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**06 June 2013**

## **UCT PhD research explores university student friendships**

Buhle Zuma, a PhD qualifier graduating at the University of Cape Town this week (6 and 7 June 2013), examines the various psychological and social factors, and complex processes that influence the formation of racially homogenous (or as he put it, "self-segregated") first-year university friendship groups. Drawing on data gathered using qualitative research methods, he finds that socio-economic status, racial identity and ethnic identity, language and accent are important contributing factors in the formation of racially homogenous friendships.

Zuma finds that students use the English accent - specifically the middle-class way(s) of speaking English that is typical of private and semi-private schools (Model C schools) - as a proxy for socio-economic status and thus a social status marker. He uses UCT as an example of how a typical, middle-class English accent is set as a benchmark for acceptance into particular friendship groups. Subsequently, he finds that students tend to reproduce, within the university context, all the characteristics of the social worlds from which they come/ His research concludes that the university is unfortunately not a place where social differences and boundaries are readily transcended. Rather, these are often reinstated in no uncertain racial and class terms.

Zuma holds a Bachelor of Social Science degree in Social Work; a Bachelor of Social Science honours degree in Social Policy and Management; and a Masters in Diversity Studies, all from UCT. He has recently joined UCT's Psychology Department as a lecturer.

***ENDS***

***Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department***

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