258). Observing was also important in establishing which media came to RMF events and who they interviewed during the events. This was important in that it gave me a sense of which media houses were interested in stories about RMF and how they were getting what they were using in the stories. Establishing which media houses attended RMF activities also worked as a public relations tactic to make it easier for the university to know who to send its statement or response to when it came to the issues that RMF was raising. Although I did not take notes during my observation, I would sit and write out all that I observed immediately after the protest.

Deacon et al. (2017:265) warn that although observations offer "immediate access to social process", the researcher only sees what is in front of them. From observation during RMF protests, imbizos and press conferences, one could have concluded that RMF was made up of a homogenous group. However, conversations with various RMF members and a quick look at their social media pages revealed that the movement was made up of diverse groups with multiple (and often competing) interests and different ideological backgrounds. However,

observation is usually conducted in conjunction with other methods that dig deeper than what is observable (Deacon et al., 2007:251). This study, it was used to supplement Content Analysis and in-depth interviews.

3.4.3. In-depth interview

I decided to use in-depth interviews as a method because of their ability to, as Byrne (2003:181) points out, uncover information about individuals' attitudes and behaviour, which cannot be accessed using observations. This is information that the respondents give in explaining their actions and the justifications for such activities from the interviewees' perspectives. This method of data collection is particularly useful "in accessing individuals' attitudes and values" (Byrne, 2004:182) and in understanding social issues from the subject's point of view (Seidman, 2006:07). I wanted the interviewees to explain in their own words how they understood their actions and motivation for those actions from their perspective to work out if political listening took place and what other factors might have led to the success of this protest.

Byrne (2003:182) explains that in-depth interviews are particularly useful to researchers whose research seeks "to explore voices and experiences which they believe have been ignored, misrepresented or suppressed in the past". This is an important factor in this research, especially considering that most RMF activities involved protest. Protest and people who engage in protest in South Africa have often been stereotypically represented as a mob. RMF itself has often been characterised as a homogenous group of students whose main objective was to disrupt the normal functioning of the university because of their supposed disdain for leadership structures and/or hierarchies. Interviews are a great opportunity for respondents to explain their actions and motivations. It is an opportunity to exercise voice.

My role as a researcher was fundamental in these interviews. I not only asked questions, but I was also a co-producer of knowledge through my interaction with the respondents. Since these interviews were semi-structured, my main role as an interviewer was to guide the interviews, and I purposefully conducted them in a manner that resembled a conversation. I encouraged respondents to speak at length about their activities and experiences through probing questions that were open-ended and flexible to accommodate the respondent's understandings and interpretations (Byrne, 2003:182).

Another reason for choosing in-depth interviews was the method's emphasis on interviewees being meaning-makers rather than passive vessels with pre-existing answers (Warren, 2002:83). As such, the purpose of this method is to derive interpretations and rationales from respondents. Seidman (2006:9) explained that in-depth interviews were based on "an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience". These interviewees are viewed as individuals with valuable experiences and understandings about a particular issue. Since they have first-hand experience of the phenomenon being researched their knowledge and views are worthy of exploration.

Byrne (2003:185) explained that the interviewer or researcher should pay attention to ethical considerations in research topics that are sensitive. The interviewees can be protected from harm by entering into a formal agreement with the researcher to participate willingly, refrain from answering questions they are not comfortable with and to be guaranteed anonymity. This consent is usual in a written format and signed by both the researcher and the respondent, and the respondent's parents in cases of minors (Byrne, 2003:185). Before commencing the interviews, interviewees were furnished with a consent form to read and complete (see **Appendix 1**). This consent form not only offered the guarantee of anonymity if the interviewees wished but it also guaranteed interviewees the right to cease participation in the research at any moment.

3.4.3.1. Interview guide

Wengraf (2001) draws a useful distinction between theory questions and interview questions. Theory questions (also known as research questions) are questions about the actual theory that is used in the study and are formulated in the theory-language. Interview questions, on the other hand, are questions formulated by the researcher using the language of the subjects to gather data that will be used in answering the research questions (Wengraf, 2001). Theory questions influence interview questions.

The interview questions used in this study were designed to gather data that shows evidence of listening through indicators of listening that were discussed in the previous chapter. Most of these questions asked respondents for information that showed the presence of these indicators or the absence thereof, as in the examples of the questions (with specific indicators of listening in brackets) listed below (see **Appendix 2** for a sample of interview questions asked):

Who did the SRC listen to when it comes to the campaign against the statue? Explain and give examples? (Authority)
Were the students taken seriously by university management during the mediation process? Please explain and give examples? (Openness)
Was there any evidence of seeing from **another party's perspective and understanding their view**? Please explain and give examples? (Recognition)
How would you describe the interaction between RMF and UCT? Please explain? (Response)
In terms of power dynamics, who had more authority within this space? (Authority)

The interview questions above were designed to purposefully probe stakeholders to give information that relates to the theory. In this study, the influence of theory questions on interview questions is quite apparent and it is the only way in which the theory can get to talk to the data or the data to the theory. These theory questions are important in further advancing the development of political listening's external language of description.

3.4.3.2. Sampling

All the interviewees for this study were purposively selected (Deacon et al., 2007:52). The decision on who to interview from these groups was informed by observation of the shifting political landscape within the university and the unfolding of events. For example, not all members of RMF took part in every campaign. Through purposive sampling, I selected only those individuals who were relevant to the specific protest I wanted to interrogate. I decided to divide my interview sample according to their proximity to or stake in the RMF – UCT interaction. I wanted to include representatives of most of the groups that had a stake in the conflict or disagreement. I planned to interview representatives from the UCT administrative management (UCT Executive and Senior Executive Task Team (SETT) members), 2014-2015 SRC, Black Academic Caucus, NEHAWU, Academic Union, UCT Communications and Marketing Department, RMF, mediators and the *Cape Times* newspaper journalist who reported on RMF's activities.

In terms of UCT management, I wanted interviewees who were involved in some of the decisions taken regarding student protest and who had interacted with RMF in their leadership capacity. I chose to interview Max Price, then Vice-Chancellor of UCT and members of the Special Executive Task Team (SETT). SETT was constituted by and reported to the VC. It was introduced to “work with multiple stakeholders across campus, to anticipate and diffuse tensions, ensure good communication with the campus community when events are moving rapidly, and ensure maintenance of a safe environment for all” (Price, 2016b). I

also wanted to interview the following individuals but could not secure an interview; Francis Petersen, who was then a Deputy Vice-Chancellor of UCT and member of SETT; and Anwar Mall, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and a member of SETT. I interviewed Russell Ally, the Executive Director of the Department of Alumni Development and a member of SETT

In terms of members of the BAC, I looked for members who have been directly involved in interactions with members of RMF through an exchange of ideas and other members who have been involved in university processes. I interviewed Dr Shose Kessi, who has not only interacted and shared ideas with members of RMF but also written a lot about some of the demands that students were making. She is a senior lecturer in the Department of Psychology and has also been a member of SETT, which was formed to negotiate with students during protest. Elelwani Ramugondo, Head of the Department of Psychiatry, has also been a member of BAC from the beginning. As one of the first few responses by the university administrative management to student protest and criticism of the university's lack of transformation, Ramugondo was appointed the Vice-Chancellor's Special Advisor on Transformation for a year. This position moved her to the university's seat of power and allowed her access to the university's planning and decision-making bodies. She was also an observer during the first (formal) mediation process between university administrative managers and RMF mediated by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (see **Chapter 5** for more on this mediation process and how it unfolded). Ramugondo later became the chair of the BAC, Curriculum Working Group and Academic Freedom Committee. I could not secure an interview with NEHAWU shop stewards or students who worked closely with workers in their efforts to be insourced by the university. As a result, I could not include a chapter on protest against outsourcing in this study.

I purposively selected to interview a senior staff member at CMD, which is UCT's mouthpiece. I specifically wanted an individual who took part in crafting messages to campus and to the *Cape Times* newspaper and/or who signed the messages off. I interviewed Kylie Hatton, CMD's Director who also signs-off on all the information that is sent out.

It became apparent early in the life of the Rhodes Must Fall movement that it was not a united group of people either ideologically or personally. Contestations around who started the movement, who should represent the movement, gender issues within the movement and whose interests the movement should represent played out in protest, press conferences and

individual members' social media pages. It appears the contestation was primarily between “black feminists” and the “patriarchs”. After the first anniversary of RMF celebration and exhibition, it became apparent that there was at least one other group, the transgender & non-binary people. I interrogated these divisions in the first few interviews with members and former members of RMF. A member of RMF provided a useful classification of the different interest groups within RMF. He explained that there were three major groups – **the patriachs, the black feminists** and **the transgender & non-binary people** – and in many cases, there were further divisions within these groups. Some of these divisions were, according to one interviewee, further (unintentionally) exacerbated by the media's repeated use of certain members of RMF as sources in their stories and referring to them as RMF leaders. I was careful not to fall into the same trap. I interviewed a variety of members of RMF based on their visibility during RMF activities, the proximity to issues I wanted to tackle and the interest group they represented. I interviewed RMF members who were in the SRC at the time, members who were involved in accommodation protest, members from the black feminist group, members of RMF with strong PASMA influence, and members of RMF who were affiliated with the UCT Trans Collective.

In terms of interviews with the media, I decided to only focus on the *Cape Times* newspaper for several reasons. The *Cape Times* was the newspaper that generated more coverage on RMF than any other newspaper. In addition, the newspaper had positioned itself as a stakeholder and a player in the conflict between RMF and UCT management⁸. I interviewed the reporter who reported on almost all stories about RMF's activities at UCT.

3.5. Data Analysis

The data collected must be analysed for meaning to be made. Since qualitative data is about the subjects' experience, behaviour and beliefs or motivations, data analysis cannot be done in a quantified, rigorous manner (Guy et al., 1987). Instead, qualitative data analysis involves the breaking up, separating, or disassembling of research materials into pieces, parts, elements, or units. With the facts broken down into manageable pieces, the researcher sorts and sifts them, searching for types, classes, sequences, processes, patterns or wholes. The aim of this process is to assemble or reconstruct the data in a meaningful or comprehensible

⁸ I discuss this in detail Chapter 10.

fashion (Jorgensen, 1989:107 in Boeije, 2010:76). The analysis has to take into account grounded insights for meaning. Rubin and Rubin (2005:207) point out that analysing qualitative data involves examining “concepts, themes, and events across different interviews and combining the material into a coherent whole that portrays a culture, suggests solutions to policy problems, or describes what happens and what it means”. The data analysed through content analysis will be presented alongside data collected through in-depth interviews. I used NVivo to group data from interviews for the theory to be mapped on this data. My data was grouped according to individual themes aligned to the theory.

3.6. Ethical considerations

The common principle when it comes to ethical considerations in social science research is that research should “cause no harm” to its subjects (Ruane, 2005:17). One way of protecting interviewees from harm is by entering into a formal agreement with the researcher to participate willingly, to refrain from answering questions they are not comfortable with and are guaranteed anonymity (Tonkiss, 2004:137). This consent is usually in a written format and signed by both the researcher and the respondent, and the respondent’s parents in cases of minors (Byrne, 2003:185). The participants in this study were all adults and their occupations range from students, university staff and journalists. Interviewees participated willingly, with the freedom to stop participating in the research at any point in the study. Interviewees that could only be interviewed over the phone, were unable to sign and return the consent form although the form and details of the study (research proposal) were sent to them in advance. In terms of observing during RMF’s activities, only a few members that I was close to were aware of my observer status and the fact that I was employed at CMD, which RMF considered the enemy department. I decided to withhold information about my CMD employment status from the greater RMF membership after a member I told responded by likening then UCT spokesperson, Patricia Lucas, who was my line manager at the time, to the devil. Withholding information about my employment status did not bring any harm to RMF members and neither did the information I was gathering through the observation.

3.7. Conclusion

The next chapters will provide an analysis of the data in light of the theoretical framework. The theory of political listening and the indicators of listening, discussed in this chapter, will

be mapped on the empirical data to assess the kinds of ‘political listening’ that may or may not be possible among RMF members, between RMF and UCT, and RMF, UCT and the *Cape Times* newspaper.

Chapter 4: The statue of Cecil John Rhodes must fall

“Dear history, this revolution has women, gays, lesbians, queers and trans. Remember that” – placard at a Rhodes Must Fall protest

4.1. Introduction

I have used the previous three chapters to provide the context within which to locate the RhodesMustFall movement’s activities, provided the theoretical frameworks that I am going to use to make sense of RMF’s activities and explained how I went about collecting the data that was used in this study. Although I do not intend on studying all RMF’s demands, I do intend on presenting the social movement’s various campaigns chronologically to create a sense of continuity in the narrative that I am weaving together through this study. I will not mention the campaigns that I am not considering as part of this study because I believe that has the potential to confuse the reader. Given the complex nature of RMF’s interaction with UCT and the highly political context in which the movement existed, I intend on focusing on those campaigns that would yield more material to test out the theory of political listening.

This Chapter focuses on RMF’s first campaign against the statue of Cecil John Rhodes. RMF used this campaign to agitate for the removal of the Rhodes statue from UCT’s main campus. This campaign is also significant because it not only gave RMF its name, but it was also during the protest against the Rhodes statue that the movement was born. In this Chapter, I will begin to draw on the theory of political listening that I discussed in thorough detail in Chapter 2 to make sense of the interaction between RMF and the UCT management, the interaction between members RMF, and the interaction between RMF, the UCT management and the *Cape Times* newspaper through the coverage that the newspaper produced. Given the complex nature of this study, the interaction that I will be analyzing ranges from face-to-face interaction, executive communiqués, newspaper articles, video footage and interviews. I will start by providing a summary of how the events unfolded I provide an analysis of key activities. I have chosen to write all my analysis in this format because I am also imagining this study as providing a historical account of some of RMF’s activities that future scholars interested in RMF can use as a starting point.

4.2. Protest against the statue of Cecil John Rhodes

On 9 March 2015, UCT student Chumani Maxwele threw human excrement on the statue of Cecil John Rhodes located at the bottom of the iconic Sarah Bartman Hall (then Jameson Hall) steps above the Rugby fields (Bester, 2015). Rhodes was a British imperialist, businessman and politician. It seems befitting that the Rhodes statue would stand a few metres away from Jameson Hall given that Leander Starr Jameson - whom the Hall was named after - was, as Maylam (2002:4) explained, ‘in death as in life, at the right-hand of Rhodes’⁹. Like many of the Rhodes statues and the one located in the Rhodes Memorial, a stone throw away from UCT’s Upper Campus, ‘he faces northeast - the gaze of the empire-builder seeking further opportunities for colonisation on the road to Cairo’ (Maylam, 2002:5). It was the position of prominence that made the Rhodes statue look as though the university was venerating him.

For the protest ‘performance’, Maxwele invited the media and informed them that he was agitating for the removal of the statue at UCT and the broader decolonisation of the institution (Ndelu, 2017:66). Several regional and national newspapers covered this protest. The *Cape Times* published an article about this protest titled, *Statue defaced over colonial dominance – UCT student in poo protest* (Verbaan, 2015), written by Aly Verbaan. The idea to target the statue of Rhodes was spurred on by the UCT Vice-Chancellor’s refusal to entertain a question about when the statue would be removed during a Faculty of Humanities seminar, which Maxwele attended in 2014 (Maxwele, 2016c). Human excrement was carefully chosen to connect the protest against the Rhodes statue, decolonisation of UCT and the broader struggles of the poor in Khayelitsha. One of his friends suggested this idea to Maxwele. He explained:

He suggested we use human excrement that runs exposed through Khayelitsha so that we can speak to the urgent need for human dignity for the black people who live in shacks there. He said that by throwing poo at the statue, we would demonstrate how Rhodes had mistreated our people in the past. In short, the act of covering the statue with poo would be an institutional appraisal of UCT (Maxwele, 2016c).

Maxwele was joined by more students and his actions were followed by bigger protests by the Rhodes Must Fall movement. This round of protest was not the first against the statue, it has always been an object of protest with the recent one expressed through graffiti in 2008 (Laurore, 2016:43). Price (2017a) argued that a narrative that recognized the protest against

⁹ Jameson and Rhodes were buried in the same cemetery in today’s Zimbabwe.

or demand for the Rhodes statue to be removed as starting in 2015 by Maxwele misses an important context and pits the UCT management against the students who wanted the statue gone. He insisted that the correct timeline should start with the transformation discussion that was held at the Baxter Theatre in October 2014 where he was “on stage saying the Rhodes statue must come down” (Price, 2017a). Price explained:

I think that (starting the narrative with Maxwele’s poo protest) misses the real dynamic. The other way of saying it is [UCT] management has always wanted to bring down the statue; they just did not have enough support on campus because there are a lot of people attached to it. We were able to use the protest as a ticking point to get the discussion going (Price, 2017a).

However, in response to the protest, the SRC called a mass open-air meeting of students, staff and outsourced workers on 12 March 2015 at the then Jameson Plaza. At this meeting, students reinforced their call for the statue of Rhodes to be removed from UCT’s premises. The UCT management also issued its first communication on the protest, *Rhodes statue protest incident at UCT on 9 March 2015* (Klopper, 2015), through DVC Klopper who was the acting VC in the absence of Price. The following day, *Cape Times* published a news article, ‘*UCT Students Tackle Race Transformation Issues*’ (Petersen, 2015a), written by Carlo Petersen.

On 16 March, the university called on staff and students to attend a ‘first of many seminars’ to discuss heritage, signage and symbolism (Klopper, 2015). The SRC president addressed the audience at this seminar before staging a walkout. The walkout was meant to demonstrate the unwillingness to participate in a process that is controlled by the UCT management. The following day, the *Cape Times* published an article on the seminar titled, ‘*Drop the poo and get rid of Rhodes*’ (Petersen, 2015b). Price issued his first university communique on the Rhodes statue and RMF titled, *Rhodes statue protest and Transformation*, where he announced that the university was accelerating the decision process over the statue (Price, 2015a).

On 20 March, the *Cape Times* published an article titled, *Support streaming in for poo protesters* (Petersen, 2015c). The article listed the number of organisations that had committed to join RMF in its march on Bremner scheduled for the same day. Later that day, members of RMF met with university leadership, including Price and DVC for

Transformation, Professor Crain Soudien, for hours outside the Bremner Building¹⁰. Various speakers took to the stage talking about the significance of the removal of the Rhodes statue and the broader transformation of the institution. These speakers included Ses'khona Peoples Rights Movement (SPRM) leader, Andile Lili. Members of RMF then made their way into Bremner Building for the occupation. Students had been granted permission to occupy Bremner by the UCT management. RMF members slept over in the Bremner Building, which they informally renamed Azania House. This marked the beginning of the occupation of the university's administrative seat.

Price issued another communication to the University community on 24 March on, *Progress in discussing the removal of Rhodes statue* (Price, 2015b). On 25 March 2015, a University Assembly (all staff and students) was held at the then Jameson Hall, where staff and students expressed their views on the Rhodes statue and racism within the institution. On 27 March, the UCT VC tabled a motion from UCT senior leadership to remove the Rhodes statue from its current position at a meeting of the Senate. Members of the SRC proposed an amendment to remove the statue permanently from the campus, which was supported. A further amendment that the statue should be boarded up while awaiting a final decision from the UCT Council and Heritage Western Cape was also supported. The final proposal with all its amendments was supported by 181 votes with one against and three abstentions (Lucas, 2015a). On 28 March, Price issued another communication to the University community to provide an *Update on Rhodes statue and occupation of Bremner Building* (Price, 2015c).

The UCT Convocation, which is made up of UCT alumni, met to discuss the Rhodes statue debate at a special general meeting on 7 April 2015. This structure was then chaired by former University of South Africa VC and struggle stalwart, Barney Pityana. UCT Association of Black Alumni also hosted a public engagement about transformation issues at UCT, specifically admissions, employment and institutional culture. On the panel of this session were UCT VC, Dr Max Price, SRC President, Ramabina Mahapa, UCT alumni and Independent News and Media South Africa owner Dr Iqbal Survé and UCT lecturer and member of the Black Academic Caucus Dr Shose Kessi. On the same day, the *Cape Times*

¹⁰ Bremner Building is the main administration building at UCT. This is where the VC's, DVC's, Finance's, Human Resources', Secretariat's offices are located.

published an opinion piece by Price titled, *Exciting time that calls for commitment to an inclusive UCT culture* (Price, 2015d).

On 08 April 2015, the *Cape Times* published an article informing readers that it was “Final call on Rhodes today” (Petersen and African News Agency, 2015). The UCT Council met later that day and voted for the removal of the Rhodes statue from campus. The meeting was interrupted by members of RMF who stormed into the meeting venue. These members of RMF did not believe that the UCT Council would vote to remove the statue. After the Council meeting, UCT Council Chairperson, Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane issued a statement informing the public that the Council “voted in favour of removing the Cecil John Rhodes statue from UCT’s Upper Campus” (Ndungane, 2015). The SRC released a statement (erroneously dated 8 March 2015 instead of 8 April 2015) welcoming the Council’s decision to have the Rhodes statue removed from UCT. The SRC statement also announced the end of the occupation of Bremner by RMF, which was meant to “take effect immediately after the statue has been removed” (UCT SRC, 8 April 2015). The statue was removed the following day, on 09 April 2016 at 17h37, as per Price’s (2015e) statement informing the university community of the logistics of the removal of the statue. RMF did not end its occupation of the Bremner Building despite the Rhodes statue being removed from UCT and the SRC’s announcement that the occupation would end immediately after the statue was removed. Price issued an “Urgent update on the Rhodes statue and Bremner occupation” to the University community informing them that RMF had breached its agreement with UCT management to end the occupation of the Bremner Building as soon as the statue was removed from campus (Price, 2015f). He also added that the University was going to approach the High Court if RMF did not end its occupation. Later that day, UCT management issued members of RMF with an eviction notice requesting them to vacate the Bremner Building they were occupying by 14h00. RMF ended their occupation of the building two days later on 12 April.

This demand for the removal of the statue represented an important moment in post-apartheid UCT. It was during the first time that many students were mobilised behind a cause, and it forced the university to come face-to-face with the experiences of black students and staff members within UCT. This campaign also forced the university to take the transformation of the institution seriously. I will now pull out and analyse key moments in this campaign against the statue of Rhodes.

4.3. Analysis of key moments

In this section, I will draw on Mufamadi's (2014:56-59) method of identifying instances that could be considered listening in both mediated forms of and face-to-face communication. Most of the analysis detailed below was conducted on mediated material. However, there are a few moments that were recorded yet they retain their face-to-face character. These are a meeting of the UCT convocation, a meeting of the University of Cape Town Association of Black Alumni (UCTABA) and the University assembly. These gatherings were recorded on video, which grants me a valuable opportunity to consider if listening occurs in both face-to-face and mediated communication. I will start with the UCT seminar on Heritage, Signage and Symbolism, followed by the interaction between RMF members during the Bremner Building occupation, then the UCT management's communication on the Rhodes statue, the University Assembly, the interaction between members of the UCT's Association of Black Alumni, the Black Academic Caucus, the UCT Academic Union and the *Cape Times* newspaper's coverage of Rhodes statue activities.

4.3.1. UCT seminar on Heritage, Signage and Symbolism

The UCT seminar on Heritage, Signage and Symbolism took place on 16 March 2015, a week after Maxwele's initial protest against the Rhodes statue. It was chaired by Crain Soudien, who was then DVC for Transformation at UCT. It was supposed to take the form of a panel discussion. Sally Titlestad – Heritage Impact Assessment Specialist, was supposed to be the main speaker; Owen Kenan – historian, Nick Shepherd - Archaeology and African Studies researcher, and Ramabina Mahapa – SRC president as discussants. The objective of the seminar, explained Soudien, was to provide space where everyone could speak and be listened to. Soudien explained:

I want us to leave this meeting with absolute confidence in a sense of what a university is all about. And to think that what we are going to do here this evening and what we are going to do is to give each of us a chance to express ourselves and to hear the point of view of the other. This is the fundamental objective. I would like to think that all of us will walk away with a deep sense of a university operating at its absolute best as a space which is fundamentally about position, counter position, argument and counter-argument (Soudien at UCT seminar, 2015).

As Soudien continued to explain the format of the seminar, participants raised their hands which he would constantly note/acknowledge and indicate that he would attend to hands later. He was eventually interrupted by an audience member who stated that by ignoring the

hands that were being raised Soudien was ignoring the same format of position and counter-position that he had committed to. He gave the first member of the audience who raised their hand to state their position. The audience member's position was that Mahapa, who was SRC president and a prominent member of RMF, should go first. Soudien explained that the format was that Titlestad, as the main speaker, would state a position and Mahapa would provide a counter-position. Titlestad explained that she was happy for Mahapa to go first.

When Mahapa was given the platform to speak first, he immediately set the tone for what is to follow through an emotionally charged rendition of the struggle song, *Thina sizwe esimnyama*¹¹ (We the black nation). His speech combined both **rational way of speaking** (Mufamadi, 2014:57) and **emotional way of speaking** (Mufamadi, 2014:57) to state his position to the listening audience. Mahapa asked who the university “was preserving its history for” and why it is that the university “did not consult on symbols all these years”. He also asked at what point was the university going to display symbols of black heroes that the

¹¹ According to Msila, *Thina sizwe esimnyama* (We the black nation) is one of the oldest South African nostalgic struggle songs about an artist longing for “the days before colonialism” (Msila, 2011:10). It remains one of the most powerful struggle songs even in post-apartheid South Africa. Then President of the Republic of South Africa, Jacob Zuma sang it during Nelson Mandela's funeral before he delivered his speech. What makes this song a powerful emotional rallying point is that “the shared and unresolved grievance that holds the collective together is land expropriation by “white people”” (Mtshali and Hlongwane, 2014:516-517). The question of land expropriation still evokes an emotional response for many in South Africa. For RMF, this song had become **movement's anthem. It was sung before proceedings to signal the official start and in closure to mark the end of proceedings.** Mtshali and Hlongwane (2014:516) detail the lyrics of *Thina sizwe esimnyama* as follows:

Thina sizwe (We the nation)
Thina sizwe esimnyama (We the black nation)
Sikhalela (We lament)
Sikhalela izwe lethu (We lament the loss of our land)
Elathathwa (Which was taken)
Elathathwa ngabamhlope (Which was taken by white people)
Sithi mabayeke (We demand that they stop)
Mabayek'umhlaba wethu (We demand that they return our land)

Although not the case during the UCT seminar on Heritage, Signage and Symbolism, it later became customary for some members of RMF to change the last two sentence of the song, Sithi mabayeke (We demand that they stop) & Mabayek'umhlaba wethu (We demand that they return our land), to Sithi mababethwe (We demand that they are beaten) & Mababethwe bazo'uyeka umhlaba wethu (We demand that they are beaten, then they will return our land).

For more on *Thina sizwe esimnyama*, read Msila, V. 2011. *Mini and the Song: The place of protest song in history*. ANC 100th Anniversary Conference. 20 – 24 September 2011; and Mtshali, K and Hlongwane, G. 2014. Contextualizing South Africa's Freedom Songs: A Critical Appropriation of Lee Hirsch's "Amandla!: A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony". *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 6

black student population could relate to. These questions were followed by segment of his speech where he used the emotional way of speaking to appeal to his audience. Mahapa said:

Frantz Fanon once said, 'when we revolt, it is not for a particular culture. We revolt simply because, for many reasons, we can no longer breathe'. We have come to that time where students can no longer breathe in this country (Mahapa at UCT seminar, 2015).

A switch back to **rational way of speaking** (Mufamadi, 2014:57) followed the statement above, where Mahapa explained the decision that the SRC took in relation to participating in discussions about transformation at UCT before he walked out. He explained:

We have reached an impasse with management and are fatigued at requesting meaningful transformation. We have begged, we have grovelled, we have pleaded with management. No more. This university cannot continue as business as normal. It simply cannot be the case. In that spirit, I cannot be participating in this (Mahapa at UCT seminar, 2015).

After commenting above, Mahapa walked out of the meeting along with over 20 members of the newly formed RhodesMustFall movement. In listening terms, Mahapa was refusing to take part in a listening exercise that would not generate a response that would indicate to him that he was being heard. Mahapa was exercising a form of strategic non-dialogue. He gave his account, which was an explanation of why he would not participate until certain conditions were met but denied university management an opportunity to dialogue with him on the matter.

However, the moment after the SRC president's and RMF members' departure from the seminar presents an important opportunity to gauge the possibility of listening when the rest of the participants decided on whether to continue and how to continue engaging RMF. This conversation was similar to the kind of deliberation and collective figuring out that Bickford (1996:51) argues listening is at the centre of. In a similar fashion to O'Donnell's (2009:513) practice of purposeful listening where those in power make a deliberate effort to open up debate and for all the parties to listen and engage with each other's views, a consensus was not the goal of this engagement. As Soudien explained that the moment was meant for everyone to air their views on the matter and how the university should approach it (Soudien at UCT seminar, 2015). This moment is valuable for listening because although some of the members of RMF left, the meeting is still highly diverse and conflictual which is an opportunity to test out the theory of political listening in the face-to-face context that it was developed for. I am now going to map listening theory to these interactions. I will attribute

the empirical data to speakers where speakers identified themselves before raising their views. I will retain the anonymity of speakers who were not part of the panel by referring to them as Speaker and a number designating the order in which they spoke. For example, the first speaker will be ‘Speaker 1’ and the rest will follow in that order. Titlestad, who was given the opportunity to kick off the collective figuring out, drew an important link between who is speaking, what is said, how it is said and the ability to listen to what is said. Bickford refers to its link as an “interactive context”, which plays an important role in the recognition of various ways of speaking (Bickford, 1996:98). It is this interactive context that enables Titlestad to hear RMF members. She explained:

I have been at the student protest on Thursday last week and have been incredibly touched by what was said by the students, by the way in which it was said, by the value which I heard in what they were saying. That should be taken forward, taken seriously, and taken by the university in all of its facets. I changed my mind about my position when I went to that student protest last week. I heard what people were saying and I think there is a real place for engagement... (Titlestad in UCT seminar, 2015).

But in the statement above, Titlestad takes her listening a step further into the realm of what Anzaldura refers to as “making face” (in Bickford, 1996:123). Making face is when individuals can switch between more than one perspective at any given moment without having to relinquish their perspective, irrespective of whether the two perspectives conflict with each other. These individuals, as is the case with Titlestad, switch between the two perspectives through speaking and action in the public realm (Bickford, 1996:123). Although Titlestad changes her position on the statue after going to the student protest, her position in terms of the process that needs to be followed remains the same. Her administrative position, which is that engagement and consultation need to happen before the stature is removed, remains the same. She is also able to argue for this engagement and consultation to consider what is said in unconventional ways to “be taken forward, taken seriously, and taken by the university in all of its facets” (Titlestad in UCT seminar, 2015). This statement is made in contrast to Soudien’s statement about the UCT management’s fears of how to “preserve the capacity of people to talk and hear each other” and to “avoid the meeting becoming an opportunity for a rally” (Titlestad in UCT seminar, 2015). Titlestad is explaining the value of the so-called rally and protest in facilitating the kind of listening that is beyond the rational debate espoused by universities. In addition, Speaker 7 argued that since the protest was

about “black alienation in a white institutional framework” it could not be resolved within the same framework. Speaker 7 explained:

The protest that has happened outside this room, as a space of encounter, the conversation needs to move outside the normative environment. The discussion needs to move to the streets where **the protest happens. I think that’s where this discussion needs to take place. It needs a different** kind of imagination as to where and how this dialogue happens. I think this is a radical politics and requires a radical approach. It needs to be outside this space which to many is oppressive in way that prevents people from being free to express themselves (Speaker 7 in UCT Seminar, 2015).

Not only does Speaker 7’s statement give RMF **recognition** (Mufamadi, 2014:57) for the issues that they are raising but it isolates the space where the seminar is hosted as a stumbling block that is preventing listening from happening. Space often regulates the form in which self-expression or voice should take. A seminar room is a space for Eurocentric rational debate and discussions in English, the medium of instruction. Mastery of this **rational way of speaking** (Mufamadi, 2014:57) enables speakers to be listened to more than others. In this space, the UCT management has an advantage given their seniority in the academic enterprise. Speaking and listening during a protest can take many forms and many languages. Students can sing, use placards, and use silence as a response, to name a few examples. Speaker 7 seems to be touching on issues of space and power, and how **equality** (Bickford, 1996:11) could be achieved by taking the conversation to the streets which do not regulate the language/form speaking should take.

For Speaker 1, proceeding with the seminar was valuable in so far as it allowed for dialogue to continue although the SRC president and some members of RMF had walked out. The seminar was an opportunity to hear different viewpoints and although the students’ views - as represented by the SRC - were heard, the university management needed to respond with their views on the same platform so that the audience can hear all views. Speaker 1 explained:

As long as we have one person to dialogue with, the dialogue should continue. The issues that are being raised here are from the position of pain and position of frustration. With all due respect, let us dialogue. The issues have to be resolved. Calling for the dissolution of this meeting and postponing it will just cause more pain and push for more dramatic choice of protest (Speaker 1 at UCT seminar, 2015).

What Speaker 1 seems to be suggesting above is the kind of speaking and listening that is not dependent on both parties that hold opposing views being present in the room. It seems to be

the kind of listening where each party speaks to the other through the listening audience. The audience seems to be the legitimizing factor in this kind of listening that Speaker 1 is arguing for. The mere fact that the audience heard the SRC's position seems to be enough for Speaker 1 to demand a response from the UCT management without regard for the fact that the SRC president who stated the position of the students will not be available to hear the response to that position. However, for Speaker 6 the fact that the SRC is no longer in the room is reason enough not to proceed with the seminar. Speaker 6 explained:

In my mind, **we can't** in this context proceed because the very people we are wanting to engage with have left. I think it would be highly problematic. I think it would be sending a signal to **students, it's almost as if they** did not do what they did here. That we are not hearing them and we are not engaging with the stand that they have made (Speaker 6 at UCT seminar, 2015).

For Speaker 6, real listening is only possible when both opposing parties are in the same space and can speak and hear the other party's response to their views. This speaker also points out an important characteristic of listening, that it is ongoing which in this case was not possible without the SRC and members of RMF in the room. Furthermore, the act of walking out is a sign of the students' frustrations from UCT management not "hearing them" and "not engaging with the stand that they have made". In other terms, continuing with the meeting would have been a refusal to listen and to give the SRC and RMF **recognition**.

For Speaker 2, the seminar could not continue until the two parties spoke to each other before they could invite an audience. The impasse between the students and the SRC management, explained Speaker 2, was a result of the two parties inability to hear each other. He explained:

The university has taken a stance and the SRC has taken a stance. It is childish on both sides. So, you guys need to listen **and hear each other's stories** (Speaker 2)

Speaker 2 was referring to the inability to hear each other because of the lack of **openness** (Mufamadi, 2014:57) among both parties. The two parties are unable "to listen and hear each other's stories" because both parties are not willing to background themselves so that they can hear the other. However, for Speakers 8 and 9, the issue was speaking and listening which did not elicit any changes when it came to issues of transformation. Speaker 9 explained to the audience that it was only "Until such a time that the university can listen to us on our terms and not on their terms, that we would be able to talk freely". The final resolution of the meeting came from Russell Ally, Executive Director of Development and

Advancement who singled out the establishment of trust between the two parties as a starting point. Ally explained:

What I propose that we try to do is created a basis where we can restore some trust. There must be some way where we agree on what we are going to talk about and that we are going to talk to **each other about these issues. We can't go** around counter-posing the issues without building trust. That is a responsibility on the part of management because management has a role of managing the institution. It is also a responsibility on the part of the SRC which is representing an important constituency, and any other constituency in the university (Ally at UCT seminar, 2015).

That this proposition by Ally was adopted by both staff and students seems to suggest that trust is an important underlying factor for people of opposing views to speak and listen to each other. Conversely, the lack of trust means that speaking and listening cannot take place. Booysen (2009:17) diagnose the root of protest in South Africa as the lack of trust in the electoral process. What this suggests for the theory of political listening is that trust is just as important as equality for listening to occur. I will discuss issues of trust further in the next chapter on the mediation between RMF and UCT. I will now analyse the interaction between members of RMF during the occupation of the Bremner Building.

4.3.2. The possibility of listening between RMF members during the Bremner Occupation

When RMF occupied the Bremner Building on 20 March 2015, it was a defining moment in the life of the movement. It meant that the movement had space where deliberations and planning could happen. Although this move to occupy Bremner was inspired by the Occupy Wall Street movement (Student 2, 2018), it also had a strategic reason. Student 5 explained:

The strategic reason why we occupied Bremner is because that is where most executive decisions take place, so it is where power operates without being connected to the students they are making decisions for. We wanted to occupy most powerful space within the university and challenge that power through the power of black bodies who are alienated (Student 5, 2018).

Viewed in this lens, the occupation of Bremner was an attempt to force the university to listen to the voices of the alienated. The move in itself was also a way of trying to create some form of equality between RMF and the UCT management by occupying the most symbolically powerful building in the institution. The movement went on to settle in the Archie Mafeje Room which in itself is a space that has come to symbolize “black resistance and black intellectual thought at UCT” (Student 5, 2018). The Mafeje Room became the space for collective figuring out. The occupation was also the coming together of a variety of

groupings, some with competing interests and opposing political ideologies into the same space to map a way forward for the movement. Some of the key members of the movement were connected after having worked together in other organisations. This was the case for SRC president, Ramabina Mahapa. When Mahapa was secretary of SASCO in 2014, Mase Ramaru, who was often quoted as RMF spokesperson, was the Chairperson of SASCO. When the two were kicked out of SASCO in 2014, they were joined by Alex Hotz and together they formed a new student political party, Aluta, to contest the SRC elections (Mahapa, 2016)¹². It was this personal connection to other prominent members of the movement that made Mahapa's role in the movement fluid and interchanging between representing the SRC and himself as an individual. At this moment, the movement was still trying to establish itself and firm up its ideology. Given that the movement was supposed to be leaderless, questions of decision-making structures were always going to plague it. Student 5 explained that the movement had already conceptualized the idea of subcommittees as a way of guiding the movement's decisions. Membership of these committees was based on skills and strengths. Student 5 explained further:

...from those committees, people who held up that committee would sit on one core Strategy and Tactics Committee, which brought together the kind of different expertise that were represented within the movement. That was also where important decisions about the direction of the movement would be made and then it would be presented to the plenary later after the Strategy and Tactics Committee had reached a consensus. I would not say the structure was necessarily a hierarchical one but it operated like a student committee and people (representatives) could change based on what the committee decided (Student 5, 2018).

However, Mahapa (2016) points out that membership in the Strategy and Tactics Committee (STC) was also an attempt for the movement to be representative of all stakeholders and various ideologies. Over and above Ramaru representing Aluta, Mahapa represented Aluta and the SRC, Hotz represented the EFF, Mbali Matandela represented black feminist thought, Masixole Mlandu represented Pasma, while NEHAWU UCT chairperson Patricia Bevie was representing workers. Black academics were also invited to be part of the committee but they decided that they would participate in other ways (Mahapa, 2016). It was important for the STC to be fully representative because it was the most powerful committee that drove the movement's ideology and direction. However, tensions and disagreements were common

¹² At UCT students usually stand for SRC elections as members of a political party or as independent candidates.

within this committee. Student 2 describes the STC as a space where differences and disagreements were everywhere. Student 2 explained:

In the Strategy and Tactics Committee we did not all have all the same ideas when it comes to ideological background, so we discussed and debated. It is one thing to disagree politically and have differences but I think we tried to be very clear about behaviour that was not going to tolerate like violence or abuse. **If you didn't agree** with feminism you were free to go, if you thought we (women) were not meant to be treated equally you were free to leave and people actually left and others stayed (Student 2, 2017).

What Student 2 is demonstrating in the above statement is the kind of conflict and difference that the movement could and could not accept within the space. In a similar fashion to Bickford's (1996) argument about keeping the conflict political as opposed to physical for speaking and listening to continue, violence and abuse was not accepted. Political differences and disagreements create room for dialogue because it is through dialogue that those differences can be communicated. However, the issue of intersexuality and black feminism being at the core of the movement's ideology contributed to the majority of disagreements in the STC in these early stages of the movement. Student 5 explained:

Another point of tension was the sexualisation of a lot of women and queer bodies in the movement and I think this was quite public as opposed to all the other tensions I was talking about. It led to a lot of protest or contestation within the movement. It led to some people leaving and coming back after they dealt with the conflict (Student 5, 2018).

As Student 2 (2017) explained, RMF members were given the ultimatum to either accept intersectionality and black feminism as the cornerstone of the movement and behave accordingly or leave the movement altogether. Some members left the movement but that did not mean the issues were resolved. The movement's inability to resolve this issue leads to the formation of other collectives with RMF and the formation of the Intersexuality Audit Committee (IAC). The IAC audited the behaviour of members in the space along with every statement that the movement issued to ensure that they were aligned with RMF's core ideology. Student 5 explained:

It was auditing every move of the movement and ensuring that, firstly, there is a political consciousness about intersectionality, and people know what it actually is and that it is engraved in the behaviour of everyone within the movement. That committee [eventually] dissolved but it was there in the beginning (Student 5, 2018).

Mahapa (2016) observed that the ideological clash in the 15 member STC was personified by two individuals within the committee. He explained that the committee was split between Chumane Maxwele, who represented the 'traditional' African ideology and Mase Ramaru, who represented the Black feminist ideology. Those who belonged and were thought to belong to Maxwele's camp were labelled bureaucrats, whilst Ramaru's followers were called radicals. Although the differences between the two stemmed from political ideology, they extended to how the movement should approach the removal of the Rhodes statue. Mahapa explained:

I was pinned with the bureaucratic and the reason for that decision was one, most of the people in the bureaucratic [group] had some form of student governance [experience] some did not but the majority had been to student governance. This is where people would argue, for an example, let us not take down the statue ourselves, let us get the university to remove it. Whereby the radicals were arguing that we must take down the statue ourselves (Mahapa, 2016).

Other committees existed within the movement to carry out special functions. The Media Committee was responsible for drafting and distributing statements to the media. This Committee was also responsible for creating and maintaining partnerships with the media when members of RMF wanted to publish articles and when the movement called press conferences (Student 5, 2018). The movement, as Student 5 explained, wanted to document its history and was aware that many people were documenting the movement's activities. To document its narrative, there was a Writing Committee. This committee served RMF's political mission, which was "to ensure that we write ourselves into history and that if it means collaborating with media institutions we would do so" (Student 5, 2018). What this section demonstrate is the value of having committees that not only guide the movement but also hold individuals in those committees accountable. The political difference between members of the STC provides enough opposing views to achieve a level of equality that keeps the space open. I will now provide an analysis of the UCT management's communication to the university community on RMF's activities.

4.3.3. UCT management's communication to the university community

The UCT management issued its first communication about the initial Rhodes statue protest, *Rhodes statue protest incident at UCT on 9 March 2015*, three days after the fact. DVC of Teaching and Learning, Sandra Klopper, who was acting VC, wrote this communication. She

was standing in for Price, who was attending the African Higher Education Summit in Senegal (Price, 2015a). The communique served three purposes; to confirm the Rhodes statue protest, to inform the campus that the university organized a series of discussions to debate symbols and transformation even before the Rhodes statue protest, and condemn protest that is unacceptable to the university (Klopper, 2015). I will now focus on her distinction between responsible and reprehensible protest.

For Klopper, although students have a right to protest, this right is accompanied by the responsibility to do so using acceptable modes. The fact that protest plays an important role in drawing “attention to complex issues” (Klopper, 2015) that the university and the country face, does not mean that those who choose to protest are free to use any mode of protest. She warns students to ensure that their protest is responsible. In her conception of what the university considers responsible protest, “the use of human excrement as a form of protest is unacceptable” (Klopper, 2015). The fact that Maxwele did not give the university a 48-hour warning before embarking on the protest was also unacceptable.

However, it is what she considered responsible and acceptable protest that points to protest that does not disrupt or cause any inconvenience for the university. Her definition of what is acceptable includes; protest that follows “procedures in place that allow students to protest”, protest that does not “use human excrement”, protest that is “peaceful and lawful”, and “open debate” (Klopper, 2015).

Upon his return, Price (2015a) issued his first communique, *Rhodes statue protest and transformation*. He acknowledges in this first communication that the university had initiated its plans to review statues, names of buildings and other symbols. Price is also quick to remind the university community that the issue of the Rhodes statue was introduced at a university transformation discussion the previous year before RMF made it a matter of urgency. Furthermore, Price (2015a) gives recognition to the pain and frustration that was expressed by RMF members during protest and offers to accelerate the decision-making on the statue as a response. He explained:

Last week's student protests have resulted in a massive outpouring of anger and frustration – much about the issue of the statue, much more about experiences of institutional racism, **aggravated by students' perceptions** that they are not being heard, or that their demands are not achieving the response they seek. There are also similar frustrations experienced by a number of our members of staff. Given this recent escalation of debate and protest, I think it appropriate to

replace our original programme with a more accelerated process to facilitate a more rapid decision about the statue (Price, 2015).

For Price at this moment, it was the pain and frustration that was expressed by both staff and students that not only warrant a response from the university but one that demonstrates that the university takes these staff and students seriously. In addition, Price lays out an intensive four-week programme of consultation over the statue but admits that “UCT’s senior management have put this proposed programme together in haste” (Price, 2015a). His admission serves, in a way, to confirm to not only staff and students who are “anger and frustration” but to others who hold a different view that at the very least the university is listening and hearing the “massive outpouring” of pain. This response is important in this early stage of RMF’s protest against the statue because it demonstrates the institution’s openness to hear all the stakeholders’ views even before the pressure to do so because the movement occupied a building. As Price explained further, the consultation process was also an opportunity to hear all the views on the statue. The UCT executive and Council could not make recommendations on the statue without these discussions. To demonstrate the significance of hearing the voices of all constituencies, his programme of consultation includes University Assembly (all staff and students), Senate meeting, meeting of staff in pay-class 1 to 5 (workers), a special meeting of Convocation, extended Professional and Administrative Support Staff (PASS) forum, Academic Heads of Department Workshop and a Special Council Meeting (Price, 2015a). Email addresses and web pages were also set up for staff, students and the alumni community to voice their opinions on the statue virtually. However, Price (2017a) explained that the consultation process was not a requirement, but merely to build consensus so that the political or bureaucratic authority of the university did not decide on its own. He explained:

Technically, we did not have to consult anyone. Council could just make the decision. This is not an academic decision; it is not that Senate has to take a decision. The student body does not have any particular governance role of respect in the art and sculptures and things like that. It is normally dealt with by the Buildings Committee and Works of Art Committee and Council. I could have just said the executive makes the decision and recommend it to Council but because I knew it will be very divisive. I also knew that if we did that half the campus would say no and half the campus would say yes. It would become an issue forever (Price, 2017a).

What Price is demonstrating in the statement above is how the UCT management used an opportunity for voice as a way of getting the rest of the university community behind the

decision to remove the statue. Given that the UCT management, through Price, had already communicated its position to have the statue removed, giving voice was merely a strategy for the university community to feel as though they had a say on the fate of the statue. However, at the early stage of the consultation process, the SRC had declined to participate in any of the consultative processes that Price listed and to meet with the university management. Price explained:

Their condition for meeting is that we agree to remove the statue and to provide a deadline for this action. This we cannot do, for two reasons. First, it is a Council decision. Second, we do not feel there has been an opportunity for all views to be considered. We hope that our acknowledgment of the import of the issue, and our commitment to a short and definite timetable for making a decision, will persuade the SRC to join the discussions and co-convene many of the fora (Price, 2015a).

At first glance, the SRC's refusal to participate in the consultative processes is not so much a matter of attempting to coerce university management but rather an expression of a lack of trust in the university management's intentions. The SRC president, in particular, expressed his frustration with taking part in consultation processes where their voices are used to rubberstamp decisions that had been taken elsewhere. Price ended his communication by stating his position on the statue, which was that it should be relocated to a less prominent position within the university.

Price's second communique, *Progress in discussing the removal of Rhodes statue*, gave the university community an update on the consultation process regarding the fate of the statue and the Bremner building occupation by RMF (Price, 2015b). Price opened the statement by explaining to the university community that the SRC had agreed to take part in the engagement after the university management pledged their support for the removal of the statue and moving the Council meeting, where the fate of the statue would be decided, to 8 March 2015. Recapping the University Assembly meeting the previous Wednesday, Price stated that "it was a powerful meeting with students and staff expressing opinions about the statue but also broader transformation issues" and that "the overwhelming voice in the hall was certainly one of passionate demand for the removal of the statue" (Price, 2015b). This was Price's way of demonstrating that the voices of staff and students were heard and that he listened.

Price also reported that the PASS forum met and discussed the UCT management's proposal to have the statue moved from its current position. Price further added that staff also raised other issues related to transformation at the university, which he assured the university community that management would look into (2015b). In his attempt to encourage participation in statue and transformation discussions, he also announced an email (passforumcomments@uct.ac.za) for use by support staff to register their views and reminded the rest of the staff and students to email their comments to the designated email address (haveyoursay@uct.ac.za).

In closing, Price (2015b) gives recognition to the value of the Bremner occupation. Although he acknowledges the disruption and the inconvenience the occupation has caused to the administrative staff, he does not condemn it or call students to end it. Instead, Price (2015b) exercises his brand of representative thinking as he tries to persuade staff to recognize its value as an educational space. He explained:

The students also engage in many educational activities and the Mafeje room is indeed a vibrant, argumentative space with lectures, films, plays, discussions, sharing experiences and strategy. Although most administrative sections in Bremner have continued to work, there has been considerable noise and disruption throughout the building and occasionally staff have been allowed to work from home or from offices in other buildings. This has undoubtedly inconvenienced them and people trying to contact the Bremner staff, but I particularly want to express my appreciation to the Bremner staff for their loyalty, patience, and assistance during this period (Price, 2015b).

In the paragraph above, Price (2015b) positions the Bremner occupation as serving a higher and more significant purpose despite the inconvenience it was causing. His attempt at selling the occupation to the university community was not surprising given that Price and Mahapa had "arranged beforehand" that students would occupy Bremner (2017a). For Price, this occupation was 'lawful' in terms of the university's rules and code of conduct in that permission was sought and given. Because of this permission, the occupation was "not an invasion" instead it was a "legitimate protest" with "rules" even though "some rules they did not stick to" (Price, 2017a). The fact that students sought permission to occupy and reached an agreement with UCT management seem to supersede the inconvenience they have caused. This is an indication of how important sticking to the Code of Conduct and following University bureaucratic procedures is to the UCT management in regulating what is acceptable and what is not.

The UCT management's third communication on the Rhodes statue was in the form of an opinion piece published in the *Cape Times* newspaper, titled *Exciting time that calls for commitment to an inclusive UCT culture* (Price, 2015c). Unlike the first two communications and the two that follow, the opinion piece was meant for the public. In it, Price invited UCT alumni to participate in the discussions about issues of transformation at UCT. In this opinion piece, Price summed up what has been happening at the university for the alumni community. He explained:

The #RhodesMustFall campaign was never simply about a statue. It was about symbols, names and heritage more generally; and beyond that, about making all students and staff feel like they belong at UCT, about creating an inclusive culture (Price, 2015c).

In the statement above, Price gives recognition of the issues that were being raised by RMF demonstrating his understanding of the nuances in the demands. While many did not understand at the time that the protest was not just against the statue, Price explained that it was “about making all students and staff feel like they belong at UCT, about creating an inclusive culture”. At this moment, Price treats RMF as an important resource on issues of transformation but allows the movement to set the agenda on issues of transformation at the university and adopt their definition of what is at issue as the official university account of what is happening. Furthermore, Price (2015c) went on to assure the alumni community and the public that the protest that students engaged in as part of getting their demands heard was not only acceptable but also valuable. He explained:

I want to assure everyone that whilst it may seem from media images and the extensive coverage of the Rhodes statue protests that this has been disruptive, even aggressive, in fact the protests have generally been disciplined, peaceful and considered. The protesters have engaged in serious teach-ins (from a range of people including our academics) in Mafeje Room in the Bremner Building, and I believe for many this is indeed an educational experience and they ultimately have **the university's interest at heart**. Classes have not been missed nor disrupted (Price, 2015c).

In the statement above, Price frames the protest at UCT as aligned to the “university's interest” rather than as a disruption. He inadvertently provides a classification of this kind of protest that has the university's interest at heart. This is a protest that is “disciplined, peaceful and considered”, it is a protest that does not result in classes being “missed nor disrupted”, and one that is “an educational experience” (Price, 2015c).

The next communique from the UCT management was in the form of a university notice by Price, titled *Rhodes statue to be moved*. In the communique, Price (2015d) announced that

Council had voted in favour of the removal of the Rhodes statue and the statue was to be removed later that day at 17h00. He then went on to quote an extract of the statement that the chairperson of the UCT Council, Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane, shared with the media.

In the abstract, RMF protest is acknowledged as having played a significant role in refocusing attention on statues and symbols and their impact on inclusiveness in the institution. It was the “depth and breadth of feelings on the issue unleashed by the student protest” that pressured the Council to accelerate its decision on the Rhodes statue (Price, 2015d). Thus, it is in recognition of the pain that the presence of the Rhodes statue at UCT causes that forced Council to decide on the statue’s fate. However, the consultative process that preceded Council’s decision is equally important for the character of the university as a space for debate. Ndungane explained in the extract:

This process has been vindicated by the number of people who have come into the debates opposed to removing the statue and who have changed their minds as a result of the frank engagement. This is exactly how a university should work and we believe is an example to the country in dealing with heritage issues (Price, 2015d).

In the paragraph above Ndungane was pointing out the value of hearing opposing views on conflictual matters and its potential to change the minds of those who are open to hearing these views. It is in these moments where individuals engage with opposing views that the theory of listening serves as an enabler for conversation to happen. Ndungane said that Council had decided on the removal of the statue to be stored for safekeeping as the university awaits the outcome of its application to Heritage Western Cape for its permanent removal (Price, 2015d).

The final communication from the UCT management to the university community was issued by Price the day after the statue was removed from campus. This communique, titled *Urgent update on the Rhodes statue and Bremner occupation*, started with Price describing some of the activities at the Bremner occupation and how the UCT management “tolerated” the disruption to allow the decision-making on the statue to run its course without any diversions or distractions (Price, 2015e). He informed the university community that the SRC had agreed to end the occupation, but RMF remained behind. He also explained that RMF had crossed the lines of acceptable protest by “ignoring the SRC’s pleas when they stormed into the Council meeting”, they “challenged the authority of Council”, they chanted “one settler,

one bullet”¹³, and they created a “hostile environment for many members of the campus community” (Price, 2015e). Price also used the opportunity to condemn the racist comments posted on social media and graffiti.

Price also informed the campus community that a notice to members of RMF that continued to occupy the Bremner building was served and required that they vacate the building by 14h00. Failure to do so, warned Price (2015e), would result in disciplinary action. Vacating the Bremner building was no easy matter for members of RMF. The movement had gained significant support during its occupation of Bremner and leaving risked losing that popular support especially when the movement did not have space to organize from. Price (2017a) explained that Elelwani Ramugondo, who is later appointed as the VC’s advisor on Transformation, and Kessi were acting as intermediaries on behalf of students because “students felt they trusted them and these staff members did not want students to get into unnecessary trouble”. Not all members of RMF were happy with the two mediating. Student 4 explained:

Our tension with the academics was that they were persuading us to leave. We thought they were being too soft but at the same time we thought they were doing their job to get us back to the classrooms (Student 4, 2017).

However, an agreement was eventually signed between RMF and the UCT management paving the way for RMF members to end the occupation. Alternative space was also allocated to RMF as part of this agreement.

4.3.4. University Assembly on the Rhodes statue and Transformation

The University Assembly to discuss the Rhodes statue and transformation at UCT was held on 25 March 2015. The was meant to be co-chaired by Keenan Hendrikse, speaker of the Student Parliament, and Barney Pityana, President of the UCT Convocation. The meeting was meant to start with the SRC president stating the SRC’s position for seven minutes, then the VC would state the UCT management’s position for seven minutes before the floor is opened for questions and comments by audience members. Audiences were to be allowed to

¹³ ‘One settler, one bullet’ was the slogan of the Azanian People’s Liberation Army (APLA), the armed wing of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). This slogan was used during the struggle against apartheid in South Africa in the 1980s.

speak for not more than three minutes per speaker. Just like the UCT seminar on Heritage, Signage and Symbolism, discussed earlier in **Section 4.3.1**, this University Assembly was yet another attempt at collective figuring out on the part of the university. The session was introduced by Hendrickse as an opportunity “to hear all the voices of individuals or as many voices as possible” (University Assembly, 2015). However, this idea of wanting to hear all voices were based on the idea of what universities represent as space and the form of speaking and listening that is considered acceptable within the space. Hendrickse explained:

We might disagree with views that are said here, but it is important that we respect those views and to provide a safe space for people to articulate those views. With that in mind, it is going to be important that when we express our views, we are not belligerent and abusive to others. This is a university; it is a space where ideas matter. I am **going to ask that we don't attack each other. That we don't make personal attacks but we vigorously and robustly attack ideas rather than people**” (Hendrickse at University Assembly, 2015).

This idea of respect for and hearing the opposing view is important to collective figuring out within the rational deliberation sphere that universities belong to. Any attempt at disregarding this ideal or acting in a way that opposes this ideal is often seem as un-academic or as lacking the necessary skills to debate. In listening terms, what Hendrickse was requesting was for speakers and listening to pay attention to one another in order for listening and speaking to continue regardless of the conflict and disagreement by focusing on ideas rather than the individual. However, separating ideas from the individual whom the ideas belong is not always possible especially in cases where the matter being deliberated upon is not only racialised but also polarizing. The statue and matters of transformation were both deeply personal and political, making it impossible to only to depersonalize such matters. This was the case when Pityana was given the platform to introduce himself as co-chairperson of that University Assembly. Although the programme had not officially started, Pityana's introduction was interrupted by a speaker who wanted him to recuse himself as co-chairperson of the session (Speaker 1 at University Assembly, 2015)¹⁴:

Chairperson of the session, I just want to check. I heard the gentleman next to you introducing himself as Professor Barney Pityana, if I heard him correctly. If that is the case, it is a bit problematic for me as a registered student in this university. Because when the Vice-Chancellor communicated the process that the university will be following in dealing with this issue, he did mention that the intention was to get all views and it must be objective as far as possible. We want to, as students, get into this process knowing that this is not a tick-and-go exercise where the university says we have consulted, like it has been done before. If the fellow introduced himself as Barney Pityana, having read the article that he wrote...

¹⁴ I decided to quote the entire speech by speaker one because it demonstrates the point I want to make about listening and power. Quoting a segment of this speech does not seem to fully show the full extent of the strategy Speaker 1 is employing against Pityana, whom all intents and purposes is a powerful individual.

Chair just one request, can we attempt to respect each other in this process. I am sure you are aware it is test week and we **sacrificed a lot. I don't see anything** that would warrant a smile in what I am saying. So can Barney Pityana stop smiling. We are not joking here. I am serious.

So I am saying that given his views on the matter that he wants the statue to stay, even if by the way he had other views, given the fact that he has expressed his views on the matter, it would not be correct that he becomes part of the process of presiding over this meeting. My proposal is that Prof Barney Pityana comes and sits here next to me. There is a nice seat here next to me. Then we can have a person that will not compromise this session like he is. He is compromising the session. We know he has a mandate, he has been told to go do A, B and C. But it is not going to happen in this meeting, he must just come here and we replace him with another chairperson.

Chair, we are here to debate the matter. We don't want to waste time on the Professor. This is not a court of law where he has to respond. We are saying we want another member of Convocation to co-chair with you, Kgosi Chikane. There is no debate here. The cadre (Pityana) must just come down here and we continue with the programme (Speaker 1 at University Assembly, 2015).

On the face of it, Speaker 1's objection to Pityana seems to be a comment on preserving trust in the process. The speaker creates a link between trust in the process with trust in the people who oversee the process. The lack of trust in the people overseeing the process would not only "compromise" the session but would also reduce the process to "a tick-and-go exercise" where the voices of participants do not elicit any results. Although the session is aimed at hearing other voices which would arguably help to broaden the horizon of all who are listening and contribute to their openness, it is the fact that Pityana has a view on the matter that renders him compromised to oversee the process. The speaker characterizes Pityana as someone who is incapable of **openness** to genuine facilitate listening. Instead, he is viewed as someone with a mandate to sway the process.

There is also something at play here. Speaker 1 seems to have employed disrespect and humiliation to break down the power, authority and gravitas that Pityana has. This was a form of guerrilla tactic by a frustrated student who was trying to demonstrate the problematic nature of having someone with formal power and is thought to have a 'stated' position on the matter overseeing proceedings. After all, Pityana was not just President of the UCT Convocation at the time, he is also an apartheid struggle stalwart and a former VC of the University of South Africa. First, the student refuses to acknowledge Pityana as a co-chairperson by insisting on only addressing Hendrickse as chairperson. Two, he refers to Pityana as a "fellow" reducing him to his peer. Three, in the middle of the request for Pityana to recuse himself, Speaker 1 states: "I don't see anything that would warrant a smile in what I

am saying” and “So can Barney Pityana stop smiling?” Finally, Speaker 1 requests that Pityana recuse himself and come sit next to him. Another student joined in on the heckling until Pityana eventually relinquishes his co-chairing responsibilities after denying publishing an article wherein he argues for the statue not to be moved.

What this moment demonstrates well is how respect is an act of the conferring of power while refusal to grant one respect or humiliation is taking away that power. Speaker 1’s refusal to treat Pityana with respect strips him (Pityana) of the power and authority that he carries as an apartheid struggle stalwart and a former VC. Price explained:

Respect should allow individuals to see past what a person is, to see who the person is. Respect is not just about being seen, but it should also enable others in a public arena. You may grudgingly respect someone. I have a vague feeling that Chumani (Maxwele) and Masixole (Mlandu) respect me. But even if they tell me privately that they respect me when we are alone, in public they act out in humiliation. That is how they exercise their power (Price, 2017a).

Price’s statement above confirms that respect only works as an act of conferment or the taking away of power when political actors interact with each other in the context of public engagement. His concept of respect closely resembles Bickford’s (1996) concept of attention. The difference between the two concepts is that one can refuse to pay attention to someone without seeming disrespectful or humiliating to them. I will now look at the interaction among members of the UCT Association of Black Alumni.

4.3.5. Interaction among members of the University of Cape Town Association Black Alumni

The University of Cape Town Association of Black Alumni (UCTABA) met for a discussion on transformation at the university on 7 April 2015, a day before the Council met to decide on the fate of the statue. The session, which was chaired by gender scholar and UCT alumni, Phumla Gqola, was in the form of a panel discussion where each member of the panel presented their arguments before the platform opened for questions and answers. The panel was made up of the UCTABA Western Cape and national president, Rod Solomons; UCT VC, Max Price; Ramabina Mahapa, UCT SRC president; Iqbal Survé, former Chairperson of the UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB) and Chairperson of the Independent News and Media South Africa, which owns the *Cape Times* newspaper; and Shose Kessi, Senior Lecturer at UCT.

Solomons spoke first. He commended students for forcing UCT management to engage with issues of transformation through their engagement. Solomons explained that although the VC and his senior management team were on record expressing their support for the transformation of the university, their pace was too slow and not decisive enough. He added that students were tired of this slow pace of transformation and that black academics were resorting to establishing pressure groups because of the lack of visual change in management composition (UCTABA discussion, 2015).

Solomons was followed by Price, who detailed the progress the university made regarding transformation. He told participants that the role of universities was to transform society. He argued for a view of transformation that includes the university's efforts in both external and internal transformation (UCTABA discussion, 2015). In terms of external transformation, Price listed the high rate of graduate employment that the university enjoys, research that responds to societal issues, the university's efforts to transforming graduates into active citizens and the role that UCT academics have played as public intellectuals. In terms of internal transformation, UCT had succeeded in transforming the student population to 60% black. Price explained that in terms of institutional culture, university management was just beginning to tackle it but appreciated the student protest which made the matter an urgent priority. He also noted that although symbols and statues were a major point of contestation, an objection or motion against these symbols had never been registered in any of the university structures. Price noted that the university had started making gains in the area of curricula transformation but also pointed out that this role rested ultimately with course conveners. The one area of transformation that the university failed in was the transformation of academic staff. Price informed the audience that only 27% of academic staff at UCT were black, excluding staff of other nationalities (UCTABA discussion, 2015).

When Mahapa took to the podium, he issued a clarion call asking the audience to refuse to accept the lack of transformation at UCT. He congratulated students for choosing to protest to register their objection to the slow pace of transformation. He explained the ideology of formerly 'white only' spaces were still the same and urged black staff and students to resist assimilating (UCTABA discussion, 2015).

Mahapa's presentation was followed by Survé, who informed the audience that UCT was a racist institution that had not changed 20 years into South Africa's democracy (UCTABA

discussion, 2015). Survé argued that the only way the university could be changed was if the entire leadership of the institution could change, not just the VC. He informed the audience that UCT needed change similar to the change he instituted when his company bought Independent News and Media South Africa. He explained:

When I took over Independent Media and made the changes that I am telling you this institution has to make, they said the readership and circulation would go down. The truth is, yesterday the AMS results were released. The *Cape Times* readership has gone up by 35,000 in spite of what some person said about the boycott of the *Cape Times*. The [Cape] Argus readership has gone up by 65,000. In the 10 years before we took over, it was declining and now it is going up. Why, it is because we brought about real change. We started giving voice to different people, poor and rich. We started giving voice to different parts of our society. No longer was it okay to be a UCT student and piss on a cleaner. No longer was it okay to be a UCT student and beat up a security guard and have nothing done by the UCT leadership. That kind of behaviour is what our newspapers are reflecting and because people are seeing it for the first time they are buying our newspapers (UCTABA discussion, 2015).

Survé's was followed by Kessi, who told the audience that the university should be trying to do is decolonize the institution instead of transforming it (UCTABA discussion, 2015). She argued that in thinking about the role of the university it was important to change the discourse first because injustice started with epistemic violence. It was in framing change in the language of decolonization that not only historicized the injustice but also contextualized the change that the university wanted to make, explained Kessi (UCTABA discussion, 2015).

In the discussion above, all the stakeholders give recognition to students for forcing the university management to approach issues of transformation with a sense of urgency and commitment. It is also important to highlight that Survé's comments on the role of newspapers provide an important lens through which to look at the coverage that the *Cape Times* newspaper has generated on RMF's activities. I will now discuss the activities of the Black Academic Caucus in relation to RMF's campaign against the Rhodes statue.

4.3.6. Black Academic Caucus

When the Bremner occupation happened, the Black Academic Caucus (BAC) collaborated with RMF in tackling a variety of issues and in allocating speakers that could share their expertise through seminar-style sessions on topics of interest for the movement. Shose Kessi, a member of the BAC committee, explained that RMF and the BAC jointly organised black academics to "talk about their work and give a kind of African and decolonial perspective on

the different subjects of study” (Kessi, 2017). For Kessi, the fact that the students were using the Rhodes statue as a symbol of exclusion was important in that the symbolic exclusion could be extended to the curriculum, black academics and the institutional culture. For Kessi, the Bremner occupation was a perfect moment for RMF. Not only was the “movement actually led by black women who were talking about their experiences, but they were also being heard”. Kessi explained:

...they had to be heard, they were occupying Bremner. I also think at that time the thing that was so powerful was that they owned the narrative. People were in agreement with them (Kessi, 2017).

What Kessi is referring to above is the power of telling one’s story and having people hear that story as is. What she seems to be suggesting is that the receptivity that RMF received was due to the movement capturing Bremner, the movement forced everyone at the university at the very least to begin to pay attention and listen to what the movement was saying. Since RMF invested a lot of resources in learning the media game, not only did the movement make itself available to the media but it also documented and created its narrative. But Bremner was also valuable because of the activities that RMF embarked on during the occupation. Kessi explained:

When you were in that space, you could see that they had started organising and there was the leadership structure somewhere. They started organising for tutors and senior students to come and assist with tutorial work and academic work. They brought us in to do some real lectures and they had this fundraising going on (Kessi, 2017).

As much as Kessi links being heard and capturing the Bremner Building, she points out that it was RMF’s refusal to stop the occupation as soon as the statue was removed that caused some of the tension between the movement and BAC. The BAC felt that the students had won on the issue of the statue, and they (RMF) needed to honour their agreement with the UCT management that they would vacate the Bremner Building as soon as the statue was removed from campus. Kessi explained that BAC informed RMF that “if you stay, nobody is going to believe you, trust you, you are going to lose the upper hand, you are going to lose the narrative and that is exactly what happened” (Kessi, 2017). Trust, in this case, is based on living up to the commitment that RMF made to the UCT management especially since the UCT management delivered on the statue. However, moving out of Bremner had implications of life and death for RMF. According to Kessi, the movement felt like it captured something that it would lose if it was to leave Bremner, and for some students it was during the

occupation that they felt as though they belonged. Although members of the BAC understood these dynamics, they also wanted RMF to understand that “things have to be negotiated; you cannot stay there indefinitely” (Kessi, 2017).

This was not the only time that BAC openly disagreed with RMF members’ actions. At the heart of these disagreements, explained Kessi, was the fact that the two movements had different agendas. BAC was primarily concerned with issues about academic members of staff while RMF in this beginning stage was primarily concerned with students. Kessi pointed out that it was difficult for members of RMF to understand that BAC was not going to support RMF blindly, in all their actions and decisions. This issue of support caused tensions between the two movements around certain issues. Kessi explained:

I think the one time that BAC put up a statement that the students were very angry with was the Senate meeting that was disrupted and somebody threw a bottle of water at Max Price. We wrote a statement but we did not condemn them, we just condemned the act but they took it very hard. I think that was the beginning of the relationship going a bit sour (Kessi, 2017).

The comment above attempts to paint a picture of how RMF and BAC dealt with the conflict between the two. Kessi implies that there was an expectation on the part of RMF for BAC to agree with whatever RMF was doing.

4.3.7. The possibility of listening between RMF and the UCT Academic Union

At the time of the protest in 2015, UCT had three labour unions representing the three constituencies defined by the classification of the work they do. The UCT Academics Union (UCTAU), represented academic staff; the UCT Employees Union (UCTEU) represented administrative staff from Payclass 6 to 12; while the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU) represented outsourced workers, who mostly belonged to Payclass 1 to 5. For the analysis in this section, I will only focus on a statement by the UCTAU on the Rhodes must fall campaign on 27 March 2015. There is no evidence that the other two unions issued official statements representing their stance on the statue of Rhodes and protest against it as led by RMF¹⁵.

¹⁵ It is important to note that although NEHAWU did not issue a statement in these beginning stages, its members featured heavily in RMF activities as the movement continues to pursue demands around insourcing of workers and paying workers a ‘living wage’.

The UCTAU statement starts with what can be considered giving **recognition** (Mufamadi, 2014:56) to the issues that RMF had brought to the fore beyond just the statue. The UCTAU statement explained that: “UCT's failure, over a period spanning decades, to address the institutional racism inherent in the naming of buildings and siting of objects on campus represents a signal failure to engage meaningfully with the symbolism of South Africa's past, and with the university's 'heritage that hurts',” (UCT Academic Union, 2015). The statement above represents “seeing from another’s perspective and understanding their views” (Mufamadi, 2014:56) which are the defining characteristics of recognition.

The UCTAU continued beyond just seeing from RMF’s perspective but one would argue that the union adopted RMF’s views. UCTAU explained in the following paragraph that the fact that it took “extreme action” for the university to realise that “urgent remedial action” was required on the statue was a representation of the institution’s “past systemic failure to successfully engage with and pay attention to the experiences of marginalised voices on campus, especially Black students, academics and other staff” (UCT Academic Union, 2015). Not only does the UCTAU represent the views of RMF but it historicizes the institution’s failure to listen in a manner that legitimizes RMF’s demands and pain. That the UCTAU takes this particular stance is important in that it represented a constituency (academics) that was still largely white. One of RMF’s demands was for UCT to transform the professoriate to represent the country’s demography (majority black African). This level of extraordinary recognition seems to be only possible when it is accompanied by a certain level of **openness**, which Mufamadi defined as when there is evidence of “plurality of individuals, backgrounding of self, foregrounding of other and empathy” (2014:56). As if to demonstrate its position beyond any doubt, the UCTAU acknowledges its role in the university’s failure. The UCTAU explained in the statement:

The AU acknowledges and accepts that it has been complicit in this failure. Had the university, including the AU, been more attuned and empathetic to these issues, the protest might not have taken the form it has (UCT Academics Union, 2015).

The statement demonstrates UCTAU’s openness which enables the labour union to background itself to confront its self-defined past complicity¹⁶. It is through openness that the

¹⁶ It is important to note that it is possible that this specific statement may not represent the thoughts and standpoint of many staff. It might have been written by one or a few people with little consultation with staff/members before publishing it.

UCTAU can realise that the labour union needed to be more “attuned and empathetic” to the issues at hand. In a way, the statement above also seems to justify the “extreme nature” the protest took because of the failure of the university and the UCTAU to be more attuned and empathetic to the issues (UCT Academics Union, 2015). It is not surprising when the UCTAU moves on to state that its position was that “the statue has no place in its present position on campus” and “nor is it relevant whether or not a majority of students, staff, alumni or Council members believe that the statue should be moved” (ibid). What is surprising, however, is the union’s disregard for the democratic processes of consultation that the university was embarking on before a final decision was taken on the statue. I believe that the position of the UCTAU and its disregard for what the majority might think of the statue is an example of **representative thinking**, which Mufamadi defines as “when individuals are able to represent multiple interests without losing their uniqueness and individuality” (2014:57). Although the UCTAU represented a majority of academic staff who were largely unaffected by the issues raised by RMF, the union is not only able to empathize with some of its members who are affected by some of the issues raised but it is also able to represent their interest without having to compromise its identity or mandate. That the union can empathize enables it to understand that members of the university came face-to-face with the “hurtful symbolism” of the statue every day that they pass by it and that this should have been “self-evident” (UCT Academics Union, 2015).

However, the UCTAU perceived the removal of the stature from its position in campus as a necessary precondition for speaking and listening to occur. The UCTAU explained that the “AU believes that removing the statue from its present position is an essential first step towards creating the space for engagement, debate and dialogue on the pressing matter of institutional transformation at UCT” (UCT Academics Union, 2015). In the context of political listening, the removal of the statue as the UCTAU explained above would create an environment where individuals can listen and be listened to by others. In Bickford’s terms, it would create political equality, which is “an equalising of unequals” by giving equal standing to those who may otherwise be unequal” (Bickford,1996:57). Political equality makes peers out of those who are different. For Bickford, political equality is important because speech and action are only possible when individuals have equal standing and see each other as peers; and an environment where listening can occur is only possible when there is political equality (Bickford, 1996:57). Considered in this regard, the UCTAU’s argument to have the

statue removed to create the (symbolic) “space for engagement, debate and dialogue on the pressing matter of institutional transformation at UCT” is important for political listening not only because it would be a sign that the university listened. But also because removing the statue would signify UCT’s openness to engage in further listening on matters of institutional transformation. The UCTAU’s argument locates the listening, symbolized by the removal of the statue, as the small act that is required for the bigger speaking and listening on institutional transformation to occur.

Furthermore, the UCTAU treated RMF as a **resource** (Mufamadi, 2014:56) when it came to defining issues of institutional transformation that required attention from the university. The UCTAU explained in a statement:

As an important UCT constituency, the AU agrees with the students that there are specific issues relating to transformation that require the urgent consideration and engagement of academic staff. The most pressing of these relate to:

The institutionalised discrimination, including racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia and ableism, experienced by staff members at UCT;

Questions relating to curriculum content and design, and whether these are as appropriate as they should be in the context of transforming higher education in South Africa;

Ensuring greater transparency of the ad hominem process, to ensure that artificial barriers are not being placed in the path of marginalised staff members seeking promotion (UCT Academics Union, 2015).

In the paragraph above, the UCTAU is not only using RMF in defining which issues required urgent attention by UCT but the union was also engaging in **representative thinking** (Mufamadi, 2014:57) for its affected members. First, the union states that it is an important constituency at UCT to remind the reader of its identity as an important labour union and that what it is stating should be viewed within the same context. Not only does it agree with the students but it picks the “most pressing” issues from a cocktail of demands made by RMF that specifically relate to staff members who fall within the category of the constituency the union represents. The UCTAU further explained that it was going to create a platform for engagement with the three issues to ensure that “marginalized groups are provided a safe and responsive space to express their views” (UCT Academics Union, 2015). But the union also acknowledges that this approach is a departure away from the way it represented its members in the past. The UCTAU explained:

The engagement proposed represents a significant shift for the Academics Union at UCT. For too long, the Union has been too parochial, concerned only with relatively uncontroversial questions of working conditions, and representation of members' concerns and grievances with UCT's management. The AU has no intention of abandoning or downscaling these activities. However, by taking on the issues above, we will be able to more meaningfully represent all UCT academic staff, and thereby build a stronger Union (UCT Academics Union, 2015).

The statement above demonstrates the UCTAU's willingness to listen to the issues being raised by RMF and its members, and the value of that listening in the union's ability to better represent its members. This is an example of how listening can help those who represent others to meaningfully understand them by enriching one's understanding of the issues and the people that are being represented at all times.

This section of this study demonstrates the UCTAU's commitment to effective listening during the campaign against the Rhodes statue. The union goes as far as explaining that its "first task is to listen, to understand, and to empathise" (UCT Academics Union, 2015). Its listening is accompanied by the desire to better represent its constituency and its willingness to background itself to fully understand issues. It is also important to note that the kind of listening that the UCTAU seems to engage in paves the way for more listening by advocating for the creation of further platforms for engagement and listening.

4.3.8. The interaction between RMF, UCT and the *Cape Times* newspaper

In this section, I will primarily focus on news articles published by the *Cape Times* newspaper, press statements by the Communications and Marketing Department of UCT, press statements by RMF and responses to the *Cape Times*' questions where such information is available. My analysis will follow the chronology of events as I continue to create a 'simplified' narrative that the reader will hopefully find easy to follow.

Following Maxwele's initial protest, the *Cape Times* published an article titled *Statue defaced over colonial dominance – UCT student in poo protest* on 10 March 2015. The story, written by Aly Verbaan, starts by telling the readers about Maxwele's single-person protest and the reasons for his protest. The reporter seems to consciously distance themselves from Maxwele's claims by using direct quotation marks and words that imply the claim was contested. In explaining the reason for Maxwele's protest, the article states that he was "particularly protesting "colonial dominance" still palpable at UCT" (Verbaan, 2015); while

the story also states that “he [Maxwele] alleged¹⁷ that black students were offended in general by the architecture and names of buildings on campus...” (Verbaan, 2015).

UCT’s perspective is presented half-way through the story with a comment from UCT’s then spokesperson Pat Lucas, who explained that Mawelele did not hold any elected office and neither did he use the many channels available to students to register their complaints or submit their motivation for change (Verbaan, 2015). What this part of the article does seem to be facilitating listening by putting Maxwele’s claims to UCT for the institution to respond on a public platform. Maxwele said, “he believed there were no women professors at UCT “after all this time” and referred to the university’s treatment of Professor Archie Mafeje, who has come to stand as a symbol of black oppression by learning institutions during the apartheid era” (Verbaan, 2015). Lucas provided a **response** (Mufamadi, 2014:56) in the following paragraph stating that “in 2013 there were 37 permanent female professors, including three black female professors (black is defined as African, coloured and Indian)” (Verbaan, 2015). The rest of the article explains how UCT was going to investigate Maxwele’s protest and an incident when a newspaper photographer was manhandled by university security during the protest. This section drew on a press statement UCT issued which stated that “the Vice-Chancellor’s Office has demanded a comprehensive and immediate report” on the alleged incident (Lucas, 2015b).

The second article that the *Cape Times* published on RMF’s activities, *UCT students tackle race transformation issues*, was a story on the UCT student assembly that took place the day before on 12 March. The news story, written by Petersen, starts by presenting the claims that students made against UCT at the Student Assembly and introduces the readers to some of the dignitaries who were there in the form of ANC Youth League provincial chairperson, Muhammad Khalid Sayen and SPRM leader, Loyiso Nkohl. Only the SRC president is quoted in the first half of the article. The bottom half of the article is devoted to UCT spokesperson, Lucas, and UCT Executive Director of Communications and Marketing, Gerda Kruger. The bottom half of the article has also presented a space for UCT to respond to claims that were made earlier in the article by students. At the beginning of the article,

¹⁷ At first glance, it is strange that Verbaan uses the word “alleged” within the context of Maxwele explaining his grievances with the university since this word is used in crime reporting and Maxwele’s claims were anything but criminal. But a quick read through some of Verbaan’s reportage at the time reveals that she was a crime reporter, which explains her use of the word “alleged” as occupational hazard.

Petersen stated that students “called for a statue of Cecil John Rhodes to be removed” (Petersen, 2015a) too which Lucas provides the following **response** (Mufamadi, 2014:56): “the university will certainly consider the call to remove the Rhodes statue...” (Petersen, 2015a). On the claim by students that UCT had an “imbalanced student ratio, a racially institutionalized curriculum and a poor representation of black professors and academics”, and in **response** (Mufamadi, 2014:56) Lucas explained that:

The Vice-Chancellor has requested an audit of staff appointments. About 60 percent of our student population is now black, and we are confident this proportion will increase as we implement the new admissions policy for the 2016 student intake (Petersen, 2015a).

On the SRC president, Ramabina Mahapa’s statement that “there was a lack of transformation at UCT, and that black students find it difficult to identify with the university as it is still largely Eurocentric” (Petersen, 2015a), Lucas explained in her **response** (Mufamadi, 2014:56) that “transformation is a high priority of the university, and that the University Council would meet with the SRC on Monday to discuss issues around heritage, signage and symbols” (Petersen, 2015a). The article ends with a comment by UCT’s main spokesperson, Kruger:

We appreciate the controversy about Cecil John Rhodes and the role he played in the founding of UCT. In terms of transformation at UCT, our view is that the calls for further transformation are legitimate, very important and valuable (Petersen, 2015a).

Kruger’s comment above is evidence of giving recognition to (RMF-led) students on their calls for transformation at the institution. The statement also serves to demonstrate how RMF-led students are used as a **resource** (Mufamadi, 2014:56) in terms of transformation-related matters. Their calls, as Kruger explains, are not only “legitimate” but are “very important and valuable”. Although it is unusual to quote two spokespersons of the same organization in the same story, Kruger’s comment legitimizes the demands made by students as genuine.

On 17 March 2015, a day after UCT’s first of a series of transformation seminars focusing on heritage, signage and symbolism, the *Cape Times* published a news story titled, *Drop the poo and get rid of Rhodes*, written by Carlo Petersen. The story was generated out of the UCT seminar on Heritage, Signage and Symbolism. The story starts by informing readers that the SRC walked out of discussions with university management and refused to participate in any discussions until the statue was removed. Although it provides a background of all activities

since the initial poo protest, the story almost exclusively quotes SRC president with the VC responding towards the end of the story. In the article, Mahapa explained that there were many issues – including symbols that black students did not identify with, marginalised black staff, readdressing affirmative action and promotions – that the university needed to deal with (Petersen, 2015c). For Mahapa, the SRC was not going to participate in any discussions until the date of the planned removal of the statue was provided. He explained in the story:

We are not at a point where management wants to meet with us in a fruitful way. There are a number of things we are upset about. Once we are given a date for the removal of the statue, it will give a firm indication that management is ready to address these issues (Petersen, 2015c).

In the statement above, Mahapa was referring to a show of good faith that the UCT management was indeed willing to listen to students and respond to that listening through action. This seems to be Mahapa's suggestion for what will restore the broken trust between the UCT management and RMF. But for the UCT VC, Price, the priority was for the university to be inclusive on the matter and to consult all stakeholders through discussions. The university, as he explained, was going "to continue our discussion with or without them". This is an example of the lack of openness and disregard for the others that I discussed in **Section 4.3.1**.

On 20 March 2015, the *Cape Times* published a new story titled, *Support streaming in for poo protesters*, wherein the reporter explained how RMF had generated a lot of support for the planned occupation of the Bremner Building that afternoon. Besides naming areas where the RMF protest had spread and organisations that were sending representatives for solidarity with RMF, the news story was told from RMF's perspective with the university management responding to issues raised by RMF. The university management was only given four sentences in the story to respond to issues. On the demand for the removal of the statue, Price's response is should be moved since it is a symbol of the university's colonial past (Petersen, 2015d). On the accusation that UCT management hacked and deleted the SRC Facebook account, Kruger stated that it was unfair and unhelpful to blame university management without any proof on the matter. On RMF's plans to occupy Bremner and to "draft a mandate that would be handed over to management at the Bremner Building", Kruger said that "the executive is preparing to meet the students, and the hope is that the engagement may lead to further discussions" (Petersen, 2015d).

On 8 April 2015, the day that the UCT Council was going to vote on the fate of the statue, the *Cape Times* published a story titled, *Final call on Rhodes today* (Petersen, 2015e). This news article was a routine coverage of the University Assembly on the Rhodes statue and Transformation that took place at UCT the night before. The story opened with Price stating that the university long felt the statue should be moved from its current position. This is followed by an explanation of the procedure in the form of a vote by the UCT Council and an application to the Western Cape Heritage Resources Council. Four participants in the University Assembly, two against and two for the removal of the statue, are quoted and the rest of the story is devoted to the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) Western Cape which accused UCT of creating unnecessary red tape by wanting to consult the Heritage Resources Council. The article quotes the ANCYL as having “produced research findings which stated that the statue was not part of the UCT National Monument declaration” (Petersen, 2015e). This claim is refuted by UCT spokesperson, Kruger towards the end of the article. What is, however, missing from the article is the beginning part of the University Assembly when Pityana was removed from co-chairship of the session and the presentation by SRC president, Mahapa.

In this campaign against the Rhodes statue, the *Cape Times* reporter who reported on the majority of these stories seems to have positioned himself as being willing to listen to the voices of students when it comes to issues of transformation at UCT. The reporter seems to have adopted, what O’Donnell (2009:513) termed, purposeful listening as a strategy by members of the media to listen to alternative voices that will not usually make it into mainstream media. This purposeful listening seems to be the explanation behind the reporter’s decision to tell the stories from RMF’s perspective, which is unusual for mainstream newspapers, especially given that UCT is considered the best institution in the continent. What seems to have contributed to getting coverage from the *Cape Times* and other news outlets seems to be RMF’s ability to send out media statements, and to distribute contact numbers that their members can be reached on by the media. The use of social media, especially Facebook, made it easier for reporters to generate story ideas on the movement without going to the UCT campus. This meant that for the kind of facilitating listening evidenced in the *Cape Times* reporting, the reporter did not have to go to campus for a story. This is an enabling factor in an era where specialist reporters have dwindled along with

shrinking newsrooms and reporters are expected to publish multiple stories to make-up for the shortage of writing staff.

4.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented a chronological narrative account of activities during the protest at the statue of Cecil John Rhodes at UCT and an analysis of some of the key moments during the protest. I am going to use this section to pull out some of the major themes that came out in the context of this protest, to sum up this chapter.

Setting the '**terms of engagement**' is a common theme that comes up in all the platforms and/or processes set up for engagement on the statue and whenever the UCT management updates the university community on the progress of the process on the Rhodes statue.

Though setting the terms of engagement might seem like a mundane procedural act, it has significant implications for voice. Setting the terms of engagement is about who can speak, how they can speak and often, where they can speak. During the Seminar on Heritage, Signage and Symbolism, many discussions were about the terms of engagement. Even when SRC president walks out of the seminar, it becomes clear in the Vice-Chancellor's communication that the walk-out was in protest of the university management's terms of engagement on the statue. The SRC president offered to be part of the process after the university management gave them a date on which the statue would be removed.

Furthermore, the announcement of the consultation process also specified who can speak, how they can speak, using what platforms and sometimes even stated where the speaking could happen. This is essentially about being given a voice. The media coverage of activities about the Rhodes statue provides insight into another process of being given a voice and a recognition of the speakers' right to be heard. The *Cape Times* ensures that the UCT management hears the demands and allegations made by students by forcing management to respond to them. The two processes not only happen simultaneously but the latter compliments the former although the two can often seem like widely unrelated processes.

Trust also came up as an important theme in several moments. What this chapter demonstrates is that trust is a requirement for speaking and listening to occur. The kind of trust that is referred to here is not necessarily to trust in the individual for their own sake, but rather trust in their openness. The students did not want to be part of any engagement that was planned by the UCT management because they did not trust the UCT management's

intentions and openness. There seems to be a link between trust and proximity to administrative power. Students do not seem to trust anyone in the UCT management. At the University Assembly, students demanded that Barney Pityana recuse himself not only because they think he would be biased but also because of his proximity to administrative power. He was the president of the UCT Convocation at the time of the University Assembly. Furthermore, even when some members of RMF continued the occupation of Bremner after the statue was removed, the VC had to get Elelwani Ramugondo and Shose Kessi (both from BAC), to convince the students to end the occupation because students trusted the two.

Issues of **power** and how it is used came up as one of the major themes in various sections of this chapter. How power plays out was accompanied by methods and strategies for reducing inequalities within a very hierarchical system. At various points in this chapter, disrespect and shaming the speaker is used as a method of creating equality between those with administrative power and those that are perceived as not having power. When Barney Pityana was heckled off the stage from his position as co-chairperson of the University Assembly, his removal was an attempt at creating equality by taking away his power. Although the reason for the initial call for Pityana to be removed from co-chairing the University Assembly was based on the suspected inability to be impartial, the suspected bias would not be an issue if he were not a person of stature who commands a great deal of respect and influence.

Furthermore, Price's explanation of how certain members of RMF would respect him enough to refer to him by his title in private engagements and refer to him by his first name in public offers another window into how disrespect can be utilized as a strategic tool. These public displays of disrespect by those who hold administrative power is not just a way of taking away power but it is also a conferring of power on this acting out the disrespect.

Chapter 5: Mediation between UCT and RMF by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation

"We haven't discovered a better way of solving problems than talking, it is still a better way to do it" – Stan Henkeman

5.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I focused on the interaction amongst members of the RMF movement, between members of RMF and members of other groups that interacted with RMF and/or its ideas. I also introduced the role of the role that the *Cape Times* played in that particular campaign. In this chapter, I will continue analyzing face-to-face interaction. This time, I will consider the interaction that occurred through mediation between RMF and UCT management, and whether this interaction could be considered political listening. Though the interaction that occurred during mediation was face-to-face, I was not privileged enough to be part of that process, which means that the data that I will use for this chapter is primarily second-hand and mediated. The fact that the narrative that I will be presenting is mediated does not take away from the significance of considering political listening in mediation processes. It is important to consider political listening in mediation for two reasons. One, the theory of political listening was conceptualised for and heavily relies on face-to-face encounters. What this means is that many of the characteristics of listening (as described by Bickford, 1996) should be identifiable in face-to-face interaction. Second, mediation is in its nature governed by democratic principles which dictate that all participants are equal and are not only given an equal opportunity to speak but are also 'forced' to listen and respond to each other's viewpoints or contributions. It is these characteristics of mediation and the fact that it is aimed at arriving at a collective understanding that makes it a deliberative process that citizens, or in this case a university community, can use to collectively and democratically solve problems affecting their community. I believe that considering political listening during the unfolding of a mediation process is even more important given that it was through this process that members of RMF and UCT management could both explain the rationale for decisions/certain actions that were taken during the campaign to remove the statue of Rhodes from the university. This chapter will also provide an opportunity to consider the role that power and its various locus played in the interaction between the two parties and how that enabled or disabled the possibility of listening. I have structured the

chapter in the following manner: it starts with the mediation process, followed by aspects of the process, which are key for analysis, and then the analysis itself before the chapter concludes.

5.2. The mediation process

I joined the UCT's Communication and Marketing Department at the beginning of May 2015, weeks after the statue of Cecil John Rhodes was removed from the campus and RMF's occupation of the Bremner Building had just ended. On 26 May 2015, UCT and RMF signed an agreement for the two parties to enter into a mediation process as an alternative to the university pursuing legal action against the movement for its occupation¹⁸ of the Bremner Building beyond the agreed date during the protest against the statue of Cecil John Rhodes. This agreement was turned into a court order by the Western Cape High Court, compelling the two parties to enter into a mediation process, to agree on the terms of mediation and mediators by 19 June 2015 and to complete the process by 31 July 2015, unless both parties agreed to an extension. The signing of this agreement was communicated to the UCT community by Price, who presented it as a victory by university management in its quest to 'contain' RMF's activities. Price (26 May 2015) assured the university community that the agreement not only prevented RMF from future occupations of university buildings but also directed RMF members to "refrain and desist" from any action that obstructed or frustrated university services or decision-making processes. Although I was employed in a department responsible for communicating on behalf of the university and UCT management by extension, like many members of the UCT community at the time, my knowledge of the mediation process was only based on the information provided by Price's communication to the university community.

However, the process of getting the two parties to sit in one room and talk and listen to each other was long and faced many obstacles. To start with, RMF members had no desire to enter into mediation with UCT management. After the Bremner occupation, the relationship

¹⁸ One of the strategies that the Rhodes Must Fall movement used against the University of Cape Town management was to occupy a key or strategic UCT building to compel the university to negotiate with them or to speedily resolve issues. During these occupations, UCT staff members could not use their occupied offices and did not have access to documents within the occupied building, which essentially shut down whatever function was housed in the occupied building.

between RMF and the UCT management was strained and trust had been broken. RMF agreed to enter into a mediation process because it was the only way to protect students who occupied Bremner beyond the agreed date from legal prosecution and the possibility of getting expelled from the University. Conversely, other members of RMF believed that UCT management had realised, through the popular support of the protest against the Rhodes statue both within and outside the university, that a decision to expel students could result in further protest which they did not have the capacity or expertise to deal with. For this latter group of students, the mediation process meant that students would get into the process with leverage against university management. Student 1, who was a prominent member of RMF and believed RMF had an advantage going into the mediation process, explains:

They [UCT management] didn't want to create motive that would spur the protest on and we were trying to just make sure that people didn't get kicked out of school (Student 1, 2017).

The second obstacle that delayed the start of the mediation process was for the two parties (RMF and UCT management) to find a mediator that they would be both happy with. Both RMF and UCT management seemed to be unfamiliar with the process and were untrusting of each other to a point that they thought whoever picks the mediator would have an advantage during the mediation process. They thought the mediator would advance the ends of whoever approached that mediator. At the time when the search for mediators started, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in Cape Town had appointed a UCT sociology student as an intern. This student would later become the critical link that brought the IJR, RMF and UCT together. She happened to be friends with key RMF members who at the time told her about the agreement and their desire to find a mediator who would be sympathetic to their cause or impartial at the very least. She suggested Stan Henkeman, the Executive Director of IJR. The movement then approached Henkeman for a meeting to discuss the possibility of becoming the mediator between RMF and UCT. But it was apparent at that initial meeting that the students had no desire to enter into a mediation process with UCT management but it was something that their lawyer agreed should happen for them to avoid being charged in a court of law. Henkeman explains:

They [RMF members] didn't understand the process, and when I explained to them they realised that this was bigger than they thought, because it meant that they actually had to talk to the university administrators, and they had to sit in the same room for extended periods and have conversations with them (Henkeman, 2017).

As the deadline to put forward the names of proposed mediators approached, RMF put IJR forward but the UCT management was sceptical not so much about having the IJR as a mediator but the fact that the IJR was nominated by RMF. This scepticism stemmed from the belief that a mediator chosen by RMF would favour the social movement in the process they were about to embark on. This unfamiliarity with the process of mediation and trust that had broken down between RMF and UCT management was later confirmed when Henkeman and Price finally talked about the IJR being the preferred mediator for students. Henkeman explains:

I received a call from Max Price, out of the blue, and he explained to me that the students put our names forward but he is not too keen on it because the administration had somebody else in mind and would I be interested in co-mediating with the other person, to which I immediately said no, **that's not how mediation works. Because I would ostensibly be the mediator for students and he, the other person, would be the mediator for management** (Henkeman, 2017).

Price eventually agreed to have the IJR as the mediators with Henkeman and Tim Murithi as the facilitators. The mediation process started on Wednesday, 29 July 2015 and lasted five weeks. Per the IJR's practice, the mediation process had four stages. One, **the first session** – which according to the IJR is where the mediators lay the foundation for the process and all the players agree on ground rules that will govern discussions and negotiations. It is at this first meeting that the mediators and all parties decide on the rules of engagement, who will represent whom, the role of the mediator(s), and where & when mediation meetings will be held.

The second stage of the mediation process was the **Storytelling phase**, which is where members of each party are allowed to tell their stories and participants are allowed to ask questions of clarity about the stories being told. Storytelling is followed by **identifying and prioritising issues** from the stories that each party told. From the stories that were told, the mediator(s) decided which issues to tackle first. However, the issue tackled first is not necessarily the most important or complex one but rather one that the mediators think will be easy for the two parties to agree on. This first agreement, explains Henkeman (2017), is essential for getting the two parties to have confidence in the process and its potential to help them collectively find solutions for all the other issues. The fourth and final stage of the process was the **agreement**. When the agreement is reached, it is not signed immediately. Parties were given two days to cool off and think about amendments they would like to add

to the agreement. I will now discuss the critical moments and issues raised during the mediation process.

5.3. Critical moments and issues in the mediation process

It is important to note that the mediation process between RMF and UCT management was complex, drawn out and sometimes confusing even for the participants. Many issues were discussed during this process, while some were discussed at greater length than others. Some issues were discussed, parked because they could not be resolved and picked up again at a later stage. My account of the issues detailed below does not represent all the issues discussed and will in no way capture all that was said during the sessions on the issues in question. I will use these issues below to give readers a sense of how the process unfolded, as complex as it was, to make a point about the role or the lack of political listening in the unfolding of the process when I conduct an analysis. I will start with the first meeting.

5.3.1. The first meeting

The first meeting introduced members of the various parties that had a stake in the mediation process. The mediators' team was made up of two mediators, Stan Henkeman and Tim Murithi, and a scribe, Eleanor du Plooy. All three sat in the middle, to represent their neutrality, with members of RMF and UCT management on either side. The three were joined in the middle by Elelwani Ramugondo, who had just been appointed as the Vice-Chancellor's special advisor on transformation (Price, 12 June 2015). Although her new position placed her close to the university's seat of power, Ramugondo was, according to her, not part of the UCT executive and given her relationship or alliance with many of the students in RMF she wanted to make it clear that she was merely observing the proceedings to give feedback to UCT management later on. For Ramugondo (2017), it was important to make that distinction clear because she believed that both RMF and UCT management should speak on their behalf and conceptualized her role in the process as that of advising UCT management of where they are going wrong. The mediators, however, had a different role; both parties agreed that the role of the mediators was that of "creating an environment for constructive engagement between the parties" (IJR, 2015:1).

To get the process started, the mediators started the first session by posing the question, "what brought us here?" (IJR, 2015:1), to both parties to get a sense of what both parties expected from the process. It was in response to that question that RMF members made it

clear from the onset that they were part of the process only because the court-mandated them to be, not because they wanted to. Despite this reluctance, it soon became clear that RMF members were willing to engage and contribute earnestly. According to Student 1 (2017), RMF members wanted to give context to all the transgressions that the university was charging them with to help UCT management understand the root of the students' issues. However, UCT management's response to RMF members' accounts was not only insincere but also demonstrated what seemed to be their real intention for agreeing to go into the mediation process with students, which seemed to be the UCT management's desire to hold students to account to restore order. This was the real first barrier in the mediation and threatened to shut down the process as it began. Henkeman explains:

[RMF members] really shared passionately from the heart and essentially trying to explain what it means to be a black student at UCT. The response from the administration was a very clinical response – “we hear you... but there have rules and regulations” (Henkeman, 2017).

The rules and regulations that are referred to above are inscribed in the Code of Conduct for a student, which is aimed at regulating the behaviour of students. From the onset, UCT management's intention seemed to have been that of getting the students to agree that their actions violated the Code of Conduct which they (students) agreed to abide by it by being UCT students. By sharing their stories, RMF members expected UCT management to listen to their stories and attempt, at the very least, to find solutions to the issues that are raised. Student 1 explains:

What they wanted us to do was to admit that we submit to the Code of Conduct. On several occasions he (Max Price) asked us: do you agree and do you accept the obligations and responsibilities that come with the Code of Conduct and we refused (Student 1, 2017).

The two parties also agreed at that initial meeting that there would be no meetings on Thursdays and Fridays and that no new members will be allowed to come on board midway through the process. Not allowing new members meant that RMF as a leaderless or flat-structured movement could not rotate its delegates to the mediation. This attempt to limit the number of participants also extended to the information they are allowed to share. It was agreed that all communication would be electronically and that no printed documents would be distributed to the group “to safeguard against the leaking of sensitive documentation and to ensure the integrity of the mediation process” (IJR, 2015:1). This agreement, as I would

later demonstrate, seems to have laid the groundwork for the exclusion of the *Cape Times* from the mediation process.

However, the mediation process did not follow a neat and carefully planned structure that the IJR had initially conceptualized. During the first session both parties suggested issues that they wanted the mediation process to deal with. Storytelling, which was supposed to follow the first session, took place in the first session and more storytelling took place as the two parties worked through the issues that were identified and prioritized by the two parties and the mediators. Likewise, this Chapter will not devote a section solely to storytelling but it will trace the key issues that were discussed during the mediation. The other shift in the structure was logistical issues. The rules of engagement (or “common courtesies” (IJR, 2015:2) as the parties preferred to call it) extended to the session on identifying and prioritizing issues and was also listed as an issue on the list of issues to prioritize. There were also other issues, such as policing by Steven Ganger¹⁹, which was discussed after the list of issues that were identified and prioritized was circulated although they did not form part of the issues listed.

In terms of prioritized issues, various issues were discussed and re-discussed as the mediation continues, which creates a sense of some issues starting abruptly and others being left hanging only to be picked up at a later stage. For the interest of continuity for this research, I will discuss issues in full in each section including discussions that happened after the issue was parked and restarted at a later stage. Although I try to create a neat chronology of events, it is important to note that the mediation process was not neat and carefully contained. It was an adversarial process that was characterized by the two parties trying to get the other party to compromise the most, which often meant raising issues that were not on the list and putting them on the agenda of issues to be resolved. I will now discuss the prioritization of issues and then move to the actual issues.

5.3.2. Identifying and prioritizing issues

¹⁹ Steven Ganger was UCT’s chief investigator. A former police officer by profession, Ganger oversaw investigations into transgressions by students on behalf of the university and collecting evidence for the university to use during disciplinary hearings or to be used for application for a court interdict. Likewise, if transgressions by students were considered to be criminal offences, Ganger would liaise with the South African Police Services and help with the investigation on behalf of UCT.

The session on identifying and prioritizing issues started with a recap of the previous session. A list of suggested issues that the mediators had noted in the first session was circulated to both parties, and both parties were asked to reshuffle them in order of priority should they see the need. UCT management did not have any concerns in terms of the order of the list. RMF re-ordered the list to the following (IJR, 2015:2):

1. Space for RMF
2. Racist remarks to RMF
3. VC handling of RMF in public
4. Criminalisation of protesters
5. Incidents
6. Restriction of right to protest
7. Disciplinary charges
8. Follow-up charges made by students
9. Amnesty
10. Rules of engagement
11. Media

UCT management questioned the order of issues and accused RMF of moving all the issues that the movement suggested to the top of the list and all the issues suggested by management to the bottom half. UCT management viewed this as a strategy on the part of RMF to get through its issues first before those raised by UCT management.

5.3.2.1. Rules of engagement

It was in the conversation about how the two parties were going to engage each other in the space that there was a contestation about the term ‘rules of engagement’ which was eventually dropped for ‘common courtesies’ (IJR, 2015:2). Each party was given a chance to highlight its common courtesies while the other party was allowed to respond. RMF went first and suggested two Common courtesies: that they “reserve the right to respond to any patriarchal tones where necessary” and that they “would like to hear all voices in the interest of building trust” (IJR, 2015:2).

UCT management did not respond to the two suggestions by RMF but instead offered two Common courtesies of their own: “use of email/laptops/phones should be restricted in the space so as to ensure full participation by all” and “a process of drawing attention of the

mediators to instances where speakers take on racist, etc tones should be put in place” (IJR, 2015:2).

RMF responded to both of the requests by UCT management. To the first request, RMF pointed out that “the policing of the space by management and the insinuation that because devices are out students are not participating is misguided and in bad faith” (IJR, 2015:2). An agreement was eventually reached for each party to use one laptop at a time during the proceedings. The movement’s response to UCT management’s second suggestion was for everyone to check their privileges within the mediation space. However, the discussion then moved to policing of RMF members by Steven Ganger, which was not part of the list of issues circulated by the mediators.

The mediators had to then deal with the last logistical issue, which was RMF members’ use of a single email address, before starting with prioritized matters. UCT management queried the use of this address to which RMF members explained that they were the only ones with access to the email address and that they “reserve[d] the right to share communication with the larger movement where they deem[ed] fit” (IJR, 2015:3). The first issue is important because it is supposed to set the tone for the rest of the process. Mediators, in this case, wanted to use getting an agreement on the first issue to get a buy-in from the participants that the process was indeed going to help them resolve their issues. Henkeman explains:

The first issue is a tool that mediators use knowing that you have a better chance of success with that one because that first one is important. The first agreement is an important thing because it gives people confidence (Henkeman, 2017).

The first issue was space for RMF. Not being familiar with the relationship between RMF and UCT management, the mediators could not have known the complexity of the issue of space given the agreements that the two parties had when RMF occupied the Bremner Building during the protest against the statue of Rhodes.

5.3.2.2. First issue: Space for RMF

Space for RMF was always a contentious issue between the movement and the UCT management. Even before the Avenue House and Avenue Hall occupation, the issue of space was always part of the agenda for the movement. During an RMF press conference on 13 April 2015, the movement called for Council to consider the movement’s demand for “the

university to provide a space where it can continue the programme it started during its occupation of Bremner ('Azania House') after the movement ended the occupation" (Calata, 2015).

As part of the negotiations to leave Bremner Building, students were promised space where they can continue with their activities. According to Student 1 (2017), RMF was supposed to be given the space a week after the occupation of the Bremner Building ended but that did not materialise. They were instead informed that a new space will be built and made available. In the meantime, the university was renovating a garage at Exear Residence which was to be used by RMF. This permanent space for RMF was meant to be unveiled on 17 July 2015, which was just under three weeks before this discussion on space took place (IJR, 2015:3). RMF members felt as though the promise of such a space was made as an enticement for them to leave the space and that they would have never left the Bremner Building had they known. The students occupied Avenue House in response to this failure to deliver the space which was initially promised. This occupation of Avenue House did not play out so well for the movement because the UCT management "had successfully framed it as being a fringe group that didn't have the legitimacy that the other somewhat mass movement had" (Student 1, 2017). The movement then moved to Avenue Hall through negotiations with the UCT management but the charges had already been laid. RMF members explained at the mediation that space was important not only for the movement but for black students at the university. According to IJR (2015:3):

RMF expressed the need for a space where Black students can talk about and learn to deal with the trauma of being Black at UCT and the challenges that come with that. 'Space' is not just a physical space but more so a place of belonging. It is important to note that the experiences of black bodies on campus, is violent, hurtful and traumatic – many students, through the RMF and the conversations of have been able to stop going to therapy for the first time since Azania ²⁰ (IJR, 2015:3).

Furthermore, RMF members stated that the UCT management was upholding a "racist institution" (ibid) by not responding to requests for space among other requests. The students also demanded that the UCT management acknowledge that they were presiding over an

²⁰ When RMF occupied the Bremner Building in protest against the statue of Cecil John Rhodes the movement renamed Bremner Azania House (which became Azania 1 when RMF occupied Avenue House). Renaming was a common practice for RMF. When the movement occupied Avenue Hall, it renamed it Azania 2 while the monumental Jameson Hall was christened Marikana Memorial Hall.

“anti-black racist institution” (IJR, 2015:3). The UCT management was allowed to respond to RMF.

In their response, UCT management explained to RMF that they “regarded the SRC as the legitimate spokes-group to negotiate with as they represent the interest of the student body” (IJR, 2015:4). They further explained that, as far as they were concerned, the SRC demanded the fall of the Rhodes Statue and management agreed but stated that a discussion was necessary before the statue could be removed. There was an understanding, management explained, that the occupation of the Bremner Building would end after the statue was removed which did not happen. The SRC had promised to vacate the building by 8 April 2015 in anticipation of the statue coming down the following day – honouring the agreement made with management. RMF refused to vacate the Bremner Building, an act that management characterized as bad faith. The continued occupation of Bremner by RMF, explained management, caused “numerous ergonomic challenges” and “was also very traumatic to staff who had to be moved, accommodative of the noise, people sleeping in corridors intimidation” (IJR, 2015:4). Management further explained that university advisors recommended that the police should be called to handle the situation but in the interest of not escalating the situation the university opted for a court order instead. Negotiations ensued between RMF and UCT management at which point the UCT offered two kinds of spaces for RMF – ad hoc space which RMF would have to request the use of space and the university would make it available, and a dedicated permanent space in Exear Residence garage which was to be delivered in mid-July 2015. More work still needed to be done on the permanent space including appointing a planning commission. Management apologized for the failure to communicate the progress of the space. UCT management also stated that although a timeframe was given for making the space available, a decision was not taken on the final date. They also pointed out that there was no clarity from RMF around what the space would be used for should it be made available. As for the Avenue House occupation, the UCT management explained that they deemed it unlawful which meant that “students were eligible for disciplinary action” (IJR, 2015:4). Furthermore, the UCT management explained that they offered Avenue Hall as an interim arrangement because the university not on recognized the need for space but also in an attempt “to manage unlawful actions” (IJR, 2015:4).

In terms of logistics, UCT management explained that management was hesitant to bypass the SRC or create multiple streams of communications since the SRC handled students’

affairs and allocate space (IJR, 2015:4). However, the UCT management started dealing with RMF upon realising that RMF and the SRC were separate entities and that RMF was an important movement. RMF was then given an opportunity to respond to management's response.

In their response, RMF members pointed out that the dispassionate and clinical response by the UCT management (delivered by the Vice-Chancellor) to their stories of what it was like to be a black student at the institution was concerning given efforts toward reconciliation between RMF and the UCT management. RMF members also explained that given the response and queries from the UCT management, they felt unheard. In terms of what UCT management referred to as the unlawful occupation of buildings, RMF cautioned management from using the term unlawful given that these allegations were not tested in court and that occupation is a legitimate act of protest (IJR, 2015:5).

Furthermore, members of RMF explained that in terms of the legitimacy of the SRC to speak on behalf of students, it was important to note the SRC did not speak on behalf of RMF and at the time when members of the SRC spoke on behalf of RMF they were given the mandate to do so. RMF never said after the removal of the statue that they would move. The university, RMF members added, refused to communicate with RMF or even recognized the movement. During the Bremner Building Occupation, the university referred to RMF as a 'splinter group' that remained in Bremner (IJR, 2015:5). In terms of staff that management said suffered because of the continued occupation, RMF members stated that there were workers and staff members at UCT who have also suffered and have made several demands for better working conditions.

The UCT management responded by explaining to RMF that they took the social movement seriously and suggested two alternative spaces that RMF could use in the interim. Both parties were then given a chance to make concluding remarks before the session ended. For their concluding remarks, RMF explained that they knew the kind of space they wanted and that they would discuss the matter of space further with the rest of the movement's members. The UCT management used their opportunity to make concluding remarks to ask RMF how they could deal with allegations of criminality at Avenue Hall (IJR, 2015:5-6).

This session left the mediators with the impression that the mediation process might not continue beyond this meeting. RMF members were incensed by the way UCT management

responded to their stories and were skeptical of whether mediation was the correct process for finding solutions to their issues with UCT and its management. The mediator, Henkeman, decided to meet both parties individually to get them to reaffirm their commitment to the process and to get them to think of a way forward that could help the process progress. It was highly irregular for a mediator to meet the two parties individually, especially in this case where each party was concerned about the mediators potentially giving an advantage to one party. Henkeman met RMF members first.

5.3.2.2.1. Henkeman's meeting with RMF

The issue of power on the part of UCT management seemed to have left a bigger impression on the mediators that when Henkeman met with RMF the question of power was high on his agenda. He wanted to ensure that the students were in a better frame of mind to listen and negotiate by helping them understand the power they also bring to the negotiation process. This was the power of having captured public attention and having the moral high ground. According to Henkeman, this power meant that UCT management had an obligation to listen to the students just as much as the students had the obligation to speak and be heard. Henkeman (2017) reminded the students of the leverage they had over UCT management. He explains:

The fact that they are here means that they understand that it is important to meet with you and to hear what you have to say (Henkeman, 2017).

Besides the strategy of convincing RMF members not to be the first to abandon the mediation process because they will lose public sympathy, his insistence that by bringing senior or top administrators the university was taking students seriously seems to suggest that university management wanted to listen to students. This is an important first step in the journey towards listening because what he is attempting in these individual meetings is to ensure that both parties understand it is important to meet and hear what each party has to say, even if the kind of listening is manipulative. In other words, making one physically available creates the possibility of listening to each other, although it does not guarantee that both parties involved will hear one another.

However, RMF members questioned if they wanted to continue to subject themselves to the mediation process with the UCT management when “they feel suffocated by the violence of the space” (IJR, 2015:7). They felt that they were being ‘othered’ by their counterparts, and

“treated like children and not equals” within the space (ibid). These students, whose experience of UCT was already that of exclusion and invisibility, explained that they were not surprised by the clinical response from management and that it was how management always respond to them. They explained: “we are subjected to explaining our narratives over and over in attempts to make people (the white man) understand” (IJR, 2015:7). They further argued that comparing the trauma suffered by staff to that of students only serves to delegitimise the pain of students.

In terms of space, RMF members stated that as a movement that extended beyond UCT they needed space that could also accommodate members of the movement who were not registered students (IJR, 2015:8). They also warned that although space was important, it was not the only issue and that management might just think that the gesture of giving the movement space would have solved all the issues. RMF concluded by stating that they wanted to put a lid on the issue of space and deal with it in the last session because they needed time to think about what every member’s needs are in terms of space.

5.3.2.2.2. Henkeman’s meeting with UCT management

The meeting with UCT management took a different turn. Henkeman used the meeting to explain to UCT management how they failed to listen to students’ stories in the first session and their failure was evidenced by their response. To create an environment where both parties demonstrate that they are committed to speaking and hearing each other, UCT management was advised to consider apologising for not listening to students in the first session. Henkeman explained to the UCT management:

I think you have missed an opportunity here, when the students started speaking from their hearts you responded in a very cold way. And it was almost as if you **did not even hear them**. I can’t tell you what to do, but consider apologizing for not hearing their emotions (Henkeman, 2017).

However, later on in the mediation process, RMF members informed the UCT management that they wanted to submit a proposal for the kind of space they desired and wanted to have an engagement with the UCT management outside the mediation process on 24 August 2015. The second issue that was dealt with in these sessions was the racist remarks that were made against members of RMF.

5.3.2.3. Racist remarks to RMF and students’ pain

This session started with UCT management being given the platform to speak first as promised by the mediator and they started with an apology. In their apology they re-affirmed their commitment to the process and that their objective was to find a way to get the charges against RMF members lifted. They also acknowledged the experience of black students as not only legitimate but also different from that of their white counterparts. According to the IJR (2015:9-10), the UCT management started the session with four proposed items of discussion:

What we hear RMF talking about and whether this is right or not.

Management realised that in the previous meeting their response falsely relayed that there was little to no acknowledgement of the pain that black students experience at the university. This is not the case. Management hears and understands the struggles that many Black students face at the institution. They recognize that there are instances where Black students could experience the institution as racist – this could be through the comments made by other students and also because of the ways in which Black students experience the space and how they feel and are made to feel in this space.

There is an acknowledgement from management that their response to the emotional outpouring of members from RMF during the previous session might have come across as clinical. Looking at challenges a particular way could be perceived as clinical. Plea from management – if we have missed this could RMF help in finding potential solutions going forward?

These sentiments are endorsed by and it is expressed that it is no way fair to challenge or determine experiences of Black students. It would be highly problematic if management were to deny what RMF students have expressed to be their experiences.

Management expressed that systems often develop with people performing different roles. A particular reality is then created because of the system. The challenge is to break free from that construct.

Representative of management shared that being part of mixed race family, she understands that people experience race in different ways. Racism is complex and it acts in insidious way so much so that we are often blinded to it. We all have our own pasts and experiences of pain.

Management acknowledges that the UCT is experienced by some as being a racist institution. Art, buildings and various symbols on campus reinforce this. The SRC was instrumental in highlighting this. The university will have to try and figure out what is alien/racist and not relating to the lived **experiences of students. Curriculum reform didn't include students in any serious way** in the past but now with change, efforts will be made to develop a curriculum that speaks to the lived experiences of all students. The absence of a representative number of Black staff at the university is another factor that might add to the perception that the university is a racist institution and management acknowledges this. There was an acknowledgement from management that the university has failed in highlighting white privilege and the ways in which it functions. There was a

suggestion that the conversation needs to be driven by students as opposed to it being a top-down initiative. Management recognizes that white privilege is an issue that whites do not acknowledge. This is of course as a result of historic privilege.

Responding to a request made by Stan (Henkeman) that there might be low-hanging fruits to be gained at this point in the process regarding racist comments and requests, management has done [its] homework and has suggestions going forward.

Criminalizing protesting students and disciplinary charges after 18 May – these are the only charges still standing.

The fourth item is related to the Transformation Dialogue process suspended pending conclusion of the mediation. As things stand, the dialogue has been delayed. There is a request from management that the dialogues continue even before the end of the mediation process – ‘**must** the transformation dialogue be put on hold or could it run parallel to the current mediation process?’ (IJR, 2015:9-10).

RMF responded by explaining the ideological pillar of the movement. RMF members stated that black consciousness was always a big part of the movement and its politics, and that “the movement was concerned with workers, feminism and ideas around diversity” (IJR, 2015:10). They further stated that they were not responsible for miscommunication since the movement had gone to great lengths to explain the decolonization project and were instead criminalized. They questioned why they were only being acknowledged at that moment and wanted to know when the shift in management approach to the movement happened. RMF members explained that they were under no obligation to find solutions but were interested in “substantial issues pertaining directly” to the mediation process (IJR, 2015:10). Although the students were still distrustful of UCT management, they acknowledge the apology as a good start in restoring faith.

The UCT management responded by first explaining that their comments were in response to the feedback that they got about their performance/participation in the previous session. They further expressed their desire to engage further to get a better sense of the lived experiences of some of the students. UCT management wanted RMF members to know that “management hears what the issues are and will try to acknowledge and respond to that” (IJR, 2015:11).

In relation to comments about the racist comments directed at the RMF movement and its followers, the UCT management explained that they have asked the UCT Communications and Marketing Department to create a record of everything that was posted regarding the

movement on social media (IJR, 2015:11). They had since linked comments to staff and students, and had discovered that the racist comments were made by previous students whom the university did not have authority over. Management also offered RMF members the option of RMF going through the folder themselves to highlight where the racist comments are made then management would follow through (IJR, 2015:11).

In their response, RMF members explained that more racist comments were sent to SRC members and more comments on the UCT radio station website. There were also racist comments that were on the walls in the Bremner Building, which RMF felt that if the UCT management were serious about investigating racism they could have taken this up. RMF members also explained that UCT was incapable of following these up because the institution itself was racist. In terms of the folder that RMF was offered to go through, RMF members declined the offer stating that they had already seen all the racist comments and had no desire to go through them again and that if the UCT management had concluded that the comments were not made by students then they would leave it at that (IJR, 2015:11). The UCT management was allowed to respond.

The UCT management's response to RMF can be classified as an attempt to build or restore trust in the institution and its ability to hold students to certain standards of behaviour. Management offered to investigate the racist comments received by SRC members because "management would hate for there to be a feeling that it is unwilling to act on racist comments" (IJR, 2015:11). They also asked RMF members if they have any examples of when the institution did not respond to racism.

RMF responded by stating that it would be problematic for the movement to take students to UCT management over racism. They added that there was intimidation of black students but official communication by the university ignored this intimidation and the "barrage of racist comments" (IJR, 2015:11). In terms of the charges against RMF members, the movement expressed its desire to have the charges dropped. The movement explained that it was part of the mediation process because it wanted the charges withdrawn. The movement further added that it was never its aim to see students go through disciplinary action or to have their careers at the university compromised (IJR, 2015:11).

5.3.2.4. Criminalisation of protest and the charges against RMF members

In their response to RMF's comments about the movement's desire to have the charges withdrawn²¹, the UCT management responded with comments about using rules/law to keep order. The UCT management started their response by asking what the movement was offering as an incentive for them to withdraw the charges. They added that it was important that management governed with rules and that "it is the duty of management to protect staff and the university space when rules are transgressed" (IJR, 2015:11).

In their response to management, RMF questioned the charges and how these charges came about. The movement asked what the basis of the charges was and whether an investigation was ever conducted before charging them, adding that charging students was an intimidation tactic. They argued that it was against the law and in bad faith to charge students since it was almost impossible to prove that some of the students who were charged were even there (at the Avenue House occupation) in the first place (IJR, 2015:12). Students questioned why they had to offer the university something to drop the charges adding that they did not even know what rules they broke.

RMF added that the students who were charged received letters requesting admission of guilt and having to do community service as a punishment²². Students argued that the work they do for RMF is already more than enough community service and they did not see how they could be disciplined for the work they are doing through RMF (IJR, 2015:12).

The UCT management pointed out that the key issue was that specific students occupied Avenue House beyond 18 May and charges were brought against those students. At the hearing, more students were named and the university asked the named students if they were

²¹ Further to my comment about the mediation process being complex and disjointed, the Criminalisation of protest and the charges against RMF members are being discussed as part of the discussion on Racist remarks against RMF and students' pain. I have put this discussion under its own subsection to help readers navigate this chapter with ease and to create some sense of chronology.

²² UCT held a suspension hearing for four students who were charged with occupying Avenue House beyond the 18 May 2015 date of the grace period before the university takes action. During the hearing RMF members submitted a document listing 240 names of staff and students who they argued stood in solidarity with the suspended students and should also be charged. UCT sent out letters to the 240 staff and students asking them to confirm if they were part of or complicit in the Avenue House occupation beyond 18 May, and to sign an admission of guilt which would mean 10 hours of community engagement at UCT as punishment for their involvement and/or complicity.

in Avenue House beyond the specified date (IJR, 2015:12). In response to why RMF should offer an incentive for the charges to be dropped, UCT management explained that the university had an obligation to act according to its rules and to take the necessary measures when the rules are transgressed. Failure to act in this way, management explained, would mean that they are not doing their job.

RMF questioned who the university was trying to appease with the charges, whether the charges were part of a show the university was putting up and who the show was for. The students argued that what the university had sent in letters to 240 students was an admission of guilt for each student to sign. They pointed out that the university should have rather charged the students than ask them to admit guilt because it presupposed many things, including that an investigation had taken place. They further added that the university did not need to get a court order, because the situation escalated after the court order. RMF argued that the court order was an indication that UCT was unable to handle its internal matters by itself.

5.3.2.5. Incidents (of racially motivated attacks)

RMF also accused the university of not acting “when white students act in horrible ways (beating up a cleaner in a parking lot or peeing on taxi drivers²³)” and of criminalising RMF’s fight for social justice and equality (IJR, 2015:12).

UCT management responded by explaining that they went to seek order as a last resort to remove students from Avenue House and to authorise police action if necessary (IJR, 2015:12). Students, they explained, were offered amnesty if they stopped the occupation on 17 May 2015 but they continued with the occupation making it necessary to get a court order. They explained that the court was the one that suggested mediation and they did not contest the suggestion. However, the UCT management argued that a distinction had to be made

²³ RMF members were referring to then UCT students, Chad de Matos and Djavan Arrigone. De Matos was charged with attempted murder for allegedly assaulting a cleaner at the parking lot with two fellow accused. Charges against the three were eventually dropped. (See Petersen, C. 2014. *3 in dock for attempted murder of cleaner*. <https://www.iol.co.za/news/3-in-dock-for-attempted-murder-of-cleaner-1786339>). Djavan Arrigone, on the other hand, was charged for “urinating on a taxi driver from the balcony of the TigerTiger nightclub” and was sentenced to three-years, which was wholly suspended on condition that he performs 200 hours of community service. (See Schroeder, F. 2016. *Man gets community service after urinating on taxi driver*. <https://www.iol.co.za/news/man-gets-community-service-after-urinating-on-taxi-driver-2074663>).

between the four students who were charged for the occupation of Avenue House beyond 17 May 2015 and the 240 staff and students who received letters. UCT management explained that the 240 were not charged but they received an offer from management to acknowledge that they were complicit in the occupation and that the occupation was unlawful. They further pointed out that they recognised that some protests were lawful while others were not and that whether a protest is lawful or should be tested in a disciplinary hearing. The consequence of not admitting guilt, management warned, could be severe and even lead to suspension. Although some had already signed the letters, management explained that if the mediation led to the dropping of charges the admission of guilt and the possibility of a disciplinary hearing will fall away (IJR, 2015:12-13).

5.3.2.6. VC handling of RMF in public and recognition of the social movement

RMF pointed out to the UCT management that management was making it clear that although they acknowledged black pain there was no recognition of RMF as a movement (IJR, 2015:13). Continuing the occupation of Avenue House was important for the movement's legitimacy and existence in the campus. RMF also pointed out that there were shortcomings in the way some staff members communicated with members of RMF but the movement aspires to improve UCT and members of the movement had had their careers on the line to achieve this goal (IJR, 2015:13). RMF added that there was no communication from management even though the movement made it clear that it was open to engagement. What the movement got in turn was the lives of its members being ruined by the UCT management. They also pointed out that UCT was using apartheid-era tactics such as divide and conquer and that it was run by a colonial power.

RMF added that on the question of the lawfulness of protest, the UCT management was "more concerned with the functioning of the institution than with the experiences of the students" (IJR, 2015:13). Students were articulating what many have tried to say for years but the university problematized how the movement organised and as a result students were also being vilified. There was also a misunderstanding, RMF members added, of what constituted protest. They argued that the extension of the occupation was not just a disruption of business as usual and that from the UCT management's response it was clear that they were not aware of the reasons behind the occupation. Management seemed to believe that there was no rationale for the protest which negated what happened historically and politically.

Furthermore, RMF explained that admitting guilt negated the “experiences, work and history of black students” at the university (IJR, 2015:13). The experiences were real and not a product of boredom and students were fighting for transformation like many others before them because UCT was meant to be progressive. They added that in the public and the media, UCT was viewed as progressive but the university was criminalising students who were trying to bring about change in the university. The UCT management responded by asking if there was an expectation by RMF that to move forward the charges needed to be dropped. RMF responded with an affirmative.

The UCT management explained that the cases of the two students who were involved in racist incidents were taken to court and withdrawn (IJR, 2015:14). Only one of the students involved in these incidents was a UCT student, and the university had already launched an investigation into the matter and issued a statement. The university, UCT management explained, did not condone racist acts by any of its students.

As for the recognition of RMF, UCT management explained that it recognised the social movement’s contribution “despite two months of occupation, the invasion of chamber meetings, the near assault of staff members and an entire series of unacceptable events” (IJR, 2015:14). UCT management added that it was through looking at the bigger picture and RMF’s mission that conditional amnesty was granted. Occupation of Avenue House continued past 18 May despite all the charges being dropped. The university made Avenue Hall available. The UCT management also pointed out that they invited engagement with RMF. They closed their response by asking if RMF believed that it could occupy any space in protest (IJR, 2015:14).

RMF responded by stating that the movement needed acknowledgement from management, then if they are to embark on any protest they will let management know about the impending protest and the rationale for it (IJR, 2015:14). The movement will explain why they were going to occupy any physical space well in advance.

UCT management responded by asking if RMF believed it was legitimate to render the university ungovernable by occupying spaces and disrupting the functioning of the university (IJR, 2015:14). They explained that invading offices was a breach of the rules and that management had the right to take the necessary steps against such transgressions. The UCT management pointed out that they were not saying occupation was not a legitimate form of

protest but they were asking for a ‘recognition’ from RMF that this would render the university ungovernable. “RMF is criminalizing themselves by following a civil disobedience strategy”, the UCT management concluded (IJR, 2015:14).

RMF responded by stating that the conversation was less about the occupation and more about the disruption of university activities. RMF members explained that the occupation of the Bremner Building (or Azania 1 as they christened it) needed to be seen within a context. Students had no intention of occupying offices but only did so after altercations occurred between staff and students (IJR, 2015:14).

The UCT management responded by asking what would happen if RMF communicated its intention to occupy but UCT management declined such action. In response RMF explained that the steps it had so far taken were a result of the lack of engagement with the movement and students’ grievances by the university (IJR, 2015:14). Issues, RMF further explained, could be discussed once RMF is recognised as an accountable mechanism for students. RMF also assured the UCT management that it only used occupation as a mode of protest designed for particular reasons. RMF embarked on occupations as a necessary tactic in unjust situations. RMF ended by asking management “what should happen in situations where students are not heard” (IJR, 2015:15).

The UCT management started their response by assuring RMF that they had already recognised the social movement, and explaining that giving RMF space was an indication of said recognition (IJR, 2015:15). UCT management also pointed out that there needed to be some processes around the leadership of the movement. Management also reminded RMF that the movement was not the only official voice of students at the university. In terms of the charges against RMF, the UCT management wanted assurance from RMF that there would not be a repetition if the charges were dropped (IJR, 2015:15).

RMF wanted clarification on whether the social movement had to admit that certain actions were unlawful to be recognised as a legitimate social movement and for the charges to be dropped (IJR, 2015:15). The movement wanted to know if there were other conditions for their recognition and the dropping of charges. In what could be described as the spirit of looking beyond the mediation process, RMF wrapped the session by asking what the engagement between RMF and the UCT management would look like (IJR, 2015:15).

The next session started with a recap of the previous session where the UCT management indicated a willingness to drop the charges if there was an undertaking from RMF, and RMF offered to inform management well in advance before they decide to have an occupation (IJR, 2015:16). RMF expressed their willingness to engage further on what was needed beyond the proposal that management put forward.

5.3.2.7. Restriction on the right to protest continues

The UCT management stated that to withdraw the charges, they wanted to enter into an agreement with RMF on how protest would be undertaken going forward (IJR, 2015:16). They explained that the first element of that agreement was that they recognised RMF and they wanted a better understanding of who the representatives of the movement were. The second element of the agreement was that there would be some form of engagement before the protest. The UCT management wanted a differentiation to be drawn between holding a picket, a march and seminars where engagement would not be necessary but those activities would still disrupt the functioning of the university. They explained that their (UCT management's) plan was not to close down the space for protest but rather "allowing for protest in a way that doesn't disrupt the university" (IJR, 2015:16). They further explained that they wanted prior engagement with students in situations where there was potential disruption. They wanted this engagement to be face-to-face as opposed to emails which they believed were not always effective. The UCT management said that they were not asking for a commitment that there would not be a protest but they were rather asking for modes of protest that are not disruptive. Management questioned what would happen when they could not reach an agreement with RMF over a protest that could become disruptive. They asked RMF to consider not engaging in any disruptive activities although they also recognised that this could be seen or regarded as restricting protest. They wanted RMF to acknowledge management had a duty to manage and govern the university using the rules. "We want recognition from RMF that we have a right to administer these rules", the UCT management explained (IJR, 2015:16). They pointed out that there were consequences for transgressing the university's rules. They wanted RMF to confirm that "it will not behave, attempt to behave or insight others to behave in ways that go beyond the limits of reasonable protest" (ibid). The UCT management explained to RMF that it was willing to lift the charges if there was a commitment from the social movement to meet these conditions.

RMF responded by explaining that the two parties were not as far off from each other as they originally thought. They explained that RMF's reason for existence was "to raise issues around the fundamental culture of the university" (IJR, 2015:17). RMF further explained that how power was exercised at the university through the law in the context of a political climate needed to be examined. RMF further pointed out that:

There will be times necessarily then that protest that is attempting to change the fundamental culture of the university will be disruptive in some way. It can also be so that some protests are not disruptive but if that is our goal I don't see if the university has acknowledged on some level that RMF is a necessary entity and it acknowledges on some level the mandate of RMF. I cannot imagine a way in which that mandate will be fulfilled in a way that does not at some point involve confrontation and disruption of regular activities of the university because explicitly in RMF's mandate, it is attempting to change the culture and activities of the status quo at UCT (IJR, 2015:17).

In addition, RMF wanted an acknowledgement from the UCT management that they were gatekeepers of a racist institution. RMF argued that it was because of the culture and institutional racism that RMF members reacted and continue to act in a certain way in response to the way they are treated (IJR, 2015:17). The way RMF organised and mobilised was in reaction to the institutional culture of the university. RMF pointed out that the question about what happens in a case where the two parties disagree on what appropriate modes of protest takes away from an acknowledgement that UCT is a racist institution and that black students feel a certain way about the institutional culture. It is important, RMF explained, to shift not only the paradigm but also the culture of the institution (IJR, 2015:17).

UCT management explained that they did not accept that changing the institutional culture of the university had to be done in ways that disrupt the university's activities. UCT management explained:

We agree that we live in a society and that we have a certain social contract that we may disagree and that we want to challenge and change culturally. We may want to change the rules. I am not suggesting that a discussion of those rules are out of bounds. That can be on the table at the transformation discussions too if you think that the rules themselves by which we try and run the university are biased or prejudiced or racist. We are absolutely happy to have them on the agenda. But in discussing those rules we are wanting to make a commitment that we are doing so through discussion, through legal protest. If not, what is the difference between saying the protest must be violent. If this was an environment where protest and discussion were not tolerated I would understand that any protest would have to be disrupted and taking such a position might become synonymous with closing down protest and free speech. UCT is not this sort of environment and

we believe that we can have this sort of discussion in a way that is not disruptive (IJR, 2015:17-18).

In addition, management pointed out their willingness to commit to addressing issues of racism and discrimination in ways that were not disrupting the functioning of the university. The UCT management concluded their response by stating that an agreement could not be reached if RMF did not recognise that the university is governed by a set of rules which when broken the university must take disciplinary action.

RMF responded by stating that it sounded as if the UCT management agreed in the last engagement that UCT was a racist institution. The UCT management explained that they never stated that the university was a racist institution and they explained that there was an understanding that the university is experienced as racist which they argued was not the same as saying the university was racist.

RMF explained that they were making a distinction between the university as a racist institution and the university that is experienced as a racist institution. RMF questioned who got to decide if the university was racist and whose experience informed that decision (IJR, 2015:18). They asked if it took the UCT management experiencing it as such to make it so. They pointed out that the fact that they were having fundamental disagreements about the university being racist and being experienced as racist was a testament to why disruption was always going to happen at UCT. They explained that the fact that RMF and the UCT management did not see racism the same way meant that when members of the social movement protested, it would not be seen as an “unjustified reason for disruption” but “RMF had to disrupt for management to take notice” (IJR, 2015:19). Management, argued RMF, needed to start looking at the issues they were bringing as normal student issues that they could not discipline students over because they were serious moral issues. RMF members explained that disruption was at the core of the movement’s strategy to get the UCT management to pay attention to the plight of the black students that the movement represented. RMF explained:

We are saying that it is unreasonable for us to say that we will not be disruptive to the normal processes of the university. That is not what RMF represents. We are intentionally disruptive. RMF has been an organisation constituted of the culture of disruption of normal circumstances. There also needs to be an acknowledgement of difference in age and demographics of the people in the room. Because of this there is difficulty to understand where we are coming from and what we are

coming from and what we consider as reasonable. We have not been violent in our protest. We have been painted in a particular kind of way (IJR, 2015:19).

An RMF member went on to point out that even in the mediation process, which is meant to guarantee participants a voice and being heard, this particular member did not have a voice, which made the mediation a difficult process for this RMF member. This lack of voice was a result of the RMF member not being well versed in the model way of speaking. RMF member in question explained that they were not the only ones with such a problem; “most of the black students at UCT don’t have a voice; they are not as articulate as some of the members of the movement” (IJR, 2015:19). For Bickford, this is a typical example of how ‘model’ speaking which closely resembles written speech benefits highly-educated individuals (1996:97-98). For this RMF member, not having a voice was a symptom of institution-wide discrimination where denying a voice was one manifestation of that problem. RMF member explained:

There is this idea that racism is individual meanness – we are talking about the power of one group to subjugate another. As black students, we have no power. Acknowledging racism in this institution is about acknowledging who has the power to make decision around who has access, who learns, who influences the curriculum, who has the power to decide who can enter this space (IJR, 2015:19).

In their response, the UCT management stated that not all means were justifiable even when the movement is in pursuing a moral cause (IJR, 2015:20). They explained that there were plenty of opportunities at the university to make people understand without disrupting the institution’s activities. They argued that making physical space available for RMF would mean that they (UCT management) can physically be present in the space to hear them. The UCT management further stated that the common interest between the two parties was the charges, which should be the focus.

Management asked for pragmatism when it came to protesting. They explained that students had a right to protest but they had a duty to run the university and that duty would manifest itself in different ways under various circumstances (IJR, 2015:20). They explained to RMF that they wanted to acknowledge the fact that not all of the movement’s protest disrupt the activities of the university, though there was some disruption including three weeks where the activities of the university came to a halt. In terms of the value of disruption in getting the two parties to speak and listen to each other, UCT management explained that:

We don't agree that had it not been for disruption, the statue would not have fallen and that we would not be here. We would like to think that it is because of the widespread support that was generated that led to this (IJR, 2015:20).

In terms of acknowledging that UCT is a racist institution, the UCT management explained that it was difficult because it raised questions of one's obligation or responsibility, whether to concede on personal or professional capacity and RMF's expectations on who and how it should be said. These questions, they explained, did not diminish the points that had been raised (IJR, 2015:20). Management ended their response by asking if the social movement believed it was entitled to occupy any building until such time that physical space is made available.

RMF pointed out the saying transformation of UCT has been pushed back because RMF occupied Avenue House was in bad taste because the act was a reaction to the failures of the university and the country as a whole (IJR, 2015:20). The social movement explained that they did not have the desire or capacity to occupy every building at the university, but they were prepared to continue with their work until they reach their goal. RMF explained:

The objective is not simply to be disruptive for the sake of being disruptive. There is some overlap of our understanding of disruption but there are also different understandings thereof between RMF and management. The very institution we are trying to change through confrontation cannot necessarily be deciding what structure and form/substance we take in its entirety. They cannot have full control over how we behave. It is completely counter-intuitive to how we understand ourselves and what we understand as our objectives (IJR, 2015:21).

RMF further added that their offer was for the UCT management to be willing to engage through occupation because the movement understood engagement as "not having to ask management for permission" (IJR, 2015:21). However, RMF members explained that they were uncomfortable with management responding through discipline but they only willing to agree if the university will act in line with the spirit of justice.

UCT management responded by stating that if the two parties agree they could issue a joint statement to highlight the common ground. The session was then brought to a close. The next session started with RMF asking management to respond with time frames regarding when they wanted to bring the mediation process to a close since they had covered many of the issues the UCT management brought to the table. RMF also raised a question about how the two parties would deal with the media.

5.3.2.8. Media and press statements

UCT management explained to RMF that they have been trying to formulate a joint statement to capture four elements of the discussion between the two parties. The four elements were:

1. Recognition of the role of RMF in contributing to the broader transformation agenda and that has been a consequence of sustained protest.
2. Offer to withdraw disciplinary charges.
3. RMF agreeing to formalize or create structure representing constituency that will enable us to engage on a) issues of transformation and b) to engage prior to protest action.
4. Recognizing that there may not be agreement on how protest action is conducted. There is no restriction on protest action and can't anticipate what they might be and what might be needed. RMF must recognize that UCT will take appropriate action which may include disciplinary measures in line with university's staff and student Codes of Conduct (IJR, 2015:22).

RMF made the changes and management agreed²⁴. Although the changes made by RMF seemed minor, they have a substantial bearing on how the university responds to student protest, and RMF protest in particular, through disciplinary hearings. The floor was then opened for a discussion on timeframes to address some of the issues raised during the process.

5.3.2.9. Five incidents

UCT management expressed their concern over bringing new RMF members into the mediation space for a discussion of the various incidents that occur during the protest against the statue of Cecil John Rhodes because of the potential to set the process back (IJR, 2015:22-3). The five incidents in question included, amongst others, the invasion of a UCT Council meeting by RMF, Finance staff members' encounter with RMF members during the occupation of Bremner Building where their offices are situated and a staff member who attempted to run over RMF members who blocked the road. As for the UCT Council, UCT management pointed out their willingness to persuade Council members who were present when RMF disrupted a Council meeting that they did not need to have an engagement with members of RMF. They added that management would persuade staff members at the Finance Department that further engagement with the social movement was not necessary. It was also not necessary for the one student who was charged to be present during the

²⁴ The press statement that RMF and UCT were working on was also going to serve as the mediation agreement between the two parties. I will discuss this agreement in Section 5.3.2.11.

mediation process. However, the UCT management explained that a staff member who was involved in a car incident with students was keen to engage with members of RMF and the UCT management wanted to give that person an opportunity to talk through the conversation would be short.

RMF asked if the staff member who wanted to engage with RMF members knew which student, in particular, they wanted to talk to, they added that they would ask some of the students who were directly involved in the incident if they were willing to engage (IJR, 2015:23). This matter was further discussed after the signing of the agreement in the last session along with the Council invasion.

5.3.2.10. VC's handling of RMF in public

In terms of the relationship between the social movement and the VC, RMF explained that “the way in which the VC has handled and spoken about RMF on media platforms has been unacceptable and has to some degree aggravated the situation between RMF and the university management. To openly come out and call the movement a militant, splinter group criminalized the movement and painted a certain type of image about the movement on campus” (IJR, 2015:23). RMF further added that the way the VC framed the movement was not only stifling to the possible engagement between the two parties but was also not in the best interest of students. They explained further characterization of RMF as such by the VC would be in bad faith and that at some point the UCT management had to acknowledge the movement in their communication to the campus community since the students did not have access to the mailing lists (IJR, 2015: 23).

In response, UCT management made three points (2015:23). First, they explained that it was ironic for RMF to believe management communicates effectively when the UCT management believed RMF was the master of the craft because they reached an audience that management could not. Second, they explained that the majority of the VC's statements recognized “the role of RMF”, their “intelligence” and that RMF's perception is from two or three responses by the VC (ibid). Third, how RMF has been speaking about management. UCT management pointed out that they had always been surprised by RMF's statement that management is the enemy, with statements such as ‘Price must fall’ and ‘Price, you have blood on your hands’. Management further added that communication from RMF was disrespectful and the mediation process was a good opportunity to discuss what respect meant

when communicating. They also committed to a different mode of engagement and asked that a common courtesy be extended in communication outside the mediation process (IJR, 2015:24).

RMF explained that they intended to verbalize what they felt and that “they reserved the right to be disrespectful where we feel that power has been exerted in a manner that is disrespectful and which invisibilizes our experiences” (IJR, 2015:24). The next session started with finalizing the press release.

5.3.2.11. Signing the agreement

The UCT management started by explaining that the agreement was not going to replace the rules of the university on events and other student activities (IJR, 2015:25). RMF asked about the practicality of the agreement and requested that the word ‘transformation’ be removed from the first paragraph as it was contentious. The final agreement read:

Following mediation, and in recognition of broader imperatives for change at UCT that prompted RMF to engage in sustained protest action, the UCT management and RMF conclude the following:

- UCT Management will permanently withdraw disciplinary charges relating to continued occupation of Avenue House beyond 18 May 2015.
- RMF agrees to identify representatives in order to be able to engage management directly in relation to protest that is possibly disruptive to the normal functioning of the university. RMF will engage with UCT Management prior to such action, ideally face-to-face.
- In the event that no agreement is reached during the engagement, and disruptive actions arise directly from any protest, RMF recognises that UCT Management will take action which may include disciplinary measures in line with the university student and/or staff codes of conduct. In taking any such action, UCT Management bears responsibility to apply the rules in accordance with UCT’s values and in the pursuit of justice (Newsroom, 2015).

In addition to the removal of the word ‘transformation’ from the version by the UCT management, RMF rephrased the last sentence to compel the UCT Management “to apply the rules in accordance with UCT’s values and in the pursuit of justice” (Newsroom, 19 August 2015). This addition is important in that RMF members were committing to recognising the UCT rules and Code of Conduct only “in so far as they are just” (Student 1, 2017). This means that in situations where they perceived the rules as unjust they could still break those rules in service of a just objective. Both parties agree to post the agreement to the UCT website and RMF’s Facebook page. Management committed to communicating to all the

parties involved to inform them that the charges would be dropped and to send them a letter of agreement (IJR, 2015:25).

5.3.2.12. Five incidents - Incident where a staff member was involved in an alleged assault and the invasion of UCT Council meeting

The last session of the mediation was devoted to the assault incident involving a staff member and the invasion of the UCT council meeting which were both referred to in **Section 5.3.2.9**. The UCT management started the session by explaining that a staff member was driving her car when she met protesting students who refuse to get out of the way, they surrounded her car, started banging on her body of her and frightened her two children who were in the car (IJR, 2015:25). The staff member, explained the UCT management, got out of the car to talk to students but they refused to listen to her and started rocking the car and a student jumped on the bonnet of the car. The driver proceeded to make a U-turn to get away and was left feeling traumatized. Her brother who was also in the car reported the matter to the police and did not know if the police were planning on taking the matter further. She would be happy to drop the charges and wants an apology from the students (IJR, 2015:25).

In their response, RMF explained that those who were present said the car drove into them and the driver could have used alternative routes (IJR, 2015:25-6). Their concern at the time, explained RMF, was for the student who had to jump onto the car to avoid being hit. The crowd was acting in response to the perceived danger that the student was in. RMF explained that other drivers passed by. There was a general mistrust among the students at the time of the incident, and RMF recognized that some undesirable actions transpired. UCT management proceeded to read out emails from staff members detailing their trauma before the discussion moved to the invasion of the UCT Council meeting (IJR, 2015:26).

RMF explained that the protest was organized to start at the same time as the Council meeting. RMF had no desire to disrupt the Council meeting but many students showed up for the meeting and some of them were not RMF members. Many students proceeded to the Council meeting and there were attempts by members of RMF to rally the group out of the venue at some point, some of the group members decided to leave. The students were split into a larger group and a smaller group, the former left the room. RMF informed management that “a lot of the frustration that was felt by the students was informed by the fact that decisions affecting students were made without any input from students” and “that evening

was the first time that students were in the room with the people who were making these decisions”²⁵ (IJR, 2015:27). In addition, RMF explained, students were told that they will get a decision on the fate of the statue from the Council by 19h00 but the meeting went on for longer. Some students did not want to leave because a Council member allegedly assaulted one of the students and called her a wild woman.

The UCT management explained that they understood the context and circumstances and asked if RMF was only acknowledging the principle of Council meetings (IJR, 2015:27). Management also urged RMF to have another session to discuss how the Council worked and its various tasks. RMF responded by explaining that there was a misconception that the social movement was unfamiliar with university structures. The mediation came to an end.

5.4. Analysis of key moments

I will now turn to specific issues in the mediation process that are significant for analysis using the theory of political listening. These are key issues that I will analyse to evaluate the role, if any, of political listening during the process and some of the factors that could have contributed to the outcome of the process. These issues are important in considering how political listening could work in a real-life context that is highly conflictual.

5.4.1. Participation in the mediation process

RMF members’ reluctance to participate in a mediation process with UCT management was based on fear of being coerced into agreements and actions they do not have control over. They initially viewed the mediation space as an ‘invited space’ that they assumed would be controlled by the UCT management. Invited spaces in post-apartheid South Africa, as Williams discovered, have been designed to limit citizens’ participation to the role of being “endorsee of pre-designed planning and programmes” by powerholders (2008:43). However, the mediation space is (and in this case was) a neutral space where all participants have equal power, voice and are all guaranteed a hearing. This space ensured that both members of the UCT management and RMF could speak and be listened to.

²⁵ Students have two representatives from the Student Representative Council as part of the UCT Council. However, Council decisions are taken through votes which often means students would have to lobby other members of Council to decisions go their way.

Furthermore, although the movement succeeded in mitigating against management's power by having more representatives in the mediation process, UCT management succeeded in limiting the number of representatives from RMF. First, it was agreed in the first session that only those representatives of RMF who were sent on that particular day were the only ones who could participate in the mediation process. This meant that RMF, as a leaderless or flat-structured movement, could not rotate its delegates to give other members a chance to participate in the process. This meant that for that particular period, the eight members were being treated as the leaders of the movement despite the movement's defining ideology as a leaderless movement. In Bickford's (1996:82) terms, RMF members were being asked to practice representative thinking where they would represent the interest of others, which they would voice themselves in the context of interaction, without negating their interests and perspectives. However, this approach was complicated by the limitation on information RMF members were allowed to share. It was agreed that all communication would be shared electronically and that no printed documents would be distributed to the group "to safeguard against the leaking of sensitive documentation and to ensure the integrity of the mediation process" (IJR, 2015:1). UCT management even questioned the use of single email address for all eight members raising concerns that other members of the movement might have access to the emails as if the mediation process only affects the eight students. This desire to limit the number of students was probably based on practical considerations that it is easier to negotiate with eight students than with three hundred students.

However, it is through listening practices that individuals get to understand the interests of others and can empathise with others. Communication with others allows individuals to formulate opinions that encompass others' contributions and enables them to represent others in an impartial manner (Bickford, 1996:87). The problem with not allowing members of RMF to share information with other members of the movement was that it in a way treats members of RMF as so homogenous that there is no need for their 'representatives' to share the developments in the mediation with them. Although this approach seemed to work in terms of engaging with the same people every time, it also raised the issue of whether the rest of RMF members would abide by the agreement that has been reached with people who are essentially not their leaders. The decision to limit the number of people who have access to mediation information ignores the representation of complex and often opposing organisations that have come together under the umbrella of RMF.

5.4.2. Reliance on Private Property Law

Italian academic, Lorenzo Cini (2017:31) contends that the type of university leadership makes a difference in terms of the institutional response to student protest. He argues that academic leaders are more eager to negotiate and reach a compromise than to challenge student protesters. This approach is based on the desire to restore a good environment for teaching and research. By contrast, “academic managers, whose principal objective is to make their universities highly competitive within the market of higher education, are generally more concerned about neutralising potential challengers, who might damage the reputation and functioning of the university” (Cini, 2017:31-2). In dealing with student protesters, academic managers tend to be confrontational and repressive. In addition to the kind of leadership universities have, the identity of a university as a public or private institution has a bearing on the type of response to student protest that university leadership is likely to take.

In an opinion piece published on *University World News*, prominent South African protest scholar – Jane Duncan – argued that public universities across the world faced a growing temptation to lose their public character because of the reliance on student fees and third-stream income to run universities. Duncan cautions that the commodification of universities and pressure on university leaders to find alternative streams of income to make universities more sustainable has the potential to make university leadership “think that they have the right to set their own rules for forms of democratic expressions on campus, such as assemblies”²⁶ (2016b). Pressure to be more marketable in a highly commercialised global higher education sector makes universities to be more concerned with their reputations to maintain their revenue streams.

In the case of RMF at UCT, UCT management’s approach was to restore law and order and to reduce modes of democratic expressions to protests that are more containable and not disruptive, in any shape or form. The issue of adherence to the Code of Conduct was significant right at the beginning of the process and demonstrated the intentions or the approach that the UCT management had adopted in dealing with student protest. The

²⁶ Many public universities retain many of the characters of independent city states. They have their own health care facilities, transport system, traffic departments, internal police/security, disciplinary tribunals, trade unions for their employees, governance and lobby structures for various constituencies (SRC, Senate) and so forth.

university seemed to have adopted Private Property Law in understanding and dealing with student protest. This approach had significant implications for the modes of protest and behaviour that were deemed acceptable during a protest in accordance with the rules and regulations of UCT as private property, which also happened to be a public university. It was inevitable for private property law not to have a major impact on the UCT management's view of protest because the university executive is made up of administrators who are from different educational backgrounds. Given that protest was being treated as disrupting law and order rather than as a form of political participation that complimented other forms of participation, its legality or illegality had to be considered. When the legality (and illegality) of protest was discussed by the university executive those who came from a legal background became expert advisors that the executive leans heavily on. Ramugondo explains:

I picked up that they [UCT management] drew heavily on Private Property Law rather than social justice and human rights. Students are seen as the outsider. So, when they erect something on campus, you see it as a problem because this is your property. I was not surprised because one of the DVCs was from the Law Faculty and that was his area of expertise (Ramugondo, 2017).

The desire to hold students to account to the Code of Conduct was also symbolic of the power that UCT management had walking into the mediation process. As Ramugondo (2017) noted in her observation of the mediation process, UCT management “had this threat that you would face disciplinary action” prefaced by “but we agreed that you would occupy until this date but you went over the date”.

Furthermore, during several moments in the mediation process, UCT management reminded students of the importance of management governing with rules and “the duty of management to protect staff and university space when rules are transgressed” (IJR, 2015:11). The rules that were being referred to are inscribed in the Code of Conduct for students, which even stipulated the procedure for what the university considers legitimate protest. The Code of Conduct for students, as Price (3 October 2013) explained in an email to the university community during a student protest, stipulates the following clauses which the university was prepared to prosecute if breached:

General clause

RCS 1.1: Any breach by a student of these Rules of Conduct for Students or any other institutional rules framed by the Council is an offence subject to disciplinary action by the University.

RCS 1.2: Nothing in these rules shall be constructed as absolving any student from liability for any misconduct in which he or she is personally involved.

RSC 1.3: No student shall wilfully commit any unjustified act or omission which adversely affects the University or any member of the University.

Conduct in general

The attention of all students is specifically drawn to the following clauses:

RCS 7.1: A student must not make unauthorised entry into or use of University facilities.

RCS 7.6: A student must not act or threaten to act in a manner which interferes with the work or study of any member of staff or student in general and specifically in relation to the person's race, gender, beliefs or sexual orientation.

RCS 7.7: A student must not abuse or otherwise interfere with any member of the University community in any manner which contributes to the creation of an intimidating, hostile or demeaning environment for staff and students in general and specifically in relation to the person's race, gender, beliefs or sexual orientation.

RCS 7.9: A student must not obstruct, disrupt or interfere with the teaching, research, administrative, custodial or other functions of the University.

RCS 7.10: A student must not obstruct the movement of any member of the University community (Price, 3 October 2013).

However, RMF was instrumental in breaking all of these rules including issuing a warning to the university a day in advance before embarking on a protest. With these rules in mind, RMF's protest fits squarely in Duncan's definition of protest as "communicative acts that disrupt the everyday functioning of society to draw attention to grievances" (Duncan, 2016a:vii). It was in disrupting the everyday functioning of the university that made RMF's grievances amplified and heard. The UCT management, as Student 1 explains, wanted students to submit to the Code of Conduct but they refused. On several occasions during the mediation process, Price asked if they "accept the obligations and responsibilities that come with the Code of Conduct" (Student 1, 2017).

This attempt to restore law and order through the Code of Conduct was a barrier that not only prevented listening on the part of UCT management but it also rendered them unable to extend a degree of "openness" that would have allowed them to put themselves in the position of students and see from the students' perspectives. The students were attempting to contextualise or give reasons to help management understand their pain and struggles as black students at the university. UCT management, on the other hand, was only interested in

ensuring that students will not embark on any disruptive protest in the future. As a result, the UCT management was listening out for information they could use to hold students to account. In Bickford's terms, what the UCT management was doing through listening out was giving RMF members the second kind of attention, which is mindfulness. Mindfulness is about a commitment to partners in deliberation and less so to public problem-solving or politics. Mindfulness as a kind of attention means that attention does not have to be kind, but could also be strategic and manipulative. In the case of UCT management's attention to RMF seems to have been strategic and manipulative, which although did not help rebuild trust between the two parties, one would argue (as Bickford (1996:41) argued) that it created and sustained "the conditions necessary for politics and the expression of political conflict". By UCT management being present in the space and giving RMF attention (though manipulative and strategic), the two parties could continue to deliberate, listen to each other and voice out their disagreements. Because of the strategic and manipulative manner in which it was employed, mindfulness contributed to eroding trust between RMF and UCT management.

5.4.3. Power, listening and trust

RMF members recognised the attempts to hold them to account to the Code of Conduct as a sign of the power that UCT management had walking into the mediation process. As senior members of university administration, they had the power to discipline and punish students in the name of restoring peace and order within the university. The university had intentionally brought out (to borrow from Henkeman) the "big guns" to the mediation process. These representatives were the Vice-Chancellor, three Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Executive Director of Properties and Services, Executive Director of the Department of Alumni Development and the Registrar elect. Because of this apparent seniority and power that UCT management had, attempts to mitigate its impact were there from the beginning. First, the students demanded to have eight representatives, two more than their counterparts, in what one could imagine being an attempt to restore the balance of power through numbers. Second, one of the mediators, Henkeman, reminded all participants "to be aware of the perceptions of power and be conscious of what is brought to the mediation space" (IJR, 2015).

Price believes that what the students observed from UCT management was formal power, which allowed management to choose whether or not to meet students and whether or not to discipline students. However, UCT management also perceived students as holding a

different kind of power. It was this notion of seeing power on the other side that had an impact on the outcome of the process. The UCT management had to constantly weigh their options against the perceived threat of protest and disruptions. There were also other areas, such as the naming of buildings, where the two parties agreed. Price explains:

But informal power came through the power to disrupt. What we as management continuously had to do is to weigh up the consequences of that power versus the consequences of conceding to demands. And sometimes we believed it was strategic to rather concede to a demand rather than having many thousands of students affected by a protest (Price, 2017).

Attempts to hold students to account through the Code of Conduct were also a manifestation of the power that the UCT management had by their positions in the university. As members of the university executive, they had the power to take disciplinary action against students for transgressing university rules. This threat to discipline and punish RMF members was another barrier to creating an environment where there is equality amongst all participants. The UCT management “had this threat that you would face disciplinary action... and the whole conversation was about ‘but we agreed that you would occupy until this date but you went over the date’” (Ramugondo, 2017). Resorting to this “formal power” (Price, 2017) could also have been a result of UCT management attempting to neutralise the power that they believed RMF held walking into the mediation process. Price believed that walking into the mediation process, students RMF had “informal power [which] comes through the power to disrupt” (2017). Viewing the opposing party as holding significant power had an impact on what the UCT management chose to agree on and what they did not agree on. According to Price, UCT management had to continuously weigh the consequences of the power to disrupt versus the consequences of conceding to demands, and “sometimes we believe it was strategic to rather concede to a demand rather than having many thousands of students affected by a protest” (Price, 2017). However, Henkeman believed that the UCT management held more power in the mediation space than the students, and the students were intimidated by management power.

Max Price by nature is a dominant person and he tried to dominate that space. The students were initially reluctant, then they held their own. **In my first meeting with them I said, “Let me hold up the mirror to you and show you what I saw in that meeting.”** One of the things I said was, **“You are intimidated but I can see the bigger picture, I can see how powerful you could be.”** The fact that you have **the top administration spending these hours talking to you... just think how much it costs the university.** In a way, **it’s a compliment to you** that they feel they should bring the big guns (Henkeman, 2017).

Henkeman's statement above was an attempt by the mediator to establish equality between the two groups by making the students realise that they have just as much power as university administrators in the mediation process. It was this perceived power that made UCT management send a delegation of senior university management. The students used every tool they had to neutralise and frustrate management's power. Price observed:

I think there was a strategy of disrespect and what I call the politics of humiliation. Quite often they would take photographs in the meetings and create memes out of the photographs on social media. And it was clearly an attempt to demonstrate disrespect. Maybe that was a way of presuming themselves more powerful or more equal in power relations. That made the relationship hard. It wasn't a positive relationship in the negotiations I would say (Price, 2017).

The statement by Price above shows that the students were intentionally being disrespectful as a strategy or a way to break down the power and authority that the UCT management had. Being disrespectful to power is a form of 'guerrilla' tactics of the people with little power, and who are frustrated by the fact that those with the formal power do not recognise having that power as problematic. Members of RMF stated in the mediation process that disrespect was a strategy they used in response to instances "where power has been exerted in a manner that is disrespectful and invisibilises" (IJR, 2015:24). During the mediation process being disrespectful was a strategy to deal with unequal power within the mediation space. Although RMF had less formal power than the UCT management, they had another form of power that was not the same as that which the UCT management had. Henkeman (2017) called this power "moral authority". However, Student 1 believes that there were three sources of RMF's authority. One, RMF had just won the victory of the removal of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes. Two, RMF members were aware that UCT management was "very anxious about things getting out to the media" (Student 1, 2017). Finally, the UCT management was "never fully sure how big or small the movement was", which meant having to maintain a balance between holding RMF to account and not being too heavy-handed that RMF would respond with protest. Price (2017) believed that RMF "had a lot of support" at the time that when the movement "call a plenary there would be 200 or 300 students who would come to the gathering". Keeping UCT management in the dark about the size of the movement was more important at that point because RMF was at its weakest at the time of the mediation and was even "struggling to get regular meetings" going despite having physical space (Student 1, 2017). The physical space that the RMF was using at the time was Avenue Hall which UCT offered the movement as an alternative to Avenue House which they occupied at the end of

the Bremner Occupation. For Price, having RMF at Avenue Hall was a demonstration of the power that RMF had because of the numbers they were thought to have. UCT management, according to Price, was reluctant to get an eviction order which the police would have had to enforce and possibly trigger more protests. The decision to let RMF use Avenue Hall was also strategic for the UCT management. Price explained:

Actually, it was not such a hassle that they occupied Avenue Hall. In some ways, it was to our advantage because it kept them away from (UCT) Upper Campus. All the meetings and convening was done out of campus away from residences. It suited us, actually. In that sense, they had the power in that we couldn't easily evict them because it would have generated much more reaction and much more protest. We weighed those up and it was better to let them stay there for the whole year (Price, 2017).

What this weighing of power on either side, the guessing at knowledge the other side did not have about the other, the strategic use of power and its consequences shows that what is missing from the theory of listening is how this engaging with, using, guessing at power is very critical to whether people listen to each other in highly conflictual circumstances at all. It is also a demonstration of how people wield two kinds of power, and how reluctant both sides are to give up power in the very act of having to listen. Furthermore, some students who were part of the mediation got the perception that the UCT management was unable to hear them because they were certain issues that they were not willing to negotiate. As Student 2 explained, they could not understand some of the things the students were saying because “they had, obviously, bottom lines that they didn't want to concede on”. These bottom lines created “a lot of mistrust on both sides” (Student 2, 2017). Student 2 statement puts trust at the centre of being able to speak and listening to each other frankly. The lack of trust, on the other hand, creates a climate where both parties think of getting the best possible outcome out of the compromises rather than attempting to hear each other and collectively solve the problem at hand. UCT management did not trust RMF and was concerned about what they (or Price in particular) perceived as the impending threat of “having many thousands of students affected by a protest”. RMF, on the other hand, did not trust that UCT management was genuinely interested in finding solutions for problems that faced black staff and students within the university. The thought management was unable to hear them because they represented another constituency that was not privy to the mediation, which in the students' perspective explained why they could not agree on certain issues. The fact that the UCT

management was representing another constituency was not a secret during the mediation process. Henkeman, one of the mediators, explained:

In that room, it was clear that there was consensus but Max Price had a lot of angry staff members who put a lot of pressure on him. He kept that on the agenda and it was very clear that he was under a lot of pressure from his staff. My sense was that the administration was under a lot of pressure not to give in to students (Henkeman, 2017).

Although representing other people is not in itself a problem, it does however raise questions about who is being represented in the case of UCT management which has to represent the entire campus community. This is a key question because the style of the person with the most power (the Vice-Chancellor) in the mediation sets the trajectory, and the behaviour of that person is evidence of the people he was representing. We can assume, from the VC's behaviour and refusal to listen (or be open at the very least), that he was representing a group of conservative employees otherwise known as the old guard (or people who want the status quo to remain the same). Further evidence that the UCT management was representing conservative staff members came in the form of a letter from one of the staff members at the Finance Department describing how the students evicted them from their offices when they occupied the Bremner Building. Students 1 and 2 explained that the letter read like the classic racist accounts of the settlers' encounter with African people. By reading this letter, the VC confirms that he is representing one section of the university community. It is also important to mention that at the time of the protest RMF and the causes it was fighting for had popular support from the Unions (Academic Staff Union, NEHAWU and Support Staff Union), academic staff, the workers and BAC. The BAC, in particular, was very vocal in supporting some of the issues raised by RMF in the media and within the UCT community. The failure of the UCT management to represent or acknowledge the perspectives of all the constituencies within the institution is symbolic of the lack of "representative thinking" (Arendt, in Bickford, 1996:82) – which is when individuals represent and voice the interest of others in the context of interaction without negating their interests and perspectives. This is essentially a problem of the inability to listen because, as Bickford (1996:87) cautions, it is through listening practices that individuals get to understand the interests of others and are able to formulate opinions that encompass others' contributions impartially. But switching between these different modes and perspectives requires "courage to be open to the possibility of contradiction and conflict within oneself, to hear different voices and see from

different vantage points, but to move beyond those shared vantage points to a unique view” (Bickford, 1996:123).

However, there were other issues that the UCT management and RMF agreed upon. These are issues pertaining to the naming (and re-naming) of buildings and the use of statues and symbols within the university. According to Price, the fact that the UCT management conceded on these issues “was not a demonstration of power [or the lack thereof], it was a demonstration of an alignment of goals, close alignment”. The “alignment of goals” that Price refers to here is an example of seeing from the student’s perspective because of giving the students “recognition” that what they are saying is indeed important and is being heard by the university management. Anzaldura calls this ability to switch modes and represent other perspectives and individuals ‘making face’ (Bickford, 1996:123). This process of making face is externalised through speech and action. When the UCT management issues a statement saying they are reviewing the names of buildings and artworks displayed on campus followed by buildings being re-named and artworks being taken down for a review is an example of ‘making face’.

5.4.4. Speaking and listening among members of RMF

It was during the storytelling phases that the power dynamics within parties became apparent. These dynamics manifested themselves in terms of who spoke more than other delegates within the same party and who had the authority to tell other delegates when to speak and not to speak. These relations of power have an impact on how speaking and listening occur within the space, as listening theorists (Bickford, 1996; Dreher, 2012; Dreher, 2009) have argued (see Chapter 2). The student cohort represented the diverse groupings under the umbrella of RMF even in terms of how the group approached the process. The students were “egalitarian within their ranks” and “they all spoke” (Henkeman, 2017). It was also clear that RMF represented both hardliners and strategists. Henkeman observed that having the “hawks and doves” amongst the RMF delegation did not manifest into “tension amongst them and they were probably not even aware”. It instead, enriched their perspectives and they complimented each other. The doves were “able to see a bit further from what is happening here” while the hawks “were the long live the spirit of no compromise” (Henkeman, 2017). Henkeman’s observation suggests the presence of a level of paying attention to one another amongst RMF members, which not only allowed a diversity of voices to proliferate but also

unique ‘whos’ to be seen and represent themselves as such. As Bickford (1996:13) points out, the level of equality that allows for a diversity of voices and identities to thrive in public spaces is a result of the kind of listening that is based on “civility, empathy, and respect towards one another”. The egalitarian nature of students’ interaction is probably a result of trust and familiarity with each other’s ideological positions from having worked together during the protest against the statue. Another incentive for the egalitarian approach within their ranks must have come from realizing that they had the common enemy, UCT management, who wanted to reduce their activities into a containable protest that does not disrupt university activities.

However, Henkeman observed that “there were aggressive elements within RMF” during the mediation process. This raises questions about the impact of such individuals on silencing and enabling other voices in a manner that might not have been observable to the mediators. Members of RMF who were interviewed for this study and posts on the RMF website have revealed that the movement was a highly contested space. Many members suspended their involvement in the movement’s activities because of what they referred to as the dominance of patriarchy within the RMF. I will discuss the internal relations within RMF in more detail in Chapter 8. However, the students themselves believed that though they were a diverse group, they created an environment that allowed a multiplicity of voices to be represented. Student 1 believes that this coming together of comrades with diverse and opposing perspectives did not mean agreeing with each other on every issue but rather a common goal of “trying to fight for some beneficial agreement for the movement” (Student 1, 2017). The interaction among members of the UCT management seems to have taken a different approach.

5.4.5. Speaking and listening within UCT management

It was clear during mediation who the dominant voices were on UCT management’s delegation. Student 1 observed that the UCT management delegation “seemed a little bit like a one man show and then the others were sort off good cop, bad cop” (Student 1, 2017). This ascendancy of one voice seems to have extended as far as determining who should speak when and on what issue. Henkeman observed that

Max Price dominated that space to the point, and I say this in hindsight, that he kind of emasculated the Deputy Vice-Chancellors. Because he would make a statement and look to them,

and they would have no other option but to agree with him. What he would sometimes do is to say: "I want my colleagues to speak, but they are speaking under pressure" (Henkeman, 2017).

Student 1 also observed that Price "was the voice of everything" and that although the rest of the team would speak Price had "the final word on everything" (Student 1, 2017). This leader-centred style of deliberation created challenges in terms of when members of the UCT management delegation could voice their perspectives when RMF raised issues from their lived experience as black students in a previously white institution, an experience that the Vice-Chancellor does not necessarily share. Ramugondo observed how when such issues were raised Price "wouldn't get it sometime and someone like Royston (Pillay) would get it faster but he will have to hold back until there is a debriefing". The approach that Ramugondo describes here could have been a result of not wanting to upstage the leader of the delegation and to project a united front to the students. But Student 2 also made a similar observation to Ramugondo's in that she believed the two black delegates were hearing the students. She explained:

Max (Price) did most of the talking but I must say the two people who were most sensible were the two black people (from University management) in the room. It was Royston (Pillay) and Andre (Theys) in the sense that they could understand the nuances of some of the points we were trying to make and how to get to particular points and places that Sandra Klopper and Max (Price) and Dannie (Visser) could not get to (Student 2, 2017).

Student 2 statement draws a link between race and understanding someone's racialized lived experience in a manner that would enable one to see from the other's perspective or to even represent such perspective impartially without negating one's opposing view, as is the case with "representative thinking" (Bickford, 1996:123). Student 2 suggests that sharing the same race and lived experience with the speaker forms the basis for hearing and having an appreciation for the speaker's views. It is, after all, only the "two black people" in the UCT management delegation who "could understand the nuances" of the students' stories in a manner that their white counterparts could not. Given South Africa's history of racial segregation under apartheid, the two administrators (Royston Pillay and Andre Thys) would probably share a history of a racialized lived experience that the students were referring to in their stories. But in a later interview Price showed that he believed listening should be based on common rationality which stems from common experience and reasoning. Price explained:

The whole idea of equality, dialogue, listening, finding convergence, empathy, solving problems only makes sense if the premise of dialogue is some sort of rationality that depends on a common experience and common reasoning. If you start off in an identity politics that says: "You can never know my pain because only I can experience it. And in the absence of you knowing my experience, you have nothing to say to me about it." Then it eliminates the possibility of listening and dialogue in some way. The challenge of management or any party for listening is a challenge not only for that approach to listening but for the dynamics that are going on between the various groups that may silence other groups so that they are not heard (Price, 2017).

In the statement above, Price is critiquing the argument that race and a shared lived experience form the basis for hearing the speaker's perspective on their racialized lived experience of UCT. By critiquing this position, Price is essentially ignoring his lack of experience and lack of insight, and saying that his rationality should be able to supersede them. However, his rationality does not supersede lived experience and insight. This situation demands humility that Price and his team do not seem experienced in showing. Price's argument above is precisely what one of the mediators referred to as the 'coldness' that the UCT management showed in their response to students. Students were trying to explain how the institution causes them pain and the UCT management wanted to work through the items on the agenda and make decisions. When the students are saying 'we need you to see us, we need you to understand why we're doing the things we're doing, we need you to acknowledge our pain'.

5.4.6. Pain, listening and recognition

During the mediation process, parties had to engage with the pain felt on both sides before they could even get to the charges. When RMF members initially shared their stories, they expressed the pain they felt as black students at UCT. This expression of pain became a barrier to listening in so far as the UCT management did not initially acknowledge or give it the recognition that students felt it deserved. The UCT management also told stories of the pain that some staff members felt during protest and the occupation of buildings. What such expressions of pain on both sides are doing is create a stumbling block to listening by turning the mediation/listening space into one where RMF views the lack of acknowledgement of its pain as a sign of not being taken seriously. The UCT management also believed that there was pain on the side of staff members who were evicted by students as they occupy Bremner. Despite their lack of acknowledging the pain of RMF members, UCT management wanted

the pain of staff members evicted by RMF not only to be acknowledged but they wanted students to apologise for it. Student 1 explains:

First of all, they wanted some form of apology and they felt that we were in the wrong. They brought a lot of stuff from the first occupation. They felt like **their pain wasn't acknowledged, the pain that the management and the staff went through wasn't acknowledged** (Student 1, 2017).

RMF members saw this as a strategy not only for management to avoid acknowledging their (RMF's) pain but rather they thought it was a way of discrediting their pain. An RMF member summed up this feeling of unacknowledged pain during the mediation process when they said: "for four years no one has recognised that my body is under threat" (IJR, 2015:13). Acknowledgement of pain on both sides would have contributed to building trust which is necessary for genuine listening to occur.

When allowed to suggest common courtesies, RMF mentions that they "reserve the right to respond to any patriarchal tones where necessary" and that they "would like to hear all voices in the interest of building trust" (IJR, 2015:2). It is not out of order for one to suggest that the movement was also looking for ways to establish trust with the UCT management, which was desperately needed. It is through hearing all voices that trust or an appreciation of the other party's perspectives could be established.

5.4.7. Disruption as a vehicle for voice and listening

A lot of time was devoted to disruption as a form of protest during the mediation process. A discussion on what constituted an acceptable disruption and a not-so-acceptable type should be seen within the broad attempts to control not only protest but to limit the power that RMF had, which was also derived from its ability to disrupt university activities. The discussion on disruption suggests that disruption not only worked as a way of highlighting students' issues but also served as a vehicle that necessitate the creation of a platform where parties could speak and listen to each other. When the everyday activities of UCT are left intact, there are no incentives for the UCT management to even engage with RMF beyond accepting a document detailing the students' demands. Disruption creates an inconvenience and a sense of urgency.

The other advantage of using disruption for RMF was the power in disruption that does not require individuals who are disrupting to master the language of bureaucracy. Negotiation

requires that individuals master the language of negotiation. The mastery of language has the potential to tip the scales towards power. Even in this mediation process, there were other members of RMF who felt their voices could not be heard because of language. RMF member explained:

I don't really have a voice in this particular mediation process and it has been really difficult for me to speak. Most of the black students at UCT don't have a voice; they aren't as articulate as some of the members of the movement (IJR, 2015:19).

The statement above makes it clear that space alone does not get people heard. The UCT management on the other hand believes that it is through the provision of a physical space for RMF that the two parties can hear each other. UCT management explained:

I don't think that we would have gotten the message or hear your story had it been through disruptive processes. One does not need the disruption to hear but needs the guarantee of space (IJR, 2015:20).

The space that management refers to would, by all accounts, be an invited space where the UCT management would still hold significant power within that space. It is in such spaces in post-apartheid South Africa that citizens' role is expected, by design, to be that of the "endorsee of pre-designed planning and programmes" by power holders (Williams, 2008:43). The *Cape Times* Newspaper, which had at that point become the one media institution that had afforded more publishing space to RMF than any other media house, was left in the dark about the mediation process.

5.4.8. The *Cape Times* newspaper's lack of coverage

Although the media was not part of the mediation process, it was always at the back of the two party's minds. For students, the fact that university management "were very anxious about things getting out to the media" (Student 1, 2017) was an advantage given that the RMF was receiving positive media coverage at the time. For university management the coverage that RMF was receiving, especially from the *Cape Times*, was worrisome. Although the *Cape Times* Newspaper was not an internal player in the interaction between the UCT management and RMF, the UCT management deliberately ensured that the newspaper was excluded from the conversation. When the mediation process started, the UCT management was already convinced that the *Cape Times* newspaper was being used by its owner (Dr Iqbal Surve) to drive a "vendetta" (Henkeman, 2017) against the university and its management. The students saw the *Cape Times* as an ally. The two parties, UCT management and RMF,

eventually agreed that “while the mediation is on, no party will speak to the media” and that “if there is a need to speak to the media, the mediators will do that” (Henkeman, 2017). The newspaper tried to report on the mediation but the students upheld the agreement. Excluding the *Cape Times* newspaper from reporting about the mediation did not work to the benefit of RMF but worked for UCT management since the newspaper was giving voice to the movement. It is almost unbelievable that the students agreed to this demand and upheld it throughout the process especially given that on many occasions students blamed the UCT management for using statements by the UCT Communications and Marketing Department (CMD) to frame and delegitimise RMF. Students also pointed out how the communication to campus that CMD sent on behalf of UCT management conveniently ignored to condemn racist comments level against RMF. The *Cape Times* newspaper was the communication platform where RMF was listened to and represented fully.

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter provided valuable insight into how face-to-face engagement between RMF and the UCT management unfolded and an opportunity to evaluate the normative theory of political listening using this interaction. Just as was the case in the previous chapter, issues of **trust** come up from the onset of the mediation. First, the UCT management did not trust that IJR could mediate impartially since it was introduced to the UCT management by RMF members. Instead, the UCT management wanted its own mediator, whom I am assuming, would have been sympathetic to their cause. Students, on the other hand, did not trust the university management and did not want to engage in the process with them. However, this lack of trust of those with and/or who are close to administrative power does not extend to Ramugondo, who is the VC’s Special Advisor on Transformation. The fact that she physical positions herself between the UCT management and RMF, along with the mediators works to reinforce her position as having an equal footing in both the UCT management and RMF. What this chapter demonstrates very well is that trust is necessary for speaking and listening to happen even when parties hold widely divergent political views.

The **terms of engagement** are another important theme for the chapter, probably because mediation is a highly structured process of speaking and listening aimed at reaching an agreement. What the chapter demonstrates in terms of the terms of engagement is that this simple process is laden with power. Questions of who can speak, when they can speak, who

can represent whom, who speaks first, which issues are prioritized and the order of what is spoken about first can give one party power over the other. For example, RMF demands more representatives than the UCT management, the UCT management concedes to that demand and requests RMF to send the same representatives throughout the mediation process. Furthermore, RMF reorganizes the list of issues to be discussed and moves all its issues to the top. Over and above that, RMF demands to speak first to set the agenda and have the UCT management enter the engagement as respondents to an agenda that is already set and fixed. Perceived this way, the terms of engagement illustrate how decisions about how the engagement or speaking and listening should unfold have a significant impact on not only who can speak but also who is heard.

Power and the weighing up and guessing at what power the other side might have played out strongly throughout the chapter. The UCT management recognizes that RMF has the informal power of protest and disruption that could render the campus ungovernable, while RMF recognizes that the UCT management has the formal power to suspend or expel them. Throughout the mediation process, the UCT management's goal seems to be of neutralizing the students' ability to embark on a protest that causes disruptions. The students' intention seems to be that of being given a bigger recognition and hearing as a voice of students of colour, in particular. Both the students and the UCT management do not give up their power in an attempt to listen, instead, both parties engage in strategic listening or manipulation to get what they want. For example, the UCT management offer Avenue Hall as a space that RMF should use for its activities as a way for the UCT management to meet RMF's demand for space. At face value, this act seems to be a genuine attempt of listening to and giving recognition to RMF. But to hear Price explain it, the decision was more beneficial to the UCT management, in that it guaranteed that RMF would not cause any disruptions and that the movement was now secluded away from the campuses where lectures happened. For RMF this was a serious gain. On the other hand, RMF agrees to exclude the media from the mediation although the media could have added enough momentum for the movement to make more gains. It is also important to highlight that real progress in the mediation process only starts after the mediators asked the UCT management to start the second session with an apology. The refusal to let go of power and manipulative listening shows that listening in highly conflictual moments is often not a result of the appeal for the common good.

Another common theme in this chapter is **being heard and being given recognition**. Throughout the mediation, RMF wanted to be given recognition as a legitimate student structure and for the recognition to be accompanied by being heard. For UCT management, the fact that RMF was given space was enough in terms of giving the movement recognition, since there was an elected SRC which represented students. As for hearing the movement, the UCT management was only willing to hear the movement in so far as it prevents disruptions. This is an example of recognition that does not necessarily result in being heard. It is a form of manipulation.

Finally, the chapter also discussed **barriers to listening**. The biggest of these barriers is the UCT management's reliance on Private Property Law. During the mediation process, the over-reliance on Private Property Law played itself out through the UCT management's insistence on wanting to hold students to account to the Code of Conduct. For the most part, the UCT management misses an opportunity to listen to students because of this one-dimensional approach. On the opposite side of the spectrum, the desire to hold students to account to the Code of Conduct only serves to confirm to students that the UCT management does not want to listen to or hear what they have to say.

Chapter 6: FeesMustFall protest

“Surely with a name like ‘Blade’ you can afford to cut fees. Malapa ha lekani [family economic circumstances are not the same]” – placard at #FeesMustFall protest.

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I focus on the #FeesMustFall (FMF) protests which swept across South African universities in the last two weeks of October 2015. These campus-based protests developed into a national campaign which culminated in a march to the seat of government in Pretoria, the Union Buildings, to demand a response from then President of the Republic of South Africa, Jacob Zuma. This research project has primarily been focused on the activities of the RhodesMustFall movement at UCT. But for this chapter, I move into discussing the UCT version of the #FeesMustFall protest carried mostly by RMF members before the protest moved to the South African Parliament and then to the Union Buildings. This approach positions #FeesMustFall not as a social movement but rather as a campaign/cause that various social and student movements embarked on. Some scholars have generously referred to these protests as being led by the #FeesMustFall movement, which I believe stemmed from a focus on the national character of the protest with little focus on the prior heightened activism against often unique issues in various universities. For example, at Rhodes University, the RU Reference List movement was protesting against a culture of rape and sexual assault and the university’s inadequate response to such allegations, Stellenbosch University and University of the Free State students were protesting against their institutions’ language policies and racism, while RMF was fighting for the decolonisation of UCT. It would be remiss not to acknowledge the fact that Universities of Technologies and former black institutions had long been protesting fees before the Fees Must Fall protests, although these protests did not gain national prominence.

I will start by detailing the FMF protest and how it progressed at UCT before it progressed to the national stage, along with the responses to it by the UCT management first and then by the government. I will also interrogate the coverage that the FMF protest received from the *Cape Times* newspaper. I then pick important moments out of all the activities and analyse them using listening theory. Listening theory will help make sense of communication between the parties involved in this context of protest and deep disagreement. I will conclude the chapter by highlighting some of the important themes that arose and their significance.

It is also important to note that at the time of the #FeesMustFall protest, then Cape Argus newspaper editor, Gasant Abarder, invited members of the RMF to co-edit an edition of the paper on 23 October 2015. Instead, I will interrogate the process that led to the students being given this opportunity and the editor's rationalisation of the newspaper's role in covering this protest. I will use the interview I conducted with Abarder for this analysis.

It is important to note that the FMF protest was also followed by the protest against the outsourcing of services in numerous universities across South Africa, including UCT. This research project will not interrogate protests against outsourcing, which affected mostly black workers at universities. The decision not to interrogate outsourcing is in no way a reflection of unimportance but rather one that is based on practical considerations. I could not secure enough interviews with all the relevant players to produce a reputable, detailed account of activities that I could analyse.

6.2. The FeesMustFall protest and communication about the protest

On 18 October 2015, DVC for Institutional Innovation at UCT, Francis Petersen²⁷, issued an email communication, "Fees, financial aid and protest action to the university community" (Petersen, 2015a), to the university community explaining how the university arrived at a 10.3% tuition fee increase and cautioning students against protesting unlawfully. DVC Petersen's email was sent to the UCT community in anticipation of the protest that he was informed would take place on Tuesday 20 October 2015, following protests at the University of the Witwatersrand²⁸ (Wits) which had continued through the weekend of 17 and 18 October.

On Monday, 19 October 2015, the *Cape Times* newspaper published an article, *Protest at UCT over 'exclusionary fees'*, wherein the reporter explained that the "decision by UCT last month to increase its tuition fees next year by 10.3 per cent has now raised the ire of RMF"

²⁷ I will refer to Francis Petersen as DVC Petersen to avoid possible conflation between him and Cape Times reporter, Carlo Petersen, who is also not related to him.

²⁸ Wits students had taken issue with a proposal by the university Council to increase fees for 2016 by 10.5 percent. They blockaded entrance to the university, effectively cancelling all lectures. This protest at Wits forced its VC Adam Habib to leave the Higher Education Summit in Durban to attend to the students' demands.

(Petersen, 2015d). The article quotes RMF member, Thuli Gamedze, explaining that the movement stood in solidarity with their comrades at Wits. Gamedze also explained that “public institutions can no longer be run like businesses, preserving the privilege of the elite whilst further distancing their ivory towers from the realities of the black working class in this country” (Petersen, 2015d). The article also quoted UCT spokesperson, Pat Lucas, who explained that it was important for the university to raise its tuition fees because of the annual decline in university funding from the government as inflation rose. The article ends with a quote from the Higher Education and Training Minister, Blade Nzimande, stating that “the management of universities must open up legitimate channels for discussion and dialogue over matters concerning students with a view to resolving whatever issues arise” (Petersen, 2015d). Nzimande’s quotation was from a statement he issued, *Negotiation needed in fee increase dispute*, after the Higher Education Summit held on 18 and 19 October 2015 where he appealed for students to negotiate with university management. He also informed the public that he was “convening a meeting with representative delegations of vice-chancellors, university council chairs, students and workers, to discuss and come up with a common framework and approach to the issue of university fee increases for 2016” (Nzimande, 2015a).

The FMF protest at UCT started in the early hours of Monday, 19 October, with students barricading the entrances to the university campuses. UCT spokesperson, Gerda Kruger announced the suspension of teaching and learning at the Lower, Middle and Upper campuses later that morning (Kruger, 2015a). The announcement also informed the university community that DVC Petersen, who was Acting VC at the time, was “engaging with the SRC, RMF, Left Students Forum and other student interest groups to arrange for ongoing discussions to bring the campus back to normal functioning” (Kruger, 2015a). DVC Petersen also issued a video message to staff, students and the public on the morning of 19 October condemning the protest for infringing on the rights of other members of the UCT community by disrupting their ability to access the university (Petersen, 2015b).

Later that afternoon, the UCT executive led by DVC Petersen as Acting VC met students outside the Bremner Building to discuss the #FeesMustFall campaign demands, which included a call to end outsourcing at the university. During the meeting, students forced their way into the Bremner Building and refused to vacate the building until their demands were met. UCT then applied for an interim interdict. The interdict, which was granted by the

Western Cape High Court granted, barred 12 respondents – RhodesMustFall, FeesMustFall, Left Students Movement, UCT: Trans Collective, SASCO UCT, PASMA UCT, Patriarchy Must Fall, UCT Left Students Forum, Thato Pule, Brian Kamanzi, Ru Slayen and Mzomhle Bixa – from “disrupting or otherwise interfering in any way with the normal activities of the University” (Yekiso, 2015: 1-2). The Public Order Policing (POP) unit was deployed to the Bremner Building and they detained students and staff who were inside and outside the building overnight.

Still on 19 October, DVC Petersen, in his capacity as acting VC, sent another email to the university community informing them that the university executive had met with protesting staff and students to keep the university open but the protesting staff and students forced their way into Bremner and refused to leave until their demands were met; paving the way for the university to apply for an interdict which was granted (Petersen, 2015c). He also explained to the university community that the university would be operational the following day thanks to the interdict.

UCT remained closed on Tuesday, 20 October 2015. DVC Petersen announced to the university community in the morning that the university was to remain closed and reiterated that the university was committed and open to dialogue with protesting staff and students. DVC Petersen also warned protesting staff and students against “unlawful behaviour” (Petersen, 2015d). The staff and students continued to barricade the entrances to various UCT campuses. The South African Police Services (SAPS) arrested 23 students and workers for barricading parts of UCT campuses. A mass meeting of staff, students and workers were convened at UCT’s Jameson Plaza during lunch hour (between 13h00 and 14h00) by protesting staff, students and workers who proceeded to march to the nearby Rondebosch Police Station to demand the release of the arrested staff and students. Their demands were not successful. The group eventually marched back to the Bremner Building to talk to members of the UCT executive.

Earlier in the morning of Tuesday, 20 October 2015, the *Cape Times* newspaper carried an article, *Mayhem at universities*, which provided a summary of the previous day’s events in universities across the country (Petersen & Mzantsi, 2015). The article provided a detailed account of what had transpired at UCT the previous day, stating that “students held acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Francis Petersen, deputy vice-chancellor Danie Visser, acting

deputy vice-chancellor Anwar Mall and head of UCT development and alumni Russell Peters [Russell Ally] hostage outside the Bremner Building, demanding an emergency council meeting to discuss the students' demands related to fees and outsourcing of workers" (Petersen & Mzantsi, 2015). The article ended with UCT spokesperson, Patricia Lucas, reaffirming the acting VC's message that the university was willing to discuss all matters with protesting staff and students provided that the discussions happened when the university was in full operation.

Meanwhile, Minister Nzimande (2015b) held a meeting with the representatives of university council chairs, trade unions, South African Union of Students, government, university vice-chancellors and Universities South Africa in Cape Town as promised in a statement the previous day. Nzimande held a press conference after this meeting to inform the public that a 6% increase was agreed upon by all stakeholders in the meeting (Nzimande, 2015b). News media outlets, eNCA and Netwerk24 released a video recorded before the press conference where Nzimande could be seen laughing as he stated that "if the students don't accept this, we will start our own movement; students must fall" (Nzimande, 2015c). The video was recorded before the press conference started.

On the morning of Wednesday, 21 October 2015, UCT VC, Max Price, who was back from his visit to China, explained in an interview on Cape Talk radio that the protest of the past two days marked the first time that there was a disruption of the academic project of the university and the ignoring of the rights of all the other students who did not necessarily support the protest since the student protest started at the university in March of the same year. Price further explained that calling the police to the university was done to protect the right of other students. Price was also vocal in his support of the student protest against the government for not providing adequate financial support to universities. Wednesday, 21 October 2015 was also the day of the mid-term budget by then South African Finance Minister, Nhlanhla Nene. UCT students along with Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), Stellenbosch University and University of the Western Cape (UWC) staff and students embarked on a march outside parliament before and during the mid-term budget speech demanding a 0% fee increase. Police used stun grenades and teargas to disperse the crowd after protesting staff and students breached the parliamentary precinct. During this protest, 23 UCT students were arrested including the VC's son. Six more students, including prominent RMF members Chumani Maxwele and Kgosi Chikane, were arrested for

breaching the parliamentary wall and spent the night at the Bellville Police Station. That evening, a group of parents approach the Western Cape Division of the High Court to seek an interdict against the police for their use of force against students. But the matter carried over to the following morning.

Thursday, 22 October 2015 was the day of the university assembly at UCT where the VC addressed staff and students. Price explained to the assembly that the university had not laid charges against any students and that it would work with the police in dropping other charges and lifting the interdict against protesting staff and students. Students and staff reiterated their demand for a no-fee increase in 2016 and an end to outsourcing at the university. Price also issued a communication to the university community informing them of the upcoming meeting between VCs, the President of the Republic of South Africa and ministers to discuss higher education funding (Price, 2015h). He also announced that the exams that were supposed to commence the following week were postponed. His update ended with him condemning the SAPS' display of force at the protest outside campus the night before. Later that day, Price (2015i) issued another statement in which he informed the university community that the institution was going to remain closed the following day. He also provided a summary of his speech at the university assembly earlier. Price announced that he was going to meet the president and ministers the following day to "demand decisive state intervention to ensure that there is no fee increase for students in need" (Price, 2015i). The UCT Council, he also said, was going to meet over the weekend after he met with the President and Ministers. Council was going to meet to consider a proposal from UCT management which ensured that the fee increase would not apply to students in need and that the university's financial aid package was still in place.

On Friday, 23 October 2015 members of the academic staff at UCT marched in solidarity with students against increasing fees. The academics marched to the Bremner Building where they handed a memorandum of demands to the UCT management. UCT students also joined students protesting at Stellenbosch University. In Pretoria, thousands of students from the University of Johannesburg, University of Limpopo, University of Pretoria, Tshwane University of Technology and Wits converged at the Union Buildings where then President, Jacob Zuma was meeting with representatives from universities to find a solution to the rising university fees. Some protesting students at the Union Buildings attempted to breach the fence to which police responded with stun grenades and teargas to disperse the crowd.

President Zuma then announced that there would be a zero per cent increase in fees for 2016. However, the protest outside the Union Buildings continued even after the announcement because students were upset that the President had not come out to meet them.

Since higher education institutions are independently run, the UCT Council met on Saturday, 24 October, to consider the President's announcement of the 0% increase in university fees. Council confirmed the 0% increase for the 2016 academic year (Price, 2015j).

6.3. The RhodesMustFall movement and #FeesMustFall protest

The FMF protest started at a time when RMF was still trying to rebuild its momentum from the Bremner Building occupation and the protest against the statue of Cecil John Rhodes, which gave the movement its name. RMF was using Avenue Hall as the base for its operation. It was at a time when many female and transsexual members were questioning the movement's commitment to intersectionality as one of the pillars of the movement.

It was at the beginning of the FMF protest that Chumani Maxwele brought Vuyani Pambo, who was part of the students behind the fees protest to the University of the Witwatersrand to address the movement's plenary (Student 2, 2017). This was a disregard for the movement's procedure for inviting speakers to address the plenary. According to Student 2, Maxwele had no mandate to bring someone as a speaker to address the movement without the consent of the movement. What was also an issue was the fact that the guest was a male at a time when the movement was contending with issues of masculinity. In the meeting where he brought Pambo, Student 2 stated that Maxwele referred to patriarchy as "the so-called patriarchy" which enraged other members of the movement to a point of staging a naked protest on the spot (Student 2, 2017).

Having members of RMF stage a protest against each other was not at all surprising at this stage in the movement's life. The structures that allowed for conflict resolutions and for grievances to be addressed had been weakened since the end of the Bremner occupation. The movement had also lost many members because of disagreements over the continued occupation of the Bremner Building despite the UCT management upholding its end of the agreement to remove the statue from UCT. Although these disagreements and fractures were happening within the movement, they were never reported upon by the media. Neither did

these disagreements play out in the public²⁹ at this stage in the movement's life. I will explore these disagreements further in **Chapter 8** when I look at relations within RMF.

For Student 4, the root of all the contestations and disagreements that arose during the FMF protest centred on questions of who could participate in the FMF protest. These questions were essentially about spelling out the relationship between RMF and FMF. Student 4 explained:

There were questions like, is #FeesMustFall part of RhodesMustFall, and who should be involved. We had a meeting to solve this dilemma because it was a dilemma that was beginning to distort history. We said nobody can talk about #FeesMustFall, #FeesMustFall is not a campaign, it is a program that came out of the RhodesMustFall. We came to the conclusion that #FeesMustFall becomes the economic décor of RhodesMustFall (Student 4, 2017).

The statement by Student 4 points to the complexity of the FMF protest for the social movement. The FMF protest resonated with more people who did not necessarily relate to RMF's struggles and who did not have to attend RMF's plenaries to participate since the issue of higher education funding had 'global' resonance and appeal.

6.4. Analysis

6.4.1. Communication by UCT management

6.4.1.1. Private Property Law and restoring peace & order

Even before the FMF protest started at UCT, the university management was attempting to limit protests to forms that were not disruptive. This was evident in the very first communication issued by DVC Petersen where he warned those planning on participating in protest "to behave respectfully towards one another, to bring their views over with intellectual rigour, debate and creativity, but to refrain from threatening, violent or unlawful behaviour" (Petersen, 2015a). The UCT management's concern was about restoring order by reducing student protest to that which does not interfere/disrupt the university's business as usual. DVC Petersen explained in his update to campus on the first day of protest:

What you have seen this morning is that protest has happened at the campus of the University of Cape Town. It is done in an irresponsible manner, it is done in a manner that is unacceptable and also

²⁹ The only time where something that resembles RMF's internal disagreements playing out on a public setting was when a female member of the movement talked about Chumani Maxwele acting like he started RMF when RMF was in fact started by black women. She mentioned this in passing during her address at a workers imbizo.

created safety risks for both our students and staff. In fact, it has also now challenged the rights of students and staff that want to attend classes and that want to do their normal work. In fact, it has gone further than that. It is now impacting the normal functioning of the university. That again, I want to emphasise, it is not acceptable (Petersen, 2015b).

The statement by DVC Petersen above demonstrates the unwillingness of the university to recognise forms of disruptive protest as a legitimate vehicle for voice within a university. Here, protest is viewed as illegitimate because it “challenged the rights of students and staff that want to attend classes and that want to do their normal work” (Petersen, 2015b) and disrupted “the normal functioning of the university” (Petersen, 2015b). The Regulation of Gatherings Act of 1993 makes a distinction between demonstrations and gatherings. The former permits not more than 15 people to demonstrate in public spaces without any prior notice. The latter, on the other hand, permits more than 15 people to assemble or form a procession on any public space, the road or any open air space (Regulation of Gathering Act, 1993:3). Gatherings require the convener of the protest to give a seven-day notice before the gathering. But South Africa has a strong history of protest and the prescripts of the Regulation of Gatherings Act are often not followed especially in a protest where issues being protested is seen as fundamental. What DVC Petersen’s interpretation of the right to protest does is limit protest to a narrow window of actions which meant that it would lose its power to affect normal daily life. It is this disruptive power that made protest an important vehicle for voice in South Africa.

Furthermore, DVC Petersen’s sentiments seem to be based on the underlying belief that protest was not necessary when it came to the fee increases because of three reasons. One, DVC Petersen made it clear that the only way the university could “balance the books without compromising both quality and access (which would happen if we reduced the allocation to financial aid) is by increasing the fees by the same amount above internal inflation, i.e 4% to 5%” (Petersen, 2015a). Although students were somehow expected to have known this information because the SRC was part of the budgeting process, the process of the previous months had proven that the SRC’s representative power was very limited, coupled with the fact that it had become customary in South African university for the general student population to hear of the proposed fee increase when the universities announced it after Council approval. Two, DVC Petersen’s explanation that “because of the wide financial assistance provided by UCT to poor students, the increase in fees has almost no impact on the fees that poorer students must themselves pay since we increase the

financial aid to cover the full increase” (Petersen, 2015a) seems to suggest that no one would be affected by the increase. The reasoning behind this argument is that poorer students will not be excluded because financial aid will be made available to them without mentioning the fact that most of this aid comes in the form of loans they will have to pay back. An increase in fees also means an increase in the loan amount poorer students would have to pay back after graduating. Three, although DVC Petersen acknowledged the rampant inequality in South Africa, he believed that the university addressed poverty and inequality through research. In this regard, protest that disrupted the university’s functioning was viewed as an attempt at preventing the university from addressing the problem through research. DVC Petersen explained:

We stand with those who want to fight against poverty and inequality, and we bring considerable intellectual and research resources to bear on the problem, such as the Vice-Chancellor’s multi-disciplinary Poverty and Inequality Initiative (Petersen, 2015a).

The statement above not only demonstrates the UCT management’s lack of recognition of protest as a legitimate platform for voicing out citizens’ concerns, but it also locates protest on the margins of the university’s acceptable forms of engagement. The point about using research to address poverty and inequality does not take cognisance of the fact that classrooms and curricula are not equal, a point that the RMF and FMF protests highlighted significantly. Furthermore, it is surprising for UCT management to advance a position of addressing poverty and inequality through research given UCT management’s emphasis on respecting the right to protest and the openness to engage with the protesting staff and students.

The FMF protest seem to have started, universities almost unilaterally decided what they would and would not tolerate in as far as protest was concerned. It is important to note that what universities were prepared to accept was acts that did not disrupt university activities. But the point of protests is disruption otherwise nothing is changed. For UCT, an unacceptable protest, was protest where participants “interfered with university business” (Petersen, 2015a), “disrupted classes or access” (Petersen, 2015a), “caused the institution to close for a period of time” (Petersen, 2015a), “threatening” (Petersen, 2015a), “violent” (Petersen, 2015a), “unlawful behaviour” (Petersen, 2015a), and “prevented staff and students from getting to their classes and workspaces” (Kruger, 2015a). The university was essentially prohibiting protest that is disruptive and that causes an inconvenience by arguing that it was

not covered by the right to protest. Furthermore, Kruger's (2015a) communication to the university community announcing the suspension of university activities for the day indicated what the UCT management meant by respecting the right to protest. Kruger explained:

UCT has a deep respect for the right to protest, and we have over the last months demonstrated that. Since the start of protest action, we have not charged a single student with disciplinary action for their involvement in protest actions (Kruger, 2015a).

In the statement above, Kruger used the fact that UCT had “not charged a single student with disciplinary action for their involvement in protest actions” since the beginning of RMF protest in March of that year as evidence of the university respecting the right to protest as if protest is illegal.

6.4.1.2. Openness to engage and its Terms & Conditions

One of the key strategies in convincing the university community that the UCT management was committed to finding solutions to the demands made by protesting staff and students rested on the university management communicating their willingness to engage with protesting staff and students. Although being open to engagement is a prerequisite for listening to happen, in this case, the communicated willingness or openness does not necessarily open up the possibility for listening to take place because it is usually accompanied by its very own terms and conditions. These terms and conditions are usually set by the UCT management. In the case of the FMF protest, the terms and conditions of UCT management being open to engagement were that the discussions commence alongside the normal functioning of the university. DVC Petersen explained:

I must stress that we remain very committed to discussions with any group related to fees, outsourced services or any other matter. However, it is critical that the operations at UCT are unaffected by unlawful interruptions (Petersen, 2015d).

Allowing teaching and learning to continue alongside the engagements eliminates the disruptive and inconvenient element of the protest, which renders it ceremonial. This is a manipulative strategy on the part of the UCT management in that the refusal by protesting staff and students to the terms and conditions portrays them as being unreasonable or unwilling to collectively resolve issues. What this strategy does in turn is that it contributes to an environment of a lack of trust between the conflicting parties which makes students suspicious of any agreements they enter with the UCT management. Similarly, the FMF protest also saw RMF introduce their terms and conditions of engagement when they went to

the Bremner Building to get the UCT management to respond to their demands. DVC

Petersen explained:

Some members of the Executive, led by myself, attempted on several occasions to persuade the protesters to refrain from interfering with university operations. A group of protesters then gathered at Bremner at midday. We met the protesters on the steps of Bremner and again attempted to persuade them to meet and to discuss issues but to refrain from interfering with any operations of the institution or **anyone else's rights. The group did not allow the four senior members to leave. They made several demands and insisted on their demands being met prior to their leaving.** The group then broke the gate of Bremner and occupied the building. In the interim, the institution applied for an interdict from the High Court to prevent protesters from interfering with university operations. This order was granted and was served on the protesters. The Executive was then allowed to leave (Petersen, 2015c).

The statement by DVC Petersen above demonstrates how engagements fall apart when terms and conditions are used to coerce those participating into granting a favourable outcome. The result of this encounter is not only the collapse of any possibility to engage but the university was also granted an interim interdict barring certain students from participating in unlawful protest at the university.

6.4.1.3. Interdict and having the police on UCT campuses

The interdict that UCT was granted as a result of an attempt to occupy Bremner paved way for the police to enforce it on students who were participating in protest. The interdict worsened the climate of lack of trust. Students viewed this interdict as an attempt by the university to target specific movements and individuals. Price not only recognises the role that the interdict was playing in furthering the rift between the university and its protesting students³⁰, but he offers to help get it lifted as a show of good faith. Price explained:

While I believe the interdict on Monday was an appropriate and necessary action to take at that time, it has been misunderstood to be a charge against individuals and organisations, whereas it is in fact only a requirement that people act lawfully. It has also become encumbered with connotations of brutality and police action. This was certainly not intended, as its purpose was to protect the rights of those writing exams and wishing to access the campus. I believe that it is possible to propose lifting the interdict (it is actually imposed and lifted by a court, not by the University) as an act of good faith on the understanding that protest will remain peaceful, lawful, respectful of the rights of all, and within acceptable limits. We have set this in motion (Price, 2015i).

³⁰ It is important to note that this was the first time that UCT sought an interdict against RMF-led protest. That the interdict was granted when DVC Petersen was acting VC is important in that it sets the tone for the interaction between RMF and SETT which I will explore in detail in Chapter 7.

Even when it comes to lifting the interdict, Price agreed to have it lifted as a way of ensuring that the ongoing protest is acceptable. The interdict paved the way for the police to enforce it on the UCT campus against staff and students who were barring others from entering the university. It was in enforcing the interdict that the police were accused of using excessive force. The Academics Union and the Black Academics Caucus used the police incidents on campus to request Council to ask for a review of the policy and guidelines for deploying the police on campus (Price, 2015j).

6.4.1.4. Recognition of the role of students

Although the UCT management condemned protest that halted university operations, Price gave recognition to students for forcing the government to pay attention to higher education funding. He explained:

In a matter of a week, the terrain of higher education has changed dramatically. It changed on campuses, it changed in government, and it changed in higher education ministry. This is a change that has been a long time coming. We have been trying to get the funding of high education taken seriously and funded adequately (Price, 2015k).

For Price, the students had in only a week done what university management had failed to achieve over the years. Not only did the students force the government to pronounce a 0% increase for the following year but the President also announced the formation of a task team to investigate the feasibility of implementing free education in the country. “Their (students’) intervention has been a game changer... and I salute them for that,” explained Price (2015j). Furthermore, Price viewed the national protest as a platform where “students across the country who have been unable to complete their studies or who have been unable to access higher education have been expressing their voice,” (Price, 2015k). I contend that Price’s view and acceptance of protest as a vehicle where voice can be expressed and heard by powerholders has something to do with the fact that students were protesting against the government rather than the university. Put differently, his seems to be a view of protest being justifiable and necessary to get students heard by the government.

6.4.2. Government’s response to the students’ demands

6.4.2.1. Government’s denial of the root of the problem

Nzimande’s statement issued after the Higher Education Summit is a good starting point for analysing the government’s response to the FMF protest. This Summit was only open for

official representatives of constituencies within universities. The irony of meeting Vice-Chancellors and representatives of student leadership to discuss fee increases among other things is that the two parties had already consulted each other and reached a percentage that both were comfortable with. At UCT, for example, the SRC and UCT management had agreed on a 10.3% increase which was later approved by Council. A more meaningful discussion could have been achieved by inviting representatives of other student organisations who do not necessarily belong to the SRC. This guestlist represents the ministry's lack of understanding of student protest. Research into student protest, especially in previously black institutions, has demonstrated that the SRC always consents to the fee increases but does not consult its constituency in doing so (Cele, 2009).

Although Nzimande was fully aware of the funding pressure that universities face as a result of the declining government funding, he reduces the cause of the protest to a lack of proper communication and discussion between university management and students. He explained:

Students need to be brought on board for frank and honest discussions so as to ensure that there is stability in our institutions. The management of universities must open up legitimate channels for discussion and dialogue over these matters, and not allow matters to deteriorate, often due to lack of understanding and knowledge of the situation and spurred by poor communication (Nzimande, 2015a).

In his statement above, Nzimande does not acknowledge government's declining funding of higher education, which has forced universities to increase fees and find other ways of raising funds. For Nzimande, the reason for the protest against the increasing fees was due to the lack of "frank and honest discussions" (Nzimande, 2015a). With declining government funding, the only viable option for universities to generate income is by raising fees. His insistence that "cost-containment measures to arrest the spiralling inefficiencies and contain the inflation within the higher education system" (Nzimande, 2015a) is evidence of his denial of the root of the fees problems.

6.4.2.2. Right to protest

In the statement issued after the Higher Education Summit and the press conference held on 20 October 2015, Nzimande used the platforms to discuss the right to protest and the kind of protest that was unacceptable at a university. Nzimande explained:

...the representatives recognised the right to protest and difference of opinion in a university. They also underscored peaceful protest and the respect for constitutional rights of all parties, including those who decide not to protest and to hold different views. The representatives condemn all violence and the

violation of rights of others; including preventing access and exit to institutions, preventing teaching and learning and the operation of universities, and acts of humiliation. The violation of these rights undermines a safe and secure institutional environment within our universities and must be resisted at all costs (Nzimande, 2015b).

There are parallels between Nzimande's statement above and the UCT management's statement on the right to protest. Just as is the case with the UCT management, the emphasis is always placed on encouraging students to participate in a protest that does not disrupt or force the university to take the issues being raised seriously. This attempt at regulating protest negates the fact that it is the failure of the so-called legitimate channels of engagement that makes protest such an important mode for the powerless to make their voices heard.

6.4.2.3. Government's unwillingness to listen

Although students had already started making calls on various university campuses and through protest against any fee increase, Nzimande's Higher Education Summit and the university stakeholder consultation session recommended a 6% increase in university fees. In the press conference that followed Nzimande's meeting with higher education stakeholders on 20 October 2015, he announced that the stakeholders had agreed on a 6% increase for all universities. Besides the fact that individual institutions have the autonomy to determine their fees and get them approved by Council, the announcement further cements Nzimande's unwillingness to listen to protesting students.

Furthermore, news media outlets, eNCA and Netwerk24 distributed a video taken before the press conference where a laughing Nzimande states, "if the student don't accept this, we will start our own movement – Students must fall" (Nzimande, 2015c). This statement, joking as it may be, demonstrate how Nzimande fails to take the students and their grievances seriously. His comment is evidence of the lack of **recognition** with which he treats students. It is not surprising that Nzimande tried to talk to the students during their protest outside the Union Buildings, the students chant 'Blade³¹ must fall'.

Furthermore, this lack of recognition of students by government representatives extended beyond Nzimande. Although students rejoiced when then President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, announced the 0% increase, they were also outraged that he could not come out of the

³¹ Minister Nzimande is commonly referred to by his nickname, Blade, which is more popular than his official names. It is not strange to meet South Africans who only know him as Blade.

Union Buildings to acknowledge them at the very least. This act of walking out would have been a **recognition** of the student's efforts in getting the cost of university to be seriously considered.

6.4.3. #FeesMustFall protest and the RhodesMustFall movement

6.4.3.1. Refusal to listen within RMF

Maxwele's invitation for Pambo to address RMF members not only demonstrated the disregard for RMF's protocols, but it is also a refusal to listen. The incident is symptomatic of the **lack of recognition** of the pain and suffering of female and transsexual members of the movement at the hands of their male counterparts. This is more so given the fact that this meeting took place shortly after a female member of RMF was raped at Avenue Hall which was RMF's home. This refusal to listen is also punctuated by Maxwele's refusal to recognise intersectionality as one of the pillars of RMF signified by the referral of patriarchy as "the so-called". I will revisit these relations within RMF in detail in **Chapter 8**.

6.4.3.2. Protest as a site for voice and listening?

On the first day of the FMF protest at UCT (at the entrance/exit by the Sports Centre), a group of students blocked the road into and out of Upper Campus. For starters, many students who did not understand what the protest was about would walk over to the road blockage and ask students who blocked the road what they were protesting against. There were instances where some of the students who were protesting would explain to the asking student why FMF protest was necessary. At the time that I was there, I observed two students approach protesting students and were given a thorough explanation of why the protest was necessary. The two students asking happened to be white and not from South Africa. There were other instances where black students who were against the protest were not extended the same courtesy and explanation as their white counterparts from other countries. The black students who passed by the protest site were called race sell-outs for not taking part in the protest. Some almost got into a physical confrontation with one of the male students who were protesting. I will now analyse the *Cape Times* newspaper's coverage of the FMF protest.

6.4.4. Coverage by the *Cape Times* and Cape Argus newspapers

6.4.4.1. Coverage by the *Cape Times* newspaper

The first article published by the *Cape Times* newspaper on FMF protest was titled *Protest at UCT over 'exclusionary fees'* (Petersen, 2015d). The article treats RMF as a **resource** on higher education fees. The story achieves this by firstly providing a comparison of the cost of Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Commerce degrees at UCT and the neighbouring Stellenbosch University, which at the very least makes the protest against the fee increase at UCT justifiable. A substantial part of the article is devoted to RMF representative who talks about fee increases as an exclusionary device. UCT spokesperson is only quoted in response to RMF and detailed how the university would provide financial aid to poor students. The article ends with then Higher Education and Training Minister, Blade Nzimande, encouraging university management to “open up legitimate channels for discussion and dialogue” (Petersen, 2015d) to resolve matters.

The second news story published by the *Cape Times* newspaper was titled *Mayhem at universities* (Petersen & Mzantsi, 2015). This article provided an update on fees protest at Wits, Rhodes University, Fort Hare University, Stellenbosch University and UCT. The article quotes extensively from university statements to substantiate the article's accounts of what was happening at various universities.

The next article, *Students reject deal – insist on no fees* (Mtyala, 2015), focused on the 6% fee increase that the Higher Education and Training Minister had entered with university management. This article represented a deviation in terms of how articles on RMF-related activities have typically been written. For starters, the article was written by Petersen. Although the article is about students rejecting the 6% fee increase agreement, this is only captured in the lead paragraph. What follows this introduction is information about the agreement from Minister Nzimande and Wits University Vice-Chancellor, Adam Habib. Student voices are only brought in towards the end of the article to explain why they were rejecting the 6% fee increase. This article is an example of “hierarchies of value and esteem” (Dreher, 2009:447) that the media assigns to various identity groups. Those who occupy official positions or positions of power have a history of their voice being valued in news articles at the expense of their unofficial (and often unorganized) counterparts. In this article students' viewpoints are relegated to the bottom of the article although the story headline and the lead paragraph frame the story from the perspective of students. It is also worth noting that this article also represents a juxtaposition in terms of who makes the claims and who gets to respond to those claims in the *Cape Times* newspaper's articles on RMF-related activities.

Minister Nzimande and Habib make the claims and the students provide a **response** to those claims.

The *Cape Times* newspaper then published an article titled, *Fees likely to fall* (Mtyala & Petersen, 2015). The article starts by quoting a source close to Minister Nzimande explaining that then President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, would announce a 0% increase in response to the student protest. Mtyala & Petersen (2015) give **recognition** to students for their role in forcing the government to cover the shortfall of the fee increase for 2016 by issuing a moratorium on the fee increases. Furthermore, the university vice-chancellor also gives **recognition** to the student's role in highlighting the exorbitant cost of higher education in South Africa. UCT VC, Max Price, reportedly said “university management supported the students’ plight and was prepared to ensure a zero per cent increase to tuition fees” (Mtyala & Petersen, 2015). Price’s recognition is accompanied by **representative thinking**. He explained that he “recognised that students from middle-class households, where they earn R5 000 to R6 000, even they struggle to pay university fees” (Mtyala & Petersen, 2015). Similarly, UWC VC, Tyrone Pretorius, is quoted as having announced that UWC was going to close for a week in solidarity with students’ demands for free education. There were also moments when students were given **conditional recognition** for their role in calling for free education. CPUT VC, Prins Nevhutalu, said: “I believe it is a just cause which unfortunately got hijacked by hooligans” (Mtyala & Petersen, 2015). This conditional recognition extends to how the authors of the article characterize the reason for the impending no-fee increase announcement. Mtyala & Petersen explain that the no-fee increase announcement would come “after a week of mayhem as thousands of university students, staff and workers shut down campuses throughout the country” (Mtyala & Petersen, 2015). The story reserved the last sentence to the students’ perspective from a representative of the South African Students Congress, who confirmed that students would insist on a no-fee increase.

The last news article published by the *Cape Times* newspaper on the FMF protest linked to UCT and the RhodesMustFall movement was titled, *High treason charges – ‘fault on the police’s side’* (Villete & Petersen, 2015). The article detailed how the police had erred in attempting to charge students who were protesting as part of FMF outside parliament with high treason.

6.4.4.2. Coverage by the Cape Argus newspaper

The Cape Argus newspaper gave the student activists half an edition of the paper to edit. This was an opportunity for the students to communicate and present their perspectives on the FMF protest. This is probably the biggest act of giving voice to students at the time of the FMF debate and protest. The idea to have half of the edition edited by students who were taking part in the FMF protest was initiated by then Cape Argus editor, Gasant Abarder. At the core of Abarder's decision was what he understood to be the role of his newspaper. He explained:

The role of Cape Argus was to help the public understand why these students are burning tyres, why they are destroying statues and all, and why they are saying fees must fall. Because we are not doing our jobs; we are asking everybody else what they think but we are not asking the students. What every responsible newspaper should be doing is to bring the temperature down and to find understanding and meaning and analysis, so that was the **Cape Argus'** role was, to provide platform for the voiceless so that people can make their own minds about the students' protests (Abarder, 2020).

What Abarder (2020) seems to be pointing to above is the limitation of representing the students' activities by publishing stories written by journalists. He seems to be suggesting that it is only through allowing students to speak for themselves through the newspaper that an authentic account of the FMF protest could be understood. It is an acknowledgement of the limitation of protest being represented by the media, which Arbadar points out, is "usually very responsive to burning tyres and action and protests and shooting" (Abarder, 2020). It is not surprising that when Abarder issued the call inviting students, he did not get any responses. It was only after a friend alerted him to issues of lack of **trust** between students and the media. He explained:

I said I have got this idea, [but] none of the students are putting out. How are we going to get the students? Then he said to me "don't be stupid, go to the campus and humble yourself, they are not going to come to you, they don't trust you. You represent the establishment. You have to go to them", and that is what we did (Abarder, 2020).

Part of establishing trust meant going to seek out students at UCT. This is important for two reasons. One, it positions **trust** as an important precondition for listening even when the other group is merely a mediator. Throughout this research project, trust has always been linked to power, so much so that students have proven to be suspicious of those in power. Two, it further reinforces the idea that trust can be established through taking action that demonstrates a commitment to openness and letting go of the desire to control the process. Having a newspaper editor physically "go to the campus and humble yourself" (Abarder,

2020) to ask students to co-edit an edition of the newspaper demonstrates a commitment to openness and willingness to listen. But when it comes to institutions such as the media, which hold the power of representing issues and people, it is negotiating the power to control the narrative that is also important in establishing trust between students and the newspaper editor. Arbadar explained:

There was a little bit of suspicion that I could sense but they (students) were prepared to listen to us because they understood that we were opening up a platform for them where they can tell their own story. So, some of the concerns were, what kind of control would they have, whether I am allowing them to edit the newspaper, what am I actually saying, who has control of the headlines. So, those were the kinds of questions that they had (Abarder, 2020).

Abarder's offer was based on the realisation that for the newspaper to hear and accurately represent the plight of the students, openness was a necessary precursor. This is the kind of openness that gave students the authority that allowed them to represent their issues. For Abarder, this meant treating students as equals in the newspaper production process. He explained:

I wanted to make it clear to them that this was a partnership. Ultimately, they were now my equals. They owned 50% of this newspaper and I owned the other half. So, in a way they were not really accountable to me but accountable to themselves. In my usual newspaper environment, it is the other way around. Yes, we are democratic in the way that I listen to ideas but in as far as decision-making is concerned, I just use the suggestions but ultimately, I decide what goes in the paper the next day. Because if we get sued, I get sued. The difference here is if they publish something that was defamatory, I would be sued so I needed to trust them, and I explained this to them that I would take responsibility for what they were writing. And so, **I needed to be brave, but ultimately, I couldn't have** the final say of what they wanted to present. This was their 50% of the newspaper (Abarder, 2020).

What Abarder is referring to above is an example of the discomfort and risk that comes with genuine openness and ceding control of the process in an attempt at genuine listening. It is a sense of co-owning the outcome of a process in that both parties were invested equally. Furthermore, the process is an eye-opener in terms of the possibility of editing newspapers differently using an approach that could reduce the distribution of power between the editor and groups that are being reported upon. Abarder explained:

For the first time in my life, there was an example that you can actually edit a newspaper by committee if you prepared to leave your ego, your prejudices, and your personal preferences aside for the greater good. **That just doesn't happen in the newspaper** environment (Abarder, 2020).

This is a democratic way in which a committee rather than an individual could make editorial decisions for a newspaper.

6.5. FMF and the shifting relations away from the ANC

The FMF protest was the first in post-apartheid South Africa where students united to embark on a nationwide protest against the ANC-led government. For other political parties, a student movement with a national footprint represented political capital that was up for grabs. These protests were also about the shifting relationship people inside the movement had towards the ANC. For example, some of the protest leaders at Wits who were ‘prominent’ members of the ruling ANC, and its affiliate, SASCO, refused to lead the protest to Luthuli House, the ANC’s headquarters. This moment is critical for understanding the schizophrenic view of the ANC by student leaders affiliated with it. These student leaders had no objection to taking the protest to Parliament and the Union Buildings where they would negotiate with the members of the ruling party. It seems that the refusal to take the protest to Luthuli House would have made the fees issue an ANC failure as opposed to a government failure.

For UCT, which is at the heart of a Democratic Alliance-run Western Cape Province, the opposition leader – Mmusi Maimane – mistaken the protest against fees for protest against the ANC. Maimane visited campus to address students in a bid to woo them into believing that his party was behind the students’ cause. The result was disastrous; in a typical shaming that has become symbolic of the student protest which started in 2015, students booed the DA leader and called him a race ‘sell-out’ for leading a ‘white party’ when he is black. This was the beginning of the master-slave/puppet discourse that students used frequently against UCT’s black executives during the Shackville protest (see **Chapter 7** for details).

6.6. Conclusion

I will now use this section to highlight some of the major themes that I highlighted in analysing some of the major activities in the unfolding of the FeesMustFall protest. The refusal to listen was one of the dominant themes of this chapter as was the case in the previous two chapters. The difference is that it played out on three levels. There was a refusal to listen by the government, through the Minister of Higher Education and Training who insisted on a 6% fee increase despite the students calling for a no-fee increase. The chapter also highlighted how the UCT management refused to even want to hear what students who

were protesting against fees wanted to say. This was done through the UCT management's strategy of conditional willingness to engage with protesting staff and students if they stop engaging in protest that disrupts university operations. This chapter also introduced the reader to a first account of the refusal to listen within the RMF movement, where a prominent member of the movement not only refused to consider the viewpoints of colleagues but disregards the movement's procedures.

There was a significant emphasis on restoring law and order in various activities. Viewing the university through the lens of Private Property Law gave UCT the legal framework to apply for an interdict and to bring the police on campus to enforce the interdict. The right to protest kept coming up as a theme in communication by the UCT management and the Minister of Higher Education and Training. This is important in that although the UCT management kept referring to their respect for the right to protest, theirs was a narrow interpretation of that right limiting the scope of what made this right an important pillar of democracy. What this protest and the protest against the statue of Cecil John Rhodes demonstrated effectively as far as the right to protest is concerned is that it can be interpreted in a manner that limits its effectiveness. These limitations can be overcome by coupling the right to protest with John Husband's "right to be understood" (in Downing, 2007:12).

In terms of recognition of students' efforts in getting the government to pay attention to the issue of student fees, this only happens when the students take protest to the national stage. It is only when they take the protest to the South African Parliament and the Union Buildings that university Vice-Chancellors give them recognition. In terms of the media coverage of the FMF protest, the chapter brings a diversity of coverage from the *Cape Times* newspaper. For the first time in the newspaper's coverage of RMF's activities, the chapter highlighted news articles written from the perspective of official sources. This was a deviation from articles written from the perspective of students. The Cape Argus' act of giving voice to students by allowing them to co-edit an edition creates possibilities of looking at control of the editorial process as an area that can be unpacked using listening theory.

Chapter 7: Shackville protest: Homeless at UCT

"The inability of one group to speak and the inability for the other group to hear always results in violence"

Brian Kamanzi

7.1. Introduction

This Chapter will discuss and analyse the interaction between RMF and UCT management regarding the shortage of housing for students in the first quarter of 2016. It will also investigate the activities that form part of the protest against the shortage of housing, which became widely known as #Shackville protest. However, to fully understand the #Shackville protest, it is important to locate these events within the broader context of events that led to that moment. This is important because the protest itself offers very little in the way of explaining the modes of protest and the willingness and/or unwillingness to engage to solve disagreements and the problem at hand. In this regard, I contend that #Shackville protest is a manifestation of the consequences of decisions that were taken at the beginning of the year by both UCT management and RMF, respectively. The events of 2015 remained a thread that created a seam throughout these protests. I will start by detailing key events that had an impact on the interaction between UCT and RMF, and UCT, RMF and the *Cape Times* newspaper leading to the #Shackville protest. These events and/or activities will be followed by a discussion of how the protest itself unfolded and its coverage by the *Cape Times*, followed by an analysis of key moments. I will start with deferred examinations followed by RMF's occupation of Avenue Hall and proceed to the #Shackville protest.

7.2. Key events leading to the #Shackville protest

7.2.1. Deferred examinations in January 2016

The 2015 final examinations at UCT started later than usual on 10 November and proceeded to Friday, 27 November 2015 except for exams in the Faculty of Health Sciences (Amoore, 2015). This delay in starting the 2015 final exams was a result of the "closure of the campus from 19 to 30 October 2015" due to the #FeesMustFall and #EndOutsourcing protests at the university (Price, 2015). The late start to exams had a snowball effect on the Summer Term pushing it to start on Friday, 27 November 2015 with Summer Term examinations on 23 December 2015. Amoore's exam schedule also featured an option to defer part of or all the exams to January 2016 for students who were not prepared to write their final examinations

as per the agreement between UCT management, RMF, the SRC and other groups (Price, 2015). The agreement also announced that “no students living in residences who are eligible for financial aid will incur additional residence accommodation costs due to the delayed exam period” and that the university was going to reduce residence food costs to “at least R40 per day” (Price, 2015). Contrary to this agreement, RMF announced on Facebook at the beginning of January 2016 that “all students will receive, at no cost, three meals a day and free accommodation [in UCT residences]” and that university residences were opened to accept students from 4 January 2016 despite UCT’s announcement that residences would only open on 7 January 2016 (UCT: Rhodes Must Fall Facebook page, 4 January 2016). Opening the university residence a few days sooner than the university proposed would help give students from less fortunate backgrounds, especially those without access to access to wifi and quiet private spaces to study in, more time and space to prepare for exams. RMF interpreted the university’s intention to open the residences on 7 January instead of January 4 as a “deliberate political act to systematically exclude those who are coming from the margins of society... [who] have been part and parcel of the ongoing protests” (ibid). Student 1 pointed out that many members of the movement who were protesting the previous year were writing deferred exams that January but many odds were stacked against them. Student 1 explained:

... many of the comrades who put themselves on the forefront who were undergraduates faced a lot of trauma and found it very difficult to get back into the exam room. Particularly those who were of working class origin were put in this difficult situation of having to sort out everything about your life and December is a very complex period. You don't even have internet where you are staying, all these things are just taken for granted. And so, when the deferred exams happened not everybody gets through (Student 1, 2017).

With this background in mind, the start of 2016 was unusual for UCT and many other South African universities at that time. For one, UCT was starting the year by first concluding the deferred exams from 2015. As Ally (2017) explained, “It was the first time, in recent memory, where the academic year (for the previous year) had not been completed and had to be completed that year because of the protest and deferred exams”. What usually happened was that by the end of the year, residences were always empty. On a normal year, students would have had to leave the university residence at the end of 2015 to allow the university to prepare for the 2016 intake. Deferred exams, coupled with free university accommodation for all students writing deferred exams, meant that university residences, which were usually free

in January in preparation for the new intake, were occupied by students from the previous year. These students included both those who were in university residences the previous year and those who were not. Upon completing their exams, many of these students remained in the UCT residences as they waited for exam results and the start of the new academic calendar for those who were continuing with their studies. Deferred exams started on 11 January 2016, and the university still using the services of a private security³² company, which was used after the #FeesMustFall and #EndOutsourcing protests of the previous year, to secure examinations from disruption by protesting students (Price, 2016a).

7.2.1.1. Accommodation for students who completed deferred exams

Students who were in university residences for deferred exams were expected to leave the university residences after completing their exams as is usually the case for students writing exams at the university, signalling the end of the academic year or a break in the academic calendar. Ally (2017) explained that “in 2016, the difference was that many students had remained in the residence system to write the exams and had not left the residence system”. For many students, it simply did not make (financial and logistical) sense to pay for travel back home at the end of January only to travel back again in March for the commencement of the new academic year. There was also a matter of many students who could not afford temporary accommodation costs and the costs of going home only to come back again a month or so later. RMF extended an invitation to students who had to vacate the university residences and did not have accommodation to go to Avenue Hall (UCT: Rhodes Must Fall Facebook, 25 January 2017). There was also a growing number of new students who were coming to register under the impression that they have also been offered a place in the university residences only to discover that their residence offer was withdrawn because the rooms were occupied by students who were writing deferred exams.

The results of these examinations were released on 29 January 2017 (Price, 2016b). Many students who wrote deferred exams remained in residences after the results were released. When Price (2016b) announced the date at which exams ended, he also invited all student formations to meet with him “to identify issues they felt should be addressed in order to

³² Private security, as the name suggests, are security companies/forces that are privately owned and are not affiliated to the university. The recent trend in South African universities has been to hire these companies to ‘protect’ universities during student protest.

obviate the need for protest action and disruption”. Only the SRC and Student Assembly accepted the invitation and participated. RMF did not reply or attend to Price’s invitation. It was in this period that Price also announced the formation of the Special Executive Task Team (SETT) (Price, 2016b), which was to play a fundamental role in the accommodation crisis that followed.

7.2.2. The introduction of UCT’s Special Executive Task Team

According to Price (2016b), SETT was meant to focus on national matters affecting universities that may have an impact on UCT. He pointed out that: “The aim is for the task team to work with multiple stakeholders across campus, to anticipate and diffuse tensions, ensure good communication with the campus community when events are moving rapidly, and ensure maintenance of a safe environment for all” (Price, 2016b). This task team, Price continued, was led by then Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Francis Petersen³³; and its other members were Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Anwar Mall; Dr Russell Ally, Executive Director: Department of Alumni Development; Elelwani Ramugondo, the Vice-Chancellor’s Special Advisor on Transformation; Roland September from Risk Management; Gerda Kruger, Executive Director: Communications and Marketing Department; and Lisa Cloete from the Quality Assurance Unit. It is important to note that this task team was formed and announced without any consultation with students even though it was meant to deal with the protest at the university. The formation of SETT also marked a departure from the UCT management’s strategy of including student and staff representation in its committees and task teams.

The significance of SETT was highlighted by the seniority of the positions that its members held in their respective departments and the fact that members of this task team had to make SETT their priority. As Price (2016b) explained, SETT members had to “make arrangements in their portfolios for work to continue whilst they serve on the task team”. This task team was a product of the assessment of the events of 2015 by the UCT executive. The executive decided that it was better to select a core group of people to negotiate with various protesting

³³ Francis Petersen is not related to Carlo Petersen, who wrote most RMF-related stories for the Cape Times. Then DVC Petersen is now the Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Free State. I will refer to him as DVC Petersen to prevent any conflation/confusion with Petersen the Cape Times journalist.

groups, freeing the rest of the executive to continue with their day-to-day duties (Price, 2017).

There was another reason for the decision to constitute a team that negotiates on behalf of university management. Ramugondo explained that SETT was formed because there was general unhappiness with the responses that the VC gave to protesting students during the protests of 2015. There was a constituency at the university that was unhappy with the VC capitulating to RMF's demands during the heat of the moment. Ramugondo explained:

Initially when I was an advisor in a substantive role, I sat in all the Vice-Chancellor's advisory groups. I was actually the only point of advice to the Vice-Chancellor from (June) 2015 until the end of that year. It was the time that [I] put the VC on the forefront of all negotiations but there was a lot of unhappiness about that. My push was that if you have a Vice-Chancellor who is saying there was a rupture and transformation has to be at the forefront, that vice-chancellor should be seen to be championing transformation. I felt it made a lot of sense for him to be the face of this change but there were those who wanted to protect him. They felt that he was over-exposed, he was getting exhausted and that he was making promises without having the power to see everything through. The following year SETT was established (Ramugondo, 2017).

Ramugondo's explanation above has important implications for speaking and listening. What she described above is a strategy to avoid a context where listening between RMF members could take place face-to-face during the moment of disagreement. The face-to-face context allows for both parties to speak and give responses to each other instantly as evidence of listening. Price suggested a similar reason for this general "unhappiness", as Ramugondo refers to it. He explained that "It was not constructive for the Vice-Chancellor to be in the heat or the moment of pressure because you are forced to respond immediately. You don't have the luxury of taking stock to respond" (Price, 2017).

The justification by the VC above suggests that SETT was also conceptualised as an all-important buffer between protesting staff & students and the Vice-Chancellor. The fact that it was, like many task teams, not equipped with any decision-making powers is a testament that its function was not only to act as a buffer in widening the gap between the Vice-Chancellor and protest but also as a vehicle for listening and recommending. As Ally (2017) explained, SETT was conceptualised as an institution that would provide a platform for disgruntled university stakeholders to voice their grievances. This was, Ally added, an important platform given the protests of 2015 and the general unhappiness with the institutional culture and the lack of voice by some black students and staff expressed in those protests. SETT was meant

to work as a “conduit” to ensure that the grievances or unhappiness reach the highest level of university management before they turn into protest as a last resort. Ally explained:

It [SETT] was there to deal with crisis, to anticipate crisis, to provide an avenue for students and staff to engage in issues and to be a conduit between the Vice-Chancellor and whichever group that had issues that they were raising. It was an early warning group as well. It was for before issues got out of control. When people felt like they were not being listened to, SETT was there to ensure that they are listened to (Ally, 2017).

It is important to unpack Ally’s rationale for SETT’s existence using insights from political listening theory. For a start, unlike all other task teams at UCT, SETT did not have any terms of reference on how it would execute its duties. Take its supposed role of providing an avenue for students and staff to engage in issues as an example. This is a view of SETT as, Bickford (1996) would argue, a deliberative platform where individuals could deliberate on issues of common interest. Its role as a “conduit” immediately suggests that as a deliberative platform, Price who is the final recipient of the messages should be part of the conversation in the first place. It is not out of order to conclude that SETT was envisioned to work a lot like a messenger, creating an unnecessary barrier before getting to the VC. What makes the situation even dire is that the new barrier is coming into effect at the back of the 2015 protests where Price would be present at the protest and respond to issues. SETT came into existence just as the accommodation crisis was about to start. This crisis was the task team’s litmus test.

7.3. The accommodation crisis and #Shackville protest at UCT

It was at the beginning of February 2016 that first-year students were arriving in numbers. Some of these students arrived at their allocated university residences only to be told that their accommodation had already been taken by other students. RMF, which was deeply divided at the time with some members having ceased their participation in its activities, saw the accommodation crisis “as a way of building capacity” (Student 1, 2017). The accommodation crisis was an opportunity for the social movement to stamp its authority at the university and in the process attract back its old members and new ones. Student 1 explained that on his and RMF members’ way to the student administration building (Masingene Building) to investigate what the real issues were, they discovered many new students seeking accommodation.

In addition to this cohort of first-year students who did not have accommodation, there were also returning students who had just finished their deferred exams and did not have a place to stay because some of them had to vacate their residence after the exams. RMF issued a call for those who had to vacate university residences to go to Avenue House³⁴ and provide their details (UCT: Rhodes Must Fall Facebook, 25 January 2016). The Student Housing and Residence Life Department made it clear that part of the reason for the accommodation crisis stemmed from the fact that the university over-offered residence places as a policy. Ally explained:

The university always offers more places to students than there actually are places because the take-up rate is never 100 percent. We have never, in the past, had a problem where more students accept more places than we have space for. Student Housing, developed, in offering places, some kind of art where they could almost know beforehand [how many students would take up their offers] (Ally, 2017).

However, what the Student Housing and Residence Life Department could not have anticipated was that 2016 was an exceptional year. More students took up their offers to stay in the UCT residences than the Student Housing and Residence Life Department could accommodate probably because the president had announced the zero-per cent increase in university fees and a commission to investigate the feasibility of a fee-free education was appointed. In addition, the Fees Must Fall student protest had made extensive strides in demonstrating to South Africa that students were willing to do whatever it took for free education to become a reality. UCT was still trying to find a solution for students who were in university residence for deferred exams from the 2015 academic calendar. There was also a matter of the residence allocation system, which malfunctioned. Ally (2017) explained:

The system of allocation, in some weird way, got it wrong. In some residences we had over-allocated and in other residences we had under-allocated. In normal circumstances that thing writes itself and balances itself. **For some reason, it wasn't working particularly well. This impacted quite a bit on first-year students who were coming and had been told they were in residence X, arrived in residence X and it was full. There was no one there to tell them that you can go to residence Y. So the RhodesMustFall, FeesMustFall movement students that became #Shackville saw this as another indication of the university's either indifference to the plight of poor students or that the university was really not addressing the concerns of poor students in a proactive enough way** (Ally, 2017).

³⁴ Avenue House is the headquarters of university student accommodation. It is where the Student Housing and Residence Life Department is housed, and students are allocated into university residences.

As the system of allocating students into the residence was failing, RMF invited students who had to vacate university residence and those who did not have a place to stay to go to Avenue Hall or to lower campus to put their names down. This invitation was issued on 25 January 2017, as deferred exams were being wrapped up in the following two days. In addition to its interest and work on accommodation issues, RMF was also busy mobilizing for a workers' gathering which took place on 1 February 2016. The social movement also issued a call for an urgent meeting to be held at 19h00 the same day for "all those who have been financially or academically excluded (due to protest action and involvement with RMF/FMF/EndOutsourcing)". This announcement was followed by another post requesting students who "had been kicked-out" university residence and those who were not allocated a place in residence to go to Avenue House and put their names down on the list so that they can be allocated to a university residence. Those students who were unable to go to Avenue House were advised to leave their details in the comment section of the post for RMF to follow-up. The next Facebook post was a call for students to occupy Avenue House. The students responded in their numbers.

7.3.1. The occupation of Avenue House

On the evening of Monday, 1 February 2016, amidst the accommodation crisis, a group of RMF members occupied Avenue House (which is the building where student accommodation is allocated). The social movement demanded the immediate resolution of issues related to academic exclusions, financial aid and accommodation and food for students who did not have accommodation. Two days later, on 3 February 2016, the social movement started communication (through email) with the UCT management. RMF sent the following email with six demands to the executive:

This letter serves to present the set of demands drafted by #RhodesMustFall. On the basis that these demands are met we will in good faith vacate Avenue House by tomorrow the 4th of February 2016 at 07:00 am.

1. We demand that all students placed in transit be given permanent accommodation, starting tonight.
2. We demand a statement from the Vice Chancellor, Max Price, stating
 - a. The systemic failings of Student Housing and contextualizing the victories of mass action that led to students being housed at the Riverside Lodge.
 - b. Re-invoking the agreement with senior management that no one should be prevented from continuing their studies on the basis of affordability.
 - c. This should be released today.
3. We demand a meeting at 5 p.m. on Thursday the 4th of February with senior management, including the Vice Chancellor, to discuss:
 - a. Concerns of victimisation in RAC (Residence Allocation Committee)

- b. Overcoming exclusion
 - c. Pursuing collective reprieve for political action
4. We demand a clear description of the plan for the various **scenarios' after the RAC has taken its** decisions at the above mentioned meeting.
 5. We demand a statement from the Vice Chancellor supporting African International students who are stranded in their home countries due to police clearance issues.
 6. We demand that students, who are reinstated by the university during the RAC, have financial aid restored (Correspondence between RMF and SETT, 2016).

In a response to RMF's email, SETT wrote back the same day and explained that they will only consider engaging with RMF further once the movement had ended the occupation of Avenue House. In response to UCT management, RMF wrote back to SETT on Thursday, 4 February 2016, assuring the task team that the movement had vacated Avenue House. SETT responded by explaining to RMF that despite the movement's insistence that they ended the occupation of Avenue House a university policing officer found five people who were still in the building (Correspondence between RMF and SETT, 2016). DVC Petersen explained to RMF that by vacating the building he meant that "the occupation of Avenue House has been unconditionally ended, Avenue House staff will be able to return to their places of work without any interference or interruptions, RMF gives a firm undertaking that it will not re-occupy Avenue House and staff will be able to return without any fears that they will not be uprooted" (Correspondence between RMF and SETT, 4 February 2016).

DVC Petersen also expressed SETT's eagerness to engage with RMF only after the Avenue House occupation had ended and when the social movement shared the same understanding of what vacating the building meant. RMF responded the same day indicating that the movement will only end the occupation after its demands are met and explained that the movement did not know who the five who were still occupying Avenue House were but had issued a call for all its members to leave the building so that staff can continue with their work. SETT was also informed of an occupation of the Cadbol Building prompting "a situation where the Masingene Building (the 'headquarters' of student administration) was locked in fear that this will be invaded too" (Correspondence between RMF and SETT, 4 February 2016). SETT wrote back to RMF the same day appealing to the social movement to reach out to those occupying Cadbol Building to vacate the premises because SETT would not engage with RMF until this occupation had also ended. RMF wrote back to Petersen informing him that the occupation of Cadbol House had ended and that the social movement would see the university's senior management at 17h00 at Avenue Hall as was agreed (Correspondence between RMF and SETT, 2016). RMF then announced on its Facebook

page that it would be meeting the university's senior management at Avenue Hall at 17h00 that afternoon and invited "all financially and/or academically excluded students and/or students without accommodation [to] please send their name, student number and contact details to the RMF Facebook account or rhodesmustfall@gmail.com" and to go to Avenue Hall at 17h00 to meet directly with senior management (UCT: Rhodes Must Fall Facebook, 4 February 2016).

DVC Petersen responded and explained to RMF that they (SETT) have noticed that RMF sent out a Facebook post asking students who were financially and/or academically excluded and students without accommodation to come and talk directly with management "despite the fact that we have made it absolutely clear to you that we will not be meeting with you at this stage" (Correspondence between RMF and SETT, 4 February 2016). He continued to offer the following reasons for not meeting with RMF:

- You wrote to us on Wednesday, 3 February 2016 at 16h35 PM with several demands.
- We wrote to you in response on the same day at 20h41 PM to explain that we will only consider engaging further with you once you have ended the occupation of Avenue House which you began on Monday, 1 February 2016 leading to the expulsion of the Avenue House staff from their workstations.
- You wrote to us at Thursday, 4 February 2016 at 9h41 AM, to say that you have vacated Avenue Hall. We sent an officer to the building after your email to find that five people were still in the building.
- We wrote on Thursday, 4 February 2016 asking you to clarify what you meant by vacating and to reassure us that that the occupation will end unconditionally. Furthermore, that Avenue House staff could return to their workstations and would not be interfered with.
- You wrote back on Thursday, 4 February 2016 at 13h01 to say that you will vacate only after we have met your demands.
- Almost at the same time you (20 people) invaded the Cadbol building, intimidating and forcing staff to leave the building.
- This created a situation where the Masingene Building was locked in fear that this will be invaded too (Correspondence between RMF and SETT, 4 February 2016).

DVC Petersen went further to explain that issue of student accommodation that RMF was raising could not be resolved because there were no functional student services due to RMF's occupation of buildings and intimidation of staff in those buildings. DVC Petersen concluded the email by stating that there was no indication that there was trust between RMF and SETT and that SETT was willing to engage in an accountable way. SETT was willing to engage with RMF, explained DVC Petersen, but could only do so when the social movement had "demonstrated that such engagement can occur in a respectful manner" (Correspondence between RMF and SETT, 4 February 2016). Communication between the two parties ceased after this email. But later that day, DVC Petersen sent an email communication to the

university community explaining that “the [UCT] executive have communicated that before the discussion could resume, RMF must indicate that vacating Avenue House means the following: The occupation of Avenue House has been unconditionally ended; Avenue House staff will be able to return to their places of work without any interference or interruptions, and RMF gives a firm undertaking that it will not re-occupy Avenue House and staff will be able to return without any fears of being uprooted” (Petersen (F), 2016). The statement did not explain the university’s role in the accommodation crisis, what caused the accommodation crisis or what the status was in terms of resolving the accommodation problem. The statement was about procedural issues rather than substantive issues, leaving the accommodation issue unresolved and without any indication of the university’s efforts on the matter. Student 1 explained that “What was not said in that statement is what happens to the people who no longer have a place to stay, so that became a protest and it led to several things happening at Masingene” (Student 1, 2017).

7.3.2. Correspondence between RMF and UCT management

Communication between RMF and UCT management resumed with an email from DVC Petersen sent to the social movement on Thursday, 11 February 2016, six days after the last email exchange between the two. This email signalled the beginning of a communications conflict between RMF and UCT management. The email stated that:

As the Executive, we wish to thank you (RMF) for drawing our attention to concerns relating to student accommodation. We would like to engage in discussion on the broader issue of transformation, private security and also provide feedback/ progress on the accommodation issues. In earlier communication we had indicated that you may make use of Avenue Hall until the deferred examinations have been concluded (25 Jan 2016) and we will also discuss the plan for you to leave Avenue Hall. We would like to meet with you tomorrow, Friday 12 February at 12:00 (noon), to discuss the above in The John Martin Room, Level 5, New Engineering Building, Upper Campus (Correspondence between RMF and UCT, 11 February 2016).

It is important to note that the email from the UCT management had also shifted the topic of engagement between the two parties from the accommodation crisis to include “the broader issue of transformation”, “private security” and the plan for RMF to leave Avenue Hall. RMF responded to this request the following day, an hour before the requested meeting. The movement email represented a shift in the communication approach to UCT management. While the social movement’s emails started with salutations, RMF had abandoned that convention and chose instead to dive right into the matter stating that:

Due to the taxing effects of the events transpiring at yesterday's Free Education protests at parliament the #RhodesMustFall movement is unable to meet with the university management under the suggested conditions. We reject the tone and suggestion in this email invitation that there is anything amicable between us as you and the executive have consistently defamed the movement to the university community and have used illegal forms of private security to intimidate and repress our members and the just protests they have embarked on. We have no interest in speaking to puppets who dance to the music of conservative whites on council and senate for their own careerist objectives. If we are eventually to meet with anyone to discuss the issues listed it will be directly with the Vice-Chancellor and not with disposable tools of the white power structure (Correspondence between RMF and UCT, 12 February 2016).

The response from RMF was a refusal to engage with anyone other than the one person that the movement perceived to have the authority and decision-making powers at the university, the Vice-Chancellor. The social movement is also making a strong link between race and power. RMF is making a claim that the senior black executives in SETT (Francis Petersen, Anwar Mall, Russell Ally, Elelwani Ramugondo and Roland September) are merely an extension of white leaders, who are the ones in charge and have decision-making power. The black executive members are accused of acting as if they are in charge, in exchange they get to further "their own careerist objectives". The social movement does this by drawing on historical knowledge of how under apartheid South Africa many black homeland leaders became "puppets who dance to the music of conservative whites" to keep their positions as kings and/or leaders of their so-called independent homelands. RMF's email shifts the conversation further to a contestation about who has the perceived legitimacy to negotiate with RMF on behalf of UCT. DVC Petersen responded to RMF the same day and explained how the UCT management had taken "extreme exception to the tone, language and description of senior leaders" used by the social movement in its response (Correspondence between RMF and UCT, 12 February 2016). The response, DVC Petersen further explained, was directly against RMF's objective of empowering black people. He also provided an confirmed to RMF that:

... SETT and not the Vice-Chancellor will engage with you on the issues as specified in our earlier invitation to you. No other member of the Executive or the Vice-Chancellor will meet with you, other than SETT (Correspondence between RMF and UCT, 12 February 2016).

DVC Petersen's email ended with an ultimatum for RMF to "either reconsider the invitation to meet with SETT on Monday, 15 February at 13:00 or management will decide on the fate of Avenue Hall without you" (Correspondence between RMF and UCT, 12 February 2016).

The email from DVC Petersen is important for three reasons in the development of events that led to the #Shackville protest. One, it was the first time in the correspondence that Petersen identified himself, albeit not explicitly, as being a representative of SETT despite identifying himself as a representative of “the Executive” when he sent the invitation the previous day. That is, one could be forgiven for believing that the initial invitation that Petersen sent to RMF was directly from the UCT executive management to which Petersen belonged. Two, though it was presented as an opportunity for participation, DVC Petersen’s email also closed-off any possibility for communication or engagement on Avenue Hall occupation should RMF not attend the proposed meeting. Petersen gave RMF an ultimatum; be part of the meeting or “the Executive will have no choice other than to proceed on the plan for Avenue Hall without your involvement” (Correspondence between RMF and UCT, 12 February 2016). Finally, Petersen’s email also signalled a change in strategy for the UCT management. The Vice-Chancellor was no longer going to negotiate with students directly. SETT was to be the buffer between RMF and the Vice-Chancellor. Petersen’s email conveyed a sense that SETT was “protecting Max Price”, as Ramugondo explained (2017), as opposed to having him in the forefront of negotiation with students.

On Saturday, 13 February 2016, RMF sent a response to DVC Petersen’s email. The email starts with a salutation, “Dear Colonial Administrators”, emphasising that the social movement viewed SETT members as the equivalent of puppets who are being told what to do and say. The email accused UCT of having “established indirect rule through the formation of the so-called "special task team" of the executive” (Correspondence between RMF and UCT, 13 February 2016). Student 1 explained that the social movement did not want to speak to the SETT representatives because “RMF’s organising principle was that we do not speak to the middle-managers we speak to the person who makes the decisions, Max Price, because if he runs the University like a Spaza³⁵ then that’s what we do, we speak to the head” (Student 1, 2017). Although there is no evidence of Price running the University like his shop, the perception could have come from the engagement that students had with him the previous year where he could make promises in the heat of the protest.

³⁵ A spaza shop is a small, informal convenient store that many families in South African townships open to supplement the family income.

Besides singling out Petersen as being “responsible for setting private security on Black students”, the response email also highlighted RMF’s refusal to what they regarded as to “speak through the channels of indirect rule as a matter of principle” (Student 1, 2017). This distinction by Student 1 points out that RMF was not opposed to engaging with UCT management but rather that they were opposed to a ritual of speaking and listening that will not elicit any results given the perceived and real lack of decision-making power of SETT and its representatives. However, on Sunday, 14 February 2016, DVC Petersen responded to RMF’s email accusing RMF of not wanting to engage. DVC Petersen explained:

Not only do you reject all attempts at engagement, but you also demonstrate the utmost contempt for authorized representatives of the university executive. Sadly, your communication has degenerated into the politics of personal insult, intolerance, intimidation and threats. This is completely unacceptable and has no place in a democratic society, let alone an institution of learning. It is your right to hold diametrically opposed views on what constitutes progressive politics. Not only does the executive respect this, but it is its responsibility to ensure that space is provided in the university for such views. It will never seek to repress or criminalize such views or the people who hold such views
(Correspondence between RMF and UCT, 14 February 2016).

In the paragraph above, DVC Petersen noted the unwillingness to engage on the part of RMF and the social movement’s unwillingness to give “recognition” to SETT as legitimate “authorized representatives of the university executive”. He also used the email to address RMF’s accusation that he set private security on students, explaining that private security was not on campus “to repress political activity but only to make sure that the university can carry out its core activities without disruption and intimidation” (Correspondence between RMF and UCT, 14 February 2016). His email continued to give RMF another ultimatum to join SETT to engage in the Avenue Hall occupation or face eviction through a legal process since the agreement was to allow RMF to use the space until the end of exams. DVC Petersen explained:

The continued presence of RMF in Avenue Hall is now no longer necessary. The executive has raised the question of dedicated alternative space because it recognizes the importance of the issues represented by RMF. It has also indicated its openness to finding a way to acknowledge the historical significance of Avenue Hall. Contrary to what is being claimed, it is not the intention or wish of the executive to ‘crush’ RMF. The executive believes that RMF has a critical role to play in the continuing transformation (what RMF calls decolonization) of the university. But the university can no longer be held to ransom. Without mutual respect and willingness to create a conducive environment for open and meaningful engagement, not only is the academic project of the university jeopardized but also all

hopes of a constructive transformation process (Correspondence between RMF and UCT, 14 February 2016).

However, RMF did not respond to DVC Petersen's email but instead erected a shack in the middle of Residence Road in the early hours of Monday, 15 February 2016, the day of the proposed meeting.

7.3.3. #Shackville Protest

On Monday, 15 February 2016, UCT woke up to a shack erected in the middle of Residence Road at the foot of the steps to Jameson Hall and two streets above where the statue of Cecil John Rhodes was located. For RMF, the shack was a great opportunity to raise consciousness about the lack of housing for students at the university and to unite the movement behind the cause. Student 1 explained that the shack should be seen as “an attempt to try and re-unify the movement on the issue outside of our personal issues and contradictions” (Student 1, 2017). The location of the shack was significant not only because it was above where the statue of Rhodes was and below Jameson Hall, which is arguably the biggest monument at UCT. Residence Road, which is the road that the shack blocked, is a thoroughfare for cars coming into the university through the south entrance of the M3 Road that passes at the edge of UCT's Upper Campus. The inconvenience or disruption that the shack caused extended beyond UCT's Upper Campus. Russell Ally explained:

What then happened was on that day that they erected a shack, we received word within SETT about the protest but we also received word from traffic officials, police and staff that because of where the shack was, it interrupted the flow of traffic. **Because of the nature of our campus, it wasn't just staying** in campus but it was also affecting the M3 motor way. There was a big back-up of traffic and SAPS actually called UCT to find out what was actually going on and what was causing all this traffic to snail up. Also, students on campus and cars that normally use **that thoroughfare couldn't move because the** shack was sort of in the road (Ally, 2017).

Ally further explained that SETT met to discuss the shack but the discussion was not about the legitimacy of the issues and the right to protest. The discussion was about the location of the shack and “protest not preventing other activities from continuing”, while for students “the intention was to cause a massive disruption” (Ally, 2017). The location of the shack was intentionally chosen by RMF. In a Facebook statement RMF explained that Shackville was “located below the towering memorial to the brutal colonial thug of Rhodes – Leander Starr Jameson” and that the shack was “a monument to the oppression that has been enforced on black people by the likes of Jameson and all manifestations of the white supremacist

capitalist patriarchal system” (UCT: Rhodes Must Fall Facebook page, 15 February 2016). For RMF, the shack symbolised decades of black struggles for land in South Africa and ties that history with the accommodation challenges for black students at UCT.

This link between struggles for land and accommodation was part of the social movement’s strategy of locating its struggles within a historical context of oppression, colonialism and capitalism; and framing the movement as a symbol of resistance against continued oppression and exploitation. For RMF, erecting a shack on the campus was an attempt to force the university (and its community) to confront the “the violence experienced by those in shacks and townships”. This was arguably RMF’s biggest strength – its ability to not only represent a multiplicity of struggles and causes but also to locate such struggle within a historical context and link it to the current context. RMF’s statement further accused UCT of transgressions that the social movement was unwilling to be complicit in.

According to RMF’s statement on Facebook, the movement erected a shack as a symbol of worker struggles, the poor’s struggles, fees struggles and black struggles within the university. It was, in a sense, an umbrella that brought together many RMF’s struggles into one physical location. RMF’s statement also re-emphasised the movement’s unwillingness to speak to members of SETT, whom they viewed as “colonial administrators” who were “puppets and gate keepers of white supremacy” (UCT: Rhodes Must Fall Facebook page; 15 February 2016), as a matter of principle. Once again, RMF draws a link between universities governed by the state through indirect rule and black UCT executives as representatives of the indirect rulers of the university. Senior members of the executives who are black are characterised as having been “granted pseudo levers of power in this institution” (UCT: Rhodes Must Fall Facebook page; 15 February 2016). RMF seemed to suggest that real listening could not happen between the movement and these senior managers since they did not have decision-making power. This refusal speaks to the kind of listening that RMF is interested in; one where decisions would be taken as a response to the speaking and listening between the two parties. This is, arguably, the reason for RMF’s refusal to engage with members of SETT with their lack of decision-making powers. To RMF, they are just “puppets and gate keepers of white supremacy”. This strategy of drawing parallels between colonial and/or apartheid-era South Africa and UCT was important in regulating the way UCT could deal with the shack. The university was faced with the challenge of having to deal with the shack in a manner that would not create any parallels with colonial and

apartheid-era forced removals in South Africa's public memory. SETT sent a representative to engage with students about the possibility of moving the shack off the road to a patch of grass next to Jan Smuts Residence. DVC Petersen, Ally and Mall went to meet with members of RMF at the shack with a request for students to move the shack to allow traffic to flow. The request was rejected by RMF because, as Ally explained, "the argument was that we need to make a statement, maximum disruption and if it inconvenienced a few people, tough, what about those who don't have a place to stay, how are they inconvenienced" (Ally, 2017). Upon their request being rejected by students, the three SETT representatives went back to report to the rest of the task team and the VC on the outcome of their interaction with RMF. According to Ally, SETT received a report that security intercepted and turned back a vehicle carrying another shack which was going to be erected at Upper Campus. RMF demarcated the area where the shack was located using the crime scene tape. The tape closed-off one side of the stairs, leaving those who were coming from lower campus through the rugby fields, Jan Smuts Hall, Fuller Hall and students who were coming from their lectures and the library to use one side of the stairs. This created conflict when some students refused to be limited to one side of the stairs and went over the tape. This led to confrontations with RMF members taking part in Shackville protest for what they viewed as crossing the picket line. It was because of the inconvenience that the shack was creating that SETT then presented RMF with an ultimatum. Ally explained:

We just felt that the situation was becoming untenable. So, the decision was taken to present those who were involved in the protest with an ultimatum. The ultimatum was you have until 17h00 to move the shack, we are prepared to assist you to relocate the shack. If you refuse to relocate the shack, we will have no choice but to ask Campus Security to take the shack down. We had informed the Public Order Police Service (POPS) and we had also informed the Private Security people to be on standby because we were not sure what response campus security will get [when they attempt to relocate the shack] (Ally, 2017).

A letter communicating this decision was delivered by Ally, DVC Mall and DVC Petersen to RMF members who were at the shack. Students called the three, among other names, "puppets of the white masters", "colonial administrators" and re-emphasised their (RMF's) unwillingness to speak to them. The three representatives continued distributing copies of the letter to whoever was in the vicinity of the shack. The letter starts by explaining that the UCT executive respected RMF's "constitutional right to protest action and recognise the

importance of the issues you are raising” (Correspondence between RMF and UCT, 16 February 2016). The letter continued:

We wish in no way to halt or divert your protest action but we are concerned that the place you have chosen for the shack (in the middle of the street on Residence Road) has serious implications for UCT operations. These include the interruption to the flow of vehicles and interference with pedestrians. The traffic blockage is also causing delay in the Jammie Shuttle schedule. This morning the consequence of the traffic interference at Residence Road caused a backlog on the M3, which infringes on the rights of others beyond UCT. We have identified the green lawn in front of Smuts Hall as a more workable venue for your protest action. We will send CPS officers at 16h00 today to assist you in moving the shack to that space. We hope you can assist the officers in moving the shack to the designated space. We recognise your goal to continue with this protest action until the accommodation backlog at UCT is resolved. The UCT Executive team and staff within Student Housing and Residence Life have been working tirelessly to resolve these issues, and we are confident that there will be no student whose issues have not been dealt with adequately. Please also ensure that anyone participating in the protest action in relation to the shack do so within legal parameters and refrain from interfering with the rights of fellow students and staff. If you refuse to allow the officers to move the shack and the shack is still in its current position by 17h00 we will unfortunately have no option but to take action to remove it (Correspondence between RMF and UCT, 16 February 2016).

This letter was the final communication between RMF and SETT. Though Ally (2017) and Price (2017) argued that the letter presented RMF with the 17h00 ultimatum to move the shack themselves or have it moved for them. But some sentences in the letter suggested that the university’s security personnel were going to move the shack and RMF was just expected to help, not the other way around. Details of what the role of the Campus Protection Services and RMF was in moving the shack were unclear and ambiguous at best. The letter stated that: “We (UCT management) will send CPS officers at 16h00 today to assist you in moving the shack to that space”, followed by: “We hope you can assist the officers in moving the shack to the designated space” – suggesting that the CPS officers were the ones who would be moving the shack at 16h00 and RMF was expected to assist. The role that the UCT executive expected RMF to play in moving the shack is made clear towards the end of the letter: “If you refuse to allow the officers to move the shack and the shack is still in its current position by 17h00 we will, unfortunately, have no option but to take action to remove it” (Correspondence between RMF and UCT, 16 February 2016).

However, RMF saw this letter as a threat by the university management and made a call for more RMF members to come and defend the shack against attempts to tear it down, which

Ally (2017) insisted was never the intention. The movement sent out a Facebook message stating that: “management has threatened to remove #Shackville at 17h00 today. Blacks and allies come in numbers to protect the only home homeless black students at UCT have” (UCT: Rhodes Must Fall Facebook page, 16 February 2016). The social movement framed the ultimatum by management as an attempt at forced removal and assured its members on Facebook that the movement would protect the shack “by any means necessary”. RMF sent another Facebook call, this time it was for an emergency plenary in the shack at 18h00 the same day. Relations between various groups within RMF were at an all-time low at this point in the social movement’s life³⁶. Some of the members who left the movement had to put aside their differences and joined their comrades in solidarity to defend the shack. Student 3 explained:

Some of us, myself included, when the housing issue started had recused ourselves and said actually we are not going to participate in that because that [patriarchy issue] hasn’t been resolved. However, on the particular day of the Shackville protest, on that watershed day, I received a message from comrades [saying] the university is threatening to evict us and we are just asking for solidarity. For all intents and purposes, I was there for solidarity together with hundreds of other students who had gone up to where Shackville was erected (Student 3).

Although the ultimatum that SETT gave RMF members was to move the shack by 17h00, the university management did not follow through with moving the shack at 17h00. They, as Ally explained, did not want to provoke a confrontation with students because they were aware of the Facebook mobilisation that RMF was doing. SETT then decided to extend the 17h00 deadline. Ally explained:

We weren’t going to remove the shack in the midst of hundreds and thousands of protesting students and have a violent confrontation. Five o’clock came and went. The students were probably wondering what was going on. Six o’clock came and went. Seven o’clock came and went. We were monitoring the situation and we felt that if we were going to remove the shack or move it to another location, it was going to be with minimum confrontation and when circumstances were more favourable (Ally, 2017).

The 17h00 deadline came and went without any attempts to move the shack by the CPS. Students came in numbers to show solidarity with fellow comrades. Many of the students who came to show their support were coming from afternoon classes. At 18h00 RMF held a

³⁶ I will discuss relations between members of RMF in detail in Chapter 8.

plenary session by the shack. As Student 3 (2017) explained, things started getting “messy from about 18h30 and settled again after 21h00”.

At about 18h30, RMF members who were at the plenary started walking into both Jan Smuts and Fuller Residences, which are a stone-throw away from where the shack was and helped themselves to food in the dining hall and took old photographs and paintings from the two halls. They also went into Molly Blackburn, which is used as a waiting area for high profile guests during graduation processions and fetched more paintings which were later burnt on Residence Road next to where the shack was located. The shack was still standing when paintings and photographs were burnt. The removal of the shack followed this incident. Ally explained that:

There was violence and conflict, then the shack was removed because the assessment was that the organizing and rallying point where this was orchestrated from. That is why the shack had to be removed. It was very unfortunate then because when the shack had to be removed it was removed in this conflict and so it took on an added violent nature where the students stood and defended it. It was torn down, it wasn't moved which was always the intention... But it was torn down, torn down quite violently in the end by private security with police being around providing cover (Ally, 2017).

More fires followed the destruction of the shack and stun grenades being discharged on students by the police. A UCT research vehicle was torched on University Avenue North, a Jammie Shuttle bus³⁷ was set alight and destroyed at the Lower Campus bus stop, and the Vice-Chancellor's office, in Bremner Building, was fire-bombed. But Student 1 explained that all the acts of burning were not part of the movement's plans but rather a spur of the moment reaction. Student 1 (2017) argued that if the burning of property were part of the movement's plan, buildings and more valuable items would have been burnt. The fire on campus, he explained, was a reaction to guns being brought to campus by the police and private security. Ally (2017) rejected this claim arguing that the presence of the police and private security could not have been the cause because they came to campus in response to the burning of paintings and photographs.

Eight students were arrested overnight following the Shackville protest and eight other students were also suspended. The morning after the shack was demolished, Price issued a communique, *UCT committed to a safe study and work environment*, assuring the campus community that operations at the university will continue as usual. Price (2016c) explained to

³⁷ These are university buses that transport students and staff to and from residences and various campuses.

the university community that the university had increased security presence on campus dramatically and that Public Order Policing. The campus communication ends with Price assuring the campus community that the university was in the process of getting an interdict against RMF. On the evening of 17 February, a day after the shack was demolished, the Western Cape Division of the High Court of South Africa granted UCT an interim interdict, which listed 16 students and former students as respondents. The draft order listed the 17th respondent as “those persons who associate themselves with any unlawful conduct at any of the university’s premises” and “barred respondents from, from amongst other things, entering the UCT premises without the university’s consent”.³⁸

The violent acts (both by students and Private Security and/or Public Order Police Services) that have come to symbolise the #Shackville protest are beyond just a sign of disagreements between the UCT management and members of RMF. They are a symptom of a bigger problem, that of communication (or the lack thereof) during heightened political moments. Student 1 believes that the #Shackville protest is an example of what would happen when two parties resolve not to speak or hear each other. Student 1 explained:

Shackville in a very interesting way becomes a proxy war for this failure to engage in dialogue which always precipitates in violence, always. So, it just manifested, in this case, in the burning of the paintings. It could have been anything, it could have been the cars, it has been cars in the past, there could have been so many things but that is just the expression of the situation that was set up to produce violence (Student 1, 2017).

However, the Vice-Chancellor believed that had RMF been patient, the university would have solved the accommodation process quicker. In fact, Price (2017) did not believe that it was necessary for RMF to erect a shack or even protest about the accommodation crisis because the university was already addressing the issue. The #Shackville protest was covered extensively by many South African print, online and broadcast media; with most of the Cape regional media publishing it as a major story. I will now discuss the *Cape Times*’ coverage of the protest.

7.3.4. *Cape Times* coverage of the accommodation crisis

On Monday, 8 February 2016, the *Cape Times* published an article, *RMF slams UCT over accommodation*, which stated that RMF was up in arms against UCT after the university

³⁸ To read the draft interdict, visit https://www.news.uct.ac.za/images/archive/dailynews/downloads/2016/2016-02-17_InterimInterdict.pdf

offered “offered a house in Matopo Road, where 30 mattresses were allegedly placed in a room with one bathroom, and no privacy or security” (Petersen (C), 2016d). According to the article, RMF had to step in and accommodate students. The movement, the article continued, occupied Avenue House after rejecting the offer to have students accommodated in Matopo Road. The article then quotes UCT DVC, Francis Petersen, explaining the reasons for the high take-up rate in university accommodation and that the university will support every student affected. The story ends with a quote from RMF statement made at the vigil held on the evening of 4 February outside the VC’s house. The vigil, RMF explained, was “against academic, financial and residential exclusion of the Black child” (RMF Facebook page, 5 February 2016).

On Monday, 15 February 2016, when RMF erected a shack on Residence Road, CMD sent out a statement on behalf of the UCT executive explaining the accommodation crisis that the university was facing and also denying RMF’s accusation that the university was excluding students from accommodation based on race. The statement, which was printed by the *Cape Times* newspaper in its complete form, explained how the university respected the constitutional right to protest if it does not interfere with the rights of others. The statement, which was titled *UCT protects rights to lawful protests* (Moholola, 2016b), also cautioned RMF to exercise the right to protest responsibly.

On Wednesday, 17 February 2016, another *Cape Times*’ reporter, Lisa Isaacs sent an email to CMD requesting comment regarding an announcement that Independent Media Group Chairperson, Iqbal Survé, was going to make considering the accommodation crisis at UCT and the events that transpired during #Shackville protest. The email stated that:

The *Cape Times* will be covering an announcement by UCT alumni and Independent Media executive chairman, Dr Iqbal Survé today calling on alumni to come together and host meetings and conferences where issues brought by students, such as the current housing problem, can be resolved through practical means. This is in light of the recent violent events at UCT. We’d like a response from UCT to this, including an indication of whether the university would be willing to participate in this initiative (Isaacs, 2016).

CMD responded by stating that although UCT welcomed all engagements with its alumni, it would be inappropriate to comment given that the institution had not received the notification of the event, an invitation, or an announcement. The following day the *Cape Times* published the article, *Call to open homes and hearts to students without accommodation*, in which

Survé called on residents to open their homes for students who had not been allocated accommodation to alleviate the accommodation crisis at UCT. The article further explained that Survé was “prepared to mediate and lead discussions involving the alumni, the student body, academics and UCT’s management” because “leadership is needed to help resolve this crisis” (Isaacs, 2016). The article also quoted UCT spokesperson, Pat Lucas, explaining that the alumni community were an important constituency of the university and that the institution welcomed all engagement with its alumni. SRC president, Rorisang Moseli, was quoted as having said: “The SRC will render committees ungovernable and actively prevent the normal decision-making process from taking place through a filibuster campaign. We refuse to remain in a system that seeks to operate normally and continue to exclude and dehumanise black bodies” (Isaacs, 2016). RhodesMustFall’s Brian Kamanzi said that the movement was “not committed to anything in so far as partnerships but are eager for a balanced dialogue where we will have a voice” (Isaacs, 2016).

CMD followed up the article with an email to Dr Survé advising him to make contact with the Development & Alumni Department regarding the initiative. However, an invitation to the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Max Price, was sent in response. The invitation read:

Recent developments at the University of Cape Town have seen much conflict arising out of differences between management of the universities [sic], and the student body. The reason for this is multifaceted and requires urgent intervention. Dr Survé as an alumnus of UCT, a prominent member of South African society is convening a stakeholder meeting to help various parties to find solutions to resolve many of the pressing issues that have resulted in the alienation of University of Cape Town stakeholders from each other. Please note that Dr Survé is doing this in his personal capacity and not as Chairman of Independent Media and the African News Agency (Apieni 2016).

The invitation also stated the date, venue, and time of the meeting, ending with the contact person for confirming attendance. The UCT Vice-Chancellor did not respond to this invitation and neither did he attend the meeting.

On Friday, 19 February 2016, the *Cape Times*’ front page led with a story, titled *Arrest Max Price*, about the call by RMF for the arrest of the UCT VC. The story explained how the social movement lodged criminal complaints at Rondebosch Police Station accusing “Price of being responsible for the violence and excessive force used against students on Tuesday night [when the shack was demolished], which left many students traumatised” (Petersen, 2016e). The article quotes RMF members, Alex Hotz and Simon Rakei, explaining that the executive

needed to be held accountable because they were the decision-makers. It went on to quote a police spokesperson confirming the complaints having been lodged and a UCT spokesperson saying the university had not been formally informed of the charges and could not say anything until then. The article went on to give a summary of #Shackville protest activities and the interdict obtained by the university.

7.4. Analysis of key activities during #Shackville protest

7.4.1. Communication between RMF and UCT

7.4.1.1. Listening and power

The refusal of SETT to allow RMF members to speak directly with the VC should be located within the context of power's refusal to listen. The rationale for not allowing the VC to engage with students during protest is a move which seems to favour individuals with executive powers, in the sense that they do not participate in engagements where they do not control the context within which talking, listening, and responding could occur. In the case of SETT, the emphasis is on Price having the luxury to consider what protesting students are saying and respond in his own time.

In addition to SETT's determination not to have the VC negotiate with protesting students, the unwillingness of SETT to meet with RMF despite the social movement has met all the demands that the task team made created a climate of suspicion and a lack of **trust** between the two. SETT had demanded the end of the Avenue House and Cadbol House occupations and RMF not only honoured these demands but also communicate the end of these occupations to SETT. The email negotiations between the two parties up to this point demonstrated a great deal of listening. Although the communication was mediated through email, both parties were hearing each other and responding to each other. The interaction between the two parties at that moment was significant in demonstrating the kind of listening that Bickford (1996) argues for and how that listening could help to keep the conversation going. This email interaction demonstrated the importance of paying attention to what the other party says to keep the engagement going. Although the two groups made demands and counter-demands against each other, they were able to continue engaging because they responded to each other's demands as a sign of listening and as evidence of the implicit intention to collectively find solutions to the problem(s) at hand. This interaction took a different turn when SETT decided not to meet with RMF as initially proposed. This is an

indication of the significance of **trust** as a requirement for listening to occur. As soon as **trust** is gone, the two parties stop the practice of paying attention to each other.

Furthermore, the first update on the accommodation crisis from DVC Petersen to the university community contributed to further erosion of **trust** between the social movement and SETT. DVC Petersen's email blamed the accommodation crisis on RMF and students who did not leave the university residence after their deferred exams. The email did not mention that UCT overbooked its residences with the hope that some of the potential students the university offered accommodation to would decline. The email update also failed to mention that the residence allocation system was malfunctioning which caused backlogs in some residences while others were relatively empty. RMF viewed this as not only an act of bad faith but also a deliberate attempt to make it appear as though the movement was to blame for the crisis.

The fact that the two disagreeing parties threatened each other with ultimatums exacerbated the situation. The first ultimatum from SETT to RMF was an invitation for the social movement to attend a meeting with SETT to discuss its stay at Avenue Hall or have the fate of the Hall decided without RMF's input. This ultimatum came at the back of the first campus update where RMF was blamed for the crisis without the university acknowledging its role. It is also important to note that a few days before the meeting invitation and ultimatum were issued, SETT had refused to meet with RMF despite the social movement delivering on all the demands made by SETT as preconditions for the meeting to take place. The ultimatum only worked to further damage the **trust** between the two. It is when RMF was given an ultimatum that the conversation between the two begins to fall apart, which positions trust as a necessary precondition for listening to occur. The ultimatum also confirmed to RMF that SETT was in place to specifically dismantle and frustrate the social movement as opposed to engaging each other in a bid to find solutions to RMF's issues.

The same approach of giving RMF an ultimatum was employed when it came to #Shackville protest. In the case of the removal of the shack, Ally and Price have insisted that the intention was never to remove the shack despite SETT's threat to remove the shack should RMF not move it. Besides the ambiguous nature of the ultimatum discussed earlier, it was also bizarre for two reasons that SETT was threatening to use the Campus Protection Services (CPS) to move the shack. One, throughout the life of RMF, CPS was never used when it came to the

social movement's protest and activities. Two, it is odd that SETT would threaten to use CPS against RMF when CPS personnel and members of the social movement forced the university to insource the very same CPS personnel three months prior. The ultimatum further wiped away any possibility of listening between RMF and SETT. This absence of speaking and listening paves the way for the violence that follows.

7.4.1.2. Recognition and decision-making power

In a dash of irony, RMF refused to recognise SETT as legitimate representatives of the UCT management. This moment served to highlight an important link between **recognition and decision-making power** on the part of those who represent power, which is missing from the theory of listening. RMF refused to engage with SETT, but was willing to speak directly to the VC, because SETT was viewed as an extension of the VC without his decision-making powers. To DVC Petersen (and SETT by extension), the refusal to recognise SETT as legitimate “authorized representatives of the university executive” (Correspondence between RMF and SETT, 14 February 2016) stems from utmost contempt for “authorized representatives” (Correspondence between RMF and SETT, 14 February 2016).

While RMF refused to listen to SETT, SETT also inextricably refused to give a positive **response** to RMF's desire to only speak to the Vice-Chancellor. It is not out of order to argue that what DVC Petersen noted as RMF's communication having degenerated into “the politics of personal insult, intolerance, intimidation and threats” (Correspondence between RMF and SETT, 14 February 2016) is part of a strategy by RMF to make SETT realise that the movement is not averse to engagement but just not with SETT. The social movement explicitly explained that it was only willing to engage with the Vice-Chancellor. The tactic of wanting to speak to the individual with decision-making power is common during the so-called service-delivery protest in South Africa where citizens on a local level demand to speak to their representatives in national government as opposed to ward councillors and those in municipalities. These citizens hurl out insults and throw whatever they can get their hands on at local speakers to demonstrate their unwillingness to speak to those they perceive as not having enough power to give the right response.

Furthermore, DVC Petersen not only viewed RMF's refusal to engage SETT as unacceptable and having “no place in democratic society” (Correspondence between RMF and SETT, 14

February 2016) but he drew a distinction between communication that is democratic and acceptable and that which is not democratic or acceptable. Democratic communication, in his view, is about having the “right to hold diametrically opposed views on what constitutes progressive politics”, while “personal insult”, “intolerance”, “intimidation” and “threats” are unacceptable (Correspondence between RMF and SETT, 14 February 2016). Petersen did not pay attention to the unequal distribution of formal/executive power between SETT and RMF. While RMF had the right to refuse to recognise SETT, the social movement did not have the power to control the consequences of its refusal. The consequence of its refusal, as DVC Francis explained, was that management would decide on the fate of Avenue Hall without the social movement’s input. The power of SETT was that there were no consequences for its refusal to recognise RMF’s request to speak to the VC. The personal insult, intolerance, intimidation and threats that DVC Petersen refers to are part of a strategy used by poor people in an attempt to get a hearing from those who hold power. Just as in the conflict between the rich and poor that Aristotle details in Bickford (1996:30) is particularly important because it illustrates a particular kind of attention that keeps the deliberation going through email despite the conflict.

In Bickford’s terms, what kept the interaction between RMF and SETT going despite the conflict and disagreement would have been “the practice of deliberation (sic) together and the attention that makes it possible” (Bickford, 1996:35). Just like in the theory of listening, this attention was not derived from friendship because friendship is relational. The interaction between RMF and SETT is characterized by a lack of well-wishing and goodwill. In the absence of friendship, it is attention that makes political interaction possible without eliminating the conflict (Bickford, 1996:40). This kind of **attention** is an essential element of politics because listening is not concerned with reaching an outcome but rather sustaining the process of hearing each other or seeing from each other’s perspective.

7.4.1.3. Space as recognition

In his communication with RMF, DVC Petersen draws a link between being granted space and **recognition**. He explained in an email to RMF that “the executive has raised the question of dedicated alternative space because it recognizes the importance of the issues represented by RMF” (Correspondence between RMF and SETT, 14 February 2016). In this statement, DVC Petersen equates being afforded space with an indication of being given “**recognition**”

(Mufamadi, 2014:40) that the issues the social movement represented were important and that “RMF has a critical role to play in the continuing transformation (what RMF calls decolonization) of the university” (Correspondence between RMF and SETT, 14 February 2016). However, the issue of providing space for RMF was one of the fundamental points of contestation between UCT management and the movement. It was one of the main issues during the mediation between RMF and UCT facilitated by the IJR. As dealt with in detail in Chapter 6, the mediators could not resolve the issue of space and the settlement was that RMF would continue to use Avenue Hall until UCT management provides suitable alternative accommodation. For RMF, space only equates to being given “recognition” (Mufamadi, 2014:40) when the space provided is reputable rather than one that is on the periphery. Having been issued with an eviction order to vacate this reputable space in December of the previous year, it is not impossible to understand RMF’s lack of interest in meeting with SETT over Avenue Hall.

7.4.2. Shackville protest

In terms of #Shackville protest, the shack is an important point of departure for analysis. For Brown, the shack would represent a moment of disruption because claims and how RMF made these claims “disrupt[ed] the ordinary operations of social and political norms” (Brown, 2015:6) of the university. The act of erecting a shack in the heart of UCT’s Upper Campus is an important assertion of agency by RMF within the university’s political order. This kind of disruption is usually met with responses ranging from engagement to repression by representatives of the existing order. Brown argued that the “interplay between popular disruption and official response shapes the terrain of political opportunity in South Africa, and expands and contracts its possibilities” (2015:7). In the case of #Shackville protest, the interplay Brown referred to contracts any possibility for engagement between RMF and UCT management. Instead of going back to a discussion about the accommodation crisis, SETT’s response to the shack is that it should be moved from its location at the very least. RMF, on the other hand, was unwilling to have any discussion or to take instructions from SETT whose status as representatives of management the social movement did not recognise. To borrow from Brown, RMF was “challenging not simply the right of a particular organisation to represent their interests or the particular distribution of institutional power and authority within the system, but the principle of delegated representation itself” (Brown, 2015:21).

They wanted to meet with VC who had the power to respond to their demands as opposed to his delegates.

For Price (2017), the UCT management perceived the shack not only as a disruption of the university's operation but also as a demonstration of power by RMF. In this context of seeing erecting the shack as a demonstration of power, the only solution at the university's disposal was that of removing the shack. The shack was seen as a recruiting tool which could potentially have more students joining RMF to protest. Price explained:

Just to leave it (the shack) there with the disruption **that it causes, I don't think that could have achieved anything.** It might have avoided the burning of art and protest. **But I don't think it would have achieved anything around the shack.** It would have just made them feel they were stronger, and they could demand anything (Price, 2017).

Price's fear of RMF feeling like they were stronger if UCT management did not move the shack is part of the guessing at what power the other party have that could give them an advantage in the contestation between the two. This fear of the other party consolidating its power became the main focus rather than engaging the social movement about the shack. This fear of RMF's power was so significant to Price that the burning of artworks by RMF was not all that bad for the UCT management. He explained:

In fact, I think in some ways, the fact that they overstepped the mark with the arson worked to our advantage. They lost a lot of support as a result of that (Price, 2017).

However, for Ramugondo, who was the VC's Special Advisor on Transformation and a member of SETT, the problem had to do with the UCT executive's legal lenses with which they viewed the university and the law that regulated the behaviour of its constituency. These lenses determined how the university responded to various modes of protest by members of the university community. Ramugondo explained:

I picked up that they drew heavily on Private Property Law rather than social justice and human rights. Students are seen as the outsider. So, when they erect something on campus, you see it as a problem because this is your property (Ramugondo, 2017).

Ramugondo's argument above is also supported by the fact that when SETT was introduced, Hugh Corder, Professor of Public Law at UCT, was appointed as Special Assistant to DVC Petersen starting on 1 February 2016 (Price, 2016d). In this new position Corder was responsible for Library Services; Information, Communication and Technology Services; Human Resources, excluding the bargaining process and the insourcing project; joint

responsibility with DVC Petersen for faculty affairs, the Deans, and the Director of the Graduate School of Business; Chairing of committees associated with the above areas; and representing DVC Petersen on various structures in the university (Price, 2016d). Given that Corder was technical advisor in drafting the transitional Bill of Rights for South Africa in the early 1990s (Swingler, 2020), one would have expected his new responsibilities to be around the intersection between the law and the anticipated protest that SETT was formed to deal with. It is difficult to justify why his assistance was not a legal one even though his expertise would have provided a legal framework that could have assisted in resolving the problems anticipated.

7.4.3. Cape Times coverage of RMF activities

The *Cape Times* newspaper's coverage of the accommodation crisis and #Shackville protest at UCT generated three news articles and a response by CMD. Two of the articles were written by Carlo Petersen, while the other one is written by Lisa Isaacs, who was also a reporter at the newspaper. The first article, *RMF slams UCT over accommodation*, presented a balanced account of the accommodation crisis at the university and how it was caused by overbooking. The story is told from RMF's perspective and detailed how RMF had provided accommodation to students whom the university had turned away (Petersen, 2016d). In this article, RMF is given **recognition** for the accommodation crisis. Not only is the social movement credited with "locking horns" (Petersen, 2016d) with the university over the matter but the movement also tried to solve the problem. DVC Petersen, on the other hand, was quoted substantially in response to or explaining the causes of the accommodation issues that RMF had identified. The article also quotes a statement that RMF issued. This article worked as a platform for facilitating listening by taking RMF's assertions to the UCT management for a response or clarification and presented both accounts to the reader. CMD responded to the article and accused the article of being "one-sided" and presenting "opinion as fact" (Moholola, 2016a). Petersen responded and stated that the article could not be one-sided and could not have presented opinion as fact when "[DVC] Petersen and the RMF movement are quoted fairly in the article" and when "all views expressed in the article are in quotes" (Moholola, 2016a).

The next news article, *'Arrest Max Price'*, detailed how members of RMF had lodged criminal complains against the VC and members of SETT. It quoted three RMF members and

also detailed how RMF members were interdicted from entering the university. UCT spokesperson was quoted explaining how the university was not aware of the complaints.

The final article, *Call to open homes to students without accommodation*, was about a call by Independent News and Media South Africa and *Cape Times* owner, Iqbal Survé, for residents to provide accommodation to UCT students. This article was written after Survé, who was an alumnus but with no current connections to the university. He issued a public invitation and a statement without first communicating with either Price or RMF. In his invitation, he was offering to facilitate dialogue between the VC and RMF to resolve the accommodation crisis at UCT. His attempt was met with suspicion for three reasons. One, Survé was a former chair of the UCT Graduate School of Business and had the VC's number to contact him directly before issuing the public invitation. Two, Price suspected that Survé was fighting high through the *Cape Times* newspaper's coverage of RMF. Three, members of RMF were already interdicted from entering the university and the matter was in the court of law.

Furthermore, Survé's invitation to Price to discuss finding solutions to RMF's issues at the university was the first time in the existence of RMF that Survé personally inserted himself in the conflict. Although he insisted that the discussion of the intervention is being done in his capacity, the invitation was sent out by Independent News and Media South Africa's Communications Officer making it the company's initiative. Although the meeting does not happen, a story was published by the *Cape Times* and *Cape Argus* newspapers as a major news story.

7.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented a narrative of how the accommodation crisis and the #shackville protest played out at the beginning of 2016 at UCT. I am going to use this section to discuss some of the major themes that came up in the context of this protest, to sum up the chapter. Issues of **trust** came up at several moments during the accommodation crisis and the #shackville protest. In these contexts, trust was treated as the precondition for listening to occur. In both instances where trust between the two was eroded, the primary cause was bad faith. In the first instance, SETT refuse to honour a meeting with RMF upon finding out that the social movement had invited all students without accommodation to be part of the meeting. In the second instance, DVC Petersen's first communication update on the accommodation crisis to the university community blamed the crisis on MUT without

acknowledging the role of the university, which was the true cause of the crisis. Listening between the two could not occur without trust.

Issues of **power** and how they played out took prominence in several moments in this chapter. In its communication with RMF, SETT signalled its administrative power by informing the social movement that they have the power to decide on the movement's behalf. This is done through ultimatums. SETT invited RMF to a meeting to discuss the social movement's negotiated stay at Avenue Hall or have their stay decided on their behalf. When it came to the shack, SETT informed RMF to move the shack to another position or have it moved on the social movement's behalf. In both these instances, SETT's attitude was that they had the power and RMF had to not only recognise that power but also had to obey. Put differently, this power rendered SETT immune from listening. Only RMF, in SETT's eyes, had the responsibility to listen.

Furthermore, the chapter also continued the trajectory of guessing at what power the other party has and trying to limit that power. The shack was not only seen as a disruption but it was also seen as RMF's device for consolidating power. As part of this guessing game, the shack had to go before RMF could use it to consolidate this imagined power. It is this guessing at what party has what power that results in the refusal to listening that became a common characteristic throughout the chapter. RMF refused to speak to SETT and only wanted to speak to the Vice-Chancellor. SETT refused to listen or accede to this demand. This lack of listening created a stalemate that ultimately resulted in a violent confrontation.

In terms of the *Cape Times* newspaper's coverage of RMF's activities at UCT, the news articles continue to play the role of facilitating listening. RMF made accusations about UCT management and the *Cape Times* takes those accusations to the UCT management for clarification. In this regard, the newspaper seems to play all, important role in connecting RMF's struggles to university power. It is also the first time in this chapter that CMD accused Carlo Petersen of reporting bias towards RMF.

Although not a significant moment, it is important to flag Independent News and Media South Africa and *Cape Times* owner, Survé's attempt to insert himself in the accommodation crisis at UCT despite not holding any official position. This attempt cemented the suspicion of the UCT VC that Survé was using RMF protest to fight the VC in the court of public opinion.

Chapter 8: The revolution will be intersectional: relations within the Rhodes Must Fall movement

“The revolution will be black-led and intersectional, or it will be bullshit” – HeJin Kim, UCT Trans Collective

8.1. Introduction

This research project has so far interrogated important moments of interaction involving RMF, UCT management and the *Cape Times* newspaper. The focus of my analysis has been on whether some of the interactions could be considered listening and examining what that listening or lack and/or refusal to listen played out. The focus has so far been on RMF as the protagonist and UCT management and the *Cape Times* as listening partners. Although this focus is important, it can mislead the reader into thinking that RMF was a social movement without any internal contestations. For this Chapter, I turn my focus to the interactions and contestations within RMF to see whether these could be considered listening and how those acts of listening and/or refusal to listen played themselves out. Considering internal RMF interactions is important for two reasons. One, it gives readers a window into how the movement dealt with internal conflicts and disagreements. Two, it also gives an account of RMF’s decision-making processes from the point of view of members of RMF. Given the diversity of groupings that came together under the banner of RMF and the significant impact that the movement made nationally and internationally, it is important to investigate the movement’s internal workings.

I will use the Rhodes Must Fall’s first anniversary exhibition as a point of departure and work backwards to some of the moments of disagreements during the first year of the movement’s existence. Moments of disagreement are important because they highlight whether people can practice listening or not. The launch of the exhibition and its accompanying activities (on the day of the opening) provides an important entry point into conflicts and disagreements within the movement because it is the first moment where ‘strong’ disagreements between members of RMF play out in public and even capture the attention of some of the media. Unlike in the previous four chapters (Chapters 4-7) where I created a chronological narrative leading to moments of protest and resolution, this chapter will start with the moment of protest, which in all intents and purposes represents the climax of the build-up of disagreements within the

movement. For this chapter, I will draw heavily on interviews with members of RMF to detail and analyse relations within the movement.

Unlike in the previous four analysis chapters, I will not analyse media coverage of the conflict and disagreements at the exhibition or at any other moment for that matter. The *Cape Times* newspaper, which is also the focus or object of this study, did not report on RMF's first-year anniversary exhibition nor did the newspaper report on any other moment of conflict or contestation within the movement. The only coverage of trouble within the movement was the rape of an RMF member at Avenue Hall, which the movement had occupied at the time.

8.2. The Rhodes Must Fall anniversary exhibition

Wednesday, 9 March 2016, marked a year since Chumani Maxwele threw human excrement on the statue of Cecil John Rhodes at UCT's Upper Campus, setting in motion a chain of events that culminated in the removal of the Rhodes statue and the formation of RMF. To commemorate this day, RMF commissioned a photographic exhibition at the Centre for African Studies (CAS) gallery titled, *Echoing Voices from Within*. According to Student 4, who was also one of the organisers/curators of the exhibition, the social movement "wanted to use the exhibition to launch a new campaign to get the students back into campus" (Student 4, 2017).

The events of the day started with a 'symbolic' protest outside UCT's main administration building, Bremner. As it had become a common occurrence at the university during protest, the Vice-Chancellor – Max Price – came out of the building to engage protesting students and to accept a memorandum of demands. Protesting students walked away without handing over a memorandum of demands as was anticipated, with Price walking towards the students as they walked away. About 300 students proceeded to walk from Bremner through the tunnel underneath the road that separates Upper Campus from Middle Campus. The group proceeded through the sports ground and past the plinth which held the Rhodes statue and which in the absence of the statue is now "where his [painted] shadow still haunts the space" (Ramji, 2016). The procession then moved up the stairs from the plinth towards then Jameson Memorial Hall, which is adjacent to UCT's Main Library. Upon arrival outside the hall, the procession stopped, and a group of female students left the procession and went into the library area carrying "symbolic sjamboks to cast a pink veil over the Saartjie Baartman

sculpture, finally granting her image some respite from the colonial gaze” (Ramji, 2016). Upon returning from the library, the group continued to march toward the Centre for African Studies (CAS) Gallery where the RMF exhibition was set to open for public viewing.

It took a while for the event to get started when the group arrived at the CAS Gallery, despite a significantly large crowd the opening had attracted. Ramji goes as far as likening the proceedings to a Gujarati wedding with “women falling into their role running proceedings, men hanging out in the parking lot not really paying attention to the ceremony, white people gawking at the spectacle, fascinated by something they could not understand” (Ramji, 2016). It was the lack of sound during these beginning proceedings of the RMF exhibition that created a sense of wonder amongst the spectators. It was against this backdrop of no amplification that the events that followed made a bigger spectacle than the exhibition itself when the formal proceedings finally got underway.

8.2.1. Enter the UCT Trans Collective

As Lungisile Ntsebeza, then Director of the Centre for African Studies at UCT was giving his welcoming address, “a group of about a dozen students, mostly naked, some wearing underwear, all painted with red words, stormed into the gallery” (Ramji, 2016). This act was followed by loud cheers and jeers of approval from the crowd waiting to enter the gallery for the exhibition. This group of students painted exhibited work with red paint and blocked all entrances to the CAS Gallery in a move to claim their place in the movement and to “make the movement [along with spectators] aware that they were being erased and their voices being silenced” (Ramji, 2016) in the exhibition. These students were members of the UCT Trans Collective.

Speaking during the disruption, the Trans Collective’s HeJin Kim reminded the spectators and fellow movement members of a slogan from RMF and the #FeesMustFall protest: “The revolution will be black-led and intersectional, or it will be bullshit” (Omar, 2016). Kim further explained that “the voices of the Trans Collective had been marginalised within RMF and the exhibition reflected neither their contribution to the RMF cause nor their unique struggles as transgender and transsexual students” (Omar, 2016). Kim and fellow members of the Trans Collective laid their bodies in all entrances and passageways “as a protest against what they saw as their right to identify as transgender and transsexual being trampled in certain spaces” (Omar, 2016). They dared the crowd to walk on them to get to the exhibition.

8.3. Analysis: Intersectionality and the battle for the soul of RMF

For this section, I will rely on statements from the UCT Trans Collective and other statements posted on the RMF Facebook Page. I will also draw heavily on interviews I conducted with members of RMF where issues of gender, patriarchy and power came up each time I asked about how the movement dealt with conflict and disagreements. I will start with the Trans Collective's disruption of RMF's first-anniversary exhibition.

8.3.1. UCT Trans Collective, RMF and the possibility of listening from within

The overarching motivation for the UCT Trans Collective's actions stemmed from the "refusal to listen" (Dreher, 2010:98) on the part of the rest of the RMF movement. The Trans Collective explained how it "flagged the issue of a rigid loyalty to patriarchy, cisnormativity, heteronormativity and the gender binary within the space" (UCT Trans Collective, 2016) but the issue was never resolved. This becomes an example of the "lack of recognition" of certain people's pain as real within the movement. The Trans Collective explained:

There was an outright refusal to acknowledge that the condition of being a womxn, queer, trans, disabled and so forth is not incidental to blackness but that these conditions are collateral to blackness. So suffocating is this that we have had to submarine from active membership (UCT Trans Collective, 2016).

It is this refusal to listen and the lack of recognition that makes it impossible for the rest of RMF members to empathise with members of the Trans Collective. In other words, the refusal to listen and the lack of recognition render RMF members incapable of what Hannah Arendt refers to as representative thinking, which is the act of representing the interests of others that an individual would voice in the context of interaction without negating their interests and perspective (Bickford, 1996:82). It is through listening practices that individuals get to understand the interests of others and can empathise with them. This refusal to listen and to give recognition alienated members of the Trans Collective from full participation in RMF's activities. Their complaints about the "rigid loyalty to patriarchy, cisnormativity, heteronormativity and gender binary" by members of the movement only led to the group being alienated even further. The Trans Collective explained:

We had been coerced to construct a smaller decolonial enclave that would run parallel to RMF because of what had become apparent as a gulf in consciousness of many, particularly black cis het men, organisers where the understanding of the colony and how it operates did not connect with an understanding of patriarchy, heteronormativity and gender essentialism as colonially demarcated powers (UCT Trans Collective, 2016).

The refusal to listen and to give recognition to the Trans Collective's pain forced them to talk back to secure a hearing from RMF. Dreher (2010:92) identifies "talking back" as one of five strategies that communities, organisations and movements can use in efforts to increase the chances of being given a "voice" (Couldry, 2010:02) by the news media. For Couldry talking back would be classified as an "act of valuing, and choosing to value, those frameworks for organising human life and resources that themselves value voice (as a process)" (Couldry, 2010:02). In the case of the UCT Trans Collective, it is precisely the lack of voice that forces the Trans Collective into a position of "speaking back to RMF and keeping it accountable to its commitment to intersectionality" (UCT Trans Collective, 2016). The refusal to listen became a motivation for the Trans Collective to force the rest of RMF to not only give them a voice but to also listen and be held accountable.

Furthermore, the UCT Trans Collective detailed in its statement demanded that "the organising committee remove all images, videos and texts of and by trans people" (UCT Trans Collective, 2016) upon realising that "only three out of more than 1000 images that ended up making it onto the exhibition roll featured a trans person's face somewhere on them" (UCT Trans Collective, 2016). What the Trans Collective was, in Dreher's terms, demanding a "recognition" that matters as opposed to a ritualised recognition where members of the UCT Trans Collective are included as a rubber-stamping exercise for RMF to appear representative. The UCT Trans Collective explained:

This is truly a disgrace on the exhibition selection committee and particularly those 'black intersectional feminist' cis womxn who sat on it for the purpose of ensuring due representation. Even more damning is that it is clear the RMF and the exhibition's idea of intersectional representation has the faces of 4 or 5 black cis womxn repeated in a spectacular show of false inclusivity (UCT Trans Collective, 2016).

The UCT Trans Collective statement above is not only a demonstration of the false inclusivity on the part of the curator(s) and organisers of the gallery but also the tokenism of the Trans Collective and "black cis womxn" (UCT Trans Collective, 2016). This level of tokenism closely resembles the 'placation' which is located in the fifth rung of Arnstein's

ladder of participation (Arnstein, 1969:220). Instead of curating a gallery that is fully representative of all the different groups that make up RMF, the exhibition committee has “the faces of 4 or 5 black cis womxn repeated in a spectacular show of false inclusivity” (UCT Trans Collective, 2016). This placation is particularly damning given that the cis black womxn who appeared in the photographs repeatedly “sat on it for the purpose of ensuring due representation” (UCT Trans Collective, 2016). This is a classic case of placation where ‘worthy’ individuals who hold very little power to affect any change are chosen to represent the majority of the constituency they are thought to represent (Arnstein, 1969:220). The UCT Trans Collective explained further:

We will no longer tolerate the complicity of black cis womxn in our erasure. We are fed up with **RMF being ‘intersectional’ being used as public persuasion rhetoric**. We are saying down with faux inclusivity – RMF make it clear, to the world, that we are not welcome here. RMF will not tokenise our presence as if they ever treasured us as part of their movement. We will not have our bodies, faces, names, and voices used as bait for public applause (UCT Trans Collective, 2016).

In terms of listening and privilege, the refusal to listen to painful and confronting stories from members of the Trans Collective is not only a refusal to engage with the difficult. It is also a refusal to interrogate “networks of privilege and power and one’s location within them” (Dreher, 2009:451). Dreher further explained that what makes this kind of listening difficult for many of those in privileged positions is that it entails transforming the desire to be in charge of the conversation and how it unfolds to not only listening to others but also to one’s complicities and privilege. This is because the kind of listening required in this situation is only possible “when those accustomed to setting the agenda and having their interests shape the interactions are prepared to put those expectations aside (Dreher, 2009:451). It was this refusal to failure to listen or even acknowledge the contribution of members of the movement from the Trans Collective that motivate the protest against this erasure. The Trans Collective explained in a statement:

We **have reached the peak of our disillusionment with RMF’s trans exclusion and erasure**. We are done with the arrogant cis hetero patriarchy of black men. Furthermore, we called out the fact that we have had our bodies and psyches on the line in fallist movements but are continually erased in narratives by cisgender people (UCT Trans Collective, 2016).

The statement by the Trans Collective points to something about being heard and representation. It points to the lack of representation or erasure as a sign that those who are not being represented are not heard or given recognition.

8.3.2. Gender, sexuality and listening within RMF

Student 2 (2017) believes that part of the problem was RMF's inability to deal with issues of gender and sexuality within the movement. When a female RMF member was raped by a fellow male member of the movement, the collective did not know how to successfully address the rape. Instead, Student 2 explains, that people's trust within the space diminished because of what they observed as a failure to address the rape. For Student 2 (2017), part of the reason issues of gender and sexuality were ignored by the mostly male members of the movement was because they were viewed as less significant than other issues. Student 2 explained:

There was more focus on the workers struggles and the class dynamics within the movement itself. I think even at that level there are two questions or concessions that we had. It was the ideological debates and discussions about class versus what the different struggles are within the movement and that who was having difficulties with housing, who does not have a place to sleep, who is struggling to eat; and that was at the complete end of the spectrum within the same space (Student 2, 2017).

Student 2's statement above points to two problems within the movement. The first one is that of assigning more significance to issues of class and worker struggles as opposed to the expense of issues of gender and sexuality, which required urgent attention within the movement. Issues of gender and sexuality were perceived as being less significant. Two, Student 2's statement above points to one of the most common criticisms of RMF, that it had a double standard in its treatment of gender when it came to its members and the workers. It treated class at an ideological level when it came to its members. The movement paid very little attention to bread-and-butter issues within its membership. When it came to the workers who were outsourced by UCT at the time, RMF focused on the realities of being exploited and not being able to afford to send their children to UCT which they worked for through another company. This approach to class led some members to question the movement's approach or stance to class. Some RMF members believed that this approach abstract approach to the economic realities of RMF members was a sign that the social movement had been taken over by students who were economically well-off. Student 2 believes that it was for this reason that RMF members woke up to Avenue Hall spray-painted, 'Home of the rich', "basically laying the claim that the bourgeois element in the movement had taken over" (Student 2, 2017).

The claim above was a symptom of an even bigger problem within the movement. According to Student 2, RMF's biggest problem was its inability to solve what it identified as internal problems. The movement seems to have been great at identifying problems outside the movement and devising ways to solve them. When it comes to problems within the movement, RMF failed to deal with its issues because those accused of wrongdoing or unacceptable behaviour were not willing to acknowledge their part and change the behaviour. Furthermore, there was also a matter of having multiple issues that often seemed to compete or which are seen as the main issues depending on one's ideological background. An example of this is how students from the black feminist ideological thought believe the internal problems were caused by patriarchy, while their male counterparts from the black nationalist school of thought believe the root of the problem was the movement's inability to resolve issues of class and how they played out within the space.

For Student 5 (2017) the refusal to see gender issues within the movement as significant was also a result of the refusal to give recognition to issues that were being raised by female and non-binary members of the movement. When a female member of the movement was raped at Avenue Hall, it was "the first time that everyone was able to reflect on the sexualisation that was prevalent in the space, but more so the violent masculinity that was prevalent in the space" (Student 5, 2017). Student 5 believes that part of the reason the issue of rape and the sexualisation of women within the space was not interrogated was that they were raised by women and non-binary members of the movement. This issue of choosing which issues to deal with was made possible by the collapse of processes within the movement. Student 5 explains:

My analysis of the movement is that when the collective started to crumble was when violence was enacted on women and queer bodies (Student 5, 2017).

Student 4 (2017) explains that the internal conflict within the Rhodes Must Fall movement was not so much about the movement's inability to embrace intersectionality but rather the failure of the movement to deal with issues of class within the movement. As far as this student is concerned, race and class were the only significant issues that the movement had to contend with internally. Student 4 believes that although the movement succeeded in dealing successfully with issues of race, it did not interrogate class. Student 4 (2017) believes that the issues within RMF were a result of an onslaught on black male members of the movement,

especially those who come from working-class backgrounds and went to the township and rural schools. Student 4 (2017) explains:

People [male members of RMF] started to get labelled, that came as an outcome of failing to talk about class (Student 4, 2017).

Student 4 explains that black feminists in the movement divided male members of the movement into three categories: “patriarchs”, “raw patriarchs” and “better patriarchs” (Student4, 2017). Student 4 explained that all men were referred to as patriachs but depending on one’s class this identity could be divided even further. Black male members of the movement from working-class backgrounds who went to the township and rural schools were considered to be “raw patriachs”, meaning that they lacked any ability to understand intersectionality and gender struggles. The “better patriachs” category was reserved for male students from middle-class backgrounds who went to Model C and previously white-only schools. Student 2 concurred with Student 4’s observation of the classification of black male members of the movement. Student 2 explains:

I do agree that at a certain stage it was clear that when you say patriarch there was an image in mind or it was closely related to a person of a working-class background (Student 2, 2017).

Furthermore, although these categories were assigned to every cis-gender male member of the movement they seemed to not only be dependent on just one’s behaviour but also the behaviour of the company one kept, and most importantly one’s class in society. The two categories, patriarch and better patriarch seemed to be more fluid than their counterpart, the raw patriachs which are solely dependent upon being from a working-class background. Student 2 explains:

At some stage, I would have been described as a patriarch because I related to some of the people that person is talking about, they were my friends for many years, but we fell out. It [the classification into patriarch, better patriarch and raw patriarch] was never static or permanent, one day you are a better patriarch and one day you are not (Student 2, 2017).

Although Student 2 contends that these classifications were fluid and not static, it is difficult to imagine how the category of ‘raw patriarch’ which seems to have been solely based on one’s class could be fluid when it is based on the assumption that one’s social class renders them unable to comprehend discrimination based on gender and patriarchy as a position of privilege. The term raw patriarchy also seems to be used to signify not only patriarchy that

has never been checked but also one that, for lack of a better word, has not been processed by being put through other ideas that would contest it with the hope that it would come out of that contestation changed (or processed). This is where French theorist, Pierre Bourdieu's work on class is useful in making sense of these categories.

According to Student 5 what made the contestations fierce and intense was that "the ideologies, and the fabrics that had informed the movement when it initially started were in a very precarious position" (Student 5, 2018). These ideologies, one of which was intersectionality, had become the source of contestation amongst members of the movement. The contestation had become so fierce that there were naked protests by female and transsexual members within the movement. Furthermore, Student 5 believes that the refusal to listen on the part of male members of RMF was also a consequence of the brutality they experienced from the police and the university. Student 5 explained:

I think so many people had been traumatised by the push back from the state and the university and the brutality they had experienced on their own bodies that they were actually re-enacting on their comrades. I feel like queer bodies and black women were the first to experience that. If we had addressed it sooner at the plenary, what would have happened is a discussion would have been had. One which is led by the affected people as opposed to one where someone is allowing the affected people to speak and from there the solution was usually that men must speak amongst themselves (Student 5, 2018).

What Student 5 is referring to above is a situation where violence produces more violence on the part of those who experienced it. She contends that the violence that members of the movement were met with is the reason why male members symbolically (and physically) violate women and queer members by mainly refusing to listen to them or treating them as if what they say is important. The problem with this explanation is the fact that violence was experienced by all members of RMF (male, female, queer and non-binary); oddly, its effects would be the same for a select group of male members. However, Student 5's further explanation of how patriarchy was dealt with in the movement raises an important issue on how the movement dealt with conflict and disagreements at that particular moment. This explanation seems to be of the procedure with which the issue should have been resolved. This is a process "which is led by the affected people as opposed to one where someone is allowing the affected people to speak". Having male gatekeepers controlled who can speak and how they can speak is evidence of the failure to let go of the desire to control the

conversation and its outcome on the part of powerholders (male members in this case). Another significant issue, which is probably a result of the influence and control of male members in the movement, is that “the solution was usually that men must speak amongst themselves”. The fundamental flaw with this approach is that male members of the movement who did not think patriarchy was an issue were sent to reflect on and discuss a problem that they neither thought was an issue nor even existed. It is not surprising that patriarchy continued to thrive despite the many internal protests and male members being exiled. This process of letting male members of the movement reflect and discuss patriarchy further damaged relations of trust within the movement. Student 5 explains:

We would expect feedback from the process and at that point even if they came together, I had lost trust in the effectiveness of bringing them together in a point where the violent masculinities or the hyper masculinities are the ones who are given the authority and are the ones who can sway any kind of conversation. At that point I had very little trust (Student 5, 2018).

Student 5 above is describing a situation where the process of reflecting and discussing the problem seems to have been done as an exercise to meet the requirement rather than as a process to genuinely effect change. This means that members of the movement that were at the receiving end of patriarchal behaviour by their male comrades would never see change. The act of having this group discuss the problem on their own meant that they were given the authority to speak. However, Student 5 also explained that the ones who were not perceived as hyper-masculine were also at fault because they never spoke up when problematic behaviour was discussed. Student 5 explained:

The ones that are not hyper masculine or violent keep quiet and for me if you are silent when things that are inherently problematic and will inform bad decisions in the movement that is just as bad as being the speaker. That’s what started happening, people would just keep quiet and be swayed by the hyper masculine group (Student 5, 2018).

Furthermore, Student 5 explained that what some masculinities more violent than others was the gender relations within the movements that they come from. These are political organisations that are traditionally known to undermine their female members. This, Student 5 explained, was caused by the influence of partisan politics on relations within the movement. Although the racial element was there it was not as overbearing as partisan politics. Student 5 explained:

In that vile masculinity, the men who were on that camp were in a party that has a history of having those violent masculinities presence. And by that, I mean Pasma and at that point SASCO had long withdrawn from being part of the movement. I think those people would ordinarily be racially classified as African people who were predominantly these vile masculinities. But also, the dynamic that was strongest was actually the partisan politics because of the influence of the state and because it was EFF and Pasma that made up that violent masculinity camp. I think the racialised dynamics are not as pervasive as the partisan politics and I think it's because the state was so heavily involved at that time; the surveillance was intense, people's phones were intercepted, and I was also being followed (Student 5, 2018)

Furthermore, for Student 2, the ideological differences represented by the different formations that members of RMF belonged to were always going to be a source of contestation within the movement. It was the attitude of some of these ideological positions towards gender and patriarchy that conflicted with the vision of the movement. Although all members had agreed in the consecration of the movement that it would be intersectional, some male members would not accept what intersectionality meant at a practical level or in terms of behaviour and gender roles within the space. Student 2 explains:

I think when we came to space with different ideological backgrounds into one political space, people had to confront things that they never had to confront before in their organizations or even in their personal spaces, around patriarchy and feminism and they had to understand some of those things. There were patterns around roles and responsibilities and how internalized patriarchy means and particular roles. There were tensions around that and within the feminist part of the movement around sex and gender of women taking up all the space. When we talked about feminism and patriarchy we were called into order by the UCT Trans Collective that was formed during the Bremner occupation and the queer revolution that should have happened, but people did not really support the queer revolution (Student 2, 2017).

What Student 2 is referring to above is the intersection of gender, sex and ideology as a source of conflict in the movement. This, again, points to the conflict that arose as a product of the diversity of organisations that made up RMF. Many if not all of these organisations seem to have been loyal to furthering their ideological causes. What this meant is that despite intersectional being identified as a pillar of RMF, only organisations whose ideology dealt with gender and sexuality would be the sole bearers of the intersectional cause. This would explain why “people did not support the queer revolution” as Student 2 (2017) explains above. Furthermore, this denial of the existence of (or refusal to acknowledge the existence of) patriarchy by some male members of the movement was perpetuated by even the most senior or founding members of the movement. At one stage, a prominent male member of the

movement referred to “the legend of patriarchy and the so-called patriarchy” (Student 2, 2017) during an RMF meeting, which resulted in the collapse of the meeting. Furthermore, the situation became even direr when a female member of the movement was raped by a male member at the very building that the movement had occupied. When the rape of a female member occurred, all male members of RMF were exiled. However, exiling male members of the movement did elicit the kind of response that female and non-binary members were hoping for but instead, the denial of the problem continued. Student 2 explains:

There was a defensive response and they started calling themselves ‘exiles of azania’ instead of learning and doing introspection around what you lacked and being kicked out at the space, that would have had a different result. If they responded differently, we might have still had a RhodesMustFall movement; if people responded differently to the issues that were raised (Student 2, 2017).

Furthermore, what Student 2 seems to be suggesting above is the kind of listening that elicits a certain kind of response that shows that the voices of the aggrieved have indeed been heard. Male members of the movement were exiled as a way of communicating that their behaviour was not acceptable within the space. This exiling elicited a “defensive responsive” instead of the desired response, which was that of “learning and doing introspection”. This demonstrates John Husband’s (2009:442) argument that it is not enough to just listen but listening should be followed by a positive response, which shows that the listener indeed heard the speaker. This is because, Husband elaborates, our inability to act works to undermine or corrupt our initial understanding. However, acting does not always mean that those who are acting listened or even understood. Upon hearing the other side, actors can also act as a way to undermine or frustrate the efforts of those who speak out. This is precisely the case for male members of RMF when they were exiled from the movement. When the male students were exiled, they took that as an attack on them and use it as an opportunity to do what RMF did best, protest against the decision to exile them from the movement.

For RMF, protest was perceived as the most effective way of communicating a certain collective’s grievances. As a result, instances where various collectives protested internally or against fellow RMF members were common. For Student 2, these protests meant that there was the hope of resolving the issues that members of RMF were protesting against from within the movement. Student 2 explains:

What is interesting about the RMF movement was that there was a lot of internal protests. If you think about it, there was a naked protest that happened in meetings. It was a movement that protested against itself. There was a naked protest during #FeesMustFall, I think it was after the rape incident where it [RMF] failed to address issues. I think this was one element that demonstrated the contradictions within the movement and for some time there was an element of possibility about that. The fact that it was protest and not fracturing meant that it could be something that could be resolved or could be talked about (Student 2, 2017).

It is important to hold on to this idea of RMF as a movement that protests itself. This is because some of these protests should be perceived as a movement “talking back” (Dreher, 2010:92) to itself, which Dreher identifies as one of the strategies, that communities adopt to offer counter-narratives to those created by the media. In these internal RMF protests, members use RMF’s preferred medium of voice (protest) to communicate their issues and force the entire movement to listen to their issues. By distinguishing “protest” from “fracturing”, Student 1 (2017) positions protest as a form of constructive communication and/or process where actors can speak and hear each other. Fracturing, on the other hand, would be a situation where engagement with those who hold a dissenting view is no longer perceived as necessary or important. Instead, engagement in this situation will only take place between those who belong to particular factions.

8.3.3. Listening and power within RMF

In her analysis of Aristotle’s work on deliberation, Bickford (1996:30) teaches us that deliberation is a process of collective figuring out which is laden with conflict. This conflict can also stem from the very people who are part of the deliberative polity. This is because a deliberative polity “includes people whose interests, needs, and opinions conflict” (Bickford, 1996:30). This was the case for RMF. The movement brought together formations with competing and often conflicting interests. Student 2 explained:

Initially they were people from different movements people from Progressive Youth Alliance and South African Students Congress (SASCO), we had people from Pan Africanist Student Movement of Azania (PASMA), Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), ALUTA, worker unions, Black Academics Caucus (BAC), we had various groupings and some of them lost identity. I can speak for Aluta, since RMF represented everything ALUTA wanted to represent there was no reason for the continuation of ALUTA (Student 2, 2017).

Although these organisations were able to come together under the umbrella of RMF, many of them had ideological differences that they came with into the movement. Some of these

organisations could not change or alter their ideological leanings given that they were subsidiaries of bigger, national organisations and/or political parties. The EFF, SASCO and PASMA are examples of organisations, within RMF, whose ideological and policy positions are decided at a national level. There were also other less formal movements such as the Radical Black Feminists, UCT Trans Collective and others.

However, conflict and disagreements were common from the beginning of RMF. It was when the movement had occupied the Bremner Building and it was beginning to flesh out its identity and mandate that members found themselves in conflict over the ideology of the movement. According to Student 2, the Bremner space allowed for students to share their disagreements and differences. But, as Student 2 (2017) explains, “there were differences everywhere it was not like a copy-paste of ideas so tensions will come out and we had to decide on it and vote on it, disagree on it”. One of the areas where disagreements and conflict played themselves out was in the Strategy and Tactics Committee which decided the direction and mandate of the movement. Student 2 explained:

I remember in the Strategy and Tactics Committee we did not all have the same ideas when it comes to ideological background, so we discussed and debated. There was tension between all of us but at the end of the day we were trying to achieve something. It is one thing to disagree politically and having differences but I think we tried to be very clear about behaviour that we were not going to tolerate, like violence or abuse. If you didn't agree with feminism you were free to go, if you thought we were not meant to be treated equally you were free to leave and people actually left and others stayed (Student 2, 2017).

What Student 2 described above closely resembles Aristotle's idea of politics, which he described as “a realm of conflict and interaction among imperfect, diverse, and sometimes unequal citizens” (Bickford, 1996:52). The politics that he is referring to are not held together by the bonds of ‘civic friendship’ or a sense of shared interests but rather the quality of attention that is built into the practice of deliberation itself. One would not be out of order to argue that just like in Aristotle's description, the deliberation that the Strategy and Tactics Committee was held together by the quality of attention that speakers showed each other. This attention was signalled by laying the ground rules of what is accepted and not accepted during deliberations. Behaviours such as “violence and abuse” were not accepted in the deliberation. Just like in Aristotle's conception of deliberation the Strategy and Tactics Committee also laid out the parameters of what could and could not be deliberated upon. As

Student 2 (2017) explained, “if you didn’t agree with feminism you were free to go, if you thought we were not meant to be treated equally you were free to leave and people actually left and others stayed”. Violence and abuse were also not tolerated in the space.

However, the issue of intersectionality and black feminism being the defining features of RMF’s ideology was not an obvious one. It was usually due to this topic that many of the issues in RMF stemmed from. Although there were moments where members of the Strategy and Tactics Committee refused to even debate intersectionality, there were other moments where it was debated. Student 2 (2017) explained:

We definitely had one interesting day, it was a debate that was happening around feminism and masculinity and one of the policies of the RhodesMustFall movement is to have intersectionality and black feminism and people did not want to accept that. So you either stayed or you go and that person left but that did not mean that the issues around feminism were resolved; we had many issues around that resulted in people leaving the movement and the formation of other collectives, like the Accountability Intersectionality Audit Committee, which was looking at all our statements and behaviour in the space (Student 2, 2017).

According to Student 5 (2018) the major organisation that Student 2 mentioned above were well-represented in the first committee of 15 people. This is what was known as the Strategy and Tactics Committee (STC). According to Student 5, the STC held all the decision-making power within the movement. Student 5 further added that the people who belonged to the STC initially handpicked each other before they were eventually elected by the movement to lead. This decision to have members of this committee decide on the strategic direction of the movement has implications for RMF’s character as a leaderless movement. Student 5 explained:

The understanding around a non-leadership structure was that we are not going to have a hierarchy and we were not going to have individual positions but we are going to have a group of people that will take the movement forward (Student 5, 2018).

However, the individuals in the STC were, according to Student 5, chosen because they represented a constituency and some of these individuals had relationships or alliances with some of the organisations they belonged to together over the years at UCT. For example, when STC member and then SRC president, Ramabina Mahapa was a Secretary of SASCO, Mase Ramaru was Chairperson of SASCO at the time. Furthermore, when the two were kicked out of SASCO they joined forces with another STC member Alex Hotz to form a

student political organisation called ALUTA, which went on to contest SRC elections at UCT. Other STC members – Chumani Maxwele, Masixole Mlandu and Wandile Kasibe – were members of PASMA. This representation of various political formations and the ideological groups also meant that internal conflict and contestations within these political formations would filter through to RMF.

In terms of power and authority, Student 5 distinguishes between assumed power and the power of legitimate ideas. Assumed power is derived from one's social positioning that is influenced by factors such as ideology, socialization and culture. For example, being male, especially within the context of South African cultures comes with assumed power. The power of legitimate ideas was derived from one having legitimate ideas that are acknowledged as such by other members of the movement. Student 5 explained:

There is assumed power which is a power that patriarchy gives to black men and that is the status quo. With that assumed power, you walk into any room and you assume the power in the room. There was also power that you got because your ideas were legitimate and that was the power that existed in Azania 1 (Bremner Building occupation). The legitimacy of the student committee, also the knowledge that was being shared and the power that you get from the ability of knowing is even knowing how to interact with people who come with different narratives within this idea of blackness (Student 5, 2018).

Student 5's description above positions RMF as terrain for the contestation of various kinds of power that are derived from different sources. One form of power is assumed which means that being male automatically meant that one could use being male as a power to influence the movement despite not having that power legitimised by ideas. The power that comes with having legitimate ideas meant that it required legitimation from other members of the movement. This means that this form of power was not static and was contestable. Furthermore, the power of legitimate ideas could only function or be recognised in an environment where listening takes place and where ideas are debated. It is in this environment where students learn to "interact with people "who come with different narratives" (Student 5, 2018). This kind of power according to Student 5 thrived in Azania 1 where there were student committees and where it was a fertile ground for the contestation of ideas. Student 5 explained:

Azania 1 had a kind of progressive look at power and we were consistently kind of challenging understandings of power relations in terms of the space. So, who has a voice in a particular space, who has a sway, who has power to define space or claim it. That was kind of what the

intersectional audit was always thinking about in Azania 1. Azania 2 and 3, I would say the transition between the two was when the assumed powers started taking over and I would say authority (Student 5, 2018).

Student 5 above demonstrates how having accountability built into how discussions are facilitated within a political space can open the space for more voices to be heard. The intersectional audit committee seems to have played an important role in questioning “who has a voice in a particular space, who has a sway, who has the power to define space or claim it” (Student 5, 2018). In this case, the intersectional audit committee played an important role in getting members of the movement to start thinking about power relations and the authority of various speakers.

In terms of authority, Student 5 describes authority as a “kind of power to change [things] as opposed to just power” (2018). This description links authority to the ability to change things. In other words, every member of RMF had power but it is the authority or the power to effect change that was not evenly distributed and that shifted as the movement occupied various buildings. Authority, according to Student 5, was never static. Who has authority shifted as the context within which the movement operated also changed? Student 5 explained:

I would say the authority was given to black women in the very beginning because we were claiming the space, because we were ensuring that you know that everything was being audited, even what we were doing ourselves was quality assured because we very aware that we all come with our blind spot. So even what we were doing was being audited. But the minute there was no accountability and authority became un-policed, that for me was when things began to crumble and the collective **started to become unaccountable. It didn't take caring seriously, it didn't take what solidarities are formed seriously** (Student 5, 2018).

The paragraph by Student 5 above draws a link between authority and accountability within a changing political context. When mechanisms of accountability were in place and functioning at their optimal level, “black women” had the authority. This was the kind of authority that was being policed. It meant that authority was derived from the power that these “black women” were entrusted with to act on behalf of the movement. Being entrusted with this authority also meant that they could be held accountable and in theory, their actions could lead to that authority being taken away from them. This is an example of a situation where accountability helps to keep authority in check and governs how that authority could and should be used. However, the paragraph above also demonstrates how as soon as the context within which RMF existed changed and the mechanisms of accountability fell apart authority

shifted. Student 5 (2018) argues that “the minute there was no accountability and authority became un-policed” that was “when things began to crumble and the collective started to become unaccountable”. In this downward spiral due to the lack of accountability, RMF “didn’t take caring seriously, it didn’t take what solidarities are formed seriously” (Student 5, 2018).

However, Dobson (2014:22) reminds us that being heard is a conferring of power while withholding listening is an expression of power. For RMF, one of the areas where power played itself out was in the plenary sessions. It was in these sessions that members of the movement would deliberate over an issue and take vital decisions about the direction that the movement should take. But power within these plenary sessions was never fixed and was dependent on various factors. Student 1 (2017) explains:

I would say it was more about who was organised at a particular time in the movement, that was one thing that was interesting and dangerous about the space. I remember, technically we only had one structure which was a plenary. So, any group that was organised in that it could caucus and persuade people and could use power at any particular moment. It had its benefits and negatives, there was a strategic committee that existed at the time, I was involved in that but was in Azania 1 and part of Azania House. It comprised of a few different factions that pre-existed the RhodesMustFall movement but that sort of fell away to some degree after we were kicked out of Avenue House but you can’t say there has been, through the statements, you can see there was the Trans take-over, at some stage PASMA was quite influential in the movement (Student 1, 2017).

What Student 2 (2017) is describing above is a situation with RMF where the various political organisations and interest groups that made up RMF would organise themselves and control the levers of power within the movement. Student 2 (2017) adds that various political organisations had various cycles of being organised during the cause of the movement’s life. This meant that a political organisation that is highly organised would be well represented with RMF’s plenaries and the numbers would come in handy when it comes to decision-making. This ability of a political organisation to influence and organise plenaries also meant that not everybody could organise plenary sessions. Student 1 explains:

You could say some groups had better luck organising plenaries over others, some people had more social capital in the space, so it was fluid. If you had more social capital than the movement, then you had power (Student 2, 2017).

However, there were also moments in the life of the movement where plenary was set on a certain day weekly which meant that these plenaries did not have to be organised but they were a standing fixture in the movement's timetable. Student 1 (2017) explains that this was the issue when the movement embarked on a campaign to end outsourcing within the university. Student 1 explains:

We were overcoming with confidence just before the outsourcing campaign and while we were busy **with that because we had weekly meetings so it wouldn't be a matter** of you and me calling a meeting, it would be a fact that there is a meeting on Sunday. We were much small, it is more the contradiction in our movement that became much bigger problems when we were faced with the issue of security with the mass mobilisation the #FeesMustFall brought when all of a sudden there is a thousand people inside Avenue Hall and now all the things people are trying to deal with within the movement are in open display for everyone (Student 1, 2017).

Furthermore, questions of who spoke and who listened during RMF's plenaries depended on the context within which the movement found itself at a specific moment. In moments where RMF had its accountability mechanisms working effectively, talking and listening seems to have been a democratic process where all within the movement spoke and listened to each other. Student 5 explained:

I think the collective spoke and the collective listened initially. I think the method of reaching what we conceptually reaching what we had in the beginning was so critical to a point that sometimes consensus would be reached and we would have to think about whether that consensus was really a good thing. At that point I thought like if we could even look at the group dynamic and completely dissolve the kind of decision that has been made and start over or flag it for another day then we are really being critical about our behaviour, and critical about who is listening, who is speaking and who is swaying who in the room and why. And if we could dissolve a decision that has been arrived at through consensus reaching cause we are looking at consensus collectively. Then I think that was when the collective was listening and the collective was also speaking (Student 5, 2018).

Student 5 above is explaining a situation where the idea of speaking and listening is linked to deliberation to reach a consensus. In the explanation, Student 5 demonstrates the significance of speaking and listening and how relations of power would influence the consensus that is eventually reached. What this means is that the deliberation in question was not just about reaching a consensus but rather about how that consensus is reached and in whose interest it is reached. Interrogating whether consensus would still be reached if the decision taken was to be revisited demonstrates how important it was for the movement to ensure that the

decision taken was democratic. This is what Student 5 perceived as real consensus; which was when the “collective was listening and the collective was also speaking” (2018).

However, there were other moments where the consensus reached was not perceived as real. Student 5 explained:

At a point when consensus was not real it was reached within seconds, someone would come with a particular kind of assumed power in the room and with their constituency from their student movement coming to the room with a mandate from their mother body and try sway the collective. I think that was when some were listening and others were speaking (Student 5, 2018).

These moments of consensus that was not real seemed to have been characterised by the strategic listening by members of student political parties. The fake consensus was brought about by someone with a “particular kind of assumed power in the room and with their constituency from their student movement coming to the room with a mandate from their mother body and try sway the collective” (Student 5, 2018). It was at these moments that certain members of the movement (those affiliated with assumed power) were speaking, and those who were not affiliated with the person with assumed power were listening.

8.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I detailed various conflicts and contestations that took place within RMF. I want to use this section to highlight some of the major themes that came up in the analysis. The refusal to listen was a major theme that came up as the cause of many of the conflicts within RMF. [It was because of the refusal to listen on the part of male members of the movement that led to the first anniversary protest and protest within the movement. This is the first time in the life of the movement that the refusal to listen that RMF encounters when dealing with power plays itself out within RMF.

There was also a matter of the movement’s inability to identify the problem and find solutions to those problems. This is a fundamental issue in that without agreeing on what the issues are, it becomes impossible for members of the movement to begin the process of collectively figuring out the problem. This failure was a product of the collapse of the committee system and the rise in the influence of student wings of political parties on RMF.

The lack of a Code of conduct to regulate behaviour in the absence of the Intersectionality Audit Committee opens the movement for abuse. This is an important issue because it demonstrates how even in the most democratic of movements, power requires regulation to

ensure that it is not abused. Abuse of power in service of personal gain played out in organising plenaries and in suppressing issues that were raised by women.

Chapter 9: Interaction between Rhodes Must Fall movement and the UCT management: Listening, democracy and participation

9.1. Introduction

So far, this thesis has demonstrated instances of how listening as a theory can be used to evaluate the interaction between RMF and the UCT management, and within RMF; and the role that listening as a practice could play (and plays) in strengthening decision-making during heightened political moments. I have drawn heavily on Susan Bickford's theory of 'political listening' and on other listening theorists, to assess whether the interactions between RMF and the UCT management could be considered listening and at what moment, if any, effective listening take place. As part of this exercise, I investigated key moments in RMF's protest campaigns at UCT, the interaction between RMF and the UCT management and interactions within RMF, using the lenses of listening theory. I have also detailed and analysed the coverage of the interaction between RMF and the UCT management by the *Cape Times* newspaper. In this Chapter, I am going to discuss major themes that came out of my analysis (in Chapters 4 through 9) and their implications for listening theory, democratic spaces, and participation in democracy. This is particularly important in that the study offers an opportunity to empirically test the normative possibilities of listening theory on an actual micro-democracy during highly-politicised moments of interaction. I have organised my discussion into three major areas: listening theory in practice; listening, democracy and democratic spaces; and listening and the media.

9.2. Listening theory in practice

9.2.1. Listening as a physical act, requiring co-presence

In my Master of Arts degree exploratory study on using the theory of political listening to assess the interaction between Equal Education and learners, and Equal Education, learners and the media, I (2014) discovered that the theory of political listening had a "weak external language of description" (Bernstein in Maton, 2011:72). This weak external language of description was a result of the fact that the theory seems to have been developed for face-to-face encounters between citizens (Bickford, 1996; Thill, 2009; Dreher, 2012). The indicators

of listening put forward by theorists can only be observed in face-to-face encounters, as detailed in **Section 2.10**. It is nearly impossible to see these indicators in mediated communication such as written texts without having to develop the theory further (Mufamadi, 2014). This physical co-presence nature of listening is important in that it sets a context for where listening could happen.

In terms of this study, the most effective listening seems to have occurred when the UCT management was physically in the same space as RMF members. This was the case for the majority of RMF's campaigns in 2015. For the campaign against the statue of Rhodes, for example, there was a consultative process which created space for RMF and the UCT management to speak to and hear each other in a shared space. Throughout 2015, Max Price, the VC, was always available to accept memoranda during RMF's protests and to give an immediate **response** to some of the demands during these protests. As a representative of the university's formal and administrative power, Price's physical presence served to demonstrate that the institution gave RMF **recognition** and treated the social movement as though it had something important to say. This face-to-face interaction seems to support the theory's emphasis on the value of co-presence in listening.

When the UCT management introduced SETT at the beginning of 2016, it was not only a strategic departure from how the university approached the RMF protest the previous year, but it was also an attempt to put a buffer between the Vice-Chancellor and the protesters. Put differently, the introduction of SETT meant that the communication between RMF and the VC, whom RMF saw as the embodiment of the university's administrative power, would now be mediated. This means that RMF could not be sure if their message would get to the VC, the nature in which it would be delivered, and consequently the response it would be met with. I contend that having SETT represent the VC took away the recognition that the presence of the VC gave RMF. The resulting stalemate was a failure of communication which transformed the political conflict between the two parties into a physical one.

This finding demonstrates that during highly politicised moments, effective listening happens optimally when individuals with decision-making power are physically co-present with those who are making demands or claims.

9.2.2. The politics of giving and being given recognition

Although I have demonstrated in various moments through this study how the UCT management and RMF interacted and how the UCT management refused to listen, it is important to highlight the fact that the UCT management recognised RMF. Giving RMF **recognition** is important for several reasons. First, RMF was not an elected organisation and neither did it hold any formal office at the university or within the structures. Recognising RMF was also an acknowledgement that as much as the SRC is the democratically-elected student leadership, it is unable to adequately represent all student issues. Price (2017b) explained that the fact that the SRC required 25% of the student population to vote for the elections to be considered legitimate. The fact that recognition was also extended to RMF added a layer of complexity in the sense that RMF could not be held accountable using the rules and regulations that governed the SRC's behaviour. For example, this meant that RMF could protest without having to issue the university with the 48-hour notice that the SRC was required to. Conversely, being recognised meant that RMF had to have representatives that the UCT management could engage when the need arose although it was a 'leaderless' movement. Most importantly, it meant that RMF could make demands and have those demands given attention by the university management.

Second, being recognised also meant that RMF could make legitimate demands for presence and inclusion in decision-making processes. RMF was granted the use of Avenue Hall as part of its status as a recognised organisation within UCT. But because RMF did not hold any official office, the social movement could use its space in whichever way it saw fit. In terms of decision-making processes, RMF members were included in committees such as the Curriculum Review Committee and the Works of Art Committee. It is also worth noting that what seemed to make inclusion into decision-making committees possible was the fact that key members of the SRC of the time were also prominent members of RMF. The downside of being granted space was that the UCT management treated granting RMF space as a solution to all of the social movement's demands to be heard and taken seriously.

Furthermore, the UCT management was also strategic in granting and withholding recognition. During the FeesMustFall protest, the university only gave recognition to students when they directed their grievances at the South African government. The implication of listening theory is that recognition can be given and removed as part of attempts to achieve an

advantage over a political adversary. Giving recognition can be used as part of manipulative listening on the part of those who hold positions of power.

9.2.3. Power and listening

This study demonstrated how power played an important role in structuring the kinds of listening that could happen between RMF and the UCT Management, and within RMF. To fully understand how power was used at various moments, it is important to distinguish between various forms of power and how they are deployed. I will lean on Thompson's (1995) types of power which are: economic power, political power, coercive power and symbolic power; and Cini's (2017) definition of disruptive power. Economic power is about the use of and creation of materials, products and financial resources that can be exchanged for money in the market. This kind of power can be centralised in an individual or an organisation. Political power is concerned with "coordinating individuals and regulating the patterns of their interaction" (Thompson, 1995:14). At an institutional level, political power is centralised within a territory. Institutions that possess or use political power have a "complex system of rules and procedures which authorize certain individuals to act in certain ways" (Thompson, 1995:15). Cini refers to this kind of power as "formal and substantial power" (2017:20). Coercive power involves using physical force or threatening to use physical force to "subdue or conquer" (Thompson, 1995:15) an adversary. Examples of this power include the power that the army exercises. The fourth kind of power, symbolic power is when an institution or an individual has the means to produce, distribute and receive symbolic products. Finally, Cini (2017) argues that social movements, in particular, hold disruptive power. This is "power activated from below through the withdrawal of contributions to social co-operation by people at the lower end of the hierarchical social relations" (Cini, 2017:18). This power rests in the ability to disrupt institutional operations or activities. The types of power that are particularly relevant to this study are political power and disruptive power.

In terms of "political" (Thompson, 1995:14) or "formal and substantial power" as Cini (2017:18) refers to it, the UCT management held this kind of power by virtue of their established positions as members of the university leadership. Holding this form of power meant that the UCT management could enforce internal university rules and discipline any transgressors of said rules. RMF, on the other hand, held disruptive power. The social

movement embarked on various protests which disrupted the university's activities. These include blocking roads and occupying strategic university buildings.

This study demonstrated that what seemed to work in creating “**political equality**” (Bickford, 1996:57) in this environment where each party holds a different kind of power is the fact that each party recognised the power that the other held. It was this weighing up the power that the other party held and trying to figure out whether and how each party planned to use their respective power that created an environment where listening could occur. What this demonstrates for listening theory is that in these heightened political moments, political actors do not relinquish their power to make way for listening to take place. Instead, listening happens in this environment where various parties hold on to their power because they also identify the power that their adversaries hold. In a way, recognising the power that each party has and the potential that each party can wield its power creates a form of **political equality** (Bickford, 1996:57) (see **Section 2.2.2** for detail). I will discuss this duality between power and political equality next.

9.2.3.1. Power and equality: the equalising of unequals?

What seemed to have created “political equality” (Bickford, 1996:57) was when both parties saw or recognised power in the other. When RMF occupied Bremner Building, demonstrating its disruptive power, both the UCT management and RMF were able to speak and listen to each other. They even go to the extent of reaching an agreement that RMF would vacate the occupied building as soon as the Rhodes statue was removed from campus. The threat was that failure to do so would see the UCT management deploy its formal power.

Another demonstration of deploying power to create political equality was during the mediation between RMF and UCT facilitated by the IJR. Both RMF and UCT management were always aware of the power that the other side held. The UCT management recognised that the social movement had the power to make the campus ungovernable and thoroughly dysfunctional as a working institution through protest. RMF members, on the other hand, were aware that the UCT management had the power to institute disciplinary processes against them, which could result in expulsion.

There were also moments where although both parties would recognise the power that the other held, the UCT management had the legal authority to wield their power by virtue of being the custodians of “political” (Thompson, 1995:14) or “formal and substantial power”

(Cini, 2017:18). RMF members were always aware that the UCT management had the authority to institute disciplinary charges against them. In an environment where speaking and listening occur, Bickford (1996:97) reminds us that those who control or dominate the political, social and economic institutions tend to get more hearing than their counterparts. To counter this power, RMF members adopted a strategy of disrespecting and shaming those who held administrative positions of power as a way of creating political equality.

9.2.3.1.1. Listening and being disrespectful

Being disrespectful to power is a guerrilla tactic used by people with little formal power who are frustrated by those who hold more power not recognising the problematic nature of how they exercise their power. Used this way, disrespect seems to be the exact opposite of Hannah Arendt's concept of respect (see **Section 2.2.2**), which she regards as the kind of attention that citizens should show each other in the public realm (in Bickford, 1996:80). Respect, she argues, enables us to see past 'what' a person is to 'who' the person is. In the case of RMF, this distinction would mean recognising that all RMF members are not homogenous, but they are all unique individuals even though they might be protesting the same issue. Respect enables us to see others as different from us, yet as a unique 'who', just like us. It is through respect that political actors can see beyond stereotypes.

Unlike Arendt's concept of respect, disrespect focuses on 'what' the person is as opposed to 'who' they are. Disrespect, as a strategy for countering power, is also used in the public realm against those with formal power. In the case of South African anti-apartheid struggle stalwart, Pityana (see **Section 4.3.4** for details), although the call for his removal as co-chair of the University Assembly was based on the suspected inability that he could be impartial, it is my view that the suspected bias would not be an issue had he not been a person of stature, who commanded a great deal of respect and influence, and who was also president of the UCT Convocation at the time. Price's explanation of being respected in private and disrespected in public by members of RMF also highlights this focus on the 'what' in the public arena. It is not out of order to argue that in the private conversations with RMF members that Price is referring to, he is seen as a unique who. In other words, he is divorced from his position of administrative power because his role is a public one.

This strategy of being disrespectful has serious implications for listening theory. Arendt's concept of respect (Bickford, 1996:80) assumes that political actors relinquish their power to

create a sense of political equality and to hear others. This study has demonstrated how political actors hold on to their power and attempt to use it in the public arena to gain an advantage over their political adversaries. This finding demonstrates that in these heightened political moments, ‘what’ an individual is, is important in getting them a better hearing in the public arena. Giving Pityana an opportunity to co-chair the University Assembly was seen as risky by RMF members who believed that he wanted the statue to remain on campus because of his stature.

9.2.3.2. Whose UCT is it anyway: UCT through the lens of Private Property Law

It is impossible to understand the underlying motivation for when UCT management refused to listen to members of RMF without looking at some of the intentions of university management. The overriding aim of UCT management’s interaction with RMF was to restore order within the university to avoid damaging the reputation and functioning of the university. This is particularly important for universities that are competing on a global platform, facing declining funding from the government but are answerable to that very same government for their smooth functioning. This decline in funding means that universities must rely on third-stream income from donors; it is through their good reputations that donors are likely to fund university projects. What this restoration of order does internally is to seek to limit the modes of democratic expressions by creating an environment that only allows protest that is containable and not disruptive (Cini, 2017). This approach positions protest as something that needs to be dealt with and contained rather than a legitimate mode of democratic expression that demands allowance and listening.

In the case of UCT, this attempt to restore order and the lack of recognition of disruptive protest as a legitimate mode of democratic expression was rooted in the university’s reliance on Private Property Law. Adopting a legal framework that considers the university as private property has numerous implications for the behaviour of citizens on such a property and how they register their discontent. In addition, the behaviour of students was regulated according to this understanding of private property and was stipulated in the Code of Conduct for students. Any attempt to get a hearing through protest was met with an attempt by university management to enforce its Code of Conduct which rested on this understanding.

This desire to restore law and order through the Code of Conduct became the main objective of the UCT management to the detriment of a genuine attempt at listening. The Code of Conduct even went as far as stipulating the kind of protest that was acceptable within the university and the procedures to be followed when students wanted to embark on a protest. The protest was viewed as something to be dealt with rather than an opportunity to open up issues, to listen and to hear students. The role of formal power holders, in this regard, becomes that of enforcing the rules and creating 'order'. This is the approach that SETT embraced at UCT. Although SETT was meant to be a vehicle to listen for disgruntled/unheard voices, it had no mechanism to enable those voices to proliferate and be heard before the issues were communicated through protest. It was only during a protest that SETT would spring into action. This lack of a mechanism to communicate grievances without having to resort to protest escalated the status of protest into a mechanism of the first instance rather than a form of last resort. Universities' attempts to contain protest through Private Property Law are a product of pressure on universities to become financially sustainable amidst dwindling government funding.

9.2.3.2.1. University funding pressures and the pursuit of third-stream income

The declining government funding of universities in South Africa has intensified competition among universities for top students and funding by research bodies and donors. For many of these universities, looking for additional funding meant subscribing to global rankings of universities and maintaining a desirable public image that would attract both funders and top students. Cini contends that "academic managers, whose principal objective is to make their universities highly competitive within the market of higher education, are generally more concerned about neutralising potential challengers, who might damage the reputation and functioning of the university" (2017:31-2). In dealing with student protesters, academic managers tend to be confrontational and repressive.

UCT was, at the period under investigation by this study and still is, ranked as the top university in Africa. This status has helped the institution attract not only the best students and staff from across the world, but it has also assisted the university in securing donations and research funding. In this globalised and highly commercialised higher education market, protest sends the wrong message to prospective staff, students and donors and funders. Disruptive protest is viewed as a sign of a university that is dysfunctional.

9.2.3.3. Whose RMF is it anyway?

Some members of the RMF, especially those who consolidated their power and influence when the movement moved to Avenue Hall, were not immune to power's refusal to listen. It is important to note that when the mechanism to hold individuals and power to account (via the Intersectional Audit Committee) fell apart within RMF, individual members consolidated their power. This vacuum paved the way for disregard of the social movement's processes and led to the refusal to listen especially by male members of the movement. These members exhibited a similar refusal to listen that the movement was met with by the UCT management as if to reinforce the message that power does not listen unless there are mechanisms to hold it to account. What is even more concerning is the inability of male members to hold themselves to the same standard of listening that they (along with the rest of RMF) demanded from the UCT management. This refusal to listen was met with the same kind of protest that RMF has used against the UCT management.

Furthermore, the accountability vacuum weakened the movement's ability to identify and solve internal problems. In the absence of the Intersectional Audit Committee, which had the legitimacy and authority, those whose behaviour was identified as problematic refused to listen or hear how their behaviour could affect others. Instead, members of the movement who belonged to political parties mobilized their members to join the social movement's plenary sessions to sway RMF's decisions in their favour.

9.2.3.3.1. Being leaderless and the committees

For RMF, being leaderless did not necessarily mean all individuals within the movement held equal power. Having committees that provide strategic direction on various issues served as an alternative and democratic form of leadership. Even when issues were debated and decisions were taken democratically, RMF demonstrated that there was still a need to have a mechanism that regulated and monitored how those with power deployed it within the movement. This was the Intersectionality Audit Committee. This committee was successful in ensuring that all voices were heard within the movement and that RMF remains loyal to its ideological pillars. The collapse of this committee led to the abuse of power and a refusal to listen to each other within the movement.

9.2.4. Trust and listening

One of the major findings of this study is that **trust** is a requirement for speaking and listening to occur between political actors. The kind of trust that is referred to here is not necessarily trust in the individual for their own sake, but rather trust in their openness/willingness to listen and hear the students. From the beginning of the protest against the Rhodes statue, it is clear that trust broke down between the UCT management and students who had now formed RMF. During the protest against the statue, students did not want to be part of any engagement that was planned by the UCT management because they did not trust the UCT management's intentions and openness.

In many instances during the interaction between UCT management and RMF, the UCT management was seldom willing to exercise genuine openness to listen to RMF members. Instead, the university management was always trying to maintain an advantage over RMF. During the mediation process, the UCT management was interested in holding RMF members to account using the Code of Conduct and ensuring that an agreement that was signed would prevent future disruptive protest. This lack of openness further damaged **trust** between the two.

The interaction between RMF and UCT management during the accommodation crisis and #shackville protest demonstrates arguably the most damaging acts to the potential for establishing **trust** between the two. First, RMF stopped the occupation of Avenue House on the condition that the UCT management would meet with RMF members only for the university leadership to discover that RMF had issued a call for all the students without accommodation to be at the proposed meeting. Second, in the UCT management's first update on the accommodation crisis, it put the sole blame on RMF without acknowledging the university's role (over-offering accommodation) or the glitches in the system that allocated places. Third, halfway through communication about accommodation, SETT issued RMF with an ultimatum to either meet the UCT management to discuss the social movement's occupation of Avenue Hall or have its fate decided in its absence. Four, SETT refused to grant RMF an opportunity to speak directly with the VC. Finally, SETT issued RMF an ultimatum to move the shack or have it removed. It is these acts of manipulation and bad faith that ultimately led to vandalism and the burning of artworks at UCT.

9.2.4.1. Lack of trust and proximity to power

There seems to be a link between trust and an individual's proximity to administrative power. Students in the protests showed that they did not seem to trust anyone within the UCT management or anyone with administrative power. The higher the administrative power an individual is entrusted with as part of their position, the less that individual was trusted by members of RMF. Examples include the lack of trust in the Vice-Chancellors, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, SETT and even the President of Convocation. This lack of trust and faith in management stems from processes where students are expected to take part in ritualised listening processes with no real outcome.

However, this lack of trust in administrative power has its exceptions. The VC Special Advisor on Transformation was an exception. Although she sat in the executive management of the university, students' trust in her was not diminished by her proximity to power. During the mediation process, she assumed an observer's role which made her a neutral party.

9.2.5. UCT management's strategies in reacting to RMF protest

Balsiger identified six counter-strategies that institutions can deploy in response to protest. These are avoidance, acquiescence, compromise, sidestepping, confrontation, and prevention (Balsiger, 2015:656). I will consider four of these strategies, which are relevant to the UCT management's response to demands by RMF. In terms of acquiescence, which is when institutions agree to demands by activists and/or change their policies, UCT agreed to the demand to remove the Rhodes statue and later in the year agreed to insource previously outsourced workers. There were also moments when the UCT management offered concessions or compromises. Examples of compromise include UCT management instituting a Curriculum Change Committee in response to a demand to decolonise the curriculum, and the introduction of Works of Art Committee to review works of art in response to a demand by RMF for the removal of "racist" artworks. In terms of confrontation strategies (Balsiger, 2015:658) which were meant to counter RMF demands and change the narrative, during the accommodation crisis the UCT management issued a communique that placed blame for the accommodation crisis solely on RMF. Although the university did not successfully implement the strategy of prevention (Balsiger, 2015:659), it was successful in monitoring the social media activities of RMF and its prominent members and sharing this intelligence with the UCT management.

9.2.6. Government's strategy in responding to student protest over fees

The FeesMustFall protest demonstrated a similar pattern of power's refusal to listen, this time at a government level, through the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Blade Nzimande. Nzimande used Balsiger's strategies of "compromise" and "sidestepping" (2015:656). In terms of compromise, the Nzimande announced a 6% fee-increase to be applied across all South African public universities as opposed to the 10.5% increase proposed by Wits University and 10.3% proposed by UCT, to name a few. The 6% figure was also a compromise from the 0% that students were demanding. For universities such as UCT and Rhodes University, the summit that Nzimande convened represented a form of sidestepping the issues. Nzimande invited representatives of SRCs, which meant that the social movement that led the protest at UCT could not make any inputs since it was not a democratically-elected student body. For Rhodes students, a discussion on fee-increases did not meet students' demands for the minimum initial payment, which was 50% of a student's total fees, to be reduced; and for the university to deal with issues of rape and sexual assault.

9.2.7. RMF's strategies to get a hearing from UCT management

Cini's strategies that individuals (and social movements) who are at the "margins of academic decision-making" (2017:18) and are structurally marginalised in universities can use to influence decision-making processes are useful in making sense of some of the strategies that RMF deployed at UCT. These strategies are lobbying disruption, and coalition building. The most effective form of lobbying for RMF took place when the UCT Council voted on the fate of the Rhodes statue. The SRC president, who was a prominent member of RMF, detailed accounts of instances where he, along with the UCT VC, would call individual Council members to persuade them to vote for the removal of the statue. There were also moments when guests of national and international prominence were invited to speak at media events. Disruption, on the other hand, was arguably RMF's most used strategy. The social movement occupied buildings, blockaded roads and would force students and workers from their residences and places of work to join the protest. Finally, in terms of coalition building, RMF made alliances with various influential insider and external groups and individuals. Internally, RMF had a coalition with the SRC, various labour unions, and the Black Academic Caucus. The social movement had also made alliances with the UCT

Association of Black Alumni, the Independent News and Media South Africa owner, along with political activists in the province.

9.3. Listening, democracy and democratic space

Protest theorists have argued that protest is a legitimate form of participation in democracy with a long history in the South African context. Nielsen went as far as pointing out that “even if citizens had not directly participated in protest, they would rate protest on par with voting in terms of leveraging service” (Booyesen, 2009:17). This is not surprising given that these protest theorists have also demonstrated that protest is usually used when other forms of participation in democracy and democratic spaces have failed. This undeniable link between protest, participation in democracy and the nature of democratic spaces makes it important to conclude the role of protest in the case of UCT as a microcosm of the South African democracy and the nature of its accompanying democratic spaces.

9.3.1. The right to protest (and be understood)

Although there is no denying the fact that protest plays a significant role in South African politics and did at UCT during the period of study, the form it should take is a contested matter. The right to protest kept coming up as a theme in communication by the UCT management and the Minister of Higher Education and Training during the period under examination in this study. This is important in that although the UCT management kept referring to its respect for the right to protest, its interpretation of that right was narrow, limiting the scope of what made this right an important pillar of democracy. What RMF’s protest at UCT demonstrated effectively as far as the right to protest is concerned is that it can be interpreted in a manner that limits its effectiveness. The interpretation can be very prescriptive of the kind of protest that does not cause any disruptions. These limitations can be overcome by reading the right to protest alongside John Husband’s “right to be understood” (in Downing, 2007:12) (see **Section 2.2.7.3.**). Since protesting does not always guarantee that the voices of those participating would be heard, the right to be understood offers a way for those voices to be heard and would compel those in power (and the media) to understand the issues.

9.3.2. Protest and democracy at UCT

It is important to remember that all the issues that RMF was protesting against at UCT were not new and neither were RMF members the first to raise objections against such issues. This backdrop is often lost because universities are, by nature, spaces of transition for students and university leadership also changes frequently. The difference is that RMF's protest at UCT played a fundamental role in getting the institution to treat issues of transformation as being so significant that they required urgent attention from the university. Price explained:

...it (protest) had a positive and a negative role. The positive, I think, is to accelerate transformation and particularly those elements of transformation have to do with the subtle things like institutional culture and the statue is the symbol of that, the artworks and other things like the curriculum form part of that. I think all those are being taken much more seriously by the institution because of the RhodesMustFall protest. The negative, I think, it has been that it has resulted especially when the protests had taken over by more political groups and when it became mixed-up with identity politics. I think it became very polarising on campus and the protest was masculinist; sometimes it removed space for dialogue... [but] also giving a voice to people who were silenced in different ways, who now feel they can speak (2017).

Price positions protest as an important vehicle for voice to force those in power to listen and respond with speed. His view that protest sometimes “removed space for dialogue” (Price, 2017) is based on the understanding that the university should have created space for issues to be debated. The only recognised form of debate within this lens is that which happens through seminars, lectures and formal university assemblies. Protest, within this view, falls outside the confines of debate. It is protest's disruptive power (real or perceived) that renders the demands being made urgent. For Student 6, the disruptive power of protest lies in the number of people who participate. A protest with few participants can be ignored, while one with many participants forces those in power to pay attention to it at the very least. Student 6 explained:

...when we call protests, we called them a couple of days away to actually organise. If you call a protest and a few people come, it shows that you cannot mobilise and then your ability to negotiate is diminished (Student 6, 2017).

Student 6's comment above demonstrates how the disruptive power of many in a protest forced the university to pay attention to the issues that are being raised by those protesting or run the risk of prolonged disruption of its operations. It is this risk of prolonged disruption that elevates the issues being raised by those protesting into urgent matters. In addition, Student 6 is also commenting on how protest is used to pave the path towards negotiations or

talking and listening. In South Africa, in particular, protest is often the result of the failures of democratic spaces/platforms in giving ordinary citizens a hearing on decisions that affect their lives. At UCT, although the SRC is represented in the university's decision-making structures, their representation does not seem to be efficient in ensuring that students' issues are not only heard but change comes as a result of that hearing. So this says something about inclusion in small numbers in university spaces/committees – formal inclusion is mandated and adhered to, but actual power and voice do not necessarily follow from that presence

9.3.3. Listening and democratic spaces

In the case of UCT, the formation of the RMF movement was a direct result of the continued failure of the university to transform at a rapid pace. Although conversations about what needed to be transformed and how were entered into for years, they failed to result in the actual implementation of any realisable plans to transform the university. To put it differently, many of the students who were members of RMF had become so disillusioned with the ritualised speaking and listening that did not result in change so much that during the RMF protest they refused to be part of any talks unless the university could guarantee the removal of the Rhodes statue.

What this study has demonstrated in terms of democratic spaces at UCT is that they are ineffective in getting students a hearing. First, the university's SRC only technically represents 25% of the student population. This is the voting threshold that is required for the SRC elections to be legitimate. When pressed about the decision to recognise RMF even though it is not a democratically-elected representative of students, Price cited the 25% representation of the SRC as a problem. Second, although the SRC sits in the university's decision-making structures, student representation is too low and scattered to make any meaningful impact. The Council meeting that decided on the fate of the Rhodes statue is a case in point. Then SRC president, Ramabina Mahapa, detailed how he, along with the VC, had to make calls to Council members to lobby them to vote for the removal of the Rhodes statue. This under-representation of students in the decision-making structures of the university renders the SRC ineffective and their role in the process merely that of rubber-stamping.

9.4. Conclusion

This chapter synthesised how listening played itself in various moments of protest throughout this study. It highlighted the links between listening and power, trust and listening, and power and the lack of trust. Although political listening is a normative theory which focuses on areas of deep disagreements, a context of protest demonstrates how this theory could play itself out.

Chapter 10: *Cape Times* newspaper coverage: stirring the pot or facilitating listening?

10.1. Introduction

Throughout the analysis chapters, I have referred to the *Cape Times* newspaper's coverage of RMF's activities at UCT and the stance that the newspaper took of telling stories from the point of view of the students. In this section, I will interrogate the position of the *Cape Times* in the interaction between RMF and the UCT management. My discussion will revolve around three major themes in my attempt to explain the coverage and how the newspaper could have ended up adopting such a role: the social production of news, a listening editor and the relationship between UCT VC, Price and INMSA owner and chairperson, Iqbal Survé.

10.2. Making sense of the *Cape Times* newspaper's coverage of RMF's activities at UCT

The *Cape Times* newspaper's coverage of RMF's activities is unusual given that it is a mainstream newspaper and, according to (Friedman, 2011) South African mainstream newspapers tend to represent the voices of the elite in society. It is this unusual nature of the *Cape Times* newspaper's reporting that led Stoch (2016) to conclude that the newspaper was biased against UCT in her study of the *Cape Times*' coverage of RMF's campaign against the Rhodes statue. Stoch's (2016) conclusion is based on a study that does not consider the impact of the social production of news and the financial pressures on newspapers as a result of the global decline in newspaper circulation on the news articles that the *Cape Times* publishes. Without considering these two factors, Stoch's (2016) study only tells half the story. This study asserts that the social production of news and the financial pressures on newspapers have a large impact on the kinds of news that the *Cape Times* can produce and publish.

Hall et. al (2013) provide a valuable lens through which news coverage can be assessed and explained. As a starting point, it is important to understand that activities and events that end up in the news coverage are not naturally and themselves newsworthy. In other words, "news is the end-product of a complex process which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories" (Hall et. al,

2013:56). There are several factors that play a role in this sorting and selection of events and issues that make it into the news. These are the structure of the news media organisation, which produces certain types of news; the news values, which determine what stories are more important and for what reasons; and the moment of the construction of the news story itself, which is where the writer makes the story comprehensible to its assumed audience (Hall et. A, 2013:56).

Hall et. al (2013) argue that the organisation of newspapers in terms of regular types or areas of news affects the kinds of stories and events that are selected and deemed newsworthy. These organisational factors determine the areas of news that a newspaper can focus on. Factors such as the structure of the newspaper – local news versus international news, business, sports, politics; and the organisation of the workforce – specialist correspondents, departments, and institutional contacts determine the kinds of news items that are considered a priority for the readers (Hall et. al, 2013).

In addition to organisational structure, there is the issue of selecting news and events that the assumed readers will find ‘newsworthy’ within the same area or category. Hall et. al argue that it is when journalists have to select which activities are newsworthy that they draw on their “professional ideology” (2013:56) to determine what constitutes a good news story using “news values” (2013:56) to structure the entire process. This process involves an alignment toward events and activities that are extraordinary. Stories that are higher in news values have a greater chance of being published because of their perceived newsworthiness. In this regard, explains Hall et. al, “journalists will tend to play up the extraordinary, dramatic, tragic elements in a story to enhance its newsworthiness” (2013:57). Coverage of a particular issue largely depends on the number of news values that the issue in question can be aligned to. The more the news values that can be ascribed to an issue, the higher its chances of being published as a news article.

Finally, the moment of the construction of the news story itself plays a significant role in how the end product (the story that is published) would be presented. The moment of construction of the news story is when journalists construct stories to make these items understandable to the assumed audience by situating them within a social context; that is “a frame of meanings familiar to the audience” (Hall et. al, 2013:57). This is the process through which events are ‘made to mean’ by journalists. Newsworthiness is about locating a random, unusual and

unfamiliar event within the “maps of meaning” (Hall et. al, 2013:57) or “background frames of reference” (Hall et. al, 2013:58) – where our social world is already mapped –for these events to have meaning. The construction of these news events is based on the assumption that society is a consensus. The assumption is that when people share the same society, they also have the same culture and their perspectives on events are the same. Through the construction of these events, media define what important events are and they also offer interpretations on how to make sense of these events (Hall et. al, 2013:60). It is in this moment of the construction of the news story that journalistic ideologies and practice, coupled with the organisational structure combine to reproduce the ideas and interpretations of the powerful in society without being in their pay. This is done by framing certain sources as primary definers on issues being reported while the rest are framed as secondary definers.

10.2.1. Primary and secondary definers of news

The media do not autonomously create news but they are instead “‘cued in’ to specific new topics by regular and reliable institutional sources” (Hall et. al, 2013:60). This is a consequence of two reasons. One, the internal pressures of news production coupled with the consequences of declining newspaper circulation. In South Africa, in particular, the entry of global media owners has resulted in South African companies facing the same pressure as the rest of the media outlets owned by the same investor. De Beer and Wasserman explained that these commercial pressures led to “a reduction of staff, a ‘juniorisation’ of newsrooms, a preference for commercial imperatives when making editorial judgements and an erosion of specialised reporting” (2005:39). As a result, specialist reporters and senior journalists have disappeared from newsrooms making way for their younger counterparts. Two, at the heart of news reporting, is notions of impartiality, balance and objectivity. Hall et al. argue that “these professional rules give rise to the practice of ensuring that media statements are, wherever possible, grounded in ‘objective’ and ‘authoritative’ statements from ‘accredited’ sources” (2013:58). This paves the way for media to rely on statements from institutional representatives where they can verify the source, followed by an expert at the expense of unorganised people. It allows the institutional representatives to establish the primary interpretation (definition) of the topic in question. What this interpretation does is command the field and set the terms of reference within which further debate on the topic can take place. Arguments against the primary definition of the issue is them inserted into an already defined issue. In this sense, arguments against the primary definition are presented as a

secondary definition (Hall et al., 2013:58) and often towards the end of the article as a way to demonstrate objectivity or impartiality.

10.2.2. Restructuring and juniorisation of the *Cape Times* newspaper

In 2013, INMSA chairperson announced the first of many forms of restructuring of the group that happened after Survé's Sekunjalo Group took over INMSA. Survé stated that he had begun a process of restructuring INMSA which was to continue in January of the following year. He explained that all the decisions were “driven by sound commercial and fiduciary considerations” (Survé, 2013). In the same statement, Survé announced the appointment of Gasant Abader as editor of the *Cape Times*, with Anees Sallie as his deputy. This change in the *Cape Times*' management followed the controversial removal of Alide Dasnois as editor.

Weaver, in Stoch, explained how he recalled a time when “a whole bunch of new kids” (Stoch, 2016:44) were brought into the *Cape Times* newsroom to fill positions that older journalists had vacated. Weaver remembered Carlo Petersen being part of this group that juniorised the *Cape Times* newsroom. For Weaver, it was “strange” (Stoch, 2016:44) for Petersen to be given the lead story on higher education because it was the reserve of senior specialist journalists given that university politics was a “fiercely contested terrain” (Stoch, 2016:44).

Furthermore, in his second article on RMF's activities at UCT, Petersen wrote: “SRC chairman Ramabina Mahapa was seen leading the charge yesterday as SRC members and supporters walked out of a discussion on heritage, signage and symbolism” (Petersen, 2015b). Although referring to the SRC president might seem like a minor mistake, I contend that this error points to the lack of familiarity with higher education as an area of specialisation. It is an error that a specialist reporter on universities would not possibly make given that the election of the SRC and its president is a hotly contested affair. Though not excusable, it is understandable that Petersen would make such a mistake given his experience as a reporter in a community newspaper where communities have various committees with chairpersons. Petersen was also one of two relatively young reporters that reported on university stories covering four universities in the Western Cape Province; the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Stellenbosch University, UCT and the University of the Western Cape.

10.2.3. The Rhodes Must Fall movement as primary definers in news articles

It is this shift away from using representatives of powerful institutions as primary definers that can be frustrating to representatives of those institutions because they are accustomed to defining issues. The approach that Petersen took was to present RMF-UCT stories using RMF as the primary definer of the issues in question. An example of this kind of reporting was when the newspaper published an article during the #shackville protest, *RMF slams UCT over accommodation* (Petersen, 2016d), which tells the story of how RMF had to accommodate students after UCT failed to provide suitable accommodation. The article presents RMF as the primary definer and uses a statement from DVC Petersen in so far as it elaborates RMF's framework of 'what is at issue'. DVC Petersen's quote is only used to explain why UCT was in an accommodation crisis. When the university's spokesperson wrote to the paper accusing the reporter of bias toward the social movement, the reporter responded by pointing out that all sides were quoted fairly. As if to demonstrate Hall et al.'s (1913:58) point about primary definers granting certain groups more access to the media, Petersen wrapped up his response by stating: "I fail to see how the article is one-sided when [DVC] Petersen and the RMF movement are quoted fairly in the article" (Moholola, 2016a). It is when this access to the media benefits groups that do not enjoy any official status that proves frustrating for representatives of official institutions. This was the case for the Communication and Marketing Department at UCT. Kylie Hatton, Director of Communication and Marketing at UCT, explains:

What I found particularly frustrating was that one allegation will be made on social media and say, the executive refuse to meet with students, and that one allegation will be given the same weight in the article as the statement from the university or from the Vice-Chancellor. It will be given the same weight. So, the unfair weight was given to allegations, which made the organization look bad and that was so frustrating (Hatton, 2017).

What Hatton (2017) is commenting on above is not only the limitations of journalistic objectivity or impartiality and the fact that the newspaper is not using the university management as primary definers of the issues. Instead, the journalist in question was not only using RMF as the primary definers but he was also giving RMF's comments/allegations the same prominence as UCT management despite the social movement not holding any official status at the institution. In this regard, RMF's comments were allowed to command the field, while UCT's comments are presented as merely a response to the dominant narrative set by

RMF. For Hatton, the next step was to meet with the editor and the journalist. Hatton explains:

I think what I found so frustrating about the *Cape Times*, I can at least think of three or four occasions where I asked to meet with the journalist and the editor of the *Cape Times*. It was not because I wanted to sweet talk them or anything, I just wanted to get a sense of their world of view and despite all those attempts to meet with them the meeting never took place, which was never my experience during the past. I have never had a journalist or a news editor not even want to talk to me and that was my experience with the *Cape Times*. They did not even want to engage with me and that is a problem (Hatton, 2017).

What Hatton's statement above demonstrates is that UCT was accustomed to having greater access to the media and to being the primary definer in stories so that when this privilege was not extended to the institution, the journalist's and the editor's "world of view" (Hatton, 2017) had to be established. It is not out of order to argue that the meeting that Hatton wanted with the editor of the *Cape Times* and the reporter was an attempt to remind the newspaper that UCT was a prestigious institution with influence and that the newspaper should treat it as such. However, it is uncommon for a mainstream newspaper to use a social movement, especially a leaderless one, as primary definers in stories about the protest. After all, UCT was and still is the best university in the African continent. UCT's position of being the "jewel in the crown of higher education" (Hatton, 2017) in South Africa gives it so much influence that as soon as its students question issues of student funding it becomes part of the national discourse despite previously black institutions raising the issue of student funding for years without any major media coverage. Along with this honour of being the top university on the continent, UCT has a well-resourced Communication and Marketing Department which proactively and aggressively engages members of the media to see positive coverage of the University's research activities. It is not surprising that during the period of study, UCT had "the highest proportion of coverage on higher education" (Hatton, 2017) across the continent. Carlo Petersen (2022) believes that there was no bias in his coverage of RMF activities at UCT. He explained:

They (UCT management) were always given the right to reply, and those responses were always published. We did this diligently, not only because it was fair, but because we knew that after every related article published the next day there would no doubt be a letter from UCT taking issue with our reporting. They sought to discredit the *Cape Times* in this way because they knew we had a duty to publish their letters and that our readers would see what they had written, and that this would create doubt (Petersen, 2022).

For Petersen, bias only seems to be an issue when journalistic principles, such as affording a respondent the right to reply. During the period under consideration by this study, Petersen was a Senior Reporter at the *Cape Times* newspaper. Although he did not have a specific beat, he reported extensively on education. Petersen saw his role in covering RMF's activities as that of covering "what was happening at UCT" (Petersen, 2022).

10.2.4. RMF's strategies to get a hearing by the media

Dreher's (2010:89) five strategies that ignored communities use to get the media to pay attention to their activities are useful in explaining how RMF managed to get the *Cape Times* to report on its activities despite UCT having an efficient and well-resourced Communication and Marketing Department. These strategies are: checking the performance of the news, learning the game, building networks, talking back to news media, and projects that work outside the news conventions.

In terms of "learning the game" (Dreher, 2010:90), RMF's Media Committee issued press statements, and members of the social movement were regularly used as sources for stories about UCT. Members of the social movement also published opinion pieces in regional and national newspapers, along with being interviewed on broadcast platforms. In terms of "building networks" (Dreher, 2010:91), members of the movement had also developed extensive media contact lists, which they used for circulating statements about the movement and programme of activities. These are largely the reporters who attended RMF events and press conferences that the social movement would organise to address certain issues. Petersen explained that he would learn about RMF-related stories from the press statements that RMF would send to the media. After a while Petersen was purposefully looking for RMF-related stories and he knew that "the students often used social media which we checked regularly - after some time I made a few contacts in RMF and would call them to check what was happening" (Petersen, 2022).

Survé (2015) offered valuable insight into understanding the role of newspapers that belong to the INMSA stable. For Survé, the papers were meant to facilitate debate by representing the views of all in society as they discussed difficult issues. The role of the newspapers, he explained, was not to silence voices but rather to give all voices regardless of race or economic status a platform to be heard. He explained:

Democracy itself is just the first step toward a better justice system in the country and the best way to achieve that is to give everybody the opportunity to have their point of view heard (Survé, 2015).

This role of supporting democracy by giving a platform for all citizens to be heard is only possible with an editor who intentionally endeavours to make it happen.

10.2.5. Aneez Salie: The *Cape Times* listening editor?

The protest against the statue of Cecil John Rhodes happened at a time when the *Cape Times* newspaper was undergoing its transformation. Aneez Salie had just started as editor of the *Cape Times* newspaper in March 2015, the same month that Chumani Maxwele threw human excrement at the statue of Cecil John Rhodes at UCT. Salie has a complicated relationship with Independent Newspapers which owns the *Cape Times*, among other newspapers. He initially joined the Independent News stable as a journalist for then Cape Herald in 1979 (Salie, 2019). It was during his time at Cape Herald that Salie's role as a mass organiser in the struggle against injustice in the media took off. He quickly rose through the leadership of the newly formed Media and Allied Workers Union (MWASA), which wanted "to organise all media workers, from journalists to those on the shop floor, into one union" (Salie, 2019:94). He was the national wage negotiator for MWASA when Zwelakhe Sisulu (son of South African struggle stalwarts, Albertina and Walter Sisulu) was president of the union. His people organisation and recruitment abilities caught the attention of the African National Congress which recruited him in 1983 in Sweden when he was representing MWASA at the Swedish Union of Journalists national congress. By 1985, the apartheid police had caught on to Salie's political activities forcing him to leave the country to avoid capture. He left South Africa to get his military training with uMkhonto we Sizwe, the ANC's military wing, in Angola before being deployed back to South Africa in 1987 as commander of the uMkhonto we Sizwe's Ashley Kriel Detachment in Cape Town (Salie, 2019). The Ashley Kriel Detachment was "one of the most successful Umkhonto weSizwe detachments to have operated" having carried out "more than 30 [successful] operations between 1987 and 1990" (Cloete, 2020).

When the ANC and National Party negotiations advanced ANC and MK leaders were granted indemnity from prosecution to return to South Africa and participate in the negotiations. Salie was among the group that was granted indemnity in December 1991. He explained that since he was an operational regional commander of MK; MK chief of staff and South African

Communist Party leader, Chris Hani had positions such as an army general, a political role in Parliament, a business leader, or a fundraiser for the ANC in mind for him (2019:115). But Salie wanted to go back into the media. Hani (along with Charles Nqakula) eventually agreed that Salie should return to work in the media to “revive its unions and contribute to its transformation” before he was redeployed (Salie, 2019:116).

However, returning to the media was not going to be an easy task for Salie. Given that he worked for a newspaper owned by the Independent News group before he left for the MK, he wanted to resuscitate his career at Independent News. Before leaving the country, he had arranged with his then-editor to be placed on “unlimited unpaid leave”, a claim that Independent Newspaper bosses initially contested when he returned to the company in 1992 when the ANC was unbanned (2019:116). Salie had to produce proof of the unlimited unpaid leave arrangement forcing the company to reinstate him but he could not get his former job back as the Cape Herald had since been closed down. Salie explains:

I hoped to get work as a journalist at the Cape Argus, which was owned by the company, but Fred Collins, the company's regional manager, said the white journalists at Cape Argus would make my life hell because I had served with MK. Fred offered me work in the accounts department instead. I refused the position, but I agreed to work in the community newspaper division. I started at the lowest rank for the least pay, and soon discovered that the work consisted of filling spaces between paid advertisements (2019: 116-117).

With a background in fighting against injustice, giving a voice to the downtrodden and a belief in the moral obligation to transform the media and South Africa; it is not difficult to understand why RMF received greater coverage and was allowed to publish opinion pieces on the *Cape Times* newspaper under Salie's tenure as editor. Furthermore, in his editorial after the #shackville protest, Salie summed up what he saw as the failure to listen on the part of UCT management:

The attitude of UCT authorities towards the views of students on a range of matters over the past year has been deplorable. **The days of “we know best” have long passed.** With all due respect to vice-chancellor Max Price, we believe he does not know best. He does not, for instance, know anything about life in a township or about grinding poverty. **Perhaps it's time for him to learn** about this. What he does seem to know, however, is the old form of discipline, and the old form of quelling unrest, by upping the numbers of security personnel on the campus, and how to crack the whip. **Perhaps it's time for him to unlearn this** (Salie, 2016).

Salie's comment above is in line with what Survé believed was the role of the media and the role of editors at INMSA. For Survé, South Africans still needed to continue talking to each

other, and these conversations had to happen “through the media” (Survé, 2015). Survé also states that: “we have told our editors very clearly that firstly, you must be balanced; secondly, you must get all points of view; and thirdly, you must know the nature of our country and fight towards a better future” (Survé, 2015). Survé also explained that he was aware of the criticism that the *Cape Times* editor received for “putting difficult issues on our front pages” (2015) and argued that the criticism was a result of the culture of not want to talk about difficult issues on the part of the residents of Cape Town. It would be remiss of this thesis not to discuss the relationship between Survé and Price and its potential impact on the *Cape Times* newspaper’s coverage of RMF activities at UCT.

10.2.6. Max Price and Iqbal Survé: when elephants fight, it’s the grass that suffers

Price (2017b) believed that the role of *Cape Times* newspaper through its coverage of RMF’s activities was that of a “mouthpiece” of RMF which created more critics of UCT management. He explained that although the university would respond to some of the articles, the responses would often be partial and could not counter the articles published on the front page of the newspaper. Price (2017b) contended that the coverage of RMF’s activities at UCT was a result of relations having collapsed between Price and Independent Media and News South Africa chairperson and owner, Survé. Price (2017b) explained that the reason Survé was “offended” by him stemmed from the events of a UCT Humanities Graduation Ceremony held on 16 December 2014. Price explained:

I think the reason he is offended is mainly about the graduation ceremony where Alide Dasnois was the speaker, and his daughter was graduating [at the same ceremony]. I think it made him really angry. Otherwise, before that we were friendly, we new each other quite well and we go back a long way (Price, 2017b).

Survé had removed Dasnois from her position as *Cape Times* editor the previous year, much to the outrage of advocates for media freedom. At the time of her removal, Dasnois had published a front-page story on the Public Protector’s findings on the R800 million vessel management and maintenance tender that was awarded to Survé’s Sekunjalo Group. Price (2017b) maintained that the decision to invite Dasnois was not meant to spite Survé since Price was not even aware that the media tycoon’s daughter was graduating at that ceremony. Price explained that UCT coverage on the *Cape Times* before this incident was fair. He explained:

Coverage was very fair and very positive. I never picked up any negative coverage from the *Cape Times* prior to this. They would be fair if something happened, but they would be balanced even when they were looking for something faulty. They would search for stories, good news stories, and UCT was part of that (Price, 2017b)

Before Dasnois' graduation address, UCT, Survé chaired the board of UCT's Graduate School of Business, the Alumni Association and the governors' committee of the UCT Foundation Trust which he resigned from that very December. In his resignation letter to Price, which subsequently ended-up in a story by the Mail & Guardian, Survé was quoted as having terminated all associations with UCT due to "his inability to "respect an institution that continues to pay lip service to ... transformation" (Macfarlane, 2015). In the same newspaper article, Macfarlane quoted Survé's letter as having stated that his main objective for buying Independent Media was to advance transformation. He explained:

One of the reasons that I acquired the largest print media group in South Africa, with a daily readership of five million and online readership of about two million, is that I wish to create the opportunity for South Africans to participate publicly in the discourse on transformation and social cohesion. Similarly, as you may have read in the [p]ast two weeks, I am launching an Africa news syndication service and a Pan-African news channel in about 50 countries in order to ensure that as Africans we are able to embrace the **transformation requirements of our continent ... That does**, however, mean that I have to be outspoken where I see that these principles are not being upheld. I am not a hypocrite and therefore I personally cannot be associated with institutions that charade as upholding these principles (Macfarlane, 2015).

Survé continued to advance this role of Independent Media and News South Africa as a platform for discussing transformation. The *Cape Times* seems to be the only newspaper from the group where this role was pronounced. The paper even started hosting the *Cape Times* Breakfast discussion where university transformation was discussed. This pronounced role, I contended, was also made possible by the fact that then editor, Aneez Sallie, saw his role as that of advancing transformation.

Like Price, Student 1 (2015) believes that the *Cape Times* coverage of RMF's activities was largely due to Survé's vocal opposition to the lack of transformation at UCT and what he perceived as his public humiliation by Price. For Student 1, this made Survé a perfect ally for RMF which was challenging Price and his leadership team on issues of transformation. Student 1 went as far as explaining how two members of the social movement met with Survé asking for support in the form of a dedicated reporter. Student 1 (2015) explained:

It was the second or third day of the [Bremner] occupation. I remember Kgosi Chikane coming to the Strat Com [Strategy and Tactics Committee] meeting saying: "I and Chumani [Maxwele] had a meeting with Survé". The message that they passed was that Survé was interested in assisting... There was another view that said look the issue of getting funding, what could that mean if people find out, what expectations would they [Survé and other funders] have and so forth. That was a heated conversation, heated debate and the Strat Com resolved that the only thing that RMF is asking for is coverage. That there must be a dedicated sort of journalist, who at any given moment if something happens would be called upon to either write a story or something. I think at the time it was that Carlo [Petersen] character. That was the agreement... (Student 1, 2015).

This is a claim that Petersen has refuted. Petersen (2022) explained that the stories that he wrote on RMF's activities went through the journalistic process of being pitched to the News Editor, who would ultimately decide whether they were newsworthy or not. However, there is nothing strange about a reporter calling sources for stories and following sources' social media pages for story ideas, especially in an environment where newsrooms have been juniorised and have shrunk due to financial constraints. What is strange is the fact that Petersen and the *Cape Times* by extension did not cover any of the disagreements within the movement, including the fallout at RMF's first-anniversary celebration. It would not be out of order to see this omission as an attempt to sanitise the movement's public image.

10.3. Conclusion

This chapter detailed how the *Cape Times* newspaper treated RMF activities in its news coverage. As far as the stories published were concerned, the journalist and the *Cape Times* newspaper seemed to purposefully listen to RMF and to use the movement as the primary definer of the stories as evidence of that listening. It is this such use – of RMF as a primary definer in these news articles – that frustrated UCT (and other universities also dealing with fees protests and the news coverage of them), as they are accustomed to defining the news agenda on their institutions. The fact that there were allegations that the journalist was being offered as a dedicated reporter for RMF to contact whenever they needed coverage also raises fundamental questions about the newspaper's role and the intentions of its owner.

Chapter 11: Conclusion: Listening, protest and the media

11.1. Introduction

This study sets out to investigate moments of protest led by RMF at UCT and the resultant interaction between the two parties to consider the relevance of the theory and efficacy of ‘political listening’ during protest action. The study focused on three RMF protest actions, the mediation between RMF and UCT management, and activities around relations between members of RMF, which all took place between 9 March 2015 and 9 March 2016. The study uncovered several key findings.

11.2. Key insights from the study

11.2.1. Private Property Law and its relationship with power

One of the key findings of this study is the fact that UCT relied heavily on Private Property Law in the institution’s attempts to deal with RMF’s protest at the institution. This finding is important to make sense of because of Private Property Law’s usefulness to power as a bureaucratic instrument. First, Private Property Law prioritises asserts rather than people. Within this legal framework, the priority is asserted with the private property rather than the people who may be legal occupants of the property. Two, Private Property Law gives autonomy to those who have formal/executive power over the private property to act against anyone who poses a threat to asserts. The executive management of universities often calls the police on protesting students to protect university property. Finally, this legal framework gives rise to other rules and regulations specifically designed to regulate behaviour within private property and restore ‘order’. At UCT during RMF’s protest, the main objective of the university management was to hold students accountable to the Code of Conduct as a way of enforcing law and order.

11.2.2. The right to protest vs practical situations

In terms of the right to protest, which is guaranteed in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, this study demonstrated that in real-life situations powerholders choose a toothless interpretation of this right. During the FMF protest, the UCT management communicated extensively encouraging students to use protest that is not disruptive and that

keeps university activities operating as normal. This is the kind of protest that does not result in any opportunity for listening to occur.

11.2.3. Listening and its relationship with power

One of the key findings of this study is that in real-life situations listening does not happen in a neat and nicely organised manner that the theory envisages. This study found that in the case of RMF and the UCT management, the two opposing groups are unwilling to forego their power to facilitate listening. This environment is characterised by each party holding a different kind of power and each recognising the power that the other holds. Listening occurs in this context of weighing up the power that the other party hold and trying to figure out whether and how each party planned to use their respective power. What this demonstrates for listening theory is that in these heightened political moments, political actors do not relinquish their power to make way for listening to take place. Instead, listening happens in this environment where various parties hold on to their power because they also identify the power that their adversaries hold. In this environment where every decision is meant to ensure that political adversaries do not gain any advantage, decision-making becomes the product of this contestation.

This study also revealed that universities in South Africa, especially previously white institutions, function like polities. Aside from the structures that resemble those of a polity referred to in Chapter 1, this case study demonstrated that UCT is representative of the broader South African democratic systems where citizens have to resort to protest for their participation to create meaningful change. The power relations and the unwillingness of those in power to listen are representative of the greater problem of participation that South Africa faces.

11.2.4. Lessons from the *Cape Times* coverage of RMF's activities

Several listening lessons can be drawn from the coverage of RMF's activities. When one considers the articles that Carlo Petersen produced and was published by the *Cape Times* newspaper, Petersen appears to be the example of a listening journalist. He constantly called RMF members to get an update on their activities, followed the social movement on social media to get an update on their activities for stories, and he was on RMF's mailing list for press releases which he used on his stories. Furthermore, Petersen would take the claims that RMF was making to the UCT management to respond to. When writing stories about RMF's

activities at UCT, Petersen would use the social movement as the primary definers in those stories. This coverage alone seems to suggest that the most effecting listening by the mainstream media can only occur when the journalist in question has taken a decision to give disadvantaged groups a hearing. For this to happen, the journalistic chain which the story follows will also need to be staffed by listening media professionals. It is in this environment where the ultimate act of listening is demonstrated by using the disadvantaged group as the primary definers of the story as the ultimate act of giving recognition.

However, allegations of the coverage being the product of a vendetta against UCT by Survé raise questions about whether the coverage was and could have been the result of a reporter and a newspaper taking a position to listen. Though this study can conclusively tell which is which, a few observations can be made. For his commitment to writing about RMF's activities at UCT, it is surprising that Petersen perceives his role in covering these stories as just reporting on what was happening at the university. At the time of RMF's activities, UCT was leading the continent in research output. Interesting discoveries were made by UCT researchers but none of these news items made it to Petersen's stories although he received press statements about research developments. It is equally surprising that his perception of RMF was that of mere activists. As a native of Cape Town and a former reporter in the community newspapers, I contend that Petersen would not be intrigued by activists unless they represent a cause that he is passionate about. In that scenario, he would play advocacy. What is even more intriguing is the fact that Petersen did not produce any stories about the disagreements within RMF. When the disagreements between RMF members played themselves out during the launch of the first anniversary exhibition, Petersen and the *Cape Times* did not report on this story. This lack of reporting on 'negative' stories about RMF can be read as an attempt to sanitize RMF's public image.

11.2.5. Using listening theory to analyse real-life situations

This study on using the theory and methodology of political listening to assess RMF's protest at UCT built on my previous work on using the same theory to assess the work of Equal Education in giving learners the voice to make their claims on basic education-related issues. I used the typology that I developed in my previous study in my analysis of communication and various moments of protest.

I chose to apply the theory and methodology of political listening to moments of protest within a South African context because of its supposed suitability in understanding communication in moments of disagreements. It is a normative theory which is supposed to enrich democracy. Without developing the external language of description, the theory would only be useful in understanding face-to-face interaction. With the continued development of digital communication, there has been a rise in mediated communication, and I contend that political listening should be developed further and applied to mediated communication contexts.

In this study, I used the theory and methodology of political listening to make sense of face-to-face interaction, executive communication, video footage, newspaper articles, meeting minutes, reports, interviews, and social media posts. Although the theory was useful in assessing all these forms of communication, further studies are required for developing the theory for contexts that are only mediated.

11.2.6. Researching RMF: Lessons on studying a moving target

Besides the fact that movements are highly contested both from within and externally, the fact that RMF was still new and growing at the time that I was studying it made researching this movement an even harder endeavour. I found it difficult to study RMF because it was still growing, and its activities were still unfolding. Studying RMF was a lot like chasing a moving target and required that I be constantly up-to-date with what was happening within the movement. Hodes (2016) provides a relatable account of a researcher's struggles in attempting to research a movement that was still growing. In her struggle with studying the Fees Must Fall protest, she explained:

Because of its contemporaneity, current accounts of the movement offer only momentary glimpses, rendered rapidly outdated through perpetual shifts in advocacy strategies and the responses of university and government actors. This pace of change makes Fees Must Fall an ever-moving target, eluding sustained characterization and analysis. Yet, in part because of its location on campuses and in part because of its concerns with the politics of knowledge production, Fees Must Fall is the subject of acute academic interest and a rapidly growing literature (Hodes, 2016:141).

Another difficulty in the case of studying the Rhodes Must Fall movement is that researchers have often opted not to distinguish between RMF and Fees Must Fall (FMF) opting to refer to all student protest that started in 2015 in South African universities as the latter, probably

because of FMF's national reach. Ndelu argues that "paying attention to the divide between #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall is important to understand the changes in demands, the compositions of the crowds, the make-up of the leaders and the trajectory of the violence" (2017:71). In terms of organising, there were significant changes in terms of leaders, organisers, and the crowd. There were "changes in faces, bodies and voices at the plenary sessions" (Ndelu, 2017:71). Ndelu further explained that there was also an ideological shift away from RMF being a leaderless movement to FMF having organised structures with leadership "dominated by cisgender and heterosexual men" (2017:71).

By referring to the movement as the generic, national Fees Must Fall one runs the risk of misunderstanding or ignoring the nuances of student politics in various universities. For example, at UCT the Rhodes Must Fall movement had been mobilising students as early as March 2015, seven months before the first Fees Must Fall protest which only started in October and ended in November 2015 (Ndelu, 2017:71; Laurore, 2016:6). Likewise, RMF continued to mobilise students and engaged in protest after the 0% increase announcement. As a staff member at UCT at the time of these protests, it was easy to distinguish FMF as just one of many protest campaigns that RMF took part in.

Finally, the biggest difficulty in researching RMF and its activities was the fact that there was no literature on the movement. Because of RMF's approach of being strict about who the movement opens its doors to, most material about the movement capture snippets of the movement with very little detail in terms of characterisation and the internal mechanics of the movement. For me to produce a detailed account of RMF's activities, I had to start with a process of creating a timeline of events using interviews, university communication, social media posts and newspaper articles. This was a process like a historiography, the pronounced difference being that for this study the historiography was the initial step before the analysis could be conducted.

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Appendix 1



School of Journalism & Media Studies
Rhodes University, South Africa



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

RESEARCH PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT

Students should give participants a signed copy of this agreement (and keep one).

I _____ (participant's name) agree to participate in the research project of Azwihangwisi Mufamadi (researcher's name) on An examination of activism and 'political listening' during the year of student protest at the University of Cape Town from 9 March 2015 to 9 March 2016 (short title / topic of research project).

I understand that:

1. The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for a/an (Honours/Master's/PhD) degree at Rhodes University. The researcher may be contacted on 078 528 6065 (cell phone) or mufamadi.a@gmail.com (email). The research project has been approved by the relevant ethics committee(s), and is under the supervision of Professor Anthea Garman in the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University, who may be contacted on 046 603 7100 (office) or a.garman@ru.ac.za (email).
2. The researcher is interested in (short description of the main focus areas of the research).
3. My participation will involve (short description of the nature of participation required and the anticipated duration of this participation).
4. I can choose not to answer any questions about aspects of my life and work which I am not willing to disclose.
5. I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study, or consequences I may experience as a result of my participation, and to have these addressed to my satisfaction.
6. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time – however I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur, or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.
7. The report on the project may contain information about my personal and/or work experiences, attitudes and behaviours. I agree that/ do not agree that my identity be made known the general reader.
8. I agree to being recorded.

Signed on (Date): _____

Participant: _____ (print name) _____

Researcher: _____ (print name) _____

Appendix 2

Sample interview questions

Tell me a bit about how it all got started, a brief summary if you like.

What was the role of the SRC during the campaign against the statue of Cecil John Rhodes?

Who did the SRC listen to when it comes to the campaign against the statue? Explain and give examples? (Authority)

How does an issue such as protest against a statue come to the SRC? Procedurally what are the channels that issues would travel to get to the SRC and from the SRC how and where do they go?

Did your SRC see RMF issues in the same way that RMF saw them? Explain and give examples? (Recognition)

The campaign against the statue brought to light many issues about transformation of the institution and in some cases, how did the SRC's support of RMF's call for the statue come about? Please explain (Solidarity)

When the VC announced that the university was going to start a series of engagement on the fate of the statue the SRC refused to take part in the said engagements. Why?

You (the SRC) eventually agreed to take part in the engagements, what had changed?

Do you think the VC and the executive took the SRC seriously? Please explain and give examples? (Authority)

There were two UCT Council meetings that took place during the protest against the statue which you attended, tell me about your role in those meetings?

How does the SRC advance the interests of students in those meetings?

Was the SRC given the platform to speak in the two Council meetings? (Being given a voice)

Do you think Council took the SRC seriously in those meetings? (Authority)

What was the attitude of other Council members towards the campaign to remove the statue?

What do you make of RMF members' 'disruption' of one of the Council meeting?

There are multiple protest that were organised by RMF and the SRC against the statue, what role do you think protest played in this particular campaign?

You were instrumental in planning and organising the occupation of the Bremner building how did that come about?

Why was it important to occupy Bremner?

I attended one of the evening sessions in Bremner and it looked like a lot of work was being done by the students, tell me about the activities during the occupation? What were the students using Bremner for?

Along with the protest against the Rhodes statue was calls for names of buildings, symbols and artworks to be reviewed. How did this call come to the SRC? In other words, who did the SRC listen to when it comes to this particular call?

What was the SRC's position on protest against names of buildings, artworks and symbols? Please explain.

Why were these demands important for the SRC?

Do you think the VC and the executive took the SRC seriously when it comes to names of buildings, artworks and statues? Please explain and give examples? (Authority)

At the Council meeting where these were discussed, do you think Council took the SRC seriously and as though you have something important to contribute? Please explain and give examples? (Authority)

The university formed task teams to review names of buildings, artworks and symbols which members of the SRC are part of, what has been the role of the SRC in those task teams?

After the statue had been removed, what was the attitude of UCT management and Council towards the SRC and its demands on behalf of students?

Along with the protest against the Rhodes statue were calls for the decolonisation of the curriculum. How did this call come to the SRC? In other words, who did the SRC listen to when it comes to this particular call?

What was the SRC's position on protest against names of buildings, artworks and symbols? Please explain.

Why was this demand important for the SRC?

What role, if any, did the SRC play in the campaign to decolonise the curriculum?

Do you think the VC and the executive took the SRC seriously when it comes to names of buildings, artworks and statues? Please explain and give examples? (Authority)

At the Council meeting where these were discussed, do you think Council took the SRC seriously and as though you have something important to contribute? Please explain and give examples? (Authority)

The university formed task teams to review names of buildings, artworks and symbols which members of the SRC are part of, what has been the role of the SRC in those task teams?

The call for the decolonisation of the curriculum has been made for years, what do you think was different this time around? In other words, what made this campaign successful?

In one of the sessions, you presented at CMD you talked about feeling like you are taken seriously by UCT management after RMF started and the statue was removed, please explain and give examples? (Recognition/Authority)

The Vice-Chancellor spoke at length about negotiations with Rhodes Must Fall movement on insourcing staff, was the SRC part of the negotiations in any way? Please explain and give examples?

What was the SRC's relationship with RMF during this campaign? Please explain?

What role, if any, did the SRC play in the campaign to end outsourcing?

What was the SRC's official stand on outsourcing?

What was the SRC's relationship, if any, with NEHAWU and the workers?

When it came to the campaign against outsourcing who did the SRC listen to? In other words, how and who brought it to the attention of the SRC? (Authority)

The university Council met twice before it decided to insource workers, was the SRC part of those two meetings? If so, what role did the SRC play in those meetings?

Do you think you were treated as if what you said mattered by UCT management during the campaign for outsourcing? Please explain and give examples? (Recognition)

In terms of speaking out or having a voice, was there an opportunity for the SRC to influence the outcome or even communicate its views on the matter? Please explain and give examples? (being given a voice)

UCT had already set its fees at 10.2% when the fees must fall protest started at the university, was the SRC consulted in this decision?

What role, if any, did the SRC play in the campaign for fees to fall?