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GRASPING AND APPROPRIATING EPISTEMIC RELEVANCE IN THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES: A CRITICAL REALIST ARGUMENT

Tebello Letsekha

A thesis submitted to the Wits School of Education, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Johannesburg, 2021

Abstract

The end of 2017 marked a significant change in South African higher education. The government announced that free higher education would be extended to poor and working-class students. For students who had been engaged in protest action demanding free, decolonial, Afrocentric, intersectional and socialist education, this was a partial victory. While concessions were made regarding fees and the removal of statues from the colonial era, South African students continue to grapple with the epistemically alienating nature of disciplinary knowledge in higher education. This struggle is not unique to the students who were part of the 2015-2016 student movements. South African students have legitimately challenged the epistemic dimensions of inequality and exclusion in education since the early 1960s, when Black student movements demanded cognitive justice, rejecting colonial and apartheid ideas at an intellectual level.

While it is likely that the powerful disciplinary knowledge offered throughout higher education results in epistemic inequality and exclusion, the arguments presented here are limited to the humanities and social sciences. I have received my disciplinary training in these fields, which change continuously by virtue of their being elements of a culture always in a condition of transition, thus transforming through internal dispute, contestation, revision of methods, politics and philosophies. Although this transformation process is often slow and fraught with challenges, in the South African context these fields continue to reflect white, European male culture and epistemology. Adopting these representations of reality outside of the contexts which have given rise to them results in the distortion of certain ways of knowing, thinking and of seeing one's own context.

Here I propose the adoption of epistemic relevance as a curricular and pedagogical principle to guide the process of grounding disciplinary knowledge in "other" contexts, thus ensuring epistemic and cognitive justice. In sociology, we utilise the notion of "otherness" to analyse the construction of minority and majority identities. The concept is central to the way in which identity categories are established as dichotomies. The notion "otherness" is utilised in this study to highlight the inherently unequal relationship between scholarly communities in the global North and South, which has an impact on whose knowledge is included and excluded in university classrooms. It is also useful in highlighting forms of inequality amongst knowers. It is important to highlight these dichotomies of otherness in relation to epistemic forms of inequality and exclusion as they have been set up as being natural. Dichotomies of otherness in relation to representations of reality are not natural – they represent rather an established social

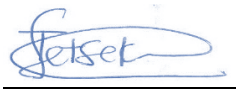
order and hierarchy which has resulted in the hegemony of perspectives from certain contexts and the silencing of others. This needs to change, and it can.

The argument advanced in thesis is underpinned by critical realist philosophy, and suggests that if we separate the nature of an underlying reality from knowledge of that reality, thus avoiding the epistemic fallacy, grounding disciplinary knowledge in the local context is possible. The separation of ontology and epistemology is necessary because they operate in two different dimensions – the latter *transitive* and changing, the former *intransitive* and relatively enduring. Being epistemically relevant requires that we acknowledge that our knowledge about reality is a result of social conditioning and, thus, cannot be understood independently of the social actors involved in the knowledge-creation process. The adoption of epistemic relevance requires that we ask questions about the context, identity and culture of the knower and producer of the disciplinary knowledge disseminated in the university. Adopting epistemic relevance as a curricular and pedagogical principle makes it possible to move towards epistemic pluralism, thus transcending the dominance of Western epistemologies.

Keywords: Epistemology; Epistemic justice; Epistemic inclusion; Critical realism; Disciplinary knowledge; Humanities and social sciences

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been previously submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University. Reasonable care has been taken to ensure that this work is original, and, does not breach copyright law. The thesis has not been taken from other sources except where such work has been cited within the text.



Tebello Letsekha

12th day of July in the year 2021

For my dad, Felix Tsietsi Letsekha

I am, because you were. Ngiyabonga Nala, Tebele!

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To quote rap scholar, K.O "I did if for my Mama, did it for my Daddy. The Letsekha gang is looking good, I did it for my family." Ngibonga abazali bami uFelix no Florence Letsekha. Mme, Ntate konke engiyiko kungengxa yezimfundiso kanye nemiyalelo yenu. Ngaphandle kothando lwenu nokungikhuthaza ngabe zange ngifike kulendawo. Ngibonge nokuthi nibe umzekelo omuhle njalo. To my brother, kid thank you for being my ride or die, my rock. This journey has been easier because I had you in my corner.

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In the wise words of hip hop philosopher, Snoop Dogg, “I want to thank me for believing in me, I want to thank me for doing all this hard work. I want to thank me for having no days off. I want to thank me for never quitting.” This study was inspired by my own struggles with epistemic dimensions of inequality and exclusion as a student in the humanities and social sciences. The journey to complete the study has amplified these epistemic dimensions of inequality and exclusion; highlighting the many ways in which what is considered knowledge in academia excludes the social contexts, cultures and identities of Black students. As a result, there were numerous times when I did want to quit. However, I have had an incredible support system that has provided me with valuable intellectual, financial and emotional support.

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Chapter One

Grounding Disciplinary Knowledge in "Other" Contexts

1.1 Introduction

The post-1994 period in South African higher education was characterised by the need to pursue social justice to ensure the inclusion and participation of groups of the population who had previously been excluded from the system. This pursuit of social justice was part of the transformation agenda and is often considered an indicator of social progress. However, the 2015-2016 student protests which took place 21 years after South Africa's transition to a democratic society served as a constructive reminder of how the transformation agenda in higher education remains incomplete. In the calls for an intersectional, decolonised and Africanised education, students raised important questions about whose knowledge is presented in the university curriculum, how this knowledge is presented and by whom. These questions are important because intellectually, South African universities remain stuck in the colonial-apartheid frame, despite the changes in student and staff population. The efforts to transform higher education have not engaged with knowledge as epistemology, with knowledge as ways of knowing not grounded in the Western context, and with knowledge as a creator of identity.

Such engagements are crucial especially for Black[1] students who continue to encounter curricula content and pedagogical practices that challenge their sense of belonging, particularly in an epistemic sense. The primary aim of this thesis is to make a case for epistemic relevance as a curricular and pedagogical principle, to aid in bringing about epistemic change in the humanities and social sciences. While the challenges associated with epistemological transformation are wide-ranging, it is unlikely that the solutions to these challenges will be uniform. I have therefore found it appropriate to focus on the fields of the humanities and social sciences, which have provided my disciplinary training. This introductory chapter provides an overview and rationale of the study, which is conceptual in nature. The chapter begins by outlining the research problem, followed by an overview of the current nature of the problem. Next, the rationale for the study is outlined. Although the conceptual bases, meaning, and implications of epistemic relevance are unpacked in the chapters that follow, the notion is introduced in the next section. The disciplinary grounding of the study is also accounted for in

[1] Black, and not white, is capitalised throughout the thesis when referring to these groups in racial, ethnic, or cultural terms. This capitalisation is part of the project of reclamation and inclusion

this chapter. This is followed by a chapter overview as well as a clarification of key concepts utilised in the study.

1.2 Context

In March 2008, Minister Naledi Pandor announced the establishment of a Ministerial Committee on Progress Towards Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions. The committee was tasked with investigating discrimination in public higher education, as well as making appropriate recommendations to promote social cohesion. The establishment of the committee was spurred by what came to be known as the "Reitz incident" at the University of Free State. The racial incident saw four students at the Reitz residence making university cleaners drink urine. This incident highlighted that race remained a primary transformation issue in higher education. The final report highlighted that in addition to issues of race, the system also faced challenges that underpinned the academic and intellectual projects pertaining to learning, teaching and research (Department of Education, 2008).

In articulating these challenges, the final report made an important distinction between transformation processes linked to legislative and policy imperatives, such as staff and student equity, and epistemological transformation, which is related to how knowledge is conceived and transmitted (DoE, 2008, p. 35). The latter was described as "limited" as a result of the "too-close association of the university with the project of Westernisation – and the ever- present danger of articulating this in narrow Eurocentric terms as a 'white' project – and a patent difficulty faced by the university to confront the challenge of opening itself up to different bodies and traditions of knowledge and knowledge-making in new exploratory ways" (DoE, 2008, p. 41). In the submissions made to the committee, institutions made a commitment to reflect upon themselves, what they stand for critically, and to attempt an understanding of their place and role in opening up to different bodies of and traditions of knowledge.

The issue of epistemological transformation in public higher education highlighted by the authors of the report continues to preoccupy both students and academics, indicating a lack of progress. South African higher education institutions, like higher education institutions everywhere, tend to assume multiple roles, serving varied constituencies, constituting and responding to the social conflict in their contexts in various ways and responding to the established social patterns found in society (Reddy, 2004). Both reproductive and transformative tendencies can be identified in varying degrees in higher education institutions

in South Africa. These institutions share a common "reproductive function" in that they were formed and designed to address the needs of particular parts of the population. This was achieved in different ways, but ultimately universities functioned to ensure that the apartheid social order was maintained. These institutions were gradually transformed, contributing to a new democratic culture, part of which can be traced to the student resistance which emerged at historically Black universities.

These institutions have since undergone considerable changes in the profile of staff and students, which have entailed what some have labelled unprecedented formal access of students to higher education (Cross, 2018). Much of this unprecedented formal access has been gained by students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds, many of whom are Black. Concerns regarding issues of equity and participation rates for this group of the student population in particular continue to be the subject of debate. It should therefore not come as a surprise that the 2015-2016 student movements engaged in protest action due to fee increases and the failure of universities to change the curriculum to move beyond Eurocentric paradigms. Higher education is about students – about educating and socialising students, about training them to become critical citizens and responsible professionals. While the higher education system has been characterised by some growth and level of transformation, the disciplinary knowledge offered at South African universities fails to cater to the changed student profile.

In spite of the efforts to transform what is a key public institution – education – and in spite of the generation of educational policies, many of our educational institutions continue to mirror South Africa's colonial and apartheid past. In the post-1994 period, the discourse on transformation has been a site of many contestations. These contestations are understandable due to the nature and at times misguided attitudes towards transformation. Reddy (2004) argued that the terrain of the agenda for transformation still largely reflects the values and goals conveyed during the struggle for freedom: to overcome the legacies of racism and exploitation. So far, transformation has been motivated by the need to increase participation rates (Luvalo, 2019). This, however, is not enough; transformation should also be concerned with how higher education can produce transformative agents and fundamentally intelligent students ready to change the world. This requires engagement with the nature of knowledge that is available in higher education.

The need for recognition and inclusion of "other" knowledges was at the heart of student demands in relation to the nature of university knowledge during the 2015-2016 student

protests. While the students initially mobilised on the basis of their demand for free education, the nature of these demands changed to include a call for a change in university knowledge. Students demanded a move away from what they described as "Eurocentric, racist, and sexist knowledge at untransformed institutions" (Fataar, 2018, p. vi). At the centre of the student demands was a call for a complete overhaul of the curriculum to provide them with relevant disciplinary knowledge. In calling for these changes in university knowledge, students were calling for a type of *cognitive justice* that remains absent in many South African university classrooms.

My understanding of the idea of *cognitive justice* is that the starting point is recognising that there are different forms of knowledge and then proceeding to treat these forms of knowledge equally. The concept therefore emphasises the equality of knowers which forms the basis of dialogue between different forms of knowledge (Leibowitz, 2017). The dialogue amongst knowers and their knowledges is necessary for democracy and ensuring that "other" knowledges do not become an object of study. Embracing cognitive justice in higher education ensures the "plural availability of knowledges" (Visvanathan, 2002, p. 4). According to Visvanathan (2002, p.8), cognitive justice is not about insisting that all kinds of knowledge brought into the classroom survive and be utilised as they are. The concept of cognitive justice is important in addressing the concerns regarding the nature of university knowledge as it highlights the need for epistemic plurality.

In the university classroom, epistemic plurality has the potential to result in equitable learning, thus bridging the gap between students who come from different backgrounds. This is achieved through the equitable use of epistemologies and pedagogic practices. Issues of cognitive justice and epistemic plurality are tied to enacting epistemic change, which is concerned with how knowledge is conceived, constructed and transmitted. Pedagogy, curricula, and institutional culture, and the need for social inclusion in particular, are at the centre of epistemic change. To bring about this change, it is necessary to question what is relevant in relation to knowledge. Given that the primary function of higher education is the production and dissemination of knowledge, questioning the appropriateness of this knowledge should be at the heart of the transformation agenda, and at the heart of the epistemological transformation is a reorientation away from dominant Western epistemologies in which knowledge becomes a tool of exclusion.

Leibowitz (2009, p. 101) maintains that the quest for cognitive justice does not entail taking a relativist position on knowledge. I disagree with this argument, and contend that cognitive

justice entails relativity in terms of the nature and extent of human knowledge – epistemology. The basics of epistemology are to characterise rational inquiry and to describe some of the organised bodies of knowledge. It deals with questions of discovering the truth, authenticity, as well as the limits of knowledge. Knowledge is a combination of experiences, values, contextual information and insight. It can be objective and observable, and likewise it can be subjective and internal to another individual. When pursued right, epistemology illuminates the nature, sources, and limits of knowledge. The study advocates for a social epistemology, which seeks to develop rich understandings of how various aspects of the social play out in the realm of knowledge-seeking (Grasswick & Webb, 2002). Deeper questions, concerning the meaning of this social epistemology, knowledge and ways of knowing are addressed in chapter three, which outlines the metatheory that guided claims regarding the nature of reality in this study. The idea of cognitive justice embraces a certain level of epistemic relativism in that it calls for the recognition of epistemic diversity. It is a critique of the dominance of Western epistemologies, which is mistakenly understood to be the result of their superior rationality when in fact it is the result of particular historical and political processes – namely, modernity and coloniality. Thus, by framing teaching and learning in higher education in conceptions of European epistemologies, higher education remains locked within an irrelevant Eurocentric horizon of understanding. These epistemologies perpetuate the dominant hegemonic discourse of Western cultures and alienate students who do not have a Western heritage.

An ideal transformed institution will be reflected in what students learn, with an emphasis on philosophies and knowledge that is pertinent to the student's environment. The higher education system should result in students achieving their full potential, in which knowledge is continually being stretched and deepened, and in which the outcomes are such that higher education leads the economic, political and social development necessary for equity. South African higher education institutions continue to struggle in this regard and in the quest to shift and advance the debates on transformation at an epistemological level, the study will attempt to answer the following question: *How can epistemic change be enacted in the humanities and social sciences?*

The question of achieving epistemic relevance in the humanities and social sciences without adopting a complete relativist position is open-ended, and one can never come to the end of it. Due to this open-ended nature of the research question, the study necessitated a process of questioning and investigation, and not necessarily coming up with the "right" answer. The answer to the question is undoubtedly different depending upon one's perspective. In addition

to this, the question is not one that could be addressed through empirical research due to a lack of conceptual tools. It was therefore necessary to do some reading and thinking, and to engage with literature, where others have considered questions related to epistemic relevance, in an effort to answer the research question. As a result, the thesis does not follow the standard pattern of empirical research as it is centrally concerned with answering a precise question (Standish, 2014).

The thesis combines various elements of what Standish (2014) characterises as a philosophical thesis. The first of these is the concern with nature of knowledge which should be disseminated in the humanities and social sciences in the South African context. Concerns regarding the nature of knowledge should be at the heart of education, but – strangely – are easily forgotten or not addressed clearly (Standish, 2014). The question regarding the nature of knowledge led to questions concerning access to knowledge and a critical analysis of policy documents, influential publications and current developments in enacting epistemic change in higher education. Due to its open-ended nature, the question led to these additional questions, which are unpacked throughout the thesis, and not highlighted as secondary research questions to give the reader a sense of how they arose. As a result there is no research design section as this would be disingenuous. Instead, methods are explained where relevant to a particular section in the thesis. The thesis is therefore not structured in a way that sets out at the start how the study is going to proceed, and instead is organised in such a way as to avoid showing my hand at the beginning in order to build up the argument more convincingly (Standish, 2014, p. 11).

1.3 Enacting Epistemological Change in Higher Education

In the 2008 report on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions, leaders of higher education institutions indicated a commitment to understanding and engaging with the challenge of locating their universities historically and developing new identities for them. There was also a pledge to revitalise the whole endeavour of higher education. Epistemological transformation was characterised as being at the centre of this transformation agenda, and curriculum reform at the heart of epistemological transformation. Although curriculum reform is essential, the notion of curriculum is broad and tends to encompass all interactions that students are exposed to in an academic environment. As a result, my concerns in this study are about epistemological transformation, which is about the knowledge that higher education should deliver; it is about

rethinking the explanation, and justification, of the purposes of such transmission and exploration of the effects that exposure to such knowledge is likely to have on recipients.

Epistemological transformation entails changing beliefs about knowledge and knowing. These beliefs have been repeatedly shown to affect how individuals deal with the crucial requirements of a modern knowledge-based society, such as acquiring and evaluating knowledge. To speak about epistemological change in higher education is about evolving ways of knowing to move beyond Western representations of reality. These representations of reality are guided by the idea of objectivity, thus encouraging the idea of truth claims being free from cultural or subjective bias. However, in this study I argue that our views of the world are shaped by our social contexts, cultures and identities. The knowledge encountered in the university context is therefore subject to historical and cultural particularities. It is written and explored within particular cultural contexts. We should aim to decentre and provincialise the methods, problems and claims of Western epistemology, which is one among many alternative, contingent epistemologies available.

What has been taught and learned in African universities has been dominated by Western epistemologies, necessitating a revision and reconceptualisation of what is taken to be genuine knowledge at African universities (le Grange, 2007, p. 579). This is essential because Western epistemologies are themselves not only local but located or situated. Their situatedness and locality is often hidden in abstract universalism, which is utilised to dismiss other knowledge systems as non-knowledge (Gwaravanda, 2019). The continued use of these epistemologies at African universities amounts to epistemic harm. As a result of their dominance "many spaces within the university do not recognise the knowledge and cultural capital that first-generation students bring with them to the university as valid forms of knowledge and as valid forms of cultural capital" (Morreira, 2015, p. 24). For some students, this results in an unequal learning process as they fail to attain relevance in the epistemologies they encounter.

1.3.1 Disciplinary Knowledge Structures

Fields of knowledge production can operate in different modes. These modes shape the production of knowledge in the field and, in doing so, construct identities for practitioners in the field, and define problems to be disputed and how they should be disputed (Moor, 2002). The issue of enacting epistemological change in higher education is made difficult by questions of what counts as valid disciplinary knowledge and whose knowledge counts as valid disciplinary knowledge within fields of knowledge production. In conducting this study, these

questions have been difficult because my advocacy for epistemic change does not amount to the rejection of disciplinary knowledge structures, epistemic boundaries and methodology. These structures and boundaries are, of course, fluid and negotiated. They also have implications for the teaching and learning within academic disciplines. Disciplines constitute complex social fields whereby "systems of objectification" – epistemological frameworks for naming and understanding the world – are themselves produced by complex political economies, institutional cultures, and relationships of power (Bourdieu, 1990).

Disciplinary knowledge is a specialised sub-set of knowledge, with the various disciplines possessing distinct concepts, grammar and procedural rules. Acquiring and disseminating disciplinary knowledge requires an understanding of these intellectual tools, but it also goes beyond this. It involves developing identity and affiliation, critical epistemic stance and dispositions as students engage in the discourse and actions of a collective social field. What counts as knowledge and whose knowledge counts should be subject to questioning, critique and, most importantly, change. However, this questioning and critique should take into account the rules and regulations of particular disciplinary fields. The discourse on enacting epistemic change should be accompanied by sufficient epistemological criteria for reviewing knowledge for inclusion in the curriculum. Such criteria are essential for providing accounts of epistemological boundaries between everyday and specialised concepts in language and knowledge (Cuthbert, 2021).

Bernstein (1971, 1977) describes two modalities of knowledge which I find useful in thinking about the idea of epistemic change that adheres to disciplinary knowledge structures in the humanities and social sciences. Analysing the form taken by knowledge in intellectual fields of production, Bernstein (1971, 1977) distinguishes between horizontal discourse (everyday knowledge) and vertical discourse (or professional knowledge). Within vertical discourse, he distinguishes between "hierarchical" and "horizontal" knowledge structures (Bernstein, 1977). The former operate to create general propositions and theories by integrating knowledge at lower levels and becoming more abstract at higher levels, such as the natural sciences (Bernstein, 1971). They are produced by an integrated code[2] which has two main forms: weak classification and strong framing, or weak classification and weak framing. The latter, horizontal knowledge structures, consist of a series of different categories and are based on a

[2] According to Bernstein, classification and framing merge together into the concept of code. There are two specific codes: collection and integrated. The natural sciences are referred to in the singular and portrayed as integrated and whole.

series or collection code.[3] They are further distinguished by "strong grammars" or "weak grammars", the strong by more explicit and precise procedure, the weak by less precise relationships (Bernstein, 1996). The disciplines that form the humanities and social sciences do not desire to create propositions and laws as the ultimate goal, and therefore have a horizontal knowledge structure.

Sieborber (2019) utilises the analogy of a train to articulate what horizontal knowledge structures might look like. The train is composed of a series of coaches running on the same horizontal rail tracks. The coaches vary in number; however, their modification does not have implications for the rest of the train, nor are there any implications for how they are placed. The coaches are like each other in that they are all built in the same manner to a common plan, though their purposes may differ. The fields of the humanities and social sciences are the train, the disciplines relate broadly to the substantive aspect of the fields, the way they are designed relates to the procedural aspects, their grammar. The disciplines in the humanities and social sciences have a series of specialised languages, each with its own modes of interrogation and specialised criteria, with non-comparable principles of description based on different, often opposed, assumptions. These knowledge structures comprise a series of segmented, strongly bounded languages (Bernstein, 1996).

The language of the natural sciences is characterised by its strong grammar, meaning that it has an explicit conceptual syntax capable of relatively precise empirical descriptions and generating formal modelling of empirical relations (Bernstein, 1990). Disciplines in the humanities and social sciences are characterised by horizontal knowledge structures with weak grammars, a conceptual syntax not capable of generating unambiguously precise empirical descriptions (Moor, 2002). The disciplines have competing languages, representing different influential schools of thought, perspectives and thinkers (Bernstein, 1990). When disputes arise, a new specialised language is invariably invented because there are no generally accepted criteria for integrating the existing disputing theories. Equally, there is no generally accepted means of clearing out old theories. In the humanities and social sciences, epistemic change is possible due to these horizontal knowledge structures and weak framing because knowledge is segmented, embedded and context-dependent.

[3] Series of rival subcultures with little dialogue across disciplinary boundaries and no means of adjudicating between competing claims to be the new unifying centre.

1.3.2 Disciplinary Knowledge

In addition to disciplinary structures, the issue of epistemic change is further complicated by the very idea of knowledge and what constitutes relevant knowledge in the various disciplines. The literature on epistemology presents an integrated view arguing that there are three kinds of knowledge: experiential knowledge, procedural knowledge and propositional knowledge. While interconnected, each of these possess some specific features. *Experiential knowledge* is obtained through direct connection with the environment, through our senses, and then it is processed by the brain. This knowledge is personal because it can only be acquired through the direct interface of our sensory system and is then processed by the brain. *Procedural knowledge* refers to knowledge of how to do something (know-how). It is well-structured and action-orientated knowledge gained by repeatedly performing a task. *Propositional knowledge* is knowledge that something is true. It refers to what we know, or think we know. These are what we frame in an explicit way by using a natural or symbolic language (Bolisani & Bratianu, 2018). In the attempts to understand how we can achieve truth about the world, we are mostly interested in the third type of knowledge, which is also known as factual knowledge.

In the university context, the concept of knowledge is primarily limited to propositional knowledge, which is viewed as mirroring the world and providing the necessary foundation for action. Viewing knowledge this way leads to thinking about knowledge as something that someone can have less or more of, what Cook and Brown (1999) referred to as an epistemology of knowledge as possession. Here explicit knowledge is privileged over tacit knowledge. Skills are separated from knowledge and competence is perceived as something beyond knowledge. This reduction of the concept of knowledge as something mental and cognitive is the result of Cartesian dualistic thinking where the mind is separated from action, knowledge from the world, theory from practice and subject from object (Carlgren, 2020).

Sociologists of education attempt to resolve the question of what counts as valid knowledge by contending that the purpose of higher education is to teach knowledge that enables students to think beyond the limits of their own experience. This is described as *powerful knowledge* (Young, 2008). This type of knowledge provides reliable explanations and new ways of thinking about the world because of the intellectual power it affords those who are exposed to it. It can provide students with a language for engaging in political, moral, and other kinds of debates (Young, 2008, p. 14). The “power” of this kind of knowledge lies in its ability to provide the best understanding of the world; it predicts, explains and enables those who have

access to it to envisage alternatives (Muller & Young, 2019). Powerful knowledge is specialised knowledge which has a higher cultural value than non-specialised knowledge (Young & Muller, 2013). Specialisation is not a basis for denying respect to non-specialist knowledge that people draw on daily. The difference between the two lies in purpose and structure, and not value. The transmission of specialised knowledge requires specialist institutions like universities and cannot be acquired informally.

Many have argued that the function of the university is to provide this kind of knowledge, thus enabling students to go beyond the limits of their own experience, better explain and understand the world and think about alternative futures and how to influence them. Powerful knowledge has been described as specialised and "relatively context-free" knowledge. To advance this idea, Young and Muller (2013) draw on Bernstein's (1971) distinction between different types of knowledge in terms of how it is structured: vertical and horizontal structures of knowledge. While vertical knowledge structures are conceptually structured as well as hierarchical, horizontal knowledge structures are contextual. The idea of powerful knowledge corresponds to the former. This type and structure of knowledge is what typically constitutes the disciplinary knowledge offered at universities.

Disciplinary knowledge as powerful vertical knowledge does not avoid the reduction of knowledge to propositional knowledge, and while the concept is useful in thinking about the nature of university knowledge, I contest the idea that it should be separated from the identity and context of the knower. This position of arises from thinking sociologically about knowledge. It focuses on the social basis of academic disciplines, subjects and pedagogical practices. It emphasises how the sociality of knowledge underpins its emergent objective character and thus avoids slipping into ontological relativism while embracing epistemic relativism. Recognising that knowledge is social from this perspective means recognising that it takes meaning from the knower as a social being. In this regard, the identity and context of the knower are central.

To call for epistemological transformation is not to challenge the idea of universities offering powerful horizontal knowledge, but rather what has come to constitute powerful knowledge in the humanities and social sciences and the uses of this type of knowledge. It can be argued that what is disseminated is *knowledge of the powerful,* which excludes the local context and identities of Black students. Viewed this way, this knowledge is powerful not only because of who defines "what counts as knowledge" and has access to it, but also the context and agents

tied to this knowledge. This is worth noting because powerful disciplinary knowledge offered at universities is emergent and produced by social conditions and contexts which leave their mark on the knowledge. Here I am not suggesting that the value of the knowledge is dependent on context or agents. The relevance of powerful knowledge, however, should and can be reduced to contexts and their agents. Specialised knowledge is developed in social activity.

Knowledge is powerful if it frees those who have access to it and enables them to envisage alternative and new possibilities (Young & Muller, 2013). I view the inclusion of this kind of knowledge in curricula as positive because it provides tools to become creative agents in society. However, a university campus brings students from different backgrounds together, and we can assume that they have a common purpose. The contexts and identities of these students is important because they contribute to how students relate to and understand knowledge. This necessitates understanding that universities cannot adequately create enabling institutional cultures and provide epistemic access to their students by merely providing services to remedy student deficits (Cross, 2018). Averting epistemic alienation and bringing about epistemological transformation necessitates engaging with addressing the relevance of the nature and scope of knowledge in the university context.

A university experience should lay the foundation for the acquisition of different hierarchies of knowledge, allowing an individual to undergo a state of knowing or constructing their own meaning. This widens what counts as knowledge to include both the visible knowns and the invisible parts: knowing *that* as well as knowing *how* as well as knowledge by acquaintance (knowledge of a person, place or thing). This is important because disciplinary subjects are not just theoretical but also include practical knowledge. In fact, all knowledge can be said to include practical knowledge, albeit in varying degrees. Understanding disciplinary knowledge as theoretical or practical is therefore misleading. If we relate this to the issue of epistemological transformation, it necessitates that we widen the scope of what counts as disciplinary knowledge. A relational view which conceives of knowledge as an expression of our relation to the world is both necessary and useful. It presents a move away from a reductionist view that considers knowledge as something to have and acquire.

1.4 Rationale

I began this study after completing my Master of Arts degree, motivated by an attempt to understand the enabling and constraining factors in relation to the Africanisation of the humanities and social science curricula. At the time, I was struggling to come to terms with the

kind of education I had received at a historically white university, and Africanisation was taken to mean context-centred. The initial study was meant to be an empirical case study, focusing on several disciplines at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and Rhodes University. What emerged when I began the study in this original format was the lack of conceptual tools to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under question – the "kind" of education I had received, which lacked relevance. This education was neither related to my context nor my social identity. Instead, it reflected white male perspectives from Western contexts. This realisation necessitated a step back and highlighted the need for conceptual tools to understand the idea of relevance as it relates to the nature and availability of knowledge in higher education. In taking this step back, I concur with Bernstein (2000, p. 93) who argued that "the theory, however primitive, has always come before the research. Thus by the time a piece of research has been initiated the theory has already been subject to conceptual clarification as it engages with the empirical problem. And by the time it has finished there have been further conceptual developments". The development of conceptual tools to investigate epistemic change accounts for the major contributions of this study and has implications beyond the humanities and social sciences.

The study also makes a significant contribution to understanding the conditions necessary for epistemic change by interrogating the interplay of structure, agency and culture. This interrogation stems from my struggles and failure to transform a university course on the sociology of education. This attempt highlighted the complicated nature of epistemic change, which does not rest solely on the will, beliefs and values of the individual academic. Appropriating epistemic relevance as part of enacting epistemic change requires that we understand the distinctive properties and powers pertaining to structure, culture and agency. The study engages with the distinctive properties of these three elements to avoid conflation which rules out the (changing) interplay between them and their theorisation. While the structures and forms of agency examined are specific to the problem at hand, the conceptualisation is worthwhile in theorising about education and change.

The discourse on transformation in South African higher education has been ongoing, however, the student protests of 2015-2016 changed the nature of this discourse to make knowledge an object of reflection. The voices coming to the fore were rightfully angry in tone, challenging the lack of efforts towards addressing the epistemic alienation of Black students. To date, the policy choices made by the government and the reaction of institutions and academics to these policy choices has not left much room to investigate the nature of the knowledge disseminated

in the classroom. As a result, there are certain aspects of institutional transformation that remain unrealised, and students justly brought this to the forefront. As part of examining the conditions necessary for the adoption of epistemic relevance as a curricular and pedagogical principle, the study examines several policies and reports intended to guide change in higher education. This examination identifies the gaps in the discourse on epistemic change and makes recommendations on how to address these gaps.

Having encountered a university experience that did not take into account my specific identity as a Black woman with a rural background, the discourse on decolonisation and Africanisation raised by students during the 2015-2016 protests was triggering. Particularly triggering was the reminder of unmet expectations in relation to the acquisition of knowledge as someone who possessing these intersecting social identities. During my time at university, my lecturers were mostly white males, who brought into the classroom what could be considered white European male knowledge, often presenting it as though its relevance were universal and applicable across space and time. This knowledge orientation was at the heart of my alienating university experience. As a student, I longed for content that recognised the relevance of diverse knowledge systems outside the "colonial library". As an educator in higher education who remains committed to the idea of disciplinary knowledge, I long for appropriate ways to integrate "other" knowledge systems into the disciplinary knowledge that I teach. The study explores these possibilities.

Questions about the nature of disciplinary knowledge in higher education have been left largely unexplored in policy discourse and academic debates on transformation. What has been raised is how to teach students to be participants in an academic practice, what has been described "in terms of gaining access to the practice in question" (Morrow, 2009, p. 77). Morrow (2009) argued that we cannot talk in the same way about entitlement to formal access and entitlement to epistemological access. Epistemological access is not a product which can be bought or sold nor is it some kind of natural growth. The concept of epistemological access can be traced to the academic development movements of the 1980s with many elaborations being provided by the likes of Morrow (2009) and Boughey (2000, 2002). The notion of epistemological access is useful in articulating the gap between, especially, first generation university students and the tacit assumptions of knowledge made in the "mainstream" university curriculum (Lange, 2017). It relates to "learning how to become a successful participant in an academic practice" (Morrow, 2009, p. 78).

The distinction between epistemological and formal access is useful in helping to identify those practices, norms and values that constrain, along with those that enable successful participation for an increasingly diverse student body. Numerous factors are implicated in the lack of access to university knowledge, such as language, academic literacy and skill associated with learning. In the South African context, formal access has been driven by policy, while epistemological access, in the way it is understood here, is dependent on conducive institutional environments, the dissemination of epistemologically relevant knowledge and student agency. My proposition here is that the type of knowledge and context where the knowledge was generated is important in constraining and enabling epistemological access for students.

The suggestion in the literature is that the student has a responsibility to use their own initiative and individual responsibility to enable them to gain entry into the rules of academic practice. Framed this way, gaining entry to disciplinary conventions and knowledge structures involves hard work and active engagement on behalf of the student. Placing the responsibility of gaining access to university knowledge solely on the student is problematic as it downplays the role of institutional mediation. According to Ballim (2015), the notion of epistemological access has been confined to building student capabilities to access the knowledge embedded in the curriculum, thus moving away from addressing the nature of this knowledge. This move allows the university to abdicate its responsibility to "teach properly" to all students. This critique suggests that every student who enters the university has to be initiated into the construction of knowledge within the disciplines (Lange, 2017). Part of this exercise requires that those who disseminate knowledge understand the different ways of knowing that students bring into the classroom and how these can constitute the point of entry for epistemological access to university knowledge, and not the opposite. The notion of epistemic relevance provides a means to engage with the various ways of knowing that students bring into the classroom while adhering to the disciplinary epistemic boundaries.

The concept of epistemological access has value in addressing epistemological transformation; it is important to ask, what is epistemological access affording access to? When Morrow (2010) introduced the concept, he was concerned with what it means to teach. In introducing the concept of epistemic relevance, I argue that it is important to stipulate what it means to learn, and what students should know and be able to do. Epistemic access is access to reality or knowledge of that reality. The provision of access to disciplinary conventions and knowledge structures involves "more than introducing students to a set of a-cultural, a-social skills and strategies to cope with academic learning and its products" (Boughey, 2002, p. 240). Rather it

involves engagement with the very nature of knowledge and a shift from closed knowledge systems, controlled and driven by canonical norms of traditional disciplines, to more open and inclusive knowledge systems. Such knowledge systems should lead to the incorporation of the perspectives and values of previously marginalised groups (Cross, 2018). In essence, this is what the students were demanding during the 2015-2016 protests.

The Rhodes Must Fall (RMF) movement in particular called for the introduction of a curriculum and research scholarship linked to social justice and the experiences of Black people. The movement called for higher education curricula to be centred on African discourses, addressing content, languages of instruction and methodologies of education and learning (Rhodes Must Fall, 2015). In making these demands, students were essentially raising questions about the form and purpose of higher education, particularly in relation to Black students who join the system as part of the transformation agenda. These students often struggle to gain access to the disciplinary knowledge offered by universities unless they come from affluent backgrounds and possess the necessary cultural capital to assimilate into epistemically alienating institutional spaces. The notion of epistemic relevance proposed in this study is valuable in thinking about social contexts, identity and culture in what it means to know.

In the various studies that have been conducted on the 2015-2016 student protests, what students seem to be calling for is a profound and abrupt change of curricular content that is analogous to the political revolution witnessed with the end of colonialism and apartheid. While curricular content does need to be changed to accommodate the diverse student population in our universities, I accept that such changes should be grounded in *epistemic values.* These are the values that shape and guide inquiry, the hidden curriculum of academic study and the grammar of the practices of disinterested inquiry (Morrow, 2009). Epistemic values are formal, content-neutral and cannot be re-invented at will. In addition to grounding curricular changes in *epistemic values*, these changes should also take into account disciplinary boundaries and structures. The knowledge acquired at university is guided by particular laws, norms, rules and practices of a given discipline or field of study. The organised intellectual resources we call "disciplines" possess certain attributes which uniquely qualify them for teaching and learning.

The discussion on epistemological transformation should therefore take these attributes into account because in the quest for relevance, we cannot abandon the scientific rigour associated with knowledge generation in the various disciplines. If we are to succeed in the project of making the necessary epistemological changes in higher education, it is worth exploring the

concepts related to realising this project. Access to powerful disciplinary knowledge is dependent on interrogating the nature, origin and limits of this knowledge which is included in the curriculum. This study explores the possibility of addressing epistemic dimensions of inequality exclusion, thus enacting epistemic change in the humanities and social sciences. The concept of epistemic relevance is proposed as a suitable curricular and pedagogical principle to assist in bringing about epistemic change which adheres to disciplinary epistemic boundaries.

1.5 Epistemologies are not All Born Relevant

A legitimate response to the challenge of epistemological transformation and the critique of the dominance of Western epistemologies might be to insist, like Plato and Descartes, that reason, intrinsic to the mind, is the only source of knowledge. Another approach might be to take an empiricist stance similar to Hume and Locke, insisting that sensory experience is the primary source of knowledge. In taking these positions, one could legitimately argue that teaching and learning in higher education should not be limited to students' identities and life experiences. My engagement with the possibility of bringing about epistemological transformation is underpinned by a third approach, which emphasises the contextual nature of the ways that knowledge is produced and acquired. From this perspective, there is no single hierarchy of knowledge, but there can be multiple hierarchies of knowledge.

Legitimation of knowledge-claims is intimately tied to networks of domination and exclusion. This recognition stems from the connection of power and knowledge, which has moved issues of epistemology from the discipline of philosophy to the centre-stage of contemporary culture. Marxists and critical theorists have argued that much of contemporary culture reflects bourgeois interests; southern scholars have pointed to the Eurocentrism of contemporary knowledge production. At the heart of these intellectual movements lies a commitment to epistemic change and a recognition of difference. Knowers occupy different contexts within society and therefore have characteristically different experiences. In different ways, the commitment to epistemic change implicates the subject in the production of knowledge. It is not simply due to bad practice that European subjects have allowed their subjectivity to imprint on their intellectual products. This imprinting of subjectivity is inevitable as knowledge bears the marks of its producer.

To recognise the implicatedness of the subject in the knowledge produced is important for epistemic transformation, as it makes the context of discovery relevant to the context of justification. This moves away from the Enlightenment idea where a universal knower can

stand and see the world without perspective. All knowers are situated temporally, historically, culturally and socially. These dimensions of situation all become part of the epistemological context (Lennon & Whitford, 1994). This marks an important departure from traditional epistemological assumptions and can work with our everyday knowledge-attributing practices. Knowledge comprises both objective and subjective attributes. Objective attributes can be conceived of as being independent of social context, but the subjective attributes are context-dependent and cannot be transferred easily to some other similar contexts.

Transcendental realists help to capture this distinction succinctly by arguing that although knowledge about reality is the result of social conditioning, reality exists independently of our knowledge about it (Bhaskar, 1979). Conceived this way, reality and our knowledge of reality operate in two different dimensions: intransitive and transitive (Bhaskar, 1998). In exploring the possibility of epistemological transformation in the humanities and social sciences, critical realism is utilised as a metatheory. It is concerned with ontology and epistemology, along with conceptions of what constitutes explanation, and what the objectives of social science should be. Critical realism is utilised here as an underlabourer and, most importantly, guides the ontological assumptions made here regarding how the social context influences individuals and how individuals may act back and change the prevailing social context. My focus in this thesis is not, though, on the application of CR as an empirical research method. Rather, my concern is with concept formation.

The CR philosophical position adopted in this thesis will be expounded in Chapter Two, however, I do want to touch on the idea of the epistemic fallacy, which is key in my conceptions of epistemic relevance and irrelevance. The epistemic fallacy is the result of being unable to distinguish between the intransitive and transitive dimensions of reality, thus resulting in the conflation of ontology and epistemology. The epistemic fallacy assumes that statements on man can be analysed in terms of statements on that man's knowledge. Bhaskar (1991) provides an instance of this ambiguity when he addresses Kuhn's proposal regarding the incommensurability of paradigmatic options: "though the world does not change with a change of paradigm, the scientist afterward works in a different world" (Kuhn, 1970, p. 121). For Bhaskar (1991), this statement fails to recognise the existence of an intransitive world which is relatively unchanging and a transitive world that is social and historical. Such a recognition would result in the following revision of Kuhn's (1970) statement: "though the (the natural or object) world does not change with the change of the paradigm, the social scientist afterward works in a different (social or cognitive) world" (Bhaskar, 1998, p. 10).

My conception of and argument for epistemic relevance as a curricular and pedagogical principle proceeds from this conceptual separation of ontology and epistemology. Ontology, or being in the world, is designated as a separate activity from knowledge of it or its epistemology. Epistemology is concerned with the "origin of knowledge, the place of experience in generating knowledge, and the place of reason in doing so; the relationship between knowledge and certainty, and between knowledge and the impossibility of error; the possibility of universal scepticism; and the changing forms of knowledge that arise form new conceptualisations of the world" (Blackburn, 1994, p. 123). The separation of ontology and epistemology makes it possible to argue for epistemic relativity, diversity and pluralism. In accepting that there are different ways of knowing, it then becomes possible to see how not all these ways of knowing will be appropriate across time, circumstances, context and identity of the knower, and thus irrelevant. The conceptualisation of the relationship between ontology and epistemology from the CR perspective provides clear guidelines for engaging with the nature of knowledge at South African universities. The distinction offered by CR opens up the possibility of epistemological transformation which is guided by the principle of epistemic relevance.

Epistemic relevance is proposed as a principle to ensure that knowledge included in the curriculum matters to the everyday experience of the knower (student): to their problems and issues, to the meanings and values they give to the problems they face. The principle requires that questions be raised regarding the context, identity and culture tied to knowledge disseminated in the classroom. Raising these questions ensures that knowledge helps the knower analyse, understand and develop alternative solutions. Raising questions about the context, culture and identity tied to knowledge and at the receiving end of knowledge dissemination ensures that knowledge is relevant because the student can reason with, or integrate, or logically handle it. Understood this way, epistemic relevance is a principle that helps to ensure that teaching and learning is a situated, contextual and dialogical process, which unfolds through relational dynamics among the various actors involved.

1.6 Seating Philosophy with Sociology: A Note on the Disciplinary Grounding of the Study

My formal academic training is in the field of sociology, and as a result there was a temptation while conducting this study to concentrate on this discipline as I know it well. However, Standish (2007, p.40) argues that "any attempt to understand education in general, any attempt to pursue practical educational questions where they lead, must soon become philosophical." This was the case with this study, where there were conceptual issues and philosophical

questions raised which lie outside the province of sociological investigation. Philosophical questions are at the heart of educational practice, however much they may be veiled or blocked by the supposed assurances of "evidence-based" policy and practice. Conversely, there is no getting around the fact that education raises questions at the heart of philosophy (Moore, 2010). Therefore, a preliminary move must be to say something about the disciplinary and methodological groundings of the study, which draws from the sub-disciplines of philosophy of education and the sociology of knowledge. What follows is therefore presented with some caution, as I attempt to present a particular view of these sub-disciplines to demonstrate compatibility and it is inevitable that the conclusions given will not be acceptable to everyone who works in these fields.

Sub-disciplines address a field of concern that is easily circumscribed, and they involve concepts and ways of reasoning that, although not entirely discrete are in some measure distinctive of a particular field. They are considered sub-disciplines in that they grow from more fundamental and more central elements in a particular field. Sub-disciplines also relate to professional fields of practice and inquiry, and this would be so with the philosophy of education and the sociology of knowledge. As a sub-discipline of philosophy, the former stresses the value of a wider, more inclusive characterisation of philosophy, making the merger with the sociology of knowledge logically possible. Those engaged in the development of the philosophy of education saw themselves as aiming for coherent and systematic rationalisation of educational beliefs and practices. This was to be achieved by importing the rigor and supposed ideological neutrality of linguistic and analytic methods in philosophy proper (Blake, Smeyers, Smith, & Standish, 2003). Its insistence on the autonomy of education as a field of human endeavour is a legacy much needed in recent years, as is the relentless pursuit of clarity and truth. As it emerged as a sub-discipline of philosophy, philosophy of education found itself as much in competition as in partnership with other disciplines, especially sociology.

The philosophy of education approach taken in this study is not one that should be associated with analytic philosophy, which understands philosophy to involve a process of conceptual analysis in order to arrive at clear and distinct ideas (Standish, 2007). Analytic philosophy takes the point of inquiry to be the uncovering of the underlying logic of the matter at hand, and can be defined in at least two perspectives: theoretical, and historical. Historically analytic philosophy was introduced as a revolution in philosophy, as a New Philosophy. Theoretically, analytic philosophy means 'rigorous philosophy'. Its aim is to produce theories, ideas, theses, which bear examination through counter arguments. Possibly the philosopher whose work

epitomizes this approach is John Wilson who identified the task of philosophy in characteristically formal or procedural terms.

In relation to education, analytic philosophy relies on the notion that the distinctions made in ordinary language, once recovered and clarified, have the power to sweep away the obscurities introduced by tendentious ways of thinking and writing. The approach aspires to map the logical geography of educational concepts, an aspiration many have labelled as naïve as it supposes that there is such a geography, unitary and two-dimensional, to be definitively mapped (Blake, Smeyers, Smith, & Standish, 2003, p. 3). It is also true that the approach took from empiricism various ideas on whose solidity subsequent work has cast doubt. Such ideas often had the effect of limiting the scope which philosophy of education took for itself. In relation to the aims of this study and my own disciplinary training in sociology, the analytic philosophy approach is considered to be "both too tidy and extremely limiting" (Standish, 2007, p. 160). The philosophical approach taken in this study can however be associated with the writings of a range of philosophical work in the Continental tradition which has immense educational resonance.

The Continental tradition of philosophy tends to be marginalised by those adopting a more exclusively analytic approach because of the alleged lack of clarity or precision in arguments (Standish, 2007). The tradition is invaluable in this study as it focuses on questions concerning human experience, meaning, and knowledge, objectivity, being in the world, immanence and transcendence. The Continental approach recognises the variety of ways in which philosophical inquiry into education can take place, and it acknowledges the long history of this; furthermore because of its less demanding or less narrow conception of what counts as philosophical, it is inclined to understand the boundaries between disciplines. It is much more inclusive and pluralistic in its understanding of philosophy and can recognise the role and the merits of work in the analytic philosophy of education tradition (Standish, 2007). The Continental tradition leads one to look beyond the self – in terms of our relations both to things in the world and to other people. While not subscribing to any faction or school of thought, it is the Continental tradition that accords with the arguments expressed in this study. Continental writers have displayed a general lack of interest, to date, in analytic philosophy – and a greater interest in social and anthropological theory and social philosophy.

While the question of epistemic relevance raised in this study is without a doubt philosophical, the approach to answering this question also draws from the sociology of knowledge. The study

is concerned with the interplay between social conditions and ideas, making the merger of philosophy and sociology necessary. Traditional sociological approaches to knowledge ask how, and to what extent, "social factors" might influence products of the mind (Shapin, 1995). As a field of study, the sociology of knowledge has included the entire ideational realm (knowledge ideas, theories, and mentalities) in an attempt to understand how the realm is related to particular social and political forces and how the mental life of a group of people arise within the context of the groups and institutions in which those people live and act (McCarthy, 2000).

As a sub-discipline, the sociology of knowledge has been described as an approach with no unified field, however, McCarthy (2000) identifies two approaches to studying the sub-discipline. The first is what is characterised as the broad approach as it identifies a range of works in sociology and social theory that examine the social nature of mind and knowledge. This approach treats the sociology of knowledge as a "frame of reference, not a definite body of theory in its own right" (Jame & Petras, 1970). The second approach to understanding the sociology of knowledge considers the field as a particular body of work that examines its origins, developments, and future prospects. This second approach also examines major substantive statements made by sociologists identified with its precise subject matter.

The one shared assumption amongst the two approaches is that "the empyrean view of knowledge – that better ideas win out over worse ideas because they are better – does not match well the messy, earth-bound reality in which knowledge is created, circulated, and adopted" (Pooley, 2016, p. 1). The sub-discipline has been useful in this study as it sets out to break down the legitimacy of the distinction between "contexts of discovery and justification," and to develop an anti-individualistic and anti-empiricist framework in which "social factors" counted not as contaminants but as constitutive of the very idea of scientific knowledge (Shapin, 1995, p. 297). Integral to the sociology of knowledge is a relative theory of knowledge from which its own concepts and theories are not excluded. This approach leaves room for the many ways that social conditions as well as ideas have been conceived in the discipline of sociology.

The sociology of knowledge directs attention to cultural elements that are more conscious, more explicitly linked to specific institutional arenas, and more historically variable (Arditi & Swidler, 1994). However, drawing from the philosophy of education became necessary because approaches to the sociology of knowledge often rely on too-often implicit epistemological stances. In addition to this, the sociology of knowledge has traditionally been excluded from the

epistemological and methodological problems, and where a connection is allowed, it generally treats the sociology of knowledge as mere evidence with which to construct theories of knowledge (Kurzman, 1994). Working across these sub-disciplines has been particularly beneficial in this study which makes an argument for plurality and is concerned with the nature of knowledge and the grounds for knowledge claims.

1.7 Structure of the Argument

The argument presented in this thesis is multi-layered, and it is therefore useful to take the reader through its structure. The task at hand is about the possibilities of enacting epistemic change in the humanities and social sciences, and the notion of epistemic relevance is proposed as a principle which can bring about this change by addressing the epistemic dimensions of inequality and exclusion. Epistemic relevance addresses a significant gap in the higher education transformation agenda by highlighting the epistemic dimensions of transformation, as well as practicalities, by focusing on the fields of the humanities and social sciences. Addressing the relevance of university knowledge widens the notion of access to include both formal and epistemological access, which should be fundamental in the discourse on higher education transformation. In the humanities and social sciences, this requires epistemic pluralism that complements the epistemic norms of the disciplines that make up the fields. Enacting epistemic change requires that we give up the project of providing a totalising theory of the nature of reality and recognising that we cannot unify into a coherent whole the multiple and diverse experiences which derive from the multiple situations in which knowledge-producers are placed (Lennon & Whitford, 1994).

The thesis is divided into three different parts. Chapters Two and Three are the lead-in chapters, highlighting the need for epistemic relevance as well as providing the philosophical foundations for the concept of epistemic relevance. Chapters Four, Five and Six are the core chapters, and outline the necessary conditions for appropriating epistemic relevance in the humanities and social science. The lead-out chapters are Chapters Seven and Eight and outline the implications of appropriating epistemic relevance as a curricular and pedagogical principle. The arguments presented in this study are the result of my own experiences with humanities and social science curricula, both as a student and a lecturer. This introductory chapter is therefore followed by a reflection on the experience of being a Black woman, with a rural background in a higher education system struggling with disseminating knowledge that does not alienate certain members of the student population. Titled *Confronting the Complexities of an Epistemically*

Unjust and Alienating Higher Education System, the chapter details the experiences of being a Black student at a historically white university and later being a first-time lecturer at a historically white university. These experiences are unpacked through the lens of intersectionality and the notion of epistemic injustice to highlight the impact of these intersecting identities on the experiences of epistemic marginality and alienation. The chapter also highlights the wider experiences of epistemic inequality and exclusion through engaging with the rise of the 2015-2016 student movements.

Chapter Three is titled *Grasping Epistemic Relevance: A Critical Realist Argument* and explicates the ontological and epistemological foundations of developing knowledge from a critical realist standpoint. Critical realism is utilised as a philosophical underlabourer in this study as it provides the tools to engage in causal explanation, which involves conceptualisation of the nature of the unobservable structures that underlie observable patterns. The chapter accounts for the use of CR as a philosophy which underpins the study rather than an empirical method. This chapter also explains how CR has been utilised to guide the theoretical assumptions behind the formulation and explanation of the concept of epistemic relevance as a curricular and pedagogical principle.

The clarification of the philosophical position taken in this study is followed by an examination of the interplay of structure and agency in relation to enacting epistemic change in Chapter Four. This chapter is titled *Appropriating Epistemic Relevance: The Interplay of Structure and Agency* and applies Archer's (1995) morphogenetic approach to highlight the dynamic interplay between structure and agency in enacting epistemic change. The morphogenetic approach is rooted in historicity and it is used in Chapter Four to trace the origins of the current state of affairs in the humanities and social sciences. The chapter begins by highlighting the importance of understanding the interplay of structure and agency in appropriating epistemic relevance. The three sections which follow outline the morphogenetic cycles. The last part of this chapter discusses the intellectual and structural challenges to appropriating epistemic relevance.

The idea of the interplay between structure and agency is extended to Chapter Five, which focuses on the policy efforts to transform higher education and is titled *The Role of Policy in Enabling and Constraining Epistemic Relevance: A Framework Analysis of Selected Higher Education Policies and Reports.* The chapter begins with an outline of the transformation context followed by an analysis of the key policies which were intended to guide higher

education. The last part of the chapter discusses the elements of policy which have the ability to enable and constrain epistemic change.

In Chapter Six, the role of discursive structures in appropriating epistemic relevance is explored. The chapter is titled *Decolonialism and Africanisation as Epistemically Relevant Epistemologies? A Sociological Discourse Analysis of Meanings and Implications*. Reflection on the question of the epistemological relevance of the humanities and social sciences in the global South has resulted in a number of perspectives. The chapter makes use of sociological discourse analysis, which is compatible with Archer's (1995) morphogenetic approach, to explore the contribution of the discourse on decolonialism and Africanisation to appropriating epistemic relevance. Chapter Six begins with and outline of the methodology utilised in discussing the discursive structures in relation to epistemic change. The chapter then presents a two part analysis on decolonialism and Africanisation which outlines the conditions which have given rise to the discourses as well as the information provided by the discourses. The last section makes a case for Africanisation and decolonialism as epistemic processes.

Chapter Seven works towards addressing the implications of epistemic relevance and is titled *Appropriating Epistemic Relevance: Towards Epistemic Pluriversality.* The chapter provides a counter-narrative to contemporary Northern epistemologies and suggests that decolonialism and Africanisation provide suitable frameworks to work with Northern epistemologies in the present context. The chapter expands on the idea of Africanisation and decolonialism as epistemic processes or alternative discourses. The chapter then argues for indigenous knowledge and endogenous knowledge as the knowledge projects which should be associated with Africanisation and decoloniality respectively. The chapter concludes with an argument for pluriversality which is grounded in disciplinary knowledge structures and epistemic boundaries.

The key arguments presented in the study are synthesised in Chapter Eight, which is titled *Grounding Disciplinary Knowledge of Society in the South African Context.* The chapter presents the uniquely South African implications of appropriating epistemic relevance. The first part outlines the idea of epistemic relevance, followed by an exploration of the notion of appropriating epistemic relevance. The next section outlines the two distinct approaches to knowledge we can take through appropriating epistemic relevance. This is followed by the curricular and pedagogical implications of adopting the principle. Chapter Nine presents the conclusion of the thesis.

1.8 Clarification of Concepts

Throughout the thesis, I make use of a number of concepts which are worth clarifying for the reader at the onset. The first of these are the different ways of *naming global divisions* among humanities and social science communities. I make use of "North/South" terminology; the language of the "centre/periphery"; the "West/East" language drawn from the discourse of Orientalism and the dependency theory language of "developed/underdeveloped". These terms are utilised interchangeably to refer to long-lasting patterns of power and influence that grew historically out of European and North American imperialism (Connell, 2007).

While the study is not about the #FeesMustFall movement or the student protests of 2015-2016, it explores some of the questions raised by the student movements during this period, particularly in relation to contextualising knowledge. These questions have been summed up under the notion of gaining *epistemological or epistemic access*, which is understood as access to the "formal" knowledge disseminated in the university classroom as well as the practices and grammar associated with this knowledge. Related to the concept of epistemological access is the notion of *curriculum.* Here the concept is utilised in the broader sense to refer to the total learning experiences of students.

The critique of Western epistemologies and their problematic nature as outlined in the next few chapters is largely related to *context*, which is understood as having significance for learning. While the concept is commonly utilised, there is lack of consensus on what it means. Context plays a major role in addressing meaning, and meaning occupies an integral role in establishing context. Throughout this study, context is utilised to describe both *when* (time period) and *where* (location). Related to this is the idea of contextualisation, which is taken to mean making something relevant for both location and time period.

Related to the concept of context is the idea of *institutional culture*, which is taken to signify particular patterns of organisational behaviour such as values, assumptions, beliefs and ideologies embedded in higher education. Institutional culture is one of the most salient forces operating within universities and is likely to represent the subculture of broader society. It can serve as an important vehicle in implementing change as it is decisive in determining the behaviour of members of the university community and in the governance and decision-making of higher education institutions.

Chapter Two

Confronting the Complexities of an Epistemically Unjust and Alienating Higher Education System

2.1 Introduction

I am by training a sociologist of South African descent, which forms my archive and is my site of inquiry. My main concerns in this study are the epistemic forms of inequality and exclusion that continue to plague the higher education system, and how these play out in the fields of the humanities and social sciences. I am also interested in the possibilities of achieving epistemic and cognitive justice in these fields. My interest in these topics was spurred by my experience of undergraduate humanities and social science curricula at a historically white South African university where, as a Black woman from a rural background, my particular representations of reality were marginalised and, at times, excluded. As a student, the education I received privileged certain knowers and ways of knowing while chronically failing to provide adequate epistemological access and support to students like me. Drawing on existing literature and personal experience, this chapter details the experience of being a "body and mind out of place", battling with epistemic marginalisation and alienation in a system that is grappling with the challenge of epistemic relevance.

The reflections provided in this chapter are important not only for highlighting the importance of epistemic relevance, but also because they highlight the context and position from which I write and formulate the arguments in this thesis. This introductory section is followed by an account of intersectionality, which is utilised as a framework to confront the interlocking systems of epistemic and cognitive injustice. I rely on intersectionality as an analytical framework to show how these epistemic forms of inequality and exclusion can be tied to one's race, gender and social class. In the following section, I present a personal account of the positionality of knowledge and how what is known, and the way in which it is known, is also tied to one's social identity. In the concluding section, I attempt to link this personal account to the wider social context by discussing the demands for cognitive and epistemic justice raised by the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall student movements.

2.2 Crossing Epistemic Borders: Intersectionality and Epistemic Injustice

I began my undergraduate studies in 2006 and completed them in 2008, having been taught by only one Black lecturer, who was a male. During this period, the course content I encountered

did not reflect my context, Black people or women. However, it did reflect old, dead white men and the affluent from Europe. In sociology I learned about the European Enlightenment, the transition from feudalism to capitalism and democratisation in Europe, while in psychology I studied operant conditioning, cognitive development, sociocultural theory, and other theories which had emerged as a result of the problems encountered in the European or North American context. In international relations and political studies, I encountered realism, liberalism and constructivism. These theories, which are steeped in Androcentrism and Eurocentrism remembering mostly contributions by Western male scholars, were applied to the local context as if their relevance were universal. As a Black woman from a rural background, I could not relate to my lecturers or this knowledge, which was situated in a historical, social and cultural context I was not familiar with.

The student protests which began in 2015 under the banner of #RhodesMustFall and evolving the following year into #FeesMustFall have served as an indicator of how the higher education system continues to struggle with epistemic and cognitive justice. On a personal level, the student demands for radical changes in curricula and for a centring of uniquely African experiences was triggering. It served as a reminder of my own experiences of epistemic alienation and marginalisation. The student engagement with epistemological issues and curricula highlighted the lack of effort to understand the experiences of those who are epistemically alienated and marginalised within the higher education system, because this is often tied to students' social identities and backgrounds. Understanding these experiences is an important part of creating cognitively enabling institutional environments in higher education. I draw on personal experience to account for how my own experiences were created by teaching which did not take into account how the intersection of social class, race and gender influenced how I came to know the world. In the South African context, this intersection becomes worth examining because the inclusion of previously marginalised groups in academia has not necessarily translated into epistemic forms of inclusion or transformation.

Intersectionality constitutes a useful and provocative analytical framework for highlighting the intersection between social class, race and gender in relation to the intellectual experiences in academia. It also establishes a provocative site for interrogating how ideas are taken up by different social actors because of the intersection of these social identities. The concept of intersectionality has its roots in Black feminist thought and the quest for an integrative approach to theorising oppression(s). It speaks to the antiracist feminist critiques that women's experiences should not be captured through an analysis of gender alone (Carastathis, 2014).

Legal scholar Kimberle Williams Crenshaw offers intersectionality as a provisional concept "to demonstrate the inadequacy of approaches which isolate systems of oppression, isolating and focusing on one, while occluding the others" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 23). While the concept, which has been taken up in a broad variety of contexts, is often said to have been coined by Crenshaw in 1991, a more accurate genealogy would follow the concept to women of colour activists working in liberation movements during the 1960s and 1970s (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Crenshaw's (1991) work, while useful constitutes neither an end point nor a point of origin for intersectionality. Instead, it constitutes an important turning point in intersectionality's engagement with social action within academic settings (Collins, 2017). The framework was changed by its entrance into academic epistemic communities. The genealogy of the concept is important because it highlights the centrality of the concept to social justice movements, and the tendency for ideas circulated by certain types of knowers to be privileged over others, particularly grassroots intellectuals.

Intersectionality is a useful framework as it disrupts group-based formulations such as "women", "Black people", and "sexual minorities" in several ways. First, it calls attention to social identities that are consistently treated as marginal or invisible because they are conceptualised as mere subsets of broader, larger, or more significant assemblages. Second, intersectionality points to the complex nature of power, undermining all reductive theories of oppression. This is useful in assisting one to move away from the desire to have one identity or form of oppression/injustice acknowledged as more important than others. Third, it points to the gap between social categorisation and the complexity of intersubjective experience, i.e., the fact that no single social label can ever exhaust what it means for an individual to travel the world, and therefore that no analysis is ever complete (Harris & Leonardo, 2018). In contrast to approaches which privilege one category over the other, intersectionality insists that multiple, co-constructing categories are operative and equally salient in constructing institutionalised practices and lived experiences (Crenshaw, 1989).

In the context of this study, intersectionality is particularly useful as it responds to the demand of reading multiple experiences simultaneously (Russell, 2007). Such a reading adds a significant element of depth to our understanding about the challenges of epistemic and cognitive justice South African students have been seeking since the early 1960s. Drawing on Black feminist thought, intersectionality achieves this by rejecting the concept of universal laws of behaviour, favouring instead idiosyncratic methods by concentrating on the realities of the

oppressed and marginalised (Stephens & Philips, 2005). The Black feminist agenda attempts to reconfigure the complexities of the oppressed and marginalised by theorising race, class, gender and other social divisions as lived realities (Mirza, 2014). Through applying intersectional analysis to understanding epistemic forms of injustice, we may be able to realise the everyday lives of students who are concurrently situated in multiple structures of dominance and power as gendered, raced, classed, colonised, and sexualised others (Mirza, 2014). Black feminist epistemology is useful in this regard as it is relative and conditional, thus allowing for the examination of the differentiated and variable organising logics of race, class and gender and other social divisions that structure the lives of the marginalised in different historical times.

Feminist theorising generally challenges the ways in which gender norms and values are sustained, and the methodological and critical inquiry into the social and political structures that maintain them. In essence, feminist theorising repudiates traditional methods of philosophic inquiry that rely on detachment and distant engagement (Laurol, 2016). It is worth noting that this kind of theorising is not a deconstructive enterprise; rather, its aim is to complement and revise traditional methods with the goal of interpreting women's experiences and ameliorating social and institutional subordination (Laurol, 2016, p. 1). Feminist scholars also have a long history of offering constructive and critical responses to the epistemological and scientific enterprise and argue that traditional epistemological theorising has centred on the norms, traditions, interests, activities, and customs from the male perspective.

Feminist critique of traditional epistemology critically analyses methods of knowledge acquisition that are incomplete and represents an unwavering commitment to the social and political goals of feminism. Feminist epistemology has developed out of this critique and at a point of history in which it has been positioned against a dominant epistemological tradition of hypernormative and individualistic analysis. It has struggled to find a place within the discipline of philosophy generally, and epistemology more specifically. It has brought resources and influences of a variety of other disciplines – from sociology, psychology, history and political science, and investigates the relation between gender oppression and the practices of knowledge-seeking (Grasswick & Webb, 2002). It therefore represents a broad collection of problems and methods, from thorough-going criticisms of traditional individualistic approaches to epistemology and new realms of application of epistemological investigation (Grasswick & Webb, 2002). Feminist epistemology offers emancipatory methods that critically investigate how knowledge changes in social situations and therefore falls under the umbrella study of social epistemology.

As a form of feminist theorising, Black feminist consciousness arises from the intersection of patterns of discrimination and argues that an understanding of race and gender as separate categories negates any explanations of how attitudes might change as a result of cross-pressures to subordinate the interests of Black women so as to protect Black men and white women (Simien, 2004). Black feminist epistemology arises out of this consciousness and focuses on the situated knower, who is referred to as the atomistic individual in traditional epistemology. It was believed that through reflective speculation and constructing self-evident propositions, the knower could acquire justified true beliefs of the objective world. Black feminist epistemology recognises that Black women are status deprived because they face discrimination on the basis of race and gender. Bearing the burdens of prejudice that challenge people of colour, in addition to the various forms of subjugation that hinder women, Black women are disadvantaged doubly. In their articulation of Black feminist epistemology, Black feminists also draw from the concept of intersectionality, arguing that "race, class, gender, and sexuality are co-dependent variables that cannot be separated or ranked in scholarship, or in lived experience. Black feminist epistemology mounts an oppositional stance, underscoring the importance of these intersecting identities in the acquisition and interpretation of knowledge.

Black feminist epistemology is a complementary and inclusive enterprise; it underlies the salience of gender and race in epistemic theorising and illuminates the social and political position of the situated knower. In addition, the primary concerns of Black feminist epistemology is the sociality of knowledge; knowledge is an interconnected product of values, beliefs, and judgements. Thus Black feminist epistemology directs focus on the community; knowledge is not created in an abstract void but situated in a socio-political environment. As part of feminist standpoint theory, Black feminist epistemology makes three distinct claims; (1) knowledge is socially situated, (2) marginalised groups are socially situated in ways that make it more possible for them to be aware of things and ask questions than it is for the non-marginalised, and (3) research should begin with the lives of the marginalised. Here the notion of the social activity of knowledge acquisition is emphasised. Black feminists argue that knowledge is produced in a social context and that the traditional paradigm has had no substantive, discursive response to the needs of (Black) women. Furthermore, Black women are forced to internalise the practices, norms, and ideals of white, male-centred epistemic theorising that conceives of knowledge as abstract, universal, and transcendent.

For me as a Black woman in academia, the metaphor of intersectionality is useful because I am not "a woman on Monday, a member of the working class on Tuesday, and a woman of African

descent on Wednesday" (Russell, 2007, p. 47). Individualising these identities reduces them to "dimensions of intersecting subjectivities managed by each unique individual" (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 119). In addition to this, the disruptions provided by an intersectional framework are useful in any attempt to avert epistemic injustice in a number of ways. Firstly, it inspires the recognition of identities and forms of subordination rendered invisible by hegemonic formulations, thus resulting in the development of increasingly sophisticated and nuanced understandings of social formations (Harris & Leonardo, 2018). Secondly, consciousness of intersectionality might highlight the structural interpretation of various forms of epistemic injustice. This recognition is important because a singular focus will address some forms of injustice while neglecting others. Thirdly, it contains a partial account of power as it leads to the understanding that systems of subordination, as they are brought to bear on social identities, never work alone.[4] Lastly, given the dynamic nature of social identity formation, intersectionality promises a continuous generativity (Harris & Leonardo, 2018, p. 6).

While making use of intersectionality is useful in relaying how epistemic forms of epistemic injustice are related to identity, the analytical framework has its limitations. One of these limitations is the intersection metaphor proposed by Crenshaw (1989, 1999). Crenshaw's (1991) conceptualisations of intersectionality, which have been taken up by other feminist scholars, are based on the metaphor of a roadway:

> Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars travelling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1243).

It has been argued that the intersection metaphor does not reflect the multiple levels of scale at which each axis of subordination operates (Harris & Leonardo, 2018). For instance, gender acts on individual, interpersonal, institutional and structural levels at the same time. Certain uses of the concept of intersectionality could give primacy to subjective identity at the expense of structural subordination. Another critique of the metaphor is that it implicitly configures all forms of subordination as parallel, thus failing to demonstrate what is unique about each form of oppression (see Williams, 2002). While these limitations are acknowledged, they do not

[4] For instance, race always operates through gender, and gender through sexuality.

diminish the usefulness of the metaphor in "grasping the limitations of single-axis explanation in favour of a cross-cutting analysis" (Harris & Leonardo, 2018, p. 7). A single analytical category is limiting, and intersectionality foregrounds a richer and more complex ontology than approaches which try to reduce people to one category at a time. In the attempts to understand and make use of epistemic relevance as a curricular and pedagogical principle, intersectionality points to the need for multiple epistemologies. In particular, it indicates that knowledge production must treat social positions as relational. Descriptively, the concept provides a less cynical way to understand the steady emergence of new perspectives and fields of study within academia; as a scholar, the concept has constantly prompted me to ask, "What or who is obscured by this analysis or focus of attention?" Prescriptively, the concept serves as a powerful reminder to pay attention to the margins of all identity-based organising and analysis (Harris & Leonardo, 2018, p. 5).

2.2.1 Epistemic Injustice

Intersectionality is a useful framework as it highlights how epistemic inequality, exclusion and alienation constitute core defining features of intersecting systems of power. Epistemology may seem to be the great equaliser within academia, however, placing epistemology beyond the boundaries of politics and ethics militates against seeing how hegemonic understandings of intellectual work result in epistemic injustice (Collins, 2017). The concept draws from understandings of epistemology from Black feminism as well as gender/race/class studies that have laid claim to social justice and political action, as well as storied and more prescribed academic definitions of epistemology that have elevated the search for truth above ethics and politics (Collins, 2017, p. 118). I introduce the concept of epistemic injustice as it gives a name to my particular experiences in higher education, both as a knower and a speaker. The concept makes it possible to name experiences of injustice which have not been previously addressed as such. Viewing these experiences through the lens of intersectionality makes it possible to see that hegemonic Western epistemologies are not situated outside of politics, but rather are embedded within and help in constructing the political. Epistemic oppression constitutes a core defining feature of intersecting systems of power. The construct identifies how epistemology constitutes a structuring dimension of social injustice beyond actual ideas of racism, sexism and similar ideological systems.

Epistemic injustice concerns the epistemic aspects of social (in)justice, including issues about how structures and practices of knowledge production unfairly (dis)advantage some people

rather than others through marginalisation and misrepresentation of their testimonies and experiences (Fricker, 2007, p. 7). In the conceptualisation of epistemic injustice, Fricker (2007) draws explicitly on both social and virtue epistemology. The former is concerned with the social arrangements by which knowledge is transmitted, and the latter studies the character of the individual knower and the experiences and practices through which good intellectual character develops (Kotzee, 2017, p. 323). Fricker (2007) locates epistemic injustice in bad epistemic "training", while epistemic justice can be achieved through individual and social "training". Identifying these conditions of epistemic injustice and justice is useful for systematically identifying and evaluating claims of harm against knowers, and showing how individuals and institutions can avoid creating epistemic (dis)advantages and reproducing existing socioeconomic inequalities (Byskov, 2020).

Expanding on Fricker's (2007) ideas on epistemic injustice, Byskov (2020, p. 2) identifies two conditions of epistemic injustice. The first is what he calls the *disadvantage condition* and identifies it as the first condition of epistemic injustice. The disadvantage referred to here is both epistemic and practical. Epistemically, certain knowers are unable to successfully make sense of and communicate their experiences, leading to them having less of a voice. Practically, epistemic injustice can create or reproduce socioeconomic inequalities and social and structural injustice (Fricker, 2007, p. 43). In both cases, injustice is relative to one's own epistemic and socioeconomic status (Byskov, 2020). The second condition of injustice identified by Byskov (2020, p. 2) is the *prejudice condition*. This relates to epistemic disadvantage based on characteristics about a speaker that are irrelevant for judging them as a knower because such judgements are based on prejudices about certain stereotypes. Prejudices may be either implicit or explicit. The former refers to false beliefs about other people and their capacities that someone may hold without realising. It is therefore not considered an injustice when a knower is mistakenly subjected to a prejudice. It is also worth pointing out that someone may hold positive prejudices about a knower, providing them with excess credibility.

2.2.2 Varieties of Epistemic Injustice

Fricker (2007, p. 7) characterises two forms of epistemic injustice: testimonial injustice, in which someone is wronged in their capacity as a giver of knowledge, and hermeneutical injustice, in which someone is wronged as a subject of social understanding. Testimonial injustice is the primary form of epistemic injustice and is the result of a speaker receiving less credibility as a result of the hearer's prejudice. These prejudices are tied to a speaker's social

identity status and prevalent negative stereotypes in society. People inhabiting such identity positions are made objects of knowledge formation rather than taken seriously as subjects of knowledge in their own right (Dubgen, 2016). As speakers, persons suffering from testimonial injustice are invisible. Testimonial injustice can take the form of incessant interruptions, incredulous and communicative sceptical micro-aggressions such as "really?", disbelieving stares and disinterested demeanours, to name a few. Prejudices tend to influence the manner in which people think. At their most powerful, they can result in people underestimating or overestimating others' credibility (sometimes a neglected aspect of epistemic injustice), except the knowledge and truth of "sounding" a certain way or coming from a certain type of person. When someone suffers a testimonial injustice, "they are degraded qua knower, and symbolically degraded qua human" (Fricker, 2007, p. 44). The harms of testimonial injustice are not easily quantifiable and may emerge long after the initial cause has disappeared.

The second form of epistemic injustice, hermeneutical injustice, stems from the lack of shared tools of social interpretation. Hermeneutical injustice occurs when a gap in collective interpretive resources results in an unfair disadvantaging of knowers in their attempts to make sense of their social experiences. Hermeneutical injustice occurs in situations where a knower is unable to find the words or thoughts to accurately express their experiences as a situated knower due to the lack of conceptual resources available. For instance, we can only speak out against cases of racism if we can name them as such and if the concept is widely accepted by society. In such cases, there is something wrong with the epistemic system itself: it is insufficient in a way that leads it to function less well with regard to certain experiences or aspects of the world as experienced by certain persons (Dotson, 2014).

Medina (2017) identifies two types of hermeneutical injustice. The first of these are semantically produced injustices, which occur when words and concepts are available but their expression is prohibited. Second, there are performatively induced hermeneutical injustices, where subjects are judged to be more or less intelligent than other subjects because of their communicative or expressive style. This can be observed, for instance, from students responding to lecturers differently based on their accents or looks, paying less attention to those who have unconventional or dissonant views. This form of epistemic injustice is collectively structured and relates to instances of unmet needs of understanding. It is worth highlighting that in Fricker's (2007) conceptualisations of hermeneutical injustice, it arises when one's social experience is obscured, however, no individual agent is at fault for its occurrence. A

consequence of this is hermeneutical marginalisation in which one's socioeconomic background has put full hermeneutical participation largely out of reach. This marginalisation can also be an effect of identity power where prevailing prejudicial stereotypes portray certain knowers as deficient or less-than in some respect. Hermeneutical injustice can lead to the radical suppression of one's voice, interpretive capacities, and critical faculties. This suppression weakens the exchange value and evidential weight others affix to a given person's situated experience. The result is likely to be a detrimental effect on one's status within collective meaning-sharing practices.

The idea of hermeneutic justice is closely linked to the notion of epistemicide, which is the destruction of "Other" forms of knowledge. The concept was introduced by Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos in the General Introduction to the multi-volume project *Reinventing Social Emancipation. Toward New Manifestos* (2005), to describe one of the more pernicious effects of globalisation upon developing countries. Santos (2005) labelled epistemicide as the destruction of the knowledges and cultures of marginalised populations, of their memories and ancestral links and their manner of relating to others and to nature. The manner in which a particular culture formulates its knowledge is intricately bound up with the very identity of its people, their way of making sense of the world and the value system that holds that worldview in place (Bennett, 2007). Unequal exchanges among cultures leads to the death of the knowledge of the subordinated culture, and even the death of the social groups that possessed this knowledge.

In the discourse on epistemologies of the South, epistemicide is traced back to the colonial period and the violence enacted on people, indigenous knowledges and the natural world. The building of colonial empires implied the export to the colonies of the ways of living of the so-called "civilised," a process that persists today, disguised as aid to the poor and underdeveloped (de Sousa Santos, et al., 2007). Colonialism, devised as an epistemic concept during imperialism, is still a synonym of the impoverishment of "local" knowledge in so far as it promotes the ghettoisation of those knowledges and the obliteration of other forms of knowing, that is, of producing and passing on experiences. In relation to colonialism, the concept of epistemicide is utilised to refer to the multiple "creative destructions," often carried out on behalf of civilising, liberating, or emancipatory projects, which aimed at reducing the understandings of the world to the logic of Western categories and interpretations of the world. Epistemicide describes the conversion of the knowledges of colonised peoples and of the diversity of their cultures and cosmologies to expressions of irrationality, superstition, or, at

best, to practical and local forms of knowledge is dependent on their subordination to modern science, perceived as the sole source of true knowledge (de Sousa Santos, 2004).

Grosfoguel (2013) identifies four epistemicides of the long 16th century that involve dispossessing people from ownership of their ideas in the new medieval universities, which brought ecclesiastical power to those institutions. The four epistemicides are: (1) the conquest of Al-Andalus the Muslim ruled area of the Iberian Peninsula, and the expulsion of Muslims and Jews from Europe, (2) the conquest of the indigenous Peoples of the Americas started by the Spanish, continued by the French and the English still underway today, (3) the creation of the slave trade that resulted in millions being killed in Africa and at sea, and more being totally dehumanised by enslavement in the Americas and (4) the killing of millions of Indo-European women, mostly through burning at the stake as witches because their knowledge practices were not controlled by men. Grosfoguel (2013, p. 73) argues that these four conquests transformed Europe in particular from being at the periphery of an earlier dominant Islamic centre of intellectual power to being centre stage. These conquests were both military and epistemological/ ideological (Hall & Tandon, 2017), and gave the global North the capacity to impose its knowledge and ignorance criteria on the rest of the world.

The production of the West as hegemonic knowledge required the creation of an Other, constituted as an intrinsically disqualified being, a collection characteristics that were markers of inferiority towards the power and knowledge of the West and, thus, available for use and appropriation of the latter (de Sousa Santos, et al., 2007). As a consequence, the plural landscape of knowledges existing in the world was rapidly overshadowed by the rise of modern science – a means of adjudicating supremacy and unicity. Many alternative forms of knowledge were destroyed and the social groups that relied on them to pursue their own and autonomous paths of development were humiliated, all in the name of modern science (de Sousa Santos, 2004). It is increasingly recognised that current scientific knowledge imposes as the only true or adequate interpretation of reality a worldview conceived as global explanation of the world, thereby eliminating the possibility of a complementarity of knowledges. Scientific knowledge represents a form of globalised localism which gives rise to a monoculture of knowledge. It can be argued that the notion of epistemicide arises from the questioning of this hegemonic conception of modern scientific knowledge and starts from the premise that the epistemological diversity of the world is immense, as immense as its cultural diversity.

Epistemicide therefore stems from a single view, which is what best characterises modern science and its epistemological break with alternative knowledges, because the other side of a single view is the incapacity to recognise alternative views. The single worldview comes from the inability to recognise the plural systems of knowledges, alternative to modern science or entering into articulations with the latter and creating new configurations of knowledges. Within the context of contemporary interactions between modern science and other "local" knowledges, the latter are regarded as valid only when they serve the projects of modernity. Until recently, social scientists did not recognise local forms of knowledge as being central to the process of development, nor were forms of so-called "lay" knowledge or experience regarded, in the North, as relevant sources and resources for the construction of epistemically and socially "robust" configurations of scientific knowledge (de Sousa Santos, 2004).

Epistemicide, as the systematic destruction of rival forms of knowledge, is at its worst nothing less than symbolic genocide (Bennett, 2007), and in the current context can work in number of ways. Knowledges that are grounded on an ideology that is radically different from the dominant one (as in the case of many of the Third World Knowledges that Santos foregrounds) will by and large be silenced completely. They will be starved of funding, if the hegemonic power controls that aspect; they will remain unpublished, since their very form will be unrecognisable to the editors of journals and textbooks; and they are unable to be taught in schools and universities, thus ensuring their rapid decline into oblivion (Bennett, 2007, p. 154). Knowledges that are not so distant as to warrant automatic annihilation, having some historical or cultural overlap with the dominant one, are instead bullied or cajoled into an acceptable shape (Bennett, 2007, p. 155).

The destruction of knowledge is not an epistemological artefact without consequences, it involves the destruction of the social practices and the disqualification of the social agents that operate according to such knowledges. Social practices are knowledge practices, but they can only be recognised as such to the extent that they are the mirror image of scientific knowledge. Whatever knowledge does not fit the image is discarded as a form of ignorance. The epistemological privilege that modern science grants to itself is thus the result of the destruction of all alternative knowledges that could eventually question such privilege. It is, in other words, a product of epistemicide. In the most extreme cases, such as that of European expansion, epistemicide was one of the conditions of genocide. The loss of epistemological confidence that currently afflicts modern science has facilitated the identification of the scope and gravity of the epistemicides perpetrated by hegemonic Eurocentric modernity.

The arguments against epistemicide are rooted in the idea that different human communities produce diverse forms of viewing and dividing up the world, which do not necessarily conform to Eurocentric distinctions. Acknowledging diverse forms of viewing and dividing up the world is important because all knowledge is situated and socially constructed. The goal is to construct knowledge without grounding it on any absolute principle. The stance is anti-relativistic because even from the point of view of social emancipation an absence of criteria for hierarchies of validities among different forms of knowledge, is an untenable position. If anything is equally valid as knowledge, all projects, of social emancipation are equally valid or, which amounts to the same, equally invalid (de Sousa Santos, 2004). The merit or the validity of the different knowledges and conceptions must obviously be assessed, but not on the basis of the mere disqualification of some.

2.3 Personal and Professional Biography

According to Mills (1958, p.196), "you must learn to use your life experience in your intellectual work: continually to examine it and interpret it. In this craftsmanship is the centre of yourself and you are personally involved in every intellectual product upon which you work". Life experiences are, of course, relational and situated at the intersection of structure, culture and agency (Brah, 1996). For instance, for some students, university can be a constructive and worthwhile experience. However, the university classroom is the first place I came face-to-face with alienation, marginalisation and feeling like a mind and body out of place. As a lecturer, it was also the first place I truly understood what it means to hold what Collins (1986, p.2) has termed an "outsider-within status" – a position in which one exists at the margins of white society.

I completed my undergraduate degree at a historically white university, with majors in industrial sociology and organisational psychology. I spent the first three years of university feeling like I was occupying a space that was not for me, like a visitor who never quite "felt at home" despite the warm welcome. While this was true both inside and outside the classroom, the classroom experience was particularly complicated. Outside the classroom I was able to form bonds with students who either looked like me (Black and/or female) or had similar backgrounds to mine (working class and/or rural) and were therefore going through similar challenges. In the classroom, however, I struggled to see myself or people that looked like me in the individuals who taught me and the knowledge that was selected for dissemination. This classroom experience was particularly alienating.

Reflecting on the meaning of alienation, Seeman (1952) identifies five variations: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement. Powerlessness refers to alienation in the Marxian view, where there is an inability to shape one's life course. The second, meaninglessness, refers to an individual lacking engagement with that in which he or she is engaged (Seeman, 1959). Normlessness is derived from Durkheim's (1897) description of anomie, a breakdown of standards and values resulting from a lack of ideals. Isolation denotes a state in which a person feels that they are not meaningfully connected to their community through shared beliefs and practices. Self-estrangement stems from isolation and refers to the denial of personal interests in order to satisfy demands and desires placed by others or social norms (Seeman, 1959).

This account of alienation provided by Seeman (1952) aptly describes my experience of being epistemically alienated as an undergraduate. Much of this alienation was the result of theories, concepts and methods which did not mirror my social identity, context or culture. In my first three years at university, I never once consulted with any of my lecturers, seldom raised a hand in class or during tutorials, and never questioned a mark on a test or an essay. This lack of active participation in my education stemmed from having my experiences underrepresented in and at times excluded from the collective pool of knowledge. I was estranged from the classroom context, powerless, and found the content disseminated in the classroom purposeless. This content neither reflected my experiences or my particular context, nor was there any effort to accommodate this experience or context.

As a student, the barrier to accessing powerful disciplinary knowledge had to do with the dissemination of "white male knowledge", because it either reflected the cultural heritage of white males or served mainly their interests. In Foucauldian terms, white knowledge, connected to European "universal" knowledge, has become a "totalising discourse" that has silenced and marginalised knowledge from other contexts (National Education Policy Investigation, 1996). The vast majority of students in South African higher education who are in the humanities and social sciences receive this white European cultural knowledge, which in most cases contributes to alienation and separation. The problem is thus not the colour of knowledge, but also the gender bias of the knowledge (NEPI, 1996, p. 6). My encounter with this kind of disciplinary knowledge left me feeling excluded, thus reinforcing my marginal status, stripped me of my agency, and forced me to constantly doubt my academic capabilities. This led to the suppression of my voice and collective meaning-making and sharing within the classroom context.

Witnessing white students or Black students from affluent backgrounds easily engage with lecturers and course content reinforced the feeling of being in a space not meant for me. These students were often given more epistemic credit as they had a good grasp of perspectives. On a testimonial level, these students received more praise and encouragement as a result of being members of an epistemically privileged group. On the hermeneutic level, institutional culture and language gave more credence to such students' perspectives while failing to comprehend the perspectives of less privileged students like myself. Dominant institutional culture privileged Western epistemologies, leaving less privileged students who were unable to assimilate at an unfair epistemic disadvantage.

Groups of students who were epistemically privileged were in many ways unfairly advantaged as they were able to actively participate in the classroom as a result of having their experiences represented in the collective body of knowledge. My particular experiences, when alluded to, were not well understood because they did not fit concepts known to those who taught me due to the historic exclusion of people like me in scholarship. As a result, my memories of being in the classroom are filled with instances of feeling like I was not being treated equally as a knower as a result of communicative structures that did not take my social background, gender and race into account. The lack of equal treatment of knowers obstructs the optimal circulation and flow of knowledge. It blocks the open-minded, curiosity-driven giving and asking for reasons that should be at the centre of any worthwhile rational inquiry. It also impedes the flow of evidence, doubts, fresh ideas, the epistemic friction of discordant reasons, and any other epistemic inputs conducive to knowledge (Dunne, 2020, p. 6).

As a result of being unable to bring my lived experiences into the classroom, much of my university experience was spent in a state of isolation. I was surrounded by educational practices that lacked inclusivity and feeling like I was surrounded by people who were determined to not hear or see me. The exception was a course I enrolled for in my third year on the sociology of work. The course represented my first classroom encounter with a Black lecturer at university. The significance of the course to my academic career, however, came mostly from what was taught rather than who taught it. The reading list of the course included Jacklyn Cock's *Maids and Madams: Domestic Workers under Apartheid* (1989). The book is both sensational and serious, and although it is titled "Maids and Madams", the book takes a wider look at the institution of domestic service, hence the subtitle "A Study in the Politics of Exploitation". The book documents a study on the institution of domestic work in the Eastern

Cape. The context included areas such as Grahamstown, Port Alfred and the rural area in between.

The course also served as an introduction to the works of Ifi Amadiume and Oyeronke Oyewumi – my first encounter with "African feminism" and first real encounter with Black scholars. I label this encounter as "real" because the works of these scholars was presented as sources of knowledge rather than texts to learn about. Amadiume and Oyewumi have made a significant contribution to gender scholarship, focusing on the ideas of matrifocality and matricentricity (Adesina, 2010). As a student of African descent and a woman from a rural background, the inclusion of these scholars and their scholarly works made me feel seen and my experiences and context included. This encounter with a context familiar to me and with Black female scholars also made me realise what my university education had been lacking was possible.

The suggestion here is not that knowledge be reduced to the interests of knowers, nor standards and criteria for knowledge be limited to the interests of certain social groups. However, I do argue that context and lived experience should be critical in determining which knowledge is relevant and selected for a curriculum. The identity and situatedness of knowers should be taken into account in the selection of curricular knowledge, and doing so in no way results in the reduction of knowledge to the identities of its knowers. This is especially true in the humanities and social sciences where there is no neutral standpoint of epistemic evaluation. Acknowledging the identities of knowers is even more important in historically white universities where Black students continue to feel like outsiders. It is also important to take who the producers of knowledge are into account, as well as the historical and social contexts from which they write. A curriculum that privileges one spatial zone in the globe as the source of knowledge production fails not only in the task of adequately educating students, it creates in most learners a type schizophrenia – particularly in those whose progenitors do not derive from Europe or those who find no value in imperial legacy. It reproduces a form of erasure, in which the non-Western collective memories that such students bring to the classroom are declared as non-knowledge. In South Africa, the task of a curriculum that is fit for post-1994 is to open the space for "diverse ontological narratives", not to insist on "erasure or a Euro-ethnic mono-discourse" (Adesina, 2006, p.144).

2.3.1 Establishing Academic Credentials

The encounter with the South African context and Black feminist scholars was crucial as it moved away from the privileging of epistemology over ontology and reason over affect which is typical of Western thought. Turning the gaze away from Western epistemologies also allowed me to experience scholarship that was not grounded in dualisms. While these can be useful and powerful analytic tools, typical of Western dualisms is the tendency for normative judgements to coalesce around a "good" pole versus a "bad" pole. The result of this is that one of the binaries becomes privileged, foregrounded and normatively valued, while the other is backgrounded and negated (Luckett, 2019). My encounter with the works of Jacklyn Cock, Ifi Amadiume and Oyeronke Oyewumi represented my first experience with scholarship that transcended dominant Western discourses. The encounter challenged the assumption that male European scholars were thinking about the nature of society and its development, and no such thinking took place in peripheral communities or was done by women. The introduction of works from the periphery also highlighted the inadequacy of social scientific concepts and discourse from Western contexts in explaining the state of affairs in my particular context. In the midst of occupying a space where I felt I did not belong, this encounter created a space where, as a Black female student, I could feel both included and seen.

This encounter was influential in my decision to pursue an honours degree in sociology and later a Master of Arts degree in the same discipline. My master's research focused on the neglected scholarly works of activist and academic Ruth Heloise First. This work was intended to valorise the contribution of First to sociology in particular, and to highlight more broadly her often overlooked scholarly contributions. The research was part of a bigger project led by Professor Jimi Adesina known as the Intellectual Heritage Project (IHP), which arose as a result of the erasure of the works of leading (South) African scholars from much of the social science curriculum and intellectual discourses. In this work, I passionately argued for serious engagement with local scholars such as Ruth First, Bernard Magubane and Archie Mafeje. Ironically, these scholars have a strong international reputation but remain neglected in the local context as a result of absent "self-knowledge" and a failure of the "intellectual nerve" (Adesina, 2005).

Upon completing the Master of Arts degree, I enrolled for a doctoral degree and began my academic career as a research intern at a research institute. I am still unclear about the motivation behind registering for the doctoral degree at the time, although I have become much

clearer about why I continued to work on it and remain in academia despite the challenges. As a student I did not see enough faces like mine or hear enough perspectives that went against the mainstream, and as Lorde (1979) puts it:

> Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women; those of who have been forged in the crucibles of difference – those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are Black, who are older – know that survival is not an academic skill. It is learning to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths (Lorde, 1979).

When I began working as a research intern, I was assigned to a research project which focused on several aspects of teacher training. These included working with teachers in the Cofimvaba area in the Eastern Cape to integrate indigenous local knowledge into the Foundation Phase mathematics curriculum. The project also utilised data which had been collected from the first part of the project to train teachers how to make learner-teacher support materials. The materials were developed using computers which were provided by the research team. This work was important to me as it was intended to ensure that the students in the rural area of Cofimvaba received an education that was context-relevant.

The work I did as a researcher, although meaningful, did not depart from the typical instance of Western epistemology applied to the South African context. It did not move away from making Universalist claims and strong boundaries between institutionalised knowledge and other forms of knowledge. Reflecting on these projects, I have come to realise that they focused more on making indigenous and local knowledges similar to Western epistemologies. The work was also not immune to dualistic thinking, which assumes a universe in which there are only two contrasting, mutually exclusive realities or choices. Working on these projects did little to change the feelings of epistemic alienation despite being surrounded by Black women and working in rural contexts.

Following a three-year stint as a researcher and still feeling like academia was not where I belonged and that I was not making real change, I accepted a job as a project manager at a marketing company. This work focused on mobilising communities to become involved in a range of issues related to healthcare. These ranged from medical male circumcision, HIV testing and tuberculosis screening to female reproductive health. At the time it was important to

distance myself from academia. While this work was meaningful and did not feel alienating, it was still not fulfilling, and I resigned after 18 months to take up a position as an associate lecturer. While I had some experience in teacher training, I had no real teaching experience when I took up the job. As a result, I taught, marked or tutored across five different courses from undergraduate to post-graduate level in my first year in an effort to gain experience and familiarise myself with my new context.

In taking up the position of associate lecturer, the perceptions I had developed as a student regarding academia being a white-, Eurocentric- and male-dominated space had not changed. Having been exposed to humanities and social science curricula that privileged Western traditions, values and practices that subsequently subordinated differing cultural qualities as a student, I was disheartened in my first year of teaching when I engaged with students and realised not much had changed in the present context. As result, I spent my first year of lecturing determined to make my students feel seen and heard. This was challenging given the class sizes, which sometimes accommodated over 500 hundred students from diverse backgrounds. Navigating appropriate ways to ensure that students feel seen and heard remains challenging because while I am determined to avert the negation of blackness and of female experiences, I also believe that doing so should not result in the alienation of white or male students.

My experiences as an undergraduate student were filled with unmet expectations about higher education. As a lecturer, I remain determined to right this wrong because as a student, the negation of women, blackness and Black cultural traits led me to image myself as less worthy than students whose experiences were brought into the classroom. As a result of these classroom experiences, I have become committed to teaching that is free of cultural and gender domination and does not propagate degrading racial stereotypes. Cultural domination not only propagates degrading racial stereotypes but also fosters a problematic reliance on the dominant group's views and values (hooks, 1994). Such moves are problematic because they further alienate those who are marginalised.

Occupying historically white universities has been challenging as a student and a lecturer. As a lecturer I have faced a type of double minority status that continues to negatively impact perceptions of me as a less-than-capable educator, researcher and scholar. Black and white students alike continue to be surprised by my presence within the halls of academe. Much of this can be attributed to stereotypical images of Black women which are part of a "general

ideology of domination" (Collins, 2000, p.69). These images and ideas about Black women are often at the centre of not being taken seriously as a speaker or being reduced to the status of sub-knower. It is common that when teachers hail from a less privileged background, they are regarded as less effective as a teacher or are held to irrelevant standards. Being harmed in this capacity as a knower is at its core a form of dehumanisation, and can be damaging. It can lead to the steady destruction of one's voice, identity, self-worth and agency and, with this, the steady erosion of one's capabilities as a situated knower to agitate for change against epistemic wrongs.

Added to this was the experience of facing questions of intelligence, competence and legitimacy. As a result, I was determined to not surrender my identity by not conforming to the status quo or dominant culture. My experience of being an "outsider within" in academia has also been accompanied by issues of invisibility, exclusion, tokenism, physical and emotional burn-out, and lack of respect. These experiences have without a doubt been structured by race, gender and class distinctions. Testimonially speaking, my voice as a Black woman academic is not as heard as my white counterparts, whose experiences and concerns dominate and shape the character of the humanities and social sciences more readily, making it difficult for unfamiliar voices to be heard. The process of exclusion in higher education is difficult to unpack as it is always underscored by these complex dynamics. Who am I teaching? What am I teaching? How am I teaching? Why am I teaching? These are some of the questions I grapple with regularly as a first-time lecturer. While the responses are never straightforward, I do believe that if those who had taught me during my undergraduate years at university had engaged with these questions, I may have had a different university experience.

The students that I teach desire inclusion without the added baggage of assimilation that comes with having to master knowledge that does not take their particular experiences and context into account. This is made even more difficult when the conceptual resources provided as part of this knowledge are difficult to grasp. This does not take away the work required on the part of the students to gain access to the knowledge offered in the university context. Rather we should go beyond broadening access to disciplinary knowledge, as well as questioning the relevance of this knowledge. While social identity alone is indeed insufficient for making knowledge claims, disciplinary knowledge should not maintain untouchable universal status in the classroom. Creating conducive learning environments for marginalised students entails challenging established knowledge structures and systems in higher education. It means challenging everything academia holds dear: who teaches, the knowledges that are being taught, the

teaching and learning approaches used, the spaces in which we teach. Such efforts do not exclude the voices of men and white women. In fact, men and white women have a role to play in challenging the systematic inequalities prevalent in academia.

2.4 Student Engagement with Epistemic Inequality and Exclusion in Higher Education

Given South Africa's colonial and apartheid past, my experiences of epistemic alienation and marginalisation are not unique. The student protests which began at the University of Cape Town in 2015 are indicative of this. Student protests in post-apartheid South Africa are nothing new, particularly at historically Black universities (HBUs). However, these protests have rarely reached the level of public and media attention as the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall protests, which took place in 2015 and 2016 respectively. I want to suggest that there was something distinct about the 2015-2016 protests. This distinctiveness lies in the constructive reminder of the limited degree of epistemological transformation which accompanied the initial demands for free education. More specifically, the #FeesMustFall mobilisation had to do not only with financial exclusion, it also highlighted a much broader failure of post-apartheid higher education to tackle issues of cognitive and epistemic justice. The demands for decolonised curricula in particular reminded us of the colonial nature of the university, including its primarily "Western paradigm of values and cultural climate" (Jogee, Callaghan, & Callaghan, 2018, p. 1).

This "Western paradigm of values and cultural climate" (Jogee, Callaghan, & Callaghan, 2018, p. 1) results in the continuing epistemic harms inflicted on students at South African universities. The emergence of the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements was constructive as it put the issue of epistemological transformation on the national agenda. In relation to the ongoing need for epistemological transformation, the #RhodesMustFall (2015) movement called for a "curriculum which critically centres Africa and the subaltern". Such a curriculum is centred on African discourses, only examining Western traditions insofar as they are relevant to the experiences of students (Rhodes Must Fall, 2015). The #RhodesMustFall movement also highlighted the intersectional nature of experiences of oppression at South African universities, arguing that an intersectional approach to addressing inequalities is critical as it "takes into account that we are not only defined by our blackness, but that some of us are also defined by our gender, our sexuality, our able-bodiedness, our mental health, and our class, among other things" (Rhodes Must Fall, 2015, p. 2).

The demands made by students call for an examination of the ethics and politics of knowledge practices. The appeals for a curriculum that critically centres Africa and marginalised populations points to the need for inclusion, as the absence of the African context and certain groups of the population in higher education curricula highlights epistemic practices that are structured in ways that are simultaneously inappropriate toward certain epistemic values, and unjust with regard to particular knowers. Epistemic injustice in this sense relies on erasure, thus reproducing epistemic inequality.[5] As an ongoing strategy of epistemic injustice, erasure disciplines social actors into taken-for-granted epistemological frameworks. Erasure produces deficiencies in social knowledge that unjustly infringe upon particular knowers. This kind of harm is the result of how the university as an epistemic institution is structured. To create sustainable epistemic justice, these institutions need to be reconstructed.

While it is essential not to homogenise the 2015-2016 protest movements, its emergence is significant and can be traced back to the entry of Black students into the academy following years of marginalisation and exclusion. As descendants of the racially oppressed, enslaved and colonised peoples, their entry was bound to impact on the idea of the university, curriculum, epistemology and pedagogy (Mbembe, 2016). Due to the high concentration of large numbers of students, higher education institutions provide an ideal environment for students who have survived a less-than-stellar schooling system and often have limited socioeconomic opportunities to share their grievances. As Collins (2017) notes, where there is oppression, there is also resistance to oppression.[6] Through protest action, students challenged epistemic oppression which is reflected in the lack of alternative epistemologies, theories, methodologies and questions other than those from the global North.

In the context of this study and calls for epistemic relevance, the student protest movements are significant as they highlight wider experiences of epistemic alienation and marginalisation. The studies conducted (Cini, 2019) on the student movements that emerged during this period reveal that much of this alienation and marginalisation is experienced by Black students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. Those at HWUs recalled experiences of not being able to "locate themselves" and "feeling horrible" in the classroom (Cini, 2019, p. 949). This was tied to epistemic practices that catered to white and middle-class students but were not accommodating of Black students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This particular group of

[5] Unequal access to learning imposed by hidden mechanisms of information capture, production, analysis, and control.
[6] Persistent epistemic exclusion that hinders one's contribution to knowledge production.

students was not only disgruntled because of fee increases but also the subjugation and subordination of blackness. The narratives on decolonisation provided by students highlighted how these experiences of marginalisation were tied to their blackness.

The erasure of particular contexts, identities and experiences in higher education curricula results in a gap in collective interpretive resources within the classroom setting, making it difficult for some students to make sense of their social experiences. This kind of epistemic harm should not be minimised or underestimated, "for the interpretive capacities of expressing oneself and being understood are basic human capacities" (Medina, 2017, p. 41). As Fricker (2007, p.163) put it, this kind of epistemic injustice is sometimes so damaging that it can "cramp the very development of self". I want to suggest that for Black students this can lead to hermeneutical death or the constraint of hermeneutical capacities and capacities such that there is a loss of one's voice and interpretive capacities (Medina, 2017, p. 42). It is therefore not surprising that some students who were part of the 2015-2016 student protests reported feeling systematically silenced and misheard (Cini, 2019) in epistemic institutions.

The inception of social movements often relies heavily on the framing of previous social movements in an attempt to situate their struggles within established discursive frameworks (Hodes, 2016). This inspires both recognition and identification. The 2015-2016 student movements heavily invoked the iconography of anti-apartheid student resistance movements. One of the slogans utilised by the #RhodesMustFall movement read 'We are not looking for our own struggle, we are fighting an old one' and the #FeesMustFall Movement utilised slogans such as '1976 Reloaded' and 'Our parents were sold dreams in 1994, we are just here for the refund'. These were utilised to create a link between the objectives of the past and present student activism and "provided a ready resource base for collective identification" (Hodes, 2016, p. 144)

The objectives of past student movements can be traced back to the emergence in 1968 of the South African Student Organization (SASO) (Biko, 2004). Led by Steve Biko, SASO was made up of students who broke away from the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) and "felt the need for a nationally representative Black student organisation" (Biko, 2004). These students felt that NUSAS failed to act in a radical manner regarding issues that affected Black students and according to Biko (2004, p.5) "not unless the non-white students decide to lift themselves from the doldrums will they ever hope to get out of them." This newly-formed student movement rejected apartheid ideals, including white political dominance

and its result of Black subordination. Parallels can also be drawn between the 2015-2016 student movement and the 1976 youth uprisings which took place in Soweto and were directed at the apartheid education system. During this period, Black students fought against apartheid policies that would ensure that Afrikaans was the medium of instruction. However, just like the 2015-2016 student movement, the 1976 uprisings were also about social and economic transformation and have been described as the tipping point in the struggle for liberation.

I want to suggest that beyond social justice, these student movements have also been seeking a kind of epistemic justice. Fricker (2007, p. 98) characterises epistemic justice as a critical social awareness that is distinctively reflective in its operation, enabling the hearer to identify the forms of identity power structuring a communicative engagement and to adjust her credibility judgements accordingly. Epistemic relevance helps us have better accounts of what we should hold in mind in thinking about epistemic justice. It highlights the importance of experience in how we understand the question of epistemic justice. Experience matters, particularly those experiences that have unjustly been excluded from knowledge projects. The inclusion of experiences of marginalised groups goes a long way toward addressing epistemic marginalisation and alienation. In seeking epistemic and cognitive justice, an account of objectivity and truth that does not discard human perspectives, interests, and experiences is necessary.

The "revolution" called for by students during the events that began in March 2015 was, therefore, neither new nor should it have been surprising. The protests marked the re-entry of South African university students onto the higher education landscape in very visible ways. The #FeesMustFall movement raised concerns about the politics of knowledge production. I locate this failure to contextualise the contents and practice of teaching in higher education in the move by South African universities to embrace the notions of "diversity" and "inclusivity" almost uncritically – these are seen as a moral good in themselves. However, not much goes into exploring how those who enter the university space to represent diversity and inclusivity experience the system which continues to struggle with epistemological transformation.

Epistemic justice is not just about hearing the testimony of others or expanding hermeneutical resources, but also undertaking to dismantle the structures through which we objectify epistemic agents. In this regard, questioning what universities teach is important. The selection of what is taught – what is included in and excluded from the curriculum – has a much deeper significance. In the testimonial sense, teaching the books and scientific, historic and cultural

achievements of students from dominant groups gives more credence to these students and their cultures. Teaching the Western canon makes Western cultural traditions accessible to students; conversely, not teaching other cultural traditions becomes a form of erasure and forecloses students' understanding of other cultural traditions. It is important to pay attention to decisions about the knowledge that is contained in the curriculum because it has the ability to enable and constrain students' understanding of particular social experiences and encourage or inhibit the ability of students from particular cultures to express their particular understanding of the world (Kotzee, 2017).

The notion of epistemic relevance as a means to address epistemic harms in higher education suggests that there are differences in the epistemic orientation of people from different contexts and cultural groups. Epistemic and cognitive justice requires that we actively seek to include more diverse epistemic perspectives within our educational institutions. This should not be equated with cultural diversity. What is of epistemic relevance is the diversity found in belief systems, research methods and methods of inquiry, and research questions and cultures. While applauding the epistemic value of diversity and inclusion, this does not entail accepting incommensurability between different beliefs, questions and methods. Epistemic diversity is useful only if different positions enter into debate thereby unearthing strong and weak questions, claims, methods, and so on, in each other's armouries. For the critique of other positions to be possible, shared epistemic standards are needed.

Epistemic justice does not require that there be epistemic equality between speaker and hearer (Fricker, 2007, p. 19). That some people have epistemic authority over others is unthreatening in itself; it is when our judgements on who is a proper authority in some area become distorted through identity prejudice that injustice occurs (Kotzee, 2017). In the teaching situation epistemic authority is necessary but learners should also be accorded the right amount of receptivity that they deserve to make teaching possible. In speaking about epistemic justice, Fricker (2007, p. 19) holds that a person should not receive too little epistemic credit, nor too much, but just the right amount of credit that is due to them. Epistemic justice requires more than closer engagement with philosophical traditions and ideas from the non-European worlds, but also a difficult form of self-critical reflexivity. This perspective offers not only pluralism and perspective, but also epistemic justice.

2.5 Conclusion

Having attended a historically white university, my first "real" encounter with marginalisation and exclusion was in a university classroom. This was brought on by humanities and social science curricula that pervasively reproduced white people's values and attitudes in social norms and practices. The curricula I encountered tended to overvalue work by Western scholars, and seemed to suggest that such work constitutes the only relevant scholarly discourse. Inclusion and/or exclusion of particular elements in a "canon" both determine and reinforce its worth. For me, the omission of texts pertaining to women, the local context and Black identities brought on a distinctively epistemic type of injustice which reinforced my marginality while reinforcing the supremacy of dominant minority groups.

The mere presence of marginalised and ethnicised bodies in higher education does not signal equality or inclusiveness. Providing white patriarchal institutions with marginalised students does not make these institutions diverse or inclusive, especially in relation to knowledge. While we indeed "want there to be more than one" and "want not to be the one" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 4), it is not enough to state that higher education institutions have become diverse, that numbers and presence are all. The social and political identities of marginalised students combines to create different modes of epistemic injustice. As a result of these intersecting identities, marginalised students continue to feel out of place in academia, an institution where certain experiences and representations of reality are assumed as the norm. Much of this arises from not being white and having a particular socio-economic background, which leaves certain students unable to relate to certain ways of knowing.

Inclusive institutional cultures and transformation in higher education should include epistemic and cognitive justice. The former refers to fair treatment in relation to issues of knowledge, understanding and participation in communicative practices, while the latter is about the recognition of alternative paradigms through facilitating dialogue between knowledges. The transformation efforts must acknowledge that certain groups of students continue to experience an uncharacteristic continuity of some historic experiences of exclusion and marginalisation as a result of knowledge that lacks relevance in an epistemic sense. Such knowledge is often presented to students as though its epistemic standing extends beyond the context and conditions which have given rise to it. Addressing the epistemic dimensions of inequality and exclusion should assist students to bring their lived experiences into the classroom and also set up conditions where they can engage with university knowledge.

Students should be able to experience a sense of value and inclusivity. This does not suggest that “anything goes” as there are confines which suggest adherence to disciplinary epistemic boundaries and knowledge structures. Addressing the epistemic dimensions of inequality and exclusion is not about uncritically embracing objects of knowledge, rather, it is about the construction and inclusion of alternative epistemologies into the mainstream. It is about the inclusion of the perspectives and interests of marginalised groups in the construction of knowledge to ensure that knowledge has epistemic relevance and value. In many ways, this challenges the individualistic nature of traditional epistemology and makes it possible to pay greater attention to supporting students by examining the testimonial bases for their beliefs. Diversifying knowledge as part of the transformation agenda ensures that we move beyond merely adding colour and other markers of diversity.

Chapter Three

Grasping Epistemic Relevance: A Critical Realist Argument

3.1 Introduction

Generating new knowledge is not possible without a clear perspective of how "reality" is constituted and realised (Arvanitide, 2013). As a process, the production of new knowledge never takes place in a philosophical vacuum, and presupposes the adoption of a philosophical position. With this view in mind, the arguments advanced in this thesis are underpinned by critical realist philosophy. In developing these arguments, critical realism (CR) is utilised as a metatheory to guide claims regarding the nature of reality and will overarch other mid-range theories which will be introduced in later parts of the thesis. Aspects of our past and our real selves shape our lens of viewing the world which, in turn, leads us to relate well to a particular metatheory. This argument, drawn from the idea of historicity, views our past as uniquely attached to our being or "self", and has the potential to influence our future choices (Allana & Clark, 2018). The idea of historicity is important here because the arguments I explicate rest on and reflect my past experiences, values and beliefs which have, in turn, influenced my choice of CR as a metatheory.

Critical realism explicates the ontological and epistemological foundations of developing knowledge from a realist standpoint. Roy Bhaskar is often credited as one of the scientists who has given CR a coherent philosophical language (Archer, 1996; Sayer, 1992). As a school of philosophy, CR is presented as a critical application of realism and seeks to explain outcomes – it is an explanatory ontology that explores why certain phenomena occur. Critical realism presents a novel resolution to the problems generated by classical empiricism and rationalism, such as that of induction and reconciling the relativity of scientific knowledge as a social process with realism about its objects.

This chapter is dedicated to making my metatheoretical commitments explicit. My commitment to CR as a metatheory in the arguments that will follow is related to my concern about the conflation of epistemology and ontology in the discourse on the knowledge disseminated at South African universities. My adoption of CR here is not as a research method, but rather as a philosophical position which proposes a view of reality that assists in my conceptualisation and articulation of the notion of epistemic relevance. In the second section, the adoption of CR as a metatheoretical position is justified, followed by an outline of ontology and epistemology from a critical realist point of view. The next section is dedicated to demonstrating how CR serves as

an appropriate philosophical underlabourer in the conceptualisations of epistemic relevance as a curricular and pedagogical principle.

3.2 Metatheory and the Organisation of Knowledge

Metatheory comes from sociology and its purpose is the analysis of theory. It can be described as "the set of assumptions presupposed by any more or less formalised body of assertions" (Ritzer, 1991b, p. 76). Achieving success through metatheoretical work requires connections between the presuppositions that already exist, to show their weaknesses and propose alternatives. Ritzer (1991) has proposed three types of metatheory: metatheorising in order to better understand theory, as a prelude to the production of a new theory, and metatheorising to produce a perspective that overarches some or all of the theory. In this thesis, CR is utilised as a prelude to the development of the idea of epistemological relevance as a curricular and pedagogical principle.

The development of new knowledge inevitably builds on a particular ontology (the way the world thought to be), epistemology (how the world can be known), methodology (research methods to be employed in the world's study) and etiology (which causes make and change the world). Every scholar and researcher is likely to hold to diverse extents those assumptions, thus holding a distinct metatheoretical or philosophical position. Metatheories should not be confused with the substantive theories utilised in empirical research, even though metatheory does influence the relation or adoption of substantive theory (Sousa, 2010). It is worth noting that despite the primacy of metatheory in developing new knowledge, metatheoretical discussions are seldom found in papers or books – the notable exception being those in philosophy.

The relation between metatheory and theory is loose rather than tight and having the "right" metatheory does not necessarily lead one to develop an unchallengeable theory. Metatheorising is often critiqued for resulting in the production of abstract ideas which cannot be translated by others (Ritzer, 1991a, p. 244). To avert this, the metatheorising in this thesis is more self-conscious than unconscious. Metatheorising has also been criticised for being too general and lacking analysis (Hjorland, 1998, p. 620). While this may be true, the use of or reliance on a metatheory does allow for the presentation of all the situations that can be expressed within the logical possibilities of the conceptual apparatus of a theory (Vickery, 1998). In making use of CR, I attempt to avoid incoherent ontological and epistemological assumptions. I believe this to

be important because the arguments that will unfold in this thesis build on a particular ontology and epistemology.

At its root, CR is a contemporary re-application of Kant's dualist method, which divides pure reason from empirical reality (Jefferies, 2011). The term "critical realism" is an elision of the phrases "transcendental realism" and "critical naturalism". For Bhaskar the use of "critical", like "transcendental", suggests affinities with Kant's philosophy, while "realism" indicates differences from it (Bhaskar, 1998). Bhaskar (1998) originally termed his philosophy "Transcendental Realism" to explicitly reflect this Kantian heritage. The original objectives of CR were (i) to re-establish a realist view of being in the ontological domain whilst accepting the relativism of knowledge as socially and historically conditioned in the epistemological domain (Bhaskar, 1979) and (ii) to argue for a critical naturalism in social science (Bhaskar, 1986). In later works, Bhaskar (1989) (iii) developed the idea of explanatory critique as a way of re-uniting facts and values and (iv) generalised the notion of dialectic as an interaction of positive and negative, presence and absence (Bhaskar, 1989).

Critical realism allows us to retain an ontological realism (there is a real world that exists independently of our perceptions, theories and constructions) while accepting a form of epistemological constructivism and relativism (Maxwell, 2011). Thus, there is no possibility of attaining a single, "correct" understanding of the world. This position has achieved widespread acceptance as an alternative to naïve realism and to radical constructivist views that deny any reality apart from our constructions (Sayer, 1992). It is important to note that the acceptance of varying perspectives does not translate to an acceptance of multiple realities in the sense of independent worlds that are socially constructed by different individuals or societies. This is important for the conceptualisation of epistemic relevance, which is not about an alternate reality, but rather about alternative ways of knowing that reality.

Critical realism has been chosen as a metatheoretical position as it offers attractive solutions to the problems associated with both positivist and hermeneutic philosophies of science, particularly in relation to social change, debates on structure and agency and the ontological status of social structures (Pratschke, 2003). As a philosophical theory, positivism recognises only that which can be scientifically verified while hermeneutic philosophies are only concerned with interpretation. Within philosophy, CR involves a switch from epistemology to ontology, and within ontology, a switch from events to mechanisms (Bhaskar, 2013). This is

the core of the critical realist approach which maintains that the world is differentiated, stratified and changing.

Critical realism is useful in this study as it denies that we can possess any "objective" or certain knowledge of the world, and instead accepts the possibility of alternative valid accounts of any phenomenon. From this perspective, all theories about the world are viewed as grounded in a particular perspective and worldview, and all knowledge is partial, incomplete and fallible (Maxwell, 2011). The difference between this perspective and objectivist views is that objectivism claims that there is only one fully correct way in which reality can be divided into objects, properties and relations. Critical realism on the other hand accepts that there can be more than one way of understanding reality in terms of conceptual schemes with different objects and categories of objects (Lakoff, 1987, p. 265). I expand on this idea in the arguments on epistemic plurality presented in Chapter Seven.

3.3 Critical Realist Explanatory Ontology

Ontology is the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature and structure of reality. It focuses on the nature and structure of things per se, independently of any other considerations, and even independently of their actual existence (Guarino, Oberle, & Staab, 2009). It is often utilised as a synonym for "metaphysics" (what comes before physics). In the broader sense, ontology is utilised to refer to the study of what exists (Smith, 2003) and seeks to provide an exhaustive classification of entities in all spheres of being. This classification should be definitive, answering questions such as: what classes of entities are needed for a complete description and explanation of all the things going on in the universe? Ontologically, CR is based on the following basic assumptions: existence of an independent reality; a stratified ontology compromised of structures, mechanisms, events, and experiences; emergent powers dependent upon but not reducible to lower-level powers; and an open systems perspective (Wynn & Williams, 2012).

As a critical realist, Bhaskar (1975) is concerned with "emancipatory social practice". For him the world cannot be changed rationally unless it is interpreted adequately, and this interpretation has as its pre-requisite the philosophical idea of the independent existence of the natural and social world; he extends his ideas from the natural sciences to the social sciences. His critical realism is an elision of two earlier conceptions, one for science (transcendental realism) and one for the human sciences (critical naturalism) (Bhaskar, 1989). Bhaskar (1975) provided a transcendental argument that took the success of the natural sciences as its premise,

arguing that in order for success to be possible, the natural world must have a stratified ontology of causally effective generative mechanisms that operate in open systems and laboratory systems. Transcendental realism was born in the context of vigorous critical activity orientated against the positivist conception of science that has dominated the first two thirds of the 20th century. Bhaskar (1978) offers transcendental realism in direct opposition to an "empiricist realist" position: the former sustains the idea of the independent existence and the action of the causal structures and things investigated and discovered by science, while the latter's valid subject matter is said to be exhausted by atomistic facts about their conjunctions (Bhaskar, 1986). Bhaskar (2008, p. 34) uses a transcendental argument to show that a constant conjunction is not necessary. These ontological conclusions are extended by Bhaskar (1975) to the social realm while insisting on the specificities of social structures.

Bhaskar's philosophy of human science is known as "critical naturalism": an idea of the human sciences which sustains the idea of explanatory critique of specific structural sources of determination and their emancipatory critique (Corson, 1991). Social actors are generally able to coordinate and plan their behaviour and to act in socially appropriate and meaningful ways, and this entails the existence of relatively stable and enduring structures. On the possibility of critical naturalism, Bhaskar (1979) argued that the social sciences can be "sciences" in exactly the same sense as the natural sciences, but in ways which are as different (and specific) as their objects. In proposing this view, Bhaskar (1979) attempted to resolve the dualisms prevalent in social science, namely, structure and agency, collectivism and individualism, reification and voluntarism, causes and reason, body and mind, facts and values. For the empiricist, that which cannot be experienced cannot be. For the conventionalist, limitations of our *knowledge* of being are viewed as limitations on being itself (Mingers, 2000, p. 1260). In contrast, critical realists assert the primacy of ontology, arguing that there is a reality and it is possible to know. Developing this knowledge requires that we understand that reality is structured, differentiated, stratified and subject to all kinds of historical and other influences (Bhaskar, 1978).

3.3.1 Entities and Emergence: Diversity and Potential Exercise of Powers

Objects or entities provide the basic theoretical building blocks for critical realist explanation and can be such things as organisations, people, relationships, attitudes, ideas, and so on. They can be human, social or material, complex or simple, structured or unstructured. The notion of entities stands in contrast to the idea of variables, which dominates much of social research traditions. Each entity has a peculiar nature, exhibiting a set of structural properties that are, in

general, interlinked. Entities are the things which make a difference in their own right, rather than as mere sums of their parts, and will usually be structured. Structure is "…a set of internally related objects or practices" (Sayer, 1992). Structures are nested within structures. For example, entities can be organisations that have departmental structures and relations within them.

There are two kinds of relationships among entities: "necessary" and "contingent". Sayer (1992, p. 89) argued that "the relation between a slave and a master is necessary, in that the object is dependent on its relation to the other; a person cannot be a slave without a master and vice versa." Necessary relations are not tautologies but derive directly from the nature of the bodies involved. The relation between entities and the events they cause will usually be a rich and varied one. Thus, the elements of the relation are not simply given by the mutual definition. Entities are defined in terms of their necessary relations; for complex entities there may be any number of relations that define both it and the other entities to which it is related (Easton, 2009, p. 120).

Necessary relations are not inevitably rigid though changes in one entity will lead to changes in the other. Necessary relations do not have to be particularly important since this depends on the nature and objectives of the research being conducted (Easton, 2010, p. 21). Research builds up theories that comprise a number of concepts that refer to particular entities and specify the relations among them to create a theory or theoretical framework. In doing so, we are relying on the relations among entities to hold the whole system together. The definitions therefore become referential and interdependent. A contingent relation occurs when "it is neither necessary nor impossible that they stand in any particular relation" (Sayer, 1992, p. 89). This distinction recognises that entities can have some relations (necessary) that will affect one another and some (contingent) that may affect one another. Contingent relations are different from necessary relations in the nature of those relations: "… the contingently related conditions are never inert, but are themselves the product of causal processes and have their own causal powers and liabilities" (Sayer, 1992, p. 140).

Entities have causal powers and liabilities. According to Sayer (1992, p. 104), "to ask for the cause of something is to ask 'what makes it happen', what 'produces', 'generates', 'creates', or 'determines' it, or more weakly, what 'enables' or 'leads to' it." Entities may be analysed at a number of different levels of accumulation. A crucial critical realist assumption concerns the existence of emergence in such situations. The properties of entities at a higher level of

aggregation are not necessarily understood through a summative process or, working from the top down, a reductionist approach (Denmark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen, & Karlsson, 2002). They emerge from those of the lower level but are not easily derived from them. In choosing a level of analysis, one accepts that ready access to other levels is not necessarily easy. Emergence must always involve some element of connectedness. For example, the social world is only understood through the connections between the people that comprise a society, not by studying the individuals in isolation. Entities are independent from, and irreducible to, the components of which they are comprised (Archer, 1996). The properties of a given structure *emerge* from the interactions between the components themselves and their causal powers, but do not enable the structure to be defined simply by identifying the characteristics of the components. This is particularly applicable in social structures and phenomena. Explanations of social phenomena depend on an account of how the properties and powers of the "people" causally intertwine, and not on focusing on the individuals in isolation (Wynn & Williams, 2012).

3.3.2 Causal Mechanisms and Configurations in the World

The most fundamental aim of CR is explanation: answers to the question "what caused those events to happen?" Critical realists argue that there should always be competing explanations since different interpretations of the data are necessary to ensure that the best current interpretation is made. There should also be room for revision through the normal processes of academic presentation and critique (Easton, 2010). *Causality* refers to the relationship between an action or thing (cause) and the outcome (effect) it generates (Wynn & Williams, 2012). Our ability to explain a given phenomenon requires the identification of the factors and relationships which cause it to occur. A causal explanation is one that identifies entities and the mechanisms that connect them and combine to cause events to occur.

Mechanism refers to "the ways of acting things" (Bhaskar, 1978, p. 14) and is at the heart of causal explanation but also generates a constant source of debate. The term "mechanism", according to Easton (2009, p. 122), has problematic implications since it infers clear structure and invariance in operation, something that critical realists would discard. The term, however, has been entrenched in the CR community and so Easton (2009) warns that it should be used with restraint and should not be taken literally. The simplest way of regarding mechanisms is that they are ways in which structures, by means of their powers and liabilities, act and cause particular events.

When activated, particular mechanisms produce effects in conjunctures, which may be unique. According to conditions, the same mechanism may sometimes produce different events and, conversely, the same type of event may have different causes (Sayer, 1992, p. 116). Causal powers are not exclusively the properties of structures: social agents also have causal powers which affect the actual. The view of causality therefore is not a constant conjunction view according to which a causal relation between *x* and *y* entails a regular (and in principle predictable) relation such that where *x* appears *y* will appear. On the contrary, the production of such constant conjunctions requires human intervention, notably in the form of experiments (which are generally more possible in the natural than in the social sciences).

In making use of CR, researchers attempt to "explain" a phenomenon by hypothesising a relationship between conceptual entities. A primary objective of CR-based research is to provide clear, concise and empirically supported statements about causation, specifically how and why a phenomenon occurred (Wynn & Williams, 2012). We can ascribe causality "if and only if it is the case that some event (E) would not have occurred, under the conditions that actually prevailed but for (the operation of) X" (Bhaskar, 1998, p. 101). Critical realism shifts the focus of causality to explicitly describing causality by detailing the means or processes by which events are generated by structures, actions and contextual conditions.

Social structures are central to the realist analysis of causation and can be understood as sets of internally related objects or practices existing at a range of levels (Sayer, 1992). They include not only big social objects but also small objects at the interpersonal and personal levels (e.g., conceptual structures) and even smaller non-social ones at the neurological levels (Sayer, 1992, p. 92). Unlike many natural structures, social structures are only relatively enduring and are dependent on human actors to reproduce them; people can also affect their transformation (Fitzpatrick, 2005). Structures constrain and enable human actions, with some people having more options allowed to them by structures than others.

Mechanisms are at the centre of critical realist methodology, and at a more detailed methodological level, the understanding of mechanisms can prove to be more challenging. One reason for this is that typically mechanisms are unobservable. Currently there is no shared body of knowledge on the identification of mechanisms, although some have argued that retroduction or abduction could qualify as a possible technique. *Retroduction* is a mode of inference in which events are explained by postulating and identifying mechanisms which are capable of producing them (Sayer, 1992, p. 107). The concept of *emergence* is central in the manner in

which mechanisms function. It is often a combination of objects that will trigger a mechanism, and produce an outcome that is dependent on, but not reducible to, the objects (Bystad & Munkvold, 2011). Whether the mechanism will be triggered, and the result it produces, is not predestined, but will depend on other active mechanisms. It will, however, have a tendency to produce certain outcomes. Identifying the structural components of a mechanism is key to understanding how these components interact in order to produce the emergent outcome (Bystad & Munkvold, 2011). Then we need to identify and analyse the outcome tendency, which should be followed by an identification of context.

3.3.3 World's Stratification: The Real, Actual and Empirical

Realism is the claim that there is a real world, including a real social world, which exists independently of our knowledge about it. Critical realists argue that the natural and social worlds differ in that the latter but not the former is dependent on human action for its existence — it is socially constructed. The social world is pre-constructed for any human being, and its socially constructed nature does not preclude there being aspects of it which human beings have no or limited knowledge of (Fairclough, 1995). Critical realism acknowledges that social phenomena are intrinsically meaningful, and hence that meaning is not only externally descriptive of them but constitutive of them. Meaning has to be understood, it cannot be measured or counted, and hence there is always an interpretative element in social science (Sayer, 2000, p. 17).

From this perspective, human knowledge captures only a small part of a deeper and vaster reality. Critical realism treats the world as theory-laden, but not theory determined. Critical realists can gain knowledge in terms of theories, which in turn can be more or less truth-like (Denmark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen, & Karlsson, 2002). Theories that help us identify causal mechanisms driving social events, activities, or phenomena are selected and formed using rational judgement of these social events. The focus on explanation and causal analysis instead of engaging in thick empirical description of a given context makes CR useful in analysing social problems and suggesting solutions for social change.

Critical realism sees reality and our knowledge of reality operating in two different dimensions. Bhaskar (1978) labels these the *intransitive* and *transitive* dimensions of reality. The i*ntransitive* is that which can be said to exist, the objects of knowledge, and includes the things we study, such as social phenomena. The theories, discourses and resources of knowledge are part of its transitive dimension, though they can be treated as objects of study as they are part of

the social world. Understood this way, the *transitive* refers to the way in which we refer to our knowledge of the *intransitive* (Bhaskar, 1998). Rival theories and sciences have different transitive objects (theories about the world); the world they are about – which exists in the intransitive dimension – is the same; hence the rivalry (Sayer, 2000, p. 11). Events at the *intransitive* domain would exist whether or not they were observed and there is therefore a domain of actual events, only a subset of which are perceived and become empirical experiences. That which is not experienced is not known but that does not mean to say that it does not exist. So, when theories change, it does not mean that what they are about (intransitive dimension) necessarily changes too. Critical realism highlights the complicated nature of the social world, which is socially constructed and includes knowledge itself, and therefore cannot be said to exist independently of at least some knowledge.

Bhaskar (1998, p. 41) argued that reality is both *intransitive* (existing independently of humans) and stratified. In proposing these dimensions, Bhaskar (1978) suggested that CR has a stratified rather than flat ontology, like other ontologies which are populated by either the actual or the empirical, or a conflation of the two. This has major epistemological implications because a stratified rather than flat ontology sees processes or events and structures as different strata of social reality with different properties. This implies that the world should not be conflated with our experience of it and that it is misleading to speak of the "empirical world" (Bhaskar, 1975). This distinction separates CR from empirical realism, equivalent to empiricism which identifies the real with what we can experience. Critical realism is also distinct from literary realism which ignores the conceptually-mediated or theory-laden character of experience (Sayer, 2000).

Critical realism distinguishes not only between the world and our experience of it, but also argues that stratification exists between structures and mechanisms, the events that they generate, and the subset of events that are actually experienced (Bhaskar, 1978). These are known as the domains of the *empirical*, the *actual* and the *real*. The empirical level is the realm of events as we experience them and at this level, events or objects can be measured empirically and often explained through common sense. Events at this level are, however, mediated through the filter of human experience. This is the transitive level of reality, where social ideas, meanings, actions and decisions occur. In the domain of the *actual*, events happen whether or not they are experienced or interpreted by humans, and these occurrences are often different from what is observed at the empirical level. The actual does not in any way reflect the real: the extent to which and ways in which the particular causal powers are activated to affect actual

events is contingent on the complex interaction of different structures and causal powers in the causing of events.

The following table developed by Bhaskar (1978) illuminates this differentiation:

	Real	Actual	Empirical
Mechanisms	√		
Events	√	√	
Experiences	√	√	√

Table 1*: The real are the causal mechanisms and structures that produce actual events a subset of which is then empirically observed* (Klein, 2004, p. 131).

The notion of "the real" highlights two things. First, it is whatever exists and can be natural or social, regardless of whether we have adequate understanding of it. Secondly, the real is the realm of objects, their structures and powers. Objects have certain structures and causal powers, they have the capacity to behave in particular ways, and causal liabilities or passive powers, that is, specific susceptibilities to certain kinds of change. Critical realism therefore seeks to identify both necessity and possibility or potential in the world – "what things must go together, and what could happen, given the nature of objects" (Sayer, 2000, p. 11). Whereas the real refers to the structures and powers of objects, the actual refers to what happens if and when those powers are activated, what they do and what happens when they do. The empirical is the domain of experience, and this can refer to either the real or the actual, though it is contingent on whether we know the real or the actual. While we may be able to observe things as well as what happens when they act, some structures may not be observable. As a result, critical realists also accept a causal criterion for making claims about what exists.

Mechanisms are inherent to physical and social structures, enabling or limiting what can take place in a given context (Sayer, 2000). Mechanisms can be conceptualised as either causal powers or tendencies with the dispositions, capacities and potentials to do certain things, but not others. Entities typically possess an ensemble of powers, which may or may not be enacted in a given context to generate the events manifest as empirical experiences (Wynn & Williams, 2012). An *event* is defined as a specific happening or action resulting from the enactment of one or more mechanisms. From the critical realist perspective, events are ontologically distinct from the structures and mechanisms that generate them (Bhaskar, 1975). While events are the result of the enactment of causal powers or tendencies emanating from a structure, it is possible that

no change occurs because of the counteracting effects of other mechanisms. Experiences are those events that we are able to directly observe, often through our sensory perceptions or via sensory-enhancing tools. Consistent with the assumptions of an independent and stratified reality, CR recognises that experiences are only a subset of the actual events generated in a given context. With real-life situations, direct observation of events is rarely possible.

A crucial implication of critical realist ontology is the recognition of the possibility that causal powers may exist unexercised, and hence that "what has happened or been known to have happened does not exhaust what could happen or have happened" (Sayer, 2000, p. 13). The nature of the real objects present at any given time constrains and enables what can happen but does not determine what will happen (Bhaskar, 2013). Realist ontology makes it possible to understand how we could be or become many things which we may not be.

3.4 Critical Realist Epistemology

Ontology is the overriding metatheoretical dimension that strongly influences epistemological assumptions, which are concerned with the notion of what counts as acceptable truth by specifying the source, characteristics and assessment of truth claims (Wynn & Williams, 2012). Epistemological assumptions determine how to acquire and develop knowledge claims, and how to evaluate the truth and validity of these claims. The nature and form of knowledge claims made from the CR perspective are derived from specific epistemological assumptions linked to the ontological premises of CR discussed in the previous section. In this section, the epistemological assumptions of CR are discussed. These include mediated knowledge, explanation or understanding, explanation by mechanisms, unobservability of mechanisms and multiple possible mechanisms (Bhaskar, 1975).

The nature and form of knowledge claims made from the CR perspective are focused on specifying and describing those elements of reality which must exist in order for the events and experiences under examination to have occurred. The relation between objects and subjects is contingent, for objects exist regardless of any inquiry made on the former by subjects (Sousa, 2010). Contingency notwithstanding, the world is "concept-dependent" for one can know it at length through available discourses. This access to the world, however, is partial and mediated. From the CR perspective, we cannot gain access to the world independently of the concepts we use. One cannot step outside discourse to understand the world – the social world for the most part is "concept-dependent". Social entities and events depend strongly on what they mean to humans, and as a result meaning is constitutive of the social world (Bhaskar, 1986).

From the critical realist perspective, the world is made up of more than discourse, despite claims from most postmodernists. For critical realists this is true because the independent nature of entities applies to even those which are socially produced, such as concepts, theories and models. These tend to have remarkable independence from what is said or thought about them by scholars and researchers. Although arguing that this mind-independent existence applies to both the natural and social worlds, critical realists do, however, recognise that the social world is in part socially constructed. While human agency is required for the existence of the world, this does not mean that it is the outcome of discursive human activities (Sousa, 2010, p. 484). Taking into account that the world does not change just because discourse or knowledge changes, critical realists accept a rather "weak" version of social constructivism.

The traditional epistemological line was to detach knowledge from its social context by grounding it in unmediated sense-data organised by propositional logic. From the perspective of this traditional epistemological line (e.g., in logical positivism), knowledge could not be "social". Social constructivism, on the other hand, grounds knowledge within the social and historical conditions of those constructing the knowledge. This moves away from foundationalism, which argues that knowledge is socially and historically decontextualised, and presents knowledge as absolute and universal. Knowledge understood this way is frequently presented as the "hegemonic" discourse and results in marginalisation or subjugation of other points of view such as those of Black people, women or non-Westerners. Social constructionism recognises that decontextualised, objective knowledge is unobtainable because all knowledge is socially constructed and inevitably reflects the historical conditions under which it is constructed (Moor, 2013). In short, the constructionism approach declares that "official" educational knowledge is no more than a representation of the standpoints and interests of the dominant groups.

Constructionism, while useful, is *reductive* in the sense that it attempts to account for knowledge by tracing it back to its point of origin in social relations of power, and it is also *subjectivist* in that it grounds knowledge in the experience of those held to be producing knowledge (Moor, 2013, p. 340). Adopting this position in relation to enacting epistemic change can present the problem in a simplified form. Critical realist epistemology partially accepts the social constructionism argument because of this simplified nature and attempts rather to articulate a philosophical position which makes it possible to differentiate between forms of knowledge, and for deciding that some are better than others. Critical realism is *emergent* and *objectivist.* Knowledge is located within enduring socio-cognitive networks, but

these networks are also seen as modes of symbolic production realised through "collective procedures for the independent evaluation of knowledge claims" (Moor, 2013, p. 340).

3.4.1 Knowledge, Practice and the Social World

The version of social constructivism accepted by critical realists is weak because from the critical realist perspective the social world is only in part a deliberate construction of humankind. It is usually not in accord with what human constructors would want the world to be in the first place (Sayer, 2000). Once created, concepts and theories gain an increasing independence from original founders and scholars who are responsible for their reproduction over time. The influence of human knowledge on the world is both potential and mediate, because that influence can never be effected, and frequently occurs in the long term. Knowledge is neither powerless nor all-powerful. It is potentially causal, that is, capable of changing the world, but contrary to postmodernist views, knowledge alone does not completely change the world (Sousa, 2010).

The world is understood by observing, experimenting, and most importantly, practically intervening. Knowledge is therefore a combination of practical intervention in the world and human interaction and communication (Sayer, 1992). The relation between the world and knowledge is not one of "correspondence" or "mirroring", thus involving the pursuit of absolute truth (Bhaskar, 1979). This relation is interactive and characterised by a certain level of "practical adequacy", in that it does more than describe the world, it also guides practice within it. Although CR accepts a certain level of epistemic relativism, it rejects judgemental relativism by which knowledge is completely internal to paradigms and without any ability to judge between competing perspectives.

Epistemic relativism has a number of variants, but it is commonly understood as an opposition to epistemic foundationalism (Scott, 2010). It is the recognition that all knowledge is humanly produced and reflects the conditions under which it is produced. Unlike social constructionism, CR sees this in terms of emergent properties rather than through a reduction to experience and individual subjectivity. According to critical realists, knowledge creation is a form of production in the sense that new meanings are constructed from and transform existing meanings within modes of symbolic production that are extensive in time and space, and which have their own irreducible qualities (Moor, 2013). From the position of CR, knowledge is doubly social in that it is socially and historically located as social constructionism claims. However, it is also socially grounded in "relatively autonomous modes of symbolic production

that have their own logics and capacities which are not simply continuous with individual experience" (Moor, 2013, p. 345).

3.4.2 Multiplicity and Fallibility of Knowledge

Critical realism fosters theoretical pluralism, acknowledging that human beings develop multiple and even contradictory accounts of a "single" world, which are always open to challenge. In the argument for epistemic relevance that I will attempt to make in this thesis, I am mostly drawn to the manner in which critical realists foster and acknowledge epistemic pluralism. Humans develop multiple and unevenly practically adequate accounts of a "single world, with all those accounts remaining open to challenge. This view challenges the idea of indisputable knowledge because from the CR perspective all knowledge is fallible even if not equally so. Treating all knowledge as equally fallible would be a mistake as dangerous as that of treating all knowledge as equally true. Critical realism challenges foundationalism and taken-for-grantedness because the fallibility of knowledge is what lends weight to realist conviction (Sousa, 2010). The relative fallibility of knowledge is not recognised by positivists who privilege scientific knowledge over everyday knowledge.

Although robust, the knowledge developed from a critical realist perspective is always tentative. Science aims to develop an increasingly practically adequate knowledge of the world. Science is in part a social activity as scientific knowledge is to some extent socially constructed, being affected by social relations that scholars establish, develop and maintain among themselves. Scientific knowledge emerges, thrives and endures on the basis of negotiated consensus between those who develop knowledge and users within respective communities. This does not imply that scholars' and researchers' interrelations are the unique or primary determinants in the development and evaluation of scientific knowledge (Sousa, 2010, p. 490).

Critical realists argue that all human knowledge is partly a social construction; it is always situated, bearing the marks of its social origins and modelled by the social background of knowledge's proponents, adherents and even fiercest contenders. One cannot assume the "context-independence" of knowledge (Sayer, 2000). Moreover, the form of knowledge produced also impacts on content. The "context-dependent" character of knowledge makes reflexivity advisable, particularly with respect to scientific knowledge. Reflexivity denotes all efforts to critically expose the social context in which knowledge is created, developed and assessed.

Arguing that scientific knowledge is situated does not necessarily threaten its objectivity nor does it signal a complete relativist position. It does, however, highlight that knowledge is never value-free; yet "value-ladenness" does not forego the possibility of aiming at objectivity in research and scientific knowledge. According to Sayer (1992), the notions of "objectivity" and "subjectivity" have three meanings: value-neutrality or value-ladenness of knowledge, presence or absence of truth in knowledge, and that knowledge pertains to the nature of objects or what subjects think of those objects. Scientific knowledge is both objective and subjective, for it is developed by subjects about objects of study (the world). Accepting a certain level of epistemic relativism does not mean one has to accept judgemental relativism and thus assume that it is impossible to differentiate between "better" and "worse" knowledge claims.

Instead of judgemental relativism, critical realists propose judgemental rationality as a way of differentiating and judging between knowledge claims. Judgemental rationality is founded on the premise that all knowledge is socially produced. However, there is acknowledgement that some of the ways in which knowledge is produced are more powerful than others in the sense that the knowledge produced is more reliable by virtue of how it is produced (Moor, 2013). Such a distinction is important given that enacting epistemic change and ensuring epistemic relevance in the humanities and social sciences does not necessitate abandoning epistemic boundaries in these fields. The idea of reliability complements that of fallibility, which is the understanding that all knowledge is fallible because it is open to critique and revision and therefore never certain. Through revision and critique, we are able to assert that some knowledge has been arrived at in ways in which we can be demonstratively more confident in what we believe. This is the core of judgemental rationality.

3.4.3 The Epistemic Fallacy

Epistemologically, Bhaskar (2013) emphasises the need to avoid epistemic fallacy, meaning the tendency to conflate being with knowledge of being. This is often described as Bhaskar's main weapon against postmodern scepticism. However, the idea of the epistemic fallacy was originally formulated as a critique of positivists who ruled out reference to objects that could not be observed, including, for instance, moral values and mental states. Earlier versions therefore concern positivist epistemology. The epistemic fallacy occurs through trying to answer concerns about being with an answer about our knowledge of it, which is epistemology. In this regard, critical realists argue that questions about the existence of objects are not the

same as questioning whether we know these objects exist. Collier (1994, pp. 76-77) presents the table below to demonstrate a few ways in which epistemic fallacy may be manifested.

Version	Ontological Questions	Epistemological Questions
1. Existence	Whether something exists	Whether we can know it exists
2. Identity	What sort of thing something is	How can we know about its identity?
3. Causality	Whether A has causally ontological primacy over B	Whether knowledge of A is presupposed by knowledge of B
4. Equivalence	Whether A is identical to B	Whether our way of knowing A is identical to our way of knowing B

Table 2: *Collier's Taxonomy in Manifesting Epistemic Fallacy*

The disambiguation of ontology and epistemology has important implications for how we should conceive knowledge in relation to its object of study. Critical realism establishes the world absolutely or relatively independent of our enquiries, and we therefore do not get immediate access to the objects we study. The implication here is that all knowledge endeavours are necessarily epistemically relative, meaning that the nature of knowledge is such that "there is no way of knowing the world except under particular, more or less historically transient descriptions" (Bhaskar, 1998, p. 99). By arguing against the epistemic fallacy, which considers being as knowledge about being, critical realists place the natural world in reality, independent of human thought (Bhaskar, 1998, p. 205). Nature and environment thus exist in the intransitive domain of the real and are not a transitive empirical construction; therefore, they have value in themselves, independent of our human thoughts and beliefs about the natural world.

Acknowledging the transitive and intransitive dimensions in science means that science consists of objects of study (ontic objects) and resources that are utilised to inquire those objects (epistemic resources), and while the latter are likely to change continuously and even radically, the former endure (regardless of the latter's influence) (Sousa, 2010). Science strives to discover the nature of the world (entities' powers, liabilities and tendencies) and thus increase human ability to explain the occurrence of events, and while scholars can develop robust theories, these are always tentative.

3.5 On Epistemology and Relevance

The idea of epistemic relevance suggests that different knowers can have distinct epistemologies, which are also tied to their contexts, cultures and social identities. Our epistemologies – not our use of them – can be inappropriate or irrelevant if they do not take the intersection of context, culture and social identity into account. The proposition is that culture, context and identity have epistemological consequences, that they influence epistemology. One might argue that the notion of relevance in relation to epistemology rests on the use of the concept of epistemology. The broad conceptualisation of epistemology is what is often utilised in the sociology of knowledge, and includes ideas, values, and interpretations. This sense of epistemology suggests that different people have different beliefs and systems of belief to which they appeal in explaining and interpreting reality (Siegel, 2006, p. 4). This notion of epistemology accepts that the factors that give rise to particular beliefs and interpretations of reality include not just "the actuality of what occurred" but also the interpretations of their experiences (Banks, 1993, p. 7).

The sociological sense of the use of epistemology differs from the strict philosophical use which typically takes epistemology to refer to that area of philosophy that takes such theories, and the issues they address, as its subject matter. While the point of which conception of epistemology is more appropriate will not be argued, I do want to suggest that the critical realist approach to epistemology is useful in resolving this tension, and also makes room for both definitions to be equally valid. Accepting the validity of both uses of the concept makes it possible to question the appropriateness of beliefs or belief systems as well as the theories of knowledge. In fact, this distinction is important because it allows us to reflect on the beliefs or belief systems students bring into the classroom as well as the knowledge encountered by students in the classroom context. This in turn has implications for the hypothesis advanced in this thesis, which begins with the assumption that all knowledge is socially constructed and inevitably reflects the historical conditions under which it is constructed. The privileging of Western epistemologies in the humanities and social sciences, in reality, is to privilege a *particular type of knower* (white, male, Western heritage). In the South African context where the majority of knowers are Black, include women and come from various socio-economic backgrounds, this results in a variety of epistemic harms.

To avert this, the historical conditions under which knowledge is constructed must be understood in terms of the particular standpoints of those constructing the knowledge and "of

their particular interests as defined through relations of inequality and power" (Moor, 2013, p. 337). On this basis, in contrast to dominant Western epistemologies where knowledge is viewed as certain and disinterested, epistemic relevance and enacting epistemic change requires that knowledge be viewed as ideological and political and as situated and embodied. From this argument, scientific knowledge is to some extent socially constructed, being affected by social relations that scholars and researchers establish and maintain among themselves (Sousa, 2010). Scientific knowledge also bears the mark of the context from which it arises. These social influences have both an enabling and constraining effect on knowledge, but they do not threaten objectivity, nor do they signal a complete relativist position. They highlight instead the fact that knowledge is never value-neutral because it pertains to the nature of objects or to what subjects think of those objects.

Following the critical realist tradition, my considerations of epistemology and its appropriateness begins from "epistemological relativism". Relativists maintain that knowledge, justification, rationality, epistemic norms and the like are the products of a plurality of conventions and frameworks of assessment and that their authority does not extend beyond the contexts giving rise to them (Carter, 2016). In short, epistemic relativists argue that knowledge, just like other epistemic standings, depends always on context. To this position, and following critical realist tradition, I add judgemental rationality as opposed to judgemental relativism. In doing this, it is possible to be realists about ontology and relativists about epistemology while still adopting criteria for judging which accounts about the world are better or worse. Judgemental rationality is therefore useful for articulating evaluative criteria. This is important because facts are not neutral objects; they are the result of knowledge production. The kind of knowledge I am interested in here is not based solely on experience or empirical data because I recognise that "facts" are theory-laden, theory is value-laden and values are pragmatic rather than given (Rutzou, 2016). An epistemological position which avoids naivety and also prevents one from comfortably slipping into judgemental relativism is the cornerstone of being epistemically relevant.

Avoiding judgemental realism is particularly useful here because arguing for epistemic relevance is not a call to abandon the idea of "powerful disciplinary knowledge". Rather, it is a call to make sure that "powerful knowledge" is responsive to its social relations. Given the implied acceptance of epistemic pluralism and diversity – there are many fundamentally different, genuinely alternative epistemic systems – how do we evaluate different epistemic systems about the same subject? Questioning the appropriateness of beliefs or belief systems or

theories of knowledge does not mean all epistemologies are equally legitimate or that any epistemology is as good as any other. Epistemological relevance requires that we expand our conceptions of ways of knowing and modes of inquiry (Young, 2001, p. 5); however, it does not mean that we are unable to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate representations of reality, or better or worse representations of reality. For this reason, the principle does not entail abandoning the evaluative criteria that comes with disciplinary epistemic boundaries. According to Scott (2010), there are four ways in which we can accomplish this. The first involves accepting that an object of knowledge is superior to another because it is more *coherent*, *comprehensive or representative*. The second suggests that a version of reality is superior to another because it contains *fewer contradictions and disjunctions*. The third approach focuses on giving reasons and concludes that some reasons and systems are *rationally superior to others*. The last approach is pragmatic, stating that an epistemic system is superior because it is more *practically adequate*.

While these approaches are not incommensurable and holding to a belief in one of them does not exclude belief in another or parts of another, I find the idea of practical adequacy advanced by Sayer (2004) useful here. According to Sayer (2004, p. 69), "to be practically adequate, knowledge must generate expectations about the world and about the results of our actions which are actually realised." There is acceptance that the practical adequacy of different parts of knowledge is context-dependent. "The differences in success of different beliefs in the same practical context and of the same beliefs in different contexts suggests that the world is structured and differentiated" (Sayer, 2004, p. 1777). As evaluative criteria for relevance, practical adequacy bridges reality and conceptuality with practice and activity. Recognising the practical adequacy of an epistemic system is not to presuppose that every part is practically adequate, let alone true or useful for practice. Practice, knowledge and the production of knowledge is a combined process which is at times uneven. In utilising practical adequacy as an evaluative criterion, we might be able to realise that objects of knowledge may be redundant, wrong, or simply make no significant difference.

Adopting epistemic relevance as a curricular and pedagogical principle presents a model of rational objectivity which makes it possible to decide what should be taught and the knowledge to which diverse groups of students have an entitlement. This position moves away from social constructionism, which collapses knowledge downwards into the situated experience and standpoint of knowers, thus conflating what is known with who knows. In many ways, the arguments for Africanisation and the integration of indigenous knowledge systems in South

African higher education have been caught up in this kind of logic, conflating knowledge with knowers. From this perspective, arguing for certain knowledge claims is seen as elevating those making the knowledge claim. The idea of epistemic relevance as a curricular and pedagogical principle in the humanities and social sciences engages with the epistemological implications of critical realism in the following ways:

1. It endorses a strong defence of disciplinary knowledge and disciplinary epistemic boundaries, while arguing that it is possible to ground disciplinary knowledge in the local context, culture and experiences of knowers.
2. It recognises that knowledge is socially constructed under particular historical conditions but adopts a weak constructivism and epistemological relativism. Knowledge is produced within forms of sociality that have distinct structures, powers and limitations.
3. The principle of judgemental rationality entails two things for the classroom: that we can speak of powerful disciplinary knowledge which is powerful because of the way it has been produced and that the principles that underlie these forms of production need to be taught.

A commitment to epistemic relevance does not mean that the epistemologies of marginalised groups are treated uncritically or that critical evaluation of these epistemological perspectives is impossible or inappropriate. It is important that these epistemologies are proved to be worthy of curricular inclusion and they should be subjected to critical scrutiny. Criticising beliefs or belief systems of marginalised groups is neither "epistemologically, morally, or pragmatically suspect" (Siegel, 2006, p. 7). This critical engagement is necessary not only for maintaining the purity of disciplinary knowledge but also because it prevents the recurring pattern of epistemic single-mindedness that epistemic relevance attempts to address. The idea of disciplinary knowledge and accompanying epistemic boundaries is not abandoned in the pursuit of epistemic relevance because it provides relevant evaluative criterion, such criteria being the property not of any given epistemology but rather of an overarching epistemological and philosophical perspective. These evaluative criterion are tied to disciplinary epistemic boundaries; a certain degree of neutrality is maintained because in the humanities and social sciences it is not possible to speak of any view that is free of the influence of the language, culture, race or gender whose perspective it is.

3.5.1 Epistemic Relevance and the Transitive Objects of Knowledge

Knowledge is a social product that is not independent of those who construct it. However, knowledge is about objects that are not produced by, and are independent of, the knower (Bhaskar, 1975). Epistemic relevance is about the world of knowing, what Bhaskar (1989) calls the *transitive* objects of knowledge. These transitive objects of science include its theories, the observational facts that input into a theory and the tools of scientific inquiry such as methods and models. Working with the three foundational principles of critical realism, ontological realism, epistemological relativism and judgemental rationality, I propose epistemic relevance is about evaluating the appropriateness of the following transitive objects of knowledge:

a. Theory

b. Concepts/language

c. Methodology

Admitting a certain degree of epistemic relativism recognises these objects of knowledge are socially produced, transient and fallible. This also opens up the possibility of transforming these objects of knowledge. On the other hand, this epistemic relativism is weak and non-standard because it is simply an acknowledgement that science can never tell the ultimate or complete truth about the way the world is. In social constructivism, the world is taken to be relative to our knowledge of it. In critical realism, our knowledge is seen to be relative to human subjective factors which are involved in the construction of that knowledge. Viewed this way, the world is not relative to our knowledge of it. The introduction of judgemental rationality makes it possible to determine the applicability and appropriateness of objects of knowledge – what is referred to here as epistemic relevance.

3.5.1.1 Theory

Theory refers to a general proposition, or logically connected system of general propositions, which establishes a relationship between two or more variables. Theory can also be understood as an explanation of a particular social phenomenon. Such an explanation should identify a number of "factors" or "conditions", which individually should pass some sort of counterfactual test for causal relevance, and whose interaction effects should be taken into account (Abend, 2008). In this sense, theory is about the connections among phenomena, explanations about why acts, events, structure and thoughts occur. Theory emphasises the nature of causal

relationships, identifying what comes first as well as the timing of such events. Strong theory delves into underlying processes so as to understand the systematic reasons for a particular occurrence or non-occurrence.

Theoretical irrelevance stems from a dominant belief that the humanities and social sciences can have only one, universal body of theories, the ones created in the global North by white males. Within the humanities and social science disciplines, these are regarded as classical theory, whose interpretation and reinterpretation define the fields. Academic prestige is constructed on the knowledge of this broadly accepted canon of thought which tends to consist of the Western tradition alone. It is rare, for instance, to come across a sociology student who has not been exposed to the analytical toolboxes created by the Marx, Weber and Durkheim trinity which is often presented as containing the tools necessary to understand the whole world.

In relation to theory, irrelevance arises from theories emerging from the global North making claims of universality from a position of privilege which serves hegemony not liberation (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). This move can be detected from attempts to offer hypotheses that are relevant everywhere and concepts that apply across society and beyond a particular time. This often results in non-accordance between assumptions and reality, resulting in theories that are inapplicable outside the contexts where they have been generated. This form of theorising does not consider the politics of knowledge production: what counts as valid knowledge and whose knowledge counts as valid knowledge? What and who are included excluded and why? The biggest indicator of theoretical irrelevance is the *inapplicability* of theoretical perspectives.

Recognising that theories are socially constructed and fallible does not require the abandonment of any notion of the truth likelihood of scientific theories. Adopting the principle of judgemental rationality here assists with the application of theories, as selection of appropriate theories is made on rational grounds and not just the social context. This is an alternative to judgemental relativity, which suggests that there can be no rational grounds for preferring one theory over another. The explanatory power of rival theories can be rationally compared, even if we have no way of comparing theories directly to reality. Here it is important to note that rival theories can only compete if they are alternative accounts of the same world.

In relation to theory, averting irrelevance entails disentangling theory from its exclusively Western provenance and drawing insights and concepts from other thought traditions, connecting to a new global moment in the reconstruction of theory. It is worth noting that peripheral intellectual communities do produce theory which has as much intellectual power as

theory from the global North and might even have more relevance. However, these theories are often treated as texts to learn about, not from. Theories continue to be irrelevant not because of a deficit of ideas from the periphery, rather because of a deficit of recognition and circulation.

3.5.1.2 Concepts and Language

Concepts are abstract ideas which are understood to be fundamental building blocks of thoughts and beliefs. In relation to concepts, irrelevance can be detected from *mystification* or the use of certain kinds of conceptual jargon in an attempt to come across as being sophisticated. Mystification is common in humanities and social science theorising and is often guided by the assumption that certain concepts are of universal relevance and can be applied in any time and place. It is a key strategy in theory building and attempts to make universal statements and highly generalised propositions. Abstractions of technical terms from Western contexts may lead to valid inferences in that context, while a similar procedure may not lead to valid inferences in the global South. The suggestion here is that a different set of concepts taking into account variations in attitudes, institutions, culture and different standards of living would have to be generated.

Conceptual irrelevance is related to linguistic irrelevance, which can be observed from the continued use of English in South African academia, particularly in the classroom context. English, as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1981) notes, was the language of power, rationality and intelligence during the colonial era. During this period, African languages signified backwardness and were weaponised against Africans. This perception has been a lasting legacy of colonialism and cultural imperialism. The acquisition of the language of the coloniser was based on the death of the language of the colonised. Language was an important element in the conquest and maintenance of colonial rule. The use of English in academia excludes the majority of people.

3.5.1.3 Methods

The irrelevance of research methods is the result of thinking that is dominated by perspectives from the global North, resulting in uncritical and imitative assimilation of these perspectives. Such methods are rooted in Eurocentrism and Androcentrism, undermining local knowledge and the experiences of marginalised groups. Similar to theoretical perspectives and conceptual language utilised in the humanities and social sciences, research methods emanating from Western contexts are rooted in universal ideas about the human condition, failing to give a voice to those who have been historically or deliberately marginalised. These methods position

researchers from marginalised groups as “outsiders-within” the academy (Zavala, 2013). Research methodology is often used as a disciplinary tool that blocks all attempts to generate knowledge differently.

The irrelevance of this object of knowledge can be attributed to a *lack of originality* and research methods that are culturally inappropriate as they are not driven by local worldviews, nor are they conducted in a language that is relevant to the local context. It is research methodology that gives the researcher the power to define, and the researched appear as specimens rather than people. Here, the “Other” becomes the object rather than the subject of research and what it means to be known by others. Irrelevant methods tend to give the result that those being researched do not live up to the standards set up by Western modernity.

Making research relevant is not so much about the method, but rather about the spaces that can enable the research process, allowing the researchers’ identities also to become transformed and reshaped. Issues of power, trust, culture and cultural competence are important structures to be considered in rendering research relevant. Such a process requires the researcher and researched be active participants in the research process, from identification of the research problem through to implementation. Making research methodology relevant should go beyond drafting ethical principles or creating research methodologies that can only apply to local contexts, as this may foster essentialist arguments.

3.6 Conclusion

Having a metatheoretical position ensures that there is clarity about one’s ontological and epistemological position. The choice of CR as a metatheoretical orientation has been the product of my historicity (past experiences, beliefs, and values) and has to do with the quest to provide an explanation for these experiences. A hard view of epistemology and ontology seemed inadequate in the attempt to capture the ambiguity and diversity of social, economic and cultural aspects of the world. Critical realism therefore aligns with both my professional and personal values. Critical realism is deemed useful in unpacking the knowledge problems in the humanities and social sciences in terms of the various components, the interactions between the components and with the context, and the mechanisms involved in determining outcomes. Critical realism successfully addresses the major divisive issues within the philosophy of science — natural versus social, positivist versus critical, realist versus constructivist and structure versus agency, to name a few (Mingers, 2000, p. 1260). It enables us to take a realist stance whilst accepting the major critiques of naïve realism; it addresses both natural and social

science and thus encompasses both hard and soft (and critical) research approaches. Critical realism acknowledges the subjective role of social actors in a given situation as well as the existence of independent structures that constrain and enable these actors to pursue certain actions in a particular setting (Wynn & Williams, 2012).

My commitments to CR as a metatheoretical position to advance my arguments for epistemic relevance begin at its rejection of empirical realism such as that of positivists (advocating that what one can observe is all that exists). Empirical realism is rejected in the arguments for epistemic relevance as it conflates ontology with epistemology and can therefore be accused of committing the epistemic fallacy. This is the reduction of the world to what is known through human senses. The separation of ontology and epistemology is utilised as a starting point in the conceptualisation of epistemic relevance and arguments for epistemic plurality in later chapters. The idea of epistemic relevance and epistemic pluralism make it possible to address epistemic harms in the humanities and social sciences.

The relevance and appropriateness of the humanities and social sciences in relation to addressing the needs and problems of peripheral societies has been widely debated. Due to the conflation of ontology and epistemology, there are few examples of what should constitute relevance in the humanities and social sciences. Clear articulations of relevance are important if we are to succeed in grounding knowledge of society in "other" experiences, not just the experiences of the rich "capital-exporting countries of Europe and North America – the global metropole" (Connell, 2007, p. 77). Being realists about ontology and being relativist about epistemology is a useful starting point in better articulations of relevance in relation to how the world can be known.

Chapter Four

Appropriating Epistemic Relevance: The Interplay of Structure and Agency

4.1 Introduction

The adoption of a critical realist approach necessarily implies that a state of affairs is flawed or incomplete and thus needs to be changed or replaced by an alternative which is not flawed. The adoption of CR therefore necessitates the identification of an object to be critical of, and which requires change. For the object to be a critical object, it must have a propensity as an object to become something that it currently is not; in short, to change as an object or become another object altogether. In the context of this study, the humanities and social sciences are treated as critical objects. The fields qualify as critical objects because they are ambiguously pluralistic, with the dominant disciplines still picturing the world as seen by white men and the affluent from the global North. Although they are flawed, the fields have a propensity to change. In line with critical realist philosophy, making this change requires identifying the distinctive causal powers at some given place or date which caused the current state of affairs in the fields of the humanities and social sciences.

This chapter makes use of Margaret Archer's (1995) morphogenetic approach to account for the process whereby social and cultural change is generated. This approach solves a problem that sociologists have grappled with for years: the relationship between structure and agency. The approach is adopted in this study as it does not propose a unidirectional and linear approach to understanding the role of structure and agency in appropriating epistemic relevance to enact epistemic change. In adopting the morphogenetic approach, epistemic change can be understood as an ongoing emergent outcome that derives from the dialectical interaction between people within contexts that are constantly subject to change. The morphogenetic/morphostatic explanatory programme is discussed in the opening section as a toolkit for theorising about the social processes which have led to the need for epistemic relevance. The next three sections offer a breakdown of the three temporal phases (Structural and Cultural Conditioning → Social Interaction → Structural and/or Cultural Elaboration) making up the morphogenetic cycle[7] in relation to the current "state" of the humanities and

[7] The three stages of the morphogenetic cycle cover structure, culture and agency, each of which has relative autonomy and yet interacts with the others.

social sciences. The last section offers an account of the consequences of structural elaboration for the contents and practice of teaching.

4.2 The Interplay of Structure and Agency in Enacting Epistemic Change: Critical Realism's Explanatory Approach

As an intentional act, appropriating epistemic relevance to enact epistemic change in the humanities and social sciences will be conditioned by social forms of one type or another. In other words, it will be conditioned by the interplay between structure and agency. Archer (1990) describes four possible relational modes between structures and agents. The first of these is a downward conflationary position, which takes place when structure and agency are conflated, so that action reflects and is wholly constitutive of social forces. The outcome of this is that agency and the powers attached to it are ignored. The second relational mode is reflected in an upward conflationary stance where structure is understood as giving rise to agency. In taking this stance, agency is denied. The third type of conflation, what Archer (1990) calls central conflation or elisionism, can be observed when the dualism of structure and agency is denied altogether. In this kind of theorising, structure is either reduced to agency and or agency is reduced to structure, thereby denying the reality of one or the other, or tying them too tightly together (Archer, 2000). This position is considered problematic as it refutes the critical realist principle that reality exists independently of our knowledge of it.

Archer (1995) proposes a fourth position, which she describes as morphogenetic and pays due deference to the causal powers of both structure and agency, and to the pre-existence of structural forms in relation to any human activity. In developing this approach, Archer (1995) builds on Bhaskar's (1998) variant of critical realism and embraces the idea that structure and agency are different emergent strata of social reality that work across different tracts of time. The analytical differentiation between structure and agency is made possible by two propositions: "that structure necessarily pre-dates the actions which transform it and that structural elaboration necessarily pre-dates these actions" (Archer, 1995, p. 44). In making this proposition, Archer (1996) employs "analytical dualism" – the methodology of keeping individuals and their agency separate from structures. By maintaining a differentiation between structure and agency, the conditions of action can be viewed as analytically separable from the action itself, thus enabling their interplay to be explored (Archer, 1996). This relational mode between structure and agency helps to clarify how structural and cultural conditioning

effectively influence socio-cultural interaction, and what forms of social interaction bring about structural and cultural reproduction or change (Herepath, 2014).

Archer (1995) utilises the term "morphogenesis" to describe the process of social structuring, "morpho" indicating shape and "genesis" signalling that the shaping is the product of social relations. Morphogenesis therefore refers to those processes which change a system's given form, state or structure. Morphostasis refers to those processes in complex system-environmental exchanges which tend to preserve or maintain a system's given form, organisation or state. The morphogenetic approach begins with the transcendental commitment to society not being fully contingent. Society is only like itself, and the basic task is to conceptualise how ordered social forms have their genesis in agency, just as social beings have their genesis in social forms. Bhaskar (1987, p.129) famously wrote of this relationship:

> …people do not create society. For it always pre-exists them and is a necessary condition for their activity. Rather society must be regarded as the ensemble of structures, practices and conventions which individuals reproduce and transform, but which would not exist unless they did so. Society does not exist independently of human activity (the error of reification). But it is not the product of it (the error of voluntarism).

As a critical realist, Archer (1995, p. 15) argues that "structures and agency are not different aspects of the same thing but are radically different in kind" and that they are "distinct from each other and irreducible to one another" (Archer, 1995, p. 14), separated by what she calls an "ontological hiatus" (Archer, 1995, p. 195). However, structures are not causally efficient, meaning that they are unable to make things happen by themselves (Archer, 1995, p. 90). Viewed this way, Archer's (1995, 1996, 2000) "Morphogenetic/Morphostatic" approach usefully supplements CR and accounts for change and stability in all social forms and institutions. Archer's (1995; 1996; 2000) morphogenetic approach is not a theory but rather what she calls a t*oolkit* or *explanatory programme*. According to Archer (2020, p.137), the toolkit is obedient to the following principles:

(a) A rejection of Humean 'constant conjunctions' as a deficient, because empiricist, basis for conceptualising social reality and causality;
(b) An endorsement of emergence and a stratified social ontology;
(c) A refusal to assign automatic priority to structure versus agency when accounting for causation in the social domain; and

(d) A reliance on ontological realism, epistemic relativism and judgemental rationality for explanatory adequacy.

Morphogenesis is described by Archer (2020) as the methodological complement to CR's social ontology. In this study, CR performs the role of conceptual regulation, governing concepts necessary in description and explanation; however, in itself it explains nothing. It has served the role of excluding certain explanations. On its own, however, it does not provide a programme for explanation, hence the use of the morphogenetic approach as an explanatory programme. Figure 1 below provides some basic guidelines for how to go about breaking down the material in hand to form the three temporal phases that make up a single morphogenetic cycle, which ends in either change or stasis and represents the next cycle (Archer, 2020, p. 140). The flow of a morphogenetic/morphostatic cycle is broken up into three phases: *structural conditioning* (T^1), *socio-cultural interaction* (T^2-T^3) and *structural reproduction or elaboration* (T^4). T^1 refers to the structural context of action or the source of motives, ideological commitments and strategies which moved agents to interaction. The ideological commitments and strategies cannot be understood without the prior structural context conditioning (T^1).

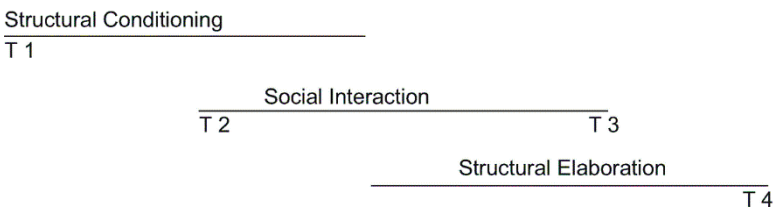


Figure 1: *The basic morphogenetic sequence*

The approach proposed by Archer (1995) is utilised in this study to give an account of the development of particular social processes, practices and policies related to enacting epistemic change. By thinking in terms of morphogenetic cycles, we can recognise both continuity and change in the social systems which have given rise to the need for epistemic relevance in the humanities and social sciences. The approach also ensures that we can do this while giving action an irreducible place in both continuity and change. Morphogenesis also allows us to articulate much more clearly that actions can transform structures and structures constrain action. Structures and actions also interact over time, producing analytical dualism as opposed to the analytical conflation found in other forms of social theorising. Following Archer's (1995) logic, the analysis in this chapter begins at the point of structure, which shapes the social context for agents (T^1). Beginning at T^1 is important in relation to enacting epistemic change

because the results "of past actions are deposited in the form of current situations" (Archer, 1995, p. 201).

4.2.1 Structure, Culture and Agency

The notion of social structure is highly contested not just among sociologists but in other disciplines as well. In relation to enacting epistemic change in the humanities and social sciences, I use the term to highlight that the issue cannot be reduced to the actions of individuals. Structure is durable enough to withstand the impulses of individuals who would change it, and it is underpinned by dynamics and an underlying logic of its own that contributes to its reproduction over time. This structure is reproduced by human beings, but it also represents the mould that they fit. Though often operating behind their backs or over their heads, social structures would not exist without the participation of human beings (Hays, 1994), whether willing or unwilling, conscious or unconscious. Apartheid, for instance, could not have endured without the purposive actions of politicians, government agents and the labour force. Some of these people may not have been involved in the creation of the system but their actions contributed to its recreation.

According to Archer (1995, p.152) morphogenesis and morphostasis are close to notions of transformation and reproduction, which only make sense as processes which come "after" something which existed "before" them. "Thus for social structure it is no longer true to say that human agents create it" (Archer, 1995, p. 152). Instead, structures should be understood as being reproduced or transformed by social agents. This is because society already exists, and any human action can only modify it.[8] Structures are also enabling as well as constraining, and sociologists have described them as the very basis of human power and self-understanding. For instance, the system of gender stratification enables and constrains the actions of men and women. In addition to this, it "gives them both a sense of identity and a certain position in the world" (Hays, 1994, p. 61). Viewed this way, structures are not only responsible for constraining human agency, they also provide a sense of self and the tools for creative and transformative action, and thereby make human freedom possible. Agency explains the recreation and transformation of social structures; it is made possible by the enabling and constraining features of social structures. Agency is also limited within the bounds of structural

[8] The totality of such acts sustain or change social structure.

constraint, and the capacity of agents to effect social structures varies with the accessibility, power and durability of the structure in question.

In relation to enacting epistemic change in the humanities and social sciences, we can identify two kinds of structures that come into contact with agents, thus constraining and enabling epistemic change. The first of these are discursive structures, which have ontological presence, thus existing independently of our knowledge of them. Discursive structures are also capable of bringing about change. According to Scott (2010, p. 98), discursive structures may be characterised as those ideational resources which sustain the individual, and include a range of stories, narratives, arguments and chronologies. They have a specific time-place location, and are therefore subject to change. Systems of language not only constrain what is possible to think but also how it is possible to think it, thus making the very act of human thinking possible (Hays, 1994). Discursive structures which enable and constrain epistemic change are discussed in Chapter Six.

This chapter focuses on the second kind of structure, which is institutional and systemic. This type of structure is composed of roles, positions and asymmetrical power relations. These tend to persist over time and are concerned with the arrangement of resources and people. Institutional and systemic structures are regulated through explicit rules or standard values woven into the fabric of social discourses (Scott, 2010). Some regulations may have legal status while others are not written down, but are reproduced orally. Without structures, the fields of the humanities and social sciences would not have rules and therefore no possibility for conscious, purposive action. In this chapter, I will attempt to demonstrate how the separation of these structures from the behaviour of agents allows for an analysis which demonstrates that much of the challenges related to enacting epistemic change in the humanities and social sciences are due to structures which have been inherited from the past.

Culture forms a part of this social structure, which has been inherited from the past and is not treated as something distinct.[9] It can be understood as both the product of human interaction and the producer of certain forms of human interaction. Similar to social structure, culture is both enabling and constraining in an ideological sense. Hays (1994) argues that culture is a social structure with an underlying logic of its own. The consequence of this conceptualisation is that social structure consists of two different but interconnected parts: systems of social

[9] In accepting culture as a type of social structure, I diverge from Archer who seems to see institutions as culture.

relations and systems of meaning (Hays, 1994, p. 65). The former is made up of patterns of roles and relationships while the latter is what is known as culture, and includes beliefs, values and norms. Culture also includes languages, forms of knowledge and common sense, as well as the material products, interactional practices, rituals and the ways of life they establish. In the context of this study, culture and structure are understood as working together and it is therefore not possible to explain the idea of epistemic relevance as the enactment of epistemic change without referring to one or the other. Culture is approached analytically in the same way as structure, "for it is just as appropriate to speak of cultural as of social structures" (Archer, 1995, p. 179).

4.2.2 Analytical Dualism

The interplay of structure and agency articulated by Archer (1995, 1996) highlights that social transformation lies in structured struggles, and the resulting social forms are generated and elaborated through the interplay of structure and agency. Archer (1995) also acknowledges that social structuring, as a process which is continuously activity dependent, is one which is uncontrolled and unpredictable. Its form is shaped by the processes and powers whose interplay accounts for its elaboration. At any given time, structure is itself the result of prior social relations conditioned by an antecedent structural context. It is patterned and re-patterned but not confined to any pattern. Society is not a mechanism with fixed, indispensable parts as functionalists would have us believe. As a system, it is open because it is peopled, and because it is peopled it can always be re-shaped through human agency (Archer, 1995).

In this study, the value of Archer's (1995, 1996, 2000) morphogenetic approach lies in analytical dualism, the ontological distinction between the "parts" and "people" of society. This allows for an irreducible account of the "social" whilst at one and the same time capturing the essence of the human condition to feel both constraint and freedom (Sayer, 1992). According to Archer (1995, p. 65), analytical dualism is based on two premises:

(i) The social world is stratified, such that the emergent properties of structures and agents are irreducible to one another, meaning that in principle they are analytically separable.

(ii) The temporal distinction between structures and agents can be utilised to examine the interplay between them as well as changes in both – over time.

Within Archer's (1995) approach, it can be demonstrated that the current state of the humanities and social sciences is the result of the emergence of certain structures at the level of the real,

through social interaction, but also that constraints proliferate within the academic community. Emergence is central in analytical dualism; it justifies the "reality" of structure while highlighting its relative autonomy, structural elaboration and structural constraint. In critical realist explanation, emergence provides a way of talking about social structures without implying material existence of the social world.

4.3 Structural Conditioning: The Humanities and Social Sciences as Western Phenomena

In advocating for the morphogenetic approach as critical realism's explanatory framework Archer (1995) strongly argued that structural factors shape the social context for the actions of agents. This chapter gives an account of the systemic structure which has causally conditioned agency in the present, thus enabling and constraining epistemic change. However, in accounting for this systemic structure, there is also an account of how agents have worked on the structure, leading to its elaboration, thereby altering the structural setting for future agency (Archer, 1995). From this position, we can analyse the development of structures which enable and constrain epistemic change as cycles. According to Archer (2020), there are no rules about where one's explanatory project can begin in time.[10] Following the logic of the morphogenetic approach, the analysis in this chapter begins at T^1 with a history of the development of higher education institutions in peripheral contexts and the implantation of the humanities and social sciences in these societies.

Social science is concerned with society and is aimed at understanding all aspects of society as well as finding solutions to social problems. It is a broad area of knowledge and includes disciplines such as geography, psychology, economics and sociology. The humanities, on the other hand, are concerned with special aspects of human culture and are primarily concerned with attempts to express spiritual and aesthetic values. The humanities include disciplines such as literature, music, art, and philosophy. They are closely related to social science in that both deal with humans and their culture. Social science, however, is most concerned with those basic elements of culture that determine the general patterns of human behaviour. The social sciences study issues in a systematic and scientific way, while the humanities focus on emotions and feelings rather than the system employed to sharpen that focus.

Humanities and social science course content that reinforces Eurocentrism and Androcentrism is not surprising if one takes into account the fact that the humanities and social sciences in

[10] T^1 may differ historically from that of previous research, even if it has stimulated current research.

their current form and organisation originated in the West, expanding through colonialism and imperialism (Keim, 2008). Their introduction in peripheral communities often took place without due recognition of the different historical backgrounds and social circumstances of these societies (Alatas S. F., 1995). It has been widely argued (Alatas, 1995; Connell, 2011; Hountondji, 1990; Keim, 2008) that the humanities and social sciences in the periphery remain extraverted, subordinated and dependent as a result of these origins. This state of dependency and extraversion can be understood as a response to structural conditioning (T^1) which has led to structural elaboration (T^4). In turn, this elaboration has led to new constraints and enablements in the present context. Here new generative mechanisms which govern how things work have been developed.[11]This point is expanded in later sections.

When the development of universities began, Western Europe was confronted with problems of underdevelopment and social fragmentation. As a result, higher education from the end of the 1800s through to the 1950s reflected the major trends in philosophical discourse among the major Western powers on how to deal with these issues. However, higher education in Africa is not a product of a long history of cultural evolution which constructed itself out of African social dynamics. Instead, it is a product of colonial imposition which does not have historical attachments to the African past. Any attempt at locating and addressing contemporary realities and appropriating epistemic relevance in the humanities and social sciences should account for the adoption of Western philosophies and educational systems in the colonised world. Given the fact that the communities in the colonised world were not without their own philosophies and educational systems (albeit not as formalised as those emerging from the West), the adoption of Western philosophies can be understood as the point of emergence, which is a situation in "which the conjunction of two or more features or aspects give rise to new phenomena, which have properties irreducible to those of their constituents, even though the latter are necessary for their existence" (Sayer, 2000, p. 78).

The majority of universities as they exist in their current form in Africa were created after 1960, following formal independence and characterised by structural dependence on the academic models of the former colonising countries. These academic models were deeply rooted in Christian, Greek and Roman traditions as they were the first groups to organise the embryonic system of education using Christianity as the transmitter of ancient Western civilisations (Assie-Lumumba, 2006). This heritage of Greek and Roman thought cannot be ignored in the

[11] T^4 also leads to the double morphogenesis of agency, through regrouping, even if agents are the same people.

history of social thought as it constitutes one of the major challenges faced by African scholars in their efforts to make the humanities and social sciences relevant to local contexts. Questions about the multicultural origins of human thought and social theorising are hardly raised and courses in the humanities and social sciences continue to be dominated by concepts and categories that were developed in Europe and North America. These courses are also dominated by the subject-object dichotomy, where Europeans are in the foreground and European categories and concepts dominate teaching and learning. Women and thinkers from the periphery continue to be left out, and are unmentioned in standard narratives on the history of the humanities and social sciences even though a number of scholars have problematised these taken-for-granted definitions and assumptions.

Higher education institutions in the global North are a product of socio-economic and political dynamics of society in the course of history, but in the African context, universities did not evolve out of social interactions (Woldegiorgis & Dovenspeck, 2013). These institutions were colonial impositions and did not exist as autonomous African institutions. Instead, they were extensions of universities in the metropole. These institutions were not relevant for the needs of Africans of the time, training a few individuals and functioning as instruments of domination and colonisation instead of functioning as academic and scientific environments. Higher education in the colonies was technical or vocational, and the concern for relevance focused on adaptation to the local context for immediate use and benefit of the metropole (Assie-Lumumba, 2006). Courses and programmes were selected based on colonial interests and were therefore detached from the local context. African traditional learning spaces, local institutions, languages, religions, and cultures were portrayed as backwards and uncivilised as a pretext for the colonial agenda (Woldegiorgis & Dovenspeck, 2013). Local scientific traditions were erased, classified as primitive and substituted with Northern science. Herein lies the power of colonialism: the ability to name and categorise the world to its own schema and interests, inventing binaries such as modern/traditional, progressive/backward and civilised/uncivilised.

The formations that we call the humanities and social sciences came into existence in Western Europe and North America in the 19th century CE. They became recognised as distinct disciplines after the 19th century even though their origins go back to ancient Greek civilisations and their inquiries into human nature, the state and morality. It is important to note that the ideas which gave rise to these fields had existed in other contexts even if not structured and articulated as academic disciplines. The disciplines became institutionalised in universities in the second half of the 19th century, at the height of imperialism. In fact, they were formed

within the culture of imperialism, and embodied an intellectual response to the colonised world (Connell, 2007). When the humanities and social sciences were eventually organised according to academic disciplines, they bore the imprint of Western European assumptions about the colonised world and sought to legitimise scientifically the hegemony of Europe. Although often presented as universal knowledge, the disciplines tend to embed the viewpoints, perspectives and problems of the global North, working through categories produced in the metropole, and rarely engaging with ideas produced in peripheral communities.

As a result of viewing the world through Eurocentric eyes, the fields operated on the assumption that Western norms and values were universal and that all other cultures, contexts and epistemic systems were to be measured against them. Thus, the Western world increasingly denied the existence of other representations of reality but its own. Eurocentrism affected all scholars that were trained in an environment where European supremacy or the centrality and universality of the European experience were taken for granted (Malambo, 2006). The fields of the humanities and social sciences contributed to the development of a worldview in which Western representations of reality went unquestioned. This was the attitude that was utilised to justify imperialism as necessary as it spread civilisation. In the African context, the introduction of the social sciences and Christianity resulted in the destruction of belief systems and culture. The destruction of indigenous knowledge systems and privileging of Western ideas and knowledge systems can be traced back to this period of spreading Western civilisation.

While the colonising Western world found no value in African precolonial knowledge systems and cultures, this does not mean they did not exist. The study argues that knowledge production is an essentially context-dependent process. Knowledge claims are not adjudicated by absolute standards; rather their authority is established through the workings of local negotiations and judgments in particular contexts. This focus on the localness of knowledge production provides the condition for the notion of African knowledge systems which existed prior to colonial conquest. These knowledge systems differed in their epistemologies, methodologies, logics, cognitive structures and their socioeconomic contexts from knowledge produced in other contexts. The distinct feature of these knowledge systems is that they arose out of and existed as the product of a series of interrelationships between different ways of knowing.

Precolonial knowledge systems in the African context were informed by and related to all domains of life and the environment, incorporating skills and practices performed within a cultural context. These knowledge systems include indigenous and endogenous knowledge,

emanating from the African context and represent as rejection of ontological and epistemological assumptions based on homogeneity. This rejection is key as scientific method, the assumptions of modern science and the notions of objectivity and autonomy are neither value neutral nor universal: they embody ways of thinking and embody values that are Western. The Western science exclusion of different African knowledge systems kinds of knowledge systems is mostly methodological, in that the exclusion of difference gives the illusion of universalism while granting itself a kind of exceptionalism, so that Western science alone is seen as able to transcend its context. Thus, if one does not follow the methods of Western science, one did not arrive at "truth".

Structural elaboration resulted in education that remoulded the African self-perception and way of thinking. Teaching the fields of the humanities and social sciences, students were introduced to the idea of Africa as a "dark continent", with no history, and in need of European colonialism. African students were "drilled with the history of England, France, Portugal and Italy and could recite the life stories of European statesmen and leading historical figures like Mazzini, Napoleon, and Bismarck, they knew nothing about their own past or their own heroes" (Malambo, 2006, p. 166). This education was, in most cases, education for subservience that led to what can be characterised as intellectual imperialism intended to reinforce Western dominance. Structural elaboration annihilated a "people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately themselves" (Wa Thiong'o, 1981, p. 14). European colonialism, informed by the humanities and social sciences, resulted in this first morphogenetic cycle which characterised African institutions as primitive and static, and imposed Western structures, systems and practices that had been developed in Europe under particular historical circumstances on societies with a different world view and different histories.

Due to their origins, the social sciences remain immaculately Eurocentric and Androcentric, with most theoretical texts in the humanities and social sciences written in the global North. Metropolitan science established a conceptual style very early, in which theory is monological, declaring one truth in one voice. This has remained a characteristic of the humanities and social science disciplines, although some exceptions can be found. Locating the contemporary situation in its broader historical context is important for enacting epistemic change as it highlights the pre-existing structures that condition agency in the present. This historical context is the first step in the morphogenetic cycle (T^1) and provides an account of how

structure conditions the projects of people involuntarily but also non-deterministically, yet nonetheless with some level of directionality.

4.4 Social Interaction: Centre–Periphery Relations

From a critical realist perspective, there is no single causal explanation of any particular state of affairs, since this will inevitably be a consequence not of a single previous state, but rather of a series of previous states at different points in the past. It is a matter of judgement which previous states of affairs we consider most relevant in any particular case. In relation to the state of affairs in the humanities and social sciences, the implantation of these fields in colonised countries during the periods of colonisation and formal decolonisation is considered most relevant (T^1). Although there may be a number of reasons for this hierarchical relationship between scholarly communities and their institutions, I want to suggest that the most significant has to do with the fact that the disciplines which make up these fields emerged and were institutionalised in Europe first. The scholarly disciplines which make up the fields, as opposed to social thinking, expanded through colonialism and imperialism. The connective mechanism between this first phase of the morphogenetic cycle and the second phase (T^2-T^3) worked through exchange and power, resulting in disciplines in Western Europe and the United States being at the centre of the fields, with those from the global South occupying a peripheral position.

During the period of structural conditioning (T^1), structural and cultural emergent properties shaped the situations in which agents found themselves, conditioning their actions, though not in a deterministic manner, given their own emergent powers. The interaction between agents and this social structure signalled the period in which "groups vie with one another to shape some social form or organisation" (Archer, 2020). Though the dependent nature of the humanities and social sciences can be traced back to the period of formal colonisation, decolonisation did little to dismantle the structure of dependency. Scholars from the global South continue to study and obtain qualifications from European metropolises. They also continue to rely on ideas formulated in the metropole. In relation to the humanities and social sciences I want to suggest that the social form which emerged as a result of social interaction was one in which the fields in peripheral communities remained at the margins, dependent on those at the centre. All interactions are "processes of exchange and power and involve the use of resources, namely political sanctions, liquid assets and expertise" (Archer, 1995, p. 297). The

varied distribution of vested material interests results in hierarchies of power with those in highly ranked positions introducing the majority of changes.

Examining social interactions as processes of exchange and power is useful in this study as it highlights the continued dominance of Western perspectives. In general, social interaction is explained by the changing interrelationship between structures of resource distributions and the structure of material and vested interest groups (Archer, 1995, p. 297). Social interaction achieves mediation of the social context in this manner, ultimately affecting structural elaboration. It is the sole mechanism governing stability or change; what goes on during social interaction also determines the morphostasis or morphogenesis of agency itself. In relation to the current state of the humanities and social sciences, the social form which emerged as a result of social interaction (T^2-T^3) can be understood in terms of a centre-periphery model.

Although articulated in various ways, there appears to be a consensus among scholars writing on the *state* of the humanities and social sciences that a centre-periphery-model is a valid tool for the description of processes of social scientific knowledge production, diffusion, reception and communication at an international level (Keim, 2008, p. 22). The centre-periphery model is drawn from dependency theory which has its roots in conflict theory. Dependency theory was born out of the realisation that classical Marxist theory explained development but not the continuous underdevelopment of some nations with reference to colonisation. From this perspective, colonising countries in the metropole intentionally kept their colonies underdeveloped so as to serve the needs of the metropole. Therefore, the necessary condition for the continued and sustained development of countries in the centre is to maintain the countries of the periphery under their control. The notions of centre and periphery make it possible to discuss the "relations between different resource distributions and the pre-grouping of agents whom they delineate in terms of the differential life chances" (Archer, 1995, p. 279).

This framework of "centre-periphery" as the main characteristic of the relations between developed countries and former colonies has been articulated by numerous scholars such as Gunder Frank (1970), Rodney (1966) and Altbach (1977). In his articulation, Altbach (1977, p. 196) distinguished between three types of influence of developed countries on peripheral communities: (i) "normal" dependency from a historical standpoint, which accounts for the development of industrialised countries in relation to education specifically in the areas of research, educational facilities and publishing; (ii) centre-periphery relationships, on an international scale, between and within countries, with industrialised countries constituting the

centre, while underdeveloped countries are the periphery, relying on goods and services provided by the centre; and (iii) neo-colonialism, characterised by the conscious policies of industrialised nations to maintain their power over underdeveloped countries (Altbach, 1977) with some degree of consent from these countries.

The value of Altbach's (1977) typology of dependency lies in the recognition that development and underdevelopment have taken place in the context of the growth of capitalism as a world system. Applied to scholarship, both development and underdevelopment are historically observable consequences of the relationship between industrialised, formerly colonising countries and non-industrialised, formerly colonised countries. Dependency theory then provides a useful approach to viewing development and underdevelopment, critiquing the continued unequal relationship between and within scholarly communities. It is also useful in locating these unequal relations within the history of imperialism and colonialism. Social interaction (T^2-T^3) is seen as being structurally conditioned by these unequal relations but never as structurally determined by them because agents possess their own irreducible emergent powers. The morphogenetic perspective requires agency to be reflective, purposive, promotive and innovative, if social interaction is indeed to operate as the mechanism responsible for stability and change.

There are many countries that do not fit the core centre-periphery model. A well-resourced country in the periphery like Australia comes to mind here. Dependency theorists have also been criticised for being highly abstract, using homogenised categories of developed and underdeveloped without taking into account the variations within these categories. One of my biggest struggles with the theory is its applicability in the present context amid the changed socio-economic and political situations in the contemporary world. While some of the criticisms of dependency theory are seemingly justified, one cannot deny that the essential ideas and ideology behind the theory remain useful in explaining the relationship between the humanities and social sciences in the metropole and those in the periphery. However, it is worth noting that the centre-periphery model can be transported to the domain of knowledge production and dissemination in only partial analogy. Institutional and material factors within academia cannot be exclusively reduced to the broader economic situation because we are not dealing with material goods but rather ideas, knowledge and discourses (Keim, 2008). The perspective would therefore need to be revised if it were to be utilised in analysing the state of humanities and social sciences in the periphery. All methods for promoting change or

protecting stability depend upon the use of resources, thus their distribution is of the greatest importance since it governs who has access to them and thus can participate in these processes.

One of the biggest challenges with applying the theory as a framework for viewing social interaction might be the lack of empirical evidence or even a framework to measure dependency. Bibliometric databases are useful as they not only indicate centrality and marginality but also enforce it, as the producers of the bibliometric databases determine through their selection criteria which scholarly communities are of no interest to the international community. For instance, the Social Sciences and Citation Index (SSCI) covers literature from over 3000 of the world's most significant social science journals across more than 50 disciplines. An analysis of this database by author reveals that the SSCI's rankings continue to be dominated by United States and European journals. Despite the growth in scientific production in many peripheral countries, Latin America, Asia and Africa currently contribute fewer than 20% of the articles published in SSCI. The bibliometric analysis confirms the hypothesis that the scholarly communities in the periphery are highly marginalised within the international community. It is important to note that this data is not used as a reflection of scholarly production, but is rather used to indicate degrees of centrality and marginality.

Centre	I. Infrastructure and Internal Organisation	Periphery
Development		Underdevelopment
	II. Conditions of Existence and Reproduction	
Autonomy		Dependency
	III. International Position	
Centrality		Marginality

Table 3: *Three-dimensional model of dependency* (Keim, 2008, p. 8).

The historically evolved hierarchies and inequalities in the production, diffusion, and especially reception of social scientific knowledge remain intact even after colonisation has come to an end. This can be observed from the degree of autonomy and dependence of the various disciplines which make up the fields. Autonomy can be observed in the self-reproduction and autonomous development at the level of staff, institutions and knowledge. Dependence can be observed from the steady import of theories and concepts, teaching material and research devices as well as academic degrees from universities of the centre (Keim, 2008, p. 26). Structural conditioning gave rise to centrality and marginality, an intra-scientific problem referring to the position and function of certain scholarly communities within the international community. Centrality can be understood as the prestige and visibility that is enjoyed by certain

scholarly communities within the international community. This position confers on them the power of setting the dominant topics of research and teaching, methodological, and theoretical approaches. Their centrality allows them to establish schools and ideologies. Centrality and marginality have implications for epistemic relevance as they influence the dominance of Western epistemologies outside their particular contexts.

Scholarly communities in the global South tend to occupy a marginal position within the international scholarly community. They lack international recognition, and not only are they largely ignored by the rest of the world, but this ignorance is not considered a problem (Alatas S. F., 2008). They rely on the institutions at the centre, either because they have no local alternatives – in this case marginality combines with underdevelopment and dependency – or because they remain orientated, despite local alternatives, to locations in the international field that are regarded as more prestigious (Keim, 2008, p. 28). The marginal position of scholarly communities in the global South can also be observed from the functions that these communities perform within knowledge production. Hountondji (2002) traces this global division of labour to the colonial period and also draws parallels between economic and geopolitical centre-periphery structures.

S.F. Alatas (2003, p. 607) highlights the same challenge and proceeds to differentiate three levels: (i) the division between theoretical and empirical intellectual labour; (ii) division between other country studies and own country studies; (iii) the division between comparative and single case studies. As a result of this marginal position, the fields of the global South produce mainly knowledge that deals with local problems at a low level of abstraction and generalisation. Those at the centre almost hold a monopoly on prestigious comparative research and general theory building. The issue of marginality should not be confused with underdevelopment because there are numerous scholarly communities with a considerable degree of material and institutional development which continue to occupy marginal positions in the international community.

4.5 Structural Elaboration: Consequences of Centrality and Marginality

The social interaction between T^2-T^3 results in structural elaboration (T^4). This transforms not only the social structure, but also agency, as part and parcel of the same process – what Archer (1995) referred to as *double morphogenesis.* As it reshapes structural and cultural relations at any given T^4, "agency is ineluctably reshaping itself; in terms of domination and subordination; in terms of new roles and positions that some occupy and others do not; and in term of the

novel situation in which all agents now find themselves, constraining to the projects of some and enabling to the projects of others, yet of significance for the motivation of all" (Archer, 2020, p. 144). Human beings are entities with emergent causal powers but, like other entities, they do not have the power uniquely and totally to determine subsequent events. Rather, social events are always the outcome of many interacting factors, of which input is only one (Elder-Vass, 2010). The point of the morphogenetic approach is precisely to specify the "who is who" and "who does what" in social transformation (Archer, 2003).

The centre-periphery model in its application to scholarly communities is useful in highlighting "who is who" and "who does what" in enacting epistemic change. The practical application of the model can be seen in the work of academic dependency theorist and philosopher Paulin Hountondji's (1995) notion of extraversion. The ideas on academic dependency and extraversion can be viewed as a radical change or structural elaboration which has taken place as a result of social interaction. These works draw on the basic premise of the centre-periphery model, arguing that the development of scholarly communities at the centre is the result of the active underdevelopment of those in the periphery. The value of the revision of the model from these perspectives lies in highlighting the consequences of the unequal relations between humanities and social science communities in the metropole and those in the world periphery. Drawing on the model, the global North, or the centre, can be defined as countries which: (i) generate large outputs of research in the form of scientific papers in journals, books and research papers; (ii) have a global reach of the ideas and information contained in these works; (iii) have the ability to influence scholarly communities of other countries due to the consumption of the works originating in the powers; and (iv) command a great deal of recognition, respect and prestige both at home and abroad (Alatas S. F., 2003). Consequently, the global South, or periphery, lacks one or several of the above-mentioned characteristics.

4.5.1 Intellectual Dependence

Applied to the state of scholarship in the humanities and social sciences, the marginal and weak position of the fields in the periphery can be attributed to the relations between the centre and periphery. These relations assume a state of dependency when the scholarly communities at the centre can expand according to criteria of development and progress, while the scholarly communities at the periphery can only do this as a reflection of that expansion. This generally has negative effects on their development according to the same criteria (Alatas, 2008, p. 5). Understood this way, dependency can be captured as the unequal structure that undergirds the

production and dissemination of knowledge within the global system where scholarly communities in the periphery remain dependent on institutions and ideas from the centre. Applying this framework to the humanities and social sciences, the current state is not natural but is an engineered position due to the relations between the metropole and periphery.

Intellectual dependence is tied to intellectual or academic imperialism which is analogous to political and economic imperialism. Imperialism is equivalent to colonialism, which required the cultivation and application of various disciplines such as history, linguistics, geography and sociology in the colonies; we may refer to the academe as imperialistic (Alatas S. F., 2003). In addition to considering the role of social scientific research and scholarship in the service of political and economic imperialism, we may also think of it as analogous to political and economic imperialism, what Alatas, S.H (2000, p. 24) defined as the domination of people by another in their world of thinking. In other words, academic imperialism is a phenomenon analogous to political economic imperialism. The centre-periphery relations are also imperialistic in a similar way to those in the world of international political economy. Academic imperialism began in the colonial period, and in the present context it is more indirect than direct and can be characterised as academic neo-imperialism, as the West's monopolistic control and influence over the nature and flows of social scientific knowledge remain intact even though political independence has been achieved.

In the colonial past, academic imperialism was maintained through colonial power; in the present context academic neo-colonialism is maintained through academic dependency, the dependence of scholars in the periphery on Western social science (Alatas S. H., 2000). Dependency may assume a psychological dimension, whereby the intellectually-dependent scholars become passive recipients of methods and ideas from the centre as a result of a shared sense of inferiority. This sense of inferiority leads to a dependence on already-established knowledge which largely emanates from the global North. The intellectually-dependent scholar in the periphery is caught in the bind of addressing realities in their context in borrowed languages and paradigms, producing prescriptive knowledge (Zeleza, 2002, p. 9).

The structural inequality between scholarly communities translates to epistemic inequality (Andrews & Okpanachi, 2012) where particular knowers gain more recognition than others. Due to epistemic inequality, the social scientists in the centre study the societies in the periphery, whereas the intellectually-dependent scholar in the periphery does not deal with the societies of the centre as an object of study (Keim, 2008). This enforces a topographic

dimension to social scientific knowledge production, reception and validation, where the spatial location of the researcher and site of research also play a significant role in the reception and valorisation of the work in operation (Baber, 2003).

Intellectual dependency is both an external factor and a conditioning situation, and can be observed at two levels: the structural and intellectual (Alatas, 2008). At the structural level, the solution has to do with the awareness and resolve of politicians without whom the structure of intellectual dependency cannot be dismantled. At the intellectual level, dismantling intellectual dependency is dependent on the concerted efforts of scholars, and involves the generation of alternative discourses with a view towards autonomy and plurality in the humanities and social sciences.

Alatas (2003: 604) offers the following dimensions of academic dependency:

1. Dependence on theories and concepts generated in the context of Western historical backgrounds and cultural practices. This problem is linked to the pervasiveness of imitation.
2. Dependence on the media of ideas (journals and print media). This can be gauged from the structure of ownership and control of international journals. The greatest numbers of social science journals are published in the United States, France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom.
3. Dependence on the technology of education such as laboratory instruments which are imported because there is little innovation in the creation of these materials.
4. Dependence on research aid as numerous governments and corporate organisations in the global North play crucial roles in the training of scholars in the global South by providing scholarships and fellowships, funding research and providing expert personnel for research and teaching institutions in the global South.
5. Dependence on investment in education which can be seen from the various degree programmes offered at universities in the global South by various universities from the global North. These involve joint ventures between foreign and local institutions.

The bulk of the world's intellectual output is produced in industrialised nations. As early as the 1970s, a survey of social science journals reported that more than 60% were published in the Unites States, France and Britain (Line & Roberts, 1976, p. 133). The realities of a highly stratified international community are more than obvious when one looks at the table below from the SSCI database. The SSCI indexes two South African journals – the South African

Journal of Economics and African Studies – despite South Africa having more than 280 journals.

Affiliation	Number of Articles
United States	366,828
Great Britain	71,606
Canada	40,573
South Africa	2,672
Nigeria	667

***Table 4**: SSCI index by country*

Evidence of the unevenness in institutional settings and material resources can also be found in the 20210 World Social Science Report titled "Knowledge divides" (UNESCO, 2010). Drawing data from various databases such as the SSCI, Ulrich, Elsevier's Scopus and the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS), the report indicates that North America produced more than half the articles registered in the SSCI, with Europe producing almost 40% of the world's published social science articles. "In terms of citations, the internationalisation of social science research in developing countries mainly takes the form of a growing dependence on studies and research produced in Europe and North America" (UNESCO, 2010, p. 45). Attempts at internationalisation tend to reinforce the centrality of the North. Another important indicator of dependence demonstrated by the report is that of language, where over 85% of the social sciences refereed journals covered in the Ulrich database are edited in English. The report also indicates that the collaborative research is still dominated by North-North partnerships, with a minute share of joint South-South articles (UNESCO, 2010, p. 146).

It can be argued that the South African humanities and social sciences, like the country's intellectual production in general, occupy a marginal position within the international scholarly community and fit this description of dependency. The result is that research agendas, definitions of problem areas and methods of research continue to be conditioned by the development and growth of the social sciences at the centre. The phenomenon of academic dependency has been widely recognised, but there have been few attempts to delineate its structure. This can be attributed to the structure of academic dependency in force. Such a delineation is important because its origins, nature and functions are not the same across contexts and time. Academic dependency is structural, and the dismantling of this structure requires concerted action on the part of social scientists all over the world. Alatas (2003)

suggested that doing this requires serious theoretical and empirical research on the problem. Academic dependency points to a scholarship problem in the humanities and social sciences, and its reversal requires scholars to deal with each dimension of academic dependency.

4.5.2 Extraversion

The morphogenetic approach serves as a methodological component of CR by application of an analytical dualism over time. Morphogenesis refers to the complex interchanges that produce change in a system's given form, structure or state (morphostasis is the opposite of this). While the humanities and social sciences in the global South continue to depend on those in the global North, academic dependency alone is insufficient to explain the continued currency of North-dominated humanities and social sciences in the global South. Centre-periphery relations take on another dimension in relation to knowledge production, what Hountondji (1990) has labelled extraversion, where scholarly production is orientated towards an overseas public. Hountondji (1990, 1994) draws on the centre-periphery model linking extraversion to historical subordination and making analogies between the functioning of the economic and academic domains. This notion of extraversion is central in Hountondji's (1970, 1972, 1978) work, having featured in his critique of "African philosophy", and having found a new context when used in his subsequent turn to dependency theory. It denotes an orientation among African scholars towards a perpetual conversation with the West.

Hountondji (1970) argued that scholarship on the African continent could only be extraverted because it is written for an audience in the global North rather than a local audience. According to Hountondji (1995, p. 4):

> African scholars are often tempted, especially in the social sciences to lock themselves up into an empirical description of the most peculiar parts of their societies, without any consistent effort to interpret, elaborate on, or theorise about these features. In so doing, they implicitly agree to act as informants for Western science and scientists.

The practice of extraversion manifests itself in the areas of research and the degree of generalisation that are orientated towards the interests of an external audience (Hountondji, 1990). As a result of this extraverted nature, the humanities and social sciences in the periphery limit themselves in both scope and perspective (Keim, 2008). Extraversion leads to a particularly bothersome limitation in the practice of scholarly activities, namely, the enclosure into the particular, or the idea that local scholarly discourse is only interesting if it refers to local realities. In doing this, the African scholar inhibits himself from the access to the universal

(Hountondji, 2002). Within such a system, African scholars can only be situated in the periphery.

Extraversion comes with the pressure to define oneself as exotic, which is a particularly limiting form of locality (Keim, 2008, p. 33). According to Sitas (2006, p.20), "there is serious pressure to define ourselves as 'different' in the world context of ideas. Trying to be more than peripheral exotica in the 'global cultural bazaar' of social science, we are bumping up against the niche trading tents we been offered." Extraversion persists as the core disciplines in the humanities and social sciences do not view the global North as places with genuine theory building, but instead as a field, a case study, where 'universal theory' developed out of the North Atlantic can be tested and validated. Contexts in the periphery like Africa and Latin America are often thought of as fields of experimentation, as regions exporting raw data in order to complement universal theory done in the North. This perception is tied to the perception that these contexts trail far behind in their social development and thus cannot yield cutting-edge research.

Connell (2018) adds to this argument, noting that to function successfully as an academic, one must read journals published in the metropole, learn the research techniques taught in that context and gain recognition there. Extraversion is most visible in the social sciences where African scholars produce research about their contexts through the lenses of Northern theories. According to Hountondji (1995), there exists a theoretical vacuum in knowledge production, as there has been an industrial vacuum in economic extraversion. According to Hountondji (2005), the indicators of extraversion include:

a. Dependence on imported apparatus;
b. Dependence on journals, libraries and publishing houses in the centre, particularly for storage, preservation and dissemination of research findings;
c. Theoretical extraversion, which is internalised by African scholars who find their main audience in the centre;
d. A focus on studying the immediate environment (local data collection) by African researchers rather than the independent creation of theoretical models;
e. Focusing local research on the needs of an extraverted economy;
f. The "brain drain" to the North in search of better opportunities;
g. Scholars in the periphery physically making the trip to the global North to develop their careers, as a structural necessity (the intellectual tourist circuit linking North and South);

h. Scientific tourism from North to South, in which researchers come in search not of knowledge but only of materials that lead to knowledge (information, new facts, and tests for their findings);
i. Dependence on metropolitan languages for scientific work resulting in the marginalisation of local languages.

4.6 Structural and Intellectual Challenges to Appropriating Epistemic Relevance

The inappropriateness of Western epistemologies outside of their particular contexts and the need to adopt epistemic relevance can be observed in the domain of the empirical, which is made up of everyday experiences. However, the observations in the domain of the real are caused by actions in the actual domain which, according to critical realists, is the middle layer of social reality. As an action performed to enact epistemic change, the appropriation of epistemic relevance takes place within the domain of the actual. If we follow the CR logic of a stratified social reality, it is possible to understand that as an action, appropriating epistemic relevance is governed by a complex web of structures within the deeper real domain. Following the logic of Archer's (1995) morphogenetic approach, the exploration of the interplay between structure and agency begins from the domain of the real, which is the deepest layer of social reality. The three layers of social reality and Archer's (1995) morphogenetic approach suggest that appropriating epistemic relevance involves intellectual and structural change.

Appropriating epistemic relevance is not possible without dismantling the structures of dependency and extraversion. Undoing the structures of dependency and extraversion is not possible without generating new knowledge that is not conditioned by the development and expansion of intellectual communities in the centre. The vertical and unidirectional flow of knowledge from the centre to the periphery needs to be resolved through provincialising[12] Western epistemologies "while opening up the diversity of African libraries – textual, oral, archaeological, etc., – to the wider world" (Adesina, 2006, p. 134). In the classroom context, this is not possible without scholarly works that are firmly rooted in the local context and knowledge produced with "epistemic intent" (Adesina, 2006, p. 137). This concerns how we produce social scientific knowledge which is meaningful to the local context, and taking these contexts seriously enough to derive epistemic analysis from them.

[12] Acknowledging the idiographic or particularity of Western thoughts rather than treat them as universal (Chakrabarty, 2000).

Epistemic relevance is about what can be known about the world and how it can be known. It is concerned with the transitive objects of knowledge, which include theories, the observational facts that input into a theory and methods of scientific inquiry. Epistemic relevance is therefore about "formal" knowledge which is expressed in a systematic manner. This points to a need for uniquely African or local theories, concepts and methods. These transitive objects of knowledge differ from social thought, which is less systematic and contains a great deal of "reflection on experiences, opinions, assessments, valuations and so on" (Alatas & Sinha, 2017, p. 13). While social thought is useful and forms the basis of many social theories and methods, it does not require a systematic approach and is not a necessary part of disciplinary knowledge.

The Eurocentric and Androcentric intellectual tradition continues to be the only one "alive" in the social science departments of most, if not all, modern universities (Chakrabarty, 2000). Chakrabarty (2000) uses the word "alive" to refer to a tradition in the social sciences where fundamental thinkers who are long dead are treated not only as people belonging to their times but also as though they were our own contemporaries. This seems to be guided by the belief that the humanities and social science can have only one, universal body of concepts and methods, and that these should be created in the global North. This assumption tends to make its way into higher education curricula and is reflected in the continued neglect and marginalisation of perspectives from women and scholars from peripheral communities.

Perspectives from the global North are fraught with evolutionist thinking and appear to be based on the assumption that all societies will go through the same stages of development, with the nations in the North representing the peak of development and the rest of the world catching up (Keim, 2008, p. 38). The development of the non-Western world is considered as parallel to that of the West. The core humanities and social science disciplines do not consider Africa or communities in the periphery as places with their own social realities and with genuine theory building, but instead as a field, a case study, where universal theory developed in the North can be tested and validated.

4.7 Conclusion

The structures that concern us in social theory are generally dynamic and maintain themselves in a steady state rather than one of passive equilibrium. Within these structures exists the potential for change which may lead them to adapt by moving to a new point of dynamic equilibrium. The appropriation of epistemic relevance in the humanities and social sciences requires that we investigate the whole range of possible social structures, identify those with

emergent causal powers and investigate how these causal powers emerge. Archerian morphogenetic cycles (of structural conditioning → agentive interactions → structural elaboration) are useful in these investigations. The morphogenetic cycles are helpful in investigating the historical developments of educational systems because we can deal with such developments retrospectively by conceptualising and picking out structural constellations (of people and their agency) that channelled agency during a particular period.

Social interaction is the ultimate source of complex phenomena; however, we have to consider agents' activities to be necessary but not sufficient conditions of structural change. Therefore, to account for the occurrence of structural elaboration (T^4), interactional analysis ($T^2 – T^3$) is essential, but it is inadequate unless undertaken in conjunction with the study of structural conditioning (T^1). Following this logic, the dependent and extraverted state of the humanities and social sciences is understood as structural elaboration (T^4) and the result of social interaction (T^2-T^3) which took place due to structural conditioning (T^1). As a consequence of structural elaboration the humanities and social sciences in the periphery continue to rely on perspectives imported from the global North, which are indigenous to their various contexts and arose as a response to social and political revolutions in those contexts. While "where" does matter, mainstream perspectives in the humanities and social sciences continue to see and speak from the global North as a result of their origins. Importing these objects of knowledge into the periphery results in humanities and social science disciplines that lack relevance, consisting of many cultural voids and steeped in Eurocentrism and Androcentrism.

Although it is important to critique Eurocentrism, Androcentrism and the neglect of perspectives from the periphery, it is also timely to shift the contours of the debate beyond this notice. The appropriation of epistemic relevance requires that the contours of the debate on the relevance of Western epistemologies move to the generation of local theories, concepts and methods. The generation of these theories, concepts and methods ought to acknowledge that knowledge production is partial, context specific and limited. Knowledge generation requires "keeping both eyes open" and embracing ways of thinking and doing that are not grounded only in Western cosmology, which has claimed a superior position for itself. In relation to knowledge production, the quest for relevance requires seeing beyond the claim of Western universality and finding different ways to explain, think about, analyse and manipulate the world. Western approaches of European science do not contain the tools to ask different questions and find different answers.

Chapter Five

The Role of Policy in Enabling and Constraining Epistemic Relevance: A Framework Analysis of Selected Higher Education Policies and Reports

5.1 Introduction

My concerns in this thesis are about the epistemic dimensions of inequality and exclusion, and how these operate and manifest in the humanities and social sciences. Epistemic relevance is proposed as a curricular and pedagogical principle to address the ongoing epistemic harms at South African universities, ensuring that students are given the communicative resources to understand and articulate both their own experiences and those of their social peers. What is defined as epistemically relevant here is that which acknowledges that there are diverse but equally valid ways of knowing the world. Although the individual academic has a role to play in achieving this in the classroom context, there also exists a myriad of enabling and constraining factors beyond their control. Chapter Four addressed the systemic and institutional structures at a global level, which enable and constrain epistemic change, and this chapter focuses on the systemic and institutional structures at the local level, namely, the policies which guide and regulate changes in higher education.

South Africa has witnessed considerable changes in higher education policy which have steered the merging of institutions, funding and various institutional modifications, which are all important. One of the central objectives articulated in most of these policies is the need to transform higher education to ensure both student access and success as part of the social justice agenda. The policy efforts have indeed resulted in enabling formal access but the issue of success, which I believe can only be ensured through enabling epistemological access, remains challenging. While policy weaknesses exist in several areas, such as funding and capacity building, this chapter is concerned with the strengths and weaknesses of higher education policies in relation to addressing epistemic harms and enacting epistemic change.

Structure and agency constitute different levels of stratified social reality, each possessing distinctive emergent properties which are real and causally efficacious but irreducible to one another. It is against this backdrop that this chapter presents a review of selected policies and reports, which are examined in relation to both enabling and constraining epistemic change. I open with a brief analysis of the concept of transformation and the meaning the concept has taken on in the context of South African higher education. Included in this section is a discussion of the structural context which has given rise to the policy developments on

transformation. Next, I make use of the framework method to analyse selected policies and reports which were aimed at guiding transformation in higher education. This examination is extended to the humanities and social sciences in the section that follows. I conclude the chapter by scrutinising the extent to which these policies have engaged with issues of epistemic change. In examining these policies and reports, the chapter attempts to set out the policy conditions under which epistemic relevance can be adopted in order to enact epistemic change.

5.2 The Transformation Context

Following the logic of Archer's (1995) morphogenetic cycle, the current context in higher education and, by extension, the humanities and social sciences, is understood as a consequence of past actions by previous actors through their prior social practices. Transforming the current context is about change and evolution, implying constant modification and restructuring of some sort and requiring human action. As a conceptual construct, transformation has its roots in critical theory, and in the context of education, it has been informed by the works of Brazilian scholar Paulo Freire as well as classical theorists Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault (du Preez, Simmonds, & Verhoef, 2016). To transform is to cause or undergo a change in form, nature or appearance. The concept should not be associated with rigidity, and implies some sort of remodelling and rupture with previous ways of doing things. This can be both an internal and external process; however, to transform means that form is given to something external (du Preez, Simmonds, & Verhoef, 2016).

In this chapter, the concept of transformation is used to refer to an intentional project of change that is political, social and epistemological, aimed at addressing historical disadvantages, exclusions and structural dysfunctions (Aina, 2010). In relation to epistemic change, remodelling and rupture can be understood as a shift in the "level of knowledge acquired, produced, implemented and questioned on the part of educators and learners – processes of coming to know, understand, implement and reflect" (Waghid, 2002, p. 459). At its core, transformation at this level refers to the ongoing change in the way both students and educators approach the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Understood this way, transformation in higher education should go beyond reform; it should include a re-examination of institutions and how marginalised students exist within them, and a reconstruction of these institutions as inclusive, durable and sustainable structures geared to meet the needs of all students.

The pursuit of transformation in higher education involves recognising and accepting that there are many conceptions and models of the university and that these have changed over time. The

name tends to apply to institutions with widely different functions, aspiring to different ideals. According to Badat (2007, p.14), the pursuit of transformation also requires vigilance regarding whether there exists a clear conception of the fundamental purposes of higher education, and the meaning of higher learning and of a university. Such meaning is not to be found only in what is taught and research, or how these are done. According to Badat (2007), the core characteristics of a university are four-fold:

(a) Producing and disseminating knowledge;

(b) Forming and cultivating the cognitive character of students to enable critical thinking;

(c) Allowing intellectual inquiry to exist without boundaries; and

(d) Having the necessary academic freedom and institutional autonomy to produce and disseminate knowledge.

Questioning the responsiveness of universities along these core characteristics is legitimate, because they are meant to advance the public good, and should be able to exemplify how their endeavours contribute to social equity and economic and social development. Universities are, and have always been, products of their society. Their perceptions and priorities should change as those of their society change around them. In the South African context, this need for change has a clear primary reference: apartheid. The history of apartheid reveals its highly discriminative principles whereby universities were segregated and where white universities were well resourced and Black institutions were deliberately limited, and kept remote from wealth and far from well-supported centres. Teaching and learning, two of the major functions of a university, were less resourced in historically Black institutions than the more advanced white institutions. During this period, the higher education system was structured according to this highly stratified dual system and informed by racial segregation.

Endorsing Archer's (1995) morphogenetic approach and analytical separability of structure and agency means recognising that there are emergent structures which were pre-dated by some actions and post-dated by others. Structurally, the need for transformation in South African higher education emerged from this history of upheaval, experiences of domination and resistance, struggles, conflicts and crisis, and a recognition of the need to engage with, redress, and transcend these experiences (Aina, 2010). Transforming higher education is considered an indicator of social progress and includes the need to ensure that barriers to access are completely removed, so that the system becomes more inclusive, achieving and widening

access, and improving throughput rates and participatory outcomes. In the post-1994 period, higher education was called upon to address and respond to the developmental needs of a democratic South Africa.

The transition to democracy marked an impetus for change to a more open, relevant and non-discriminating higher education system. The Education White Paper 3 (1997) and the National Plan for Higher Education (2001) were key here. The Education White Paper 3 called for the higher education system to reflect the changes that were taking place in society, which were related to redressing the inequalities of the past. According to the Education White Paper 3:

> [t]he higher education system must be transformed to redress past inequalities, to serve a new social order, to meet pressing national needs and to respond to new realities and opportunities and the framework for change, that is, the higher education system must be planned, governed and funded as a single national coordinated system. This will enable us to overcome the fragmentation, inequality and inefficiency which are the legacy of the past … (Department of Education, 1997, p. 2).

The first series of changes took place between 1995 and 1997 and involved structural reforms, opening up academic spaces, opening new policy objectives and rethinking the role of higher education in a developmental context. These changes were first guided by the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) and the Green Paper on Higher Education (1996), followed by the White Paper No 3 on Higher Education (1997), and the Higher Education Act (1997). These were followed by a period of intense policy discourse fuelled by the Council for Higher Education's (CHE) proposals Towards a New Higher Education Landscape (2000) and the National Plan for Higher Education (2001), The National Working Group's proposal Restructuring the Higher Education System in South Africa (2001), and the 2002 policy report on the restructuring of Higher Education, Transformation and Restructuring: A New Institutional Landscape for Higher Education. Other notable policy documents include the Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions (2008), the Declaration of the Higher Education Summit (2010), the National Development Plan (2012), the terms of reference of the Ministerial Oversight Committee on Transformation in South African Public Universities (2013) and the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2014).

The efforts to transform higher education occurred within the context of a formidable overall challenge of pursuing development (Badat, 2007, p. 7). In this context, transforming higher

education was seen as part of the broader process of South Africa's political transition and economic development. This included political democratisation, economic reconstruction and development, and redistributive social policies aimed at equity, a necessity and not an option in the South African context. According to Coate (2006), transformation in higher education was a compromise between "revolution" and "reform", with the former being a victory that only the most enthusiastic revolution supporters claimed for 1994, and the latter being the outcome which many people suspected was likely to occur.

Despite many significant shifts in the higher education sector, many of the systematic challenges inherited from the colonial-apartheid past have not significantly shifted. The system continues to reproduce student and staff outcomes reflective of the enduring legacies of our past. The system still largely functions as powerful reproductive machinery. While access to higher education has increased greatly, equity of opportunity and outcomes are dependent on transformed environments within institutions. Innovative pedagogical approaches, sustained student support and the development of flexible curricula all offer potential means of addressing throughput and success rates (Soudien, 2013). Addressing epistemic relevance and enabling epistemological access to achieve epistemic justice and better output of critical graduates is tied to both policy and scholarship on teaching and learning. Setting out the conditions necessary for this requires an examination of the interplay between structure and agency (endorsing and utilising separability).

5.3 Framework Analysis: A Policy Analysis Method

The Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions (DoE, 2008) highlighted three important aspects of transformation: policy and compliance, epistemological change, and institutional culture. Policy and compliance have to do with complying with laws on transformation as indicated by transformation indicators. Epistemological change entails interrogating the sources of knowledge and how knowledge is passed to students. Transforming institutional culture is about changing deeply embedded patterns of behaviour and shared values, assumptions, beliefs or ideologies which have been characterised as alienating. I want to suggest that these aspects of transformation are linked, with policy guiding and regulating activities related to both epistemological change and institutional culture. Therefore, it is important that any discussion on epistemic relevance as the enactment of epistemic change pays attention to the role of policy.

The meaning of policy is sometimes taken for granted, with the term often utilised to describe different things in the same context. Meaning, however, rests in people, not in a word, and the concept of policy is no exception (Ball, 1993). Anticipating that the concept is likely to take on different meanings or interpretations, it is worth defining the concept for the purpose of this chapter. In this discussion on averting epistemic harms in South African higher education, policy is considered as more than simply governmental outputs, as such a view is narrow and sees policy as a government-only driven affair. This chapter works with the notion of policy as both text and action, words and deeds; it is what is enacted as well as what is intended (Ball, 1994, p. 10).

Analysing policy can be understood as theoretical and procedural terrain aimed at giving methodological and professional support for the production of relevant information. It is often used to recommend solutions to social problems and is often multidisciplinary or normative in form (Mzangwa, 2019). There is a variety of policy analysis approaches, such as rationalist policy analysis and deliberative or argumentative policy analysis. The traditional practice which derives from economic principles applies tools such as cost-effective analysis and cost-benefit analysis, which are rooted in the positivist approach, also known as the rationalist policy analysis (Magwaza, 2019). Deliberative or argumentative policy analysis, on the other hand, is a type of policy analysis approach consisting of a set of processes and techniques for recommending and endorsing a particular policy which aims to address and tackle social problems resulting from public participation and deliberation.

Writing about the transformation of South African higher education, Badat (2007) warned that in any attempts to establish the nature and extent of what has been achieved to date in relation to policy, we need first and foremost, an imaginative theoretical framework or problematic. Such a framework should delineate the post-1994 ideological, economic, political and socio-structural conditions to ground the analysis of a number of important questions. These include how, in what way, and to what extent changes in the political economy have conditioned changes in higher education, what the implications of specific macro-economics have been for higher education change, and what the political terrain and a particular form of state have meant for higher education transformation.

Here the approach I draw on is the framework method, which originated in large-scale policy research. It sits within a broad family of analysis methods often termed thematic analysis or qualitative content analysis. These approaches identify commonalities and differences in

qualitative content before focusing on relationships between different parts of the content. The aim of the framework method is to draw descriptive and/or explanatory conclusions based on themes. Unlike other methods of analysis which search for patterns to generate full descriptions of a phenomenon, the framework method is not concerned with generating social theory (Srivastava & Thompson, 2009). Instead, it can facilitate constant comparative techniques through the review process.

The method is flexible, allowing the user to either collect all the content and then analyse it or conduct the analysis as they collect the content. Ritchie and Spencer (2004) propose the following five-step process in conducting a framework analysis:

- Familiarisation
- Identifying a thematic framework
- Indexing
- Charting
- Mapping and interpretation

The first step entailed familiarising myself with the various policies in higher education to gain an overview of which policies have guided the transformation of the sector. In conducting the second step, I already had certain themes in mind which could be related to averting epistemic harms, and this step was about identifying the discourse on the themes. However, while I had a set of prior themes, I maintained an open mind in an attempt not to force the selected policy documents to fit these themes. Indexing involved identifying portions or sections of policy documents that correspond to a particular theme. The fourth stage, charting, necessitated arranging the themes into charts. This was done by lifting the portions or sections of the policy documents from the original textual context and placing them in charts that consisted of headings and subheadings drawn from the thematic framework. The key characteristics laid out in the charts are analysed in the final stage, mapping and interpretation. The descriptive conclusions which emerged from mapping and interpretation of the selected policies and reports are presented below. The framework analysis was concerned with policies and reports intended to guide and regulate changes in higher education. In examining these policies and reports, the concern was with the policy conditions under which epistemic relevance can be adopted as a curricular and pedagogical principle. The selection of policy documents and reports for thematic analysis was guided by themes which were generated prior to the analysis.

Policy: NCHE Report	**Policy:** White Paper	**Policy:** NPHE	**Theme:** MCTHE
Themes	**Themes**	**Themes**	**Codes**
Responsiveness	Equity	Social justice	Accountability
Globalisation	Redress	Diversity	Effectiveness
Restructuring	Transition	Democracy	Efficiency
Economic needs	Funding	Intellectual	Ideological discourse
Partnerships	Transformation	Justice	Beliefs
Participation	Development	Equality	Knowledge
Massification	Effectiveness	Epistemic change	Curricula
Political transition	Participation	Discrimination	Quality
Legislation	Responsiveness	Exclusion	Dialogue
Community		Cognitive justice	
		Inclusivity	

Table 5: *Themes*

5.3.1 The National Commission on Higher Education Report and Green Paper

The National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) was appointed in 1995 to recommend to government ways in which the higher education system could be re-invigorated and made more responsive. The NCHE confronted two potentially contradictory pressures in the attempts to achieve this task: on the one hand, the pressure to prepare South Africa for participation in a sophisticated global economy; on the other hand, to render higher education more responsive to the needs and challenges of a country pulling itself away from its apartheid past. Setting up the commission marked the beginning of a contested policy process in the attempt to produce a document that satisfied stakeholders' expectations in relation to higher education restructuring (Moja & Hayward, 2000).

The final report released by the NCHE set out several principles which included equity in the allocation of resources and opportunities, redressing of historical inequities, democratic governance, and increased efficiency and productivity (Department of Education, 1996). Central themes in this final report are issues of *wider participation*, *responsiveness* and increased *partnerships* among higher education institutions (DoE, 1996). Wider participation was to be achieved through the *massification* of South African higher education. This was the first policy proposal which attempted to resolve the equity-development tension, since wider participation was meant to provide equity while providing the skills needed for the country's

economic growth. The envisaged *massification* would be a logical result of democracy, as large numbers of previously excluded and marginalised individuals entered higher education.

Increased responsiveness was intended to deal with development needs, and required new forms of management and assessment of knowledge production, dissemination and curricula. It was envisaged that changes in *institutional arrangements* would weaken boundaries of academic departments and promote flexible teaching teams. This was expected to create dynamic interaction between higher education institutions and wider society, thus promoting development and accountability (Cloete, 2006). Partnerships among higher education institutions was intended to improve co-operation amongst a broad range of constituencies, leading to greater participation and accountability.

The NCHE was also influenced by the theme of *globalisation* which was expected to lead to a shift in in knowledge production, from Mode 1 (discipline-based knowledge production in universities) to Mode 2 (interdisciplinary research conducted by teams inside universities). Mode 2 was considered more relevant in relation to the solution of real-world economic, technological, social and cultural problems. It also implied necessary shifts in curriculum organisation, not only from disciplinary to interdisciplinary and from courses to credits but also from departments to programmes, from knowledge to competence and from theory-based learning to problem-based learning.

The commission was criticised for remaining silent on the issue of curricula. However, I am persuaded to agree with Ensor (2004), who argued that the issue here was not the silence of the commission but rather the inconsistencies in the discourse on curricula and epistemic change. The commission spoke in a way that gave rise to ambiguity and confusion, and to widely divergent readings of its policy texts. This was the result of attempting to incorporate both credit exchange and disciplinary discourses. In the formal proposal on programmes, the NCHE (DoE, 1996) recommended that higher education programmes should consist of a coherent, planned and integrated sequence of learning activities, successful completion of which leads to the award of a formal qualification. While both credit exchange and disciplinary discourse influenced the formulation of the final NCHE report, the disciplinary discourse appears to have won the day (Ensor, 2004).

The overall report is underpinned by strong equity considerations: equity in the allocation of resources, redress of historical inequalities, cooperative governance, a balanced approach to material and human resources and high standards of quality. Other key features of the document

include increased participation, greater responsiveness and increased cooperation and partnerships (DoE, 1996). A single national system of higher education provision with planning instruments at national and institutional levels was envisaged. Given the history of higher education at the time, the report represented a progressive perspective with an emphasis on social justice, diversity and democracy.

In response to the NCHE report, the Department of Education released the Green Paper (1996), which was built on the report and focused on transformation as a means of overcoming the inequities of the past and developing the higher education system so that it could contribute to social, economic and political development. The Green Paper did not differ significantly from the direction proposed by the NCHE and instead attempted to strengthen some of the recommendations. Redressing past injustices was emphasised as were issues of race, class, and equity (DoE, 1996). Although higher education was assigned the task of creating the conditions necessary to put South Africa in a position to make full use of new technologies, the Green Paper does not clearly engage with the issue of knowledge or epistemic change in higher education.

5.3.2 The Education White Paper 3

In 1997, the Department of Education gazetted the Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education, for a single coordinated system. Equity and redress, democratisation, development, quality, and accountability were high on the agenda. The initial stages of transformation in South African higher education have traditionally been guided by this document which outlined numerous initiatives "through the development of a single co-ordinated system with new planning, governing and funding arrangements" (Department of Education, 1997). The White Paper begins by acknowledging that the system at the time was limited in its ability to meet the moral, political, social and economic needs of the country (Cloete, 2006). The text then proceeds to locate the transformation of higher education in the broader "political, social and economic transition, which is constrained by globalisation:

> (Transition) includes political democratisation, economic reconstruction and development, and redistributive social policies aimed at *equity*. This national agenda is being pursued within a distinctive set of pressures and demands characteristics of the late twentieth century, often typified as globalization. The term refers to multiple, inter-related change in social, cultural and economic relations, linked to the widespread impact of the information and communications revolution, the growth of trans-national scholarly and

> scientific networks the accelerating integration of the world economy and intense competition among nations for markets… These economic and technological changes will necessarily have an impact on the national agenda given interlocking nature of global economic relations (pp. 4-5)".

The White Paper specifies that transformation "…requires that all existing practices and values are viewed anew and rethought in terms of their fitness for the new era" (Department of Education, 1997, p. 1). It acknowledges several goals of higher education and suggests that higher education should "contribute to and support the process of people-driven development leading to the building of a better quality of life for all" (DoE, 1997, p. 3). It identifies the following goals for higher education: (i) to meet individual learning needs; (ii) to meet the development needs of society and to provide a skilled workforce for a knowledge-driven and knowledge-dependent society; (iii) "to contribute to the socialisation of enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens" (DoE, 1997, p. 3).

In summary, the White Paper reiterates the NCHE report and the Higher Education Green Paper, emphasising the importance of increased and broadened *participation, responsiveness* to societal interests and needs, and cooperative partnership of governance. On the latter, it called for a rethinking of relations between higher education institutions and the state, civil society and stakeholders (Reddy, 2004). The White Paper also focuses on *effectiveness* and *efficiency*, emphasising commitment to high academic standards to increase international competitiveness. The document implied that efficacy gains would have to be achieved through the implementation of a number of policy instruments such as a planning dialogue with institutions, a new funding formula, a reliable information system and a national plan that would provide benchmarks for planning and funding (Cloete, 2006).

The White Paper makes several references to knowledge, acknowledging that one of the key roles of higher education is to contribute to the creation, sharing and evaluation of knowledge. It was envisioned that a single coordinated system would contribute to the necessary range and quality of knowledge to accommodate the varying backgrounds, needs and interests of the student body. However, the document does not engage with the nature of this knowledge nor does it provide guiding principles for engaging in the pursuit of academic scholarship and intellectual inquiry. This is despite the document calling on higher education to deliver knowledge to address national needs and to contribute to the advancement to all forms of knowledge.

The document makes minimal reference to curricula, with commitment from the Ministry to conducting a review of the broad curriculum in higher education in terms of content, relevance, design and delivery. Here, there appears to be acknowledgement of the fact that an increase in formal access requires a change in curricula to offset the pressures for homogenisation. The White Paper is similar to the NCHE in that it is also a policy framework and does not go beyond the NCHE by being more specific about policy instruments and the trade-offs that would be necessary. While the White Paper does engage with the issue of knowledge, the engagement is broad, ambiguous and mostly about what is expected of higher education institutions. The guiding assumption of the documents seems to be the idea that if the numbers of students and staff reflected the demographics of the country, inclusion would be achieved. This quota-based understanding of inclusivity is one of the key shortcomings of the document.

5.3.3 The National Plan for Higher Education

The National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) outlines the framework and mechanisms for implementing and realising the policy goals of the White Paper. It was also based on a development approach that was the Ministry's response to the CHE report, Towards a New Higher Education Landscape: Meeting the Equity, Quality and Social Development Imperatives of South Africa in the 21st Century, which was released in June 2000. The plan is far-reaching in its attempts to deal with the transformation of the higher education system as a whole. It was aimed at impacting on every institution and addressing the shortcomings of the geo-political imagination of apartheid planners. The plan therefore provided the strategic framework for reengineering South Africa's higher education system for the 21st century. It established indicative targets for the size and shape of the higher education system and went on to provide a framework and outline the processes and mechanisms for the restructuring of the institutional landscape of the higher education system.

The NPHE wanted the main focus to be on improving the efficiency of the higher education system through increasing graduate outputs. The central points of the report were to use the interaction between institutional and national planning to make the system more efficient and effective. To this effect it proposed a "more rational arrangement for the consolidation of higher education provision through a combination of steering and legislative intervention in identified cases" (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2001). The plan acknowledged major policy implementation pitfalls arguing that it was unclear whether a more robust and timely

implementation of key policy instruments would have been possible given the capacity constraints at both national and institutional levels.

Unlike earlier policy documents, the NPHE demonstrates greater awareness of the challenges of epistemic and cognitive injustice that continue to plague South African universities. The NPHE notes the marginalisation of certain fields of study such as African languages, African literature and the neglect of indigenous knowledge systems. Institutions are encouraged to develop these fields, with a commitment from the Ministry to monitor developments closely. The document also acknowledges the need to transform curricula to reflect the location of knowledge and curricula in the context of the African continent. Although the introduction to the NPHE document states its aims as providing an implementation framework and identifying the strategic interventions and levers necessary for the transformation of the higher education system, the document remains vague and descriptive in relation to implementing the necessary changes in relation to knowledge.

5.3.4 The MCTHE Report

The 2008 Report of the Department of Higher Education, based on the work of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions (MCTHE), marked a shift from research on structural transformation to a broader ideological discourse. The committee was set up after a racist incident at the University of the Free State and the report it produced is useful here as it includes ideological discourse, thus not limiting transformation to institutional compliance (du Preez, Simmonds, & Verhoef, 2016). According to Soudien (2010, p. 876), this ideological discourse addresses beliefs and assumptions about the transformation of higher education. It explores discrimination and racism in great detail. It broadens the ideas of transformation to address issues related to assumptions and practices that underpin the academic and intellectual projects pertaining to learning, teaching and research (DoE, 2008, p. 11).

The MCTHE report is included in this review because of its ideological focus. According to the authors of the report, transforming higher education includes epistemological change; addressing discrimination and exclusions in terms of religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class and language; Africanisation or decolonisation of the curriculum; and intellectual justice. The report is the first to mention the notion of epistemological transformation which was understood as speaking to the core function of higher education in relation to teaching and

research. The MCTHE report noted the lack of epistemological change, which it characterised as changes to the curriculum with a focus on relevance, diversity and community engagement.

A number of recommendations aimed at addressing the lack of epistemological transformation are made by the authors of the report. These recommendations were based on the knowledge experience of both staff and students. They range from a review of curricula to the introduction of a common compulsory first-year course for all students introducing them to local and continental challenges. The proposals, while commendable, do not speak to the nature of the problems raised by students and staff. In addition to this, they are vague and do not deviate much from proposals made in earlier policy documents regarding the issue of epistemological transformation.

Following the review of policy and selected reports, I am inclined to agree with du Preez, Simmonds and Verhoef (2010), who argued that the history of the transformation of higher education in South Africa can be categorised into three main discourses. The first is the structural discourse which is related to the transition to a democratic society. Here the issue of equality and efficiency of the higher education system was primary and was guided mainly by the Education White Paper 3 of 1997. The second discourse can be related to ideology, involving a much broader understanding of transformation. This was mostly the result of the 2008 Report of the Department of Higher Education which was based on the work of the MCTHE (du Preez, Simmonds, & Verhoef, 2016). The third discourse includes aspects concerned with epistemology, curriculum, accessibility, teaching and learning.

5.4 Transforming Disciplinary Fields: The Case of the Humanities and Social Sciences

While the policies and reports reviewed make minimal reference to specific fields or disciplines, there have been several concerns about the decline of the humanities and social sciences. In what can be perceived as a response to these concerns, the Minister of Higher Education and Training (DHET), Blade Nzimande, commissioned a charter for the humanities and social sciences aimed at plotting a future for the fields as well as revitalising them. A task team and several reference groups were established by the DHET to assist in achieving this goal. There have been other initiatives aimed at the fields of the humanities and social sciences, but the Charter remains significant as it represented some of the first signs of deepening interest in the fields by those charged with policy-making.

The authors of the final report argued that the importance of the fields has been downplayed, its scholarship ignored, and its contributions marginalised (Department of Higher Education and

Training, 2011). For the authors, much of this marginalisation is reflected in government's funding formula, the manner in which research productivity is rewarded, which is insensitive to humanities and social science scholarship. In the final Humanities and Social Sciences Charter report presented to the minister, the authors make the point that there is a widespread perception of the humanities and social sciences as being in crisis. They appear reluctant to accept this position completely and point out that there was never a "golden past in apartheid South Africa's humanities and social sciences to cling to, besides pockets of excellence and ... critical scholarship" (DHET, 2011, p. 11).

Guided by these viewpoints, the task team arrived at a series of recommendations which included six key interventions intended to occur in two phases – Phase 1: 2012-2015 and Phase 2: 2015-2018:

- The formation of an Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences, a special purpose institution to energise the field of inquiry through five primarily virtual Schools in the first phase and four such Schools in the second phase, each located in a designated province;
- The creation of an African Renaissance Program, a continent-wide version of programmes like the Socrates and Erasmus Programs in the European Union;
- The formation of a National Centre for Lifelong Education and Educational Opportunities to generate and preserve equity and employability;
- The consolidation of six Catalytic Projects during the first phase that would animate the humanities and social sciences;
- The creation of the frameworks and new formulae necessary for the integrity of the disciplinary fields of study; and
- The implementation of 14 Corrective Interventions during Phase 1 to overcome once and for all the perceived crisis in the current landscape of humanities and social science scholarship.

It was envisaged that the implementation of the above recommendations would result in the humanities and social sciences being an epicentre of scholarship, pedagogy, community practice and social responsibility in Africa. This vision was viewed as necessary if academic institutions and the academic community in the South Africa were to become equal partners in

the world's knowledge production and dissemination alongside centres of excellence in the North and the Global South. The feedback received from various stakeholders following the publication of the Charter in mid-2011 suggests that there were many who did not share this vision.

For instance, in the Academy of Science South Africa (ASSAf) submission to the Department of Higher Education on the final report, it was argued that the recommendations in the Charter contained the potential for destructive conflict. The recommendations, according to the ASSAf (2011) submission, appeared to be entirely unconstrained by the structures and financing of the present science system, and seemed to propose that the humanities and social sciences be regulated in and through a series of instruments entirely separate from the university system. While the authors of the Charter report acknowledged that some of the proposals might introduce conflict, the ASSAf (2011) submission argued that the authors of the final report considerably underestimated the potential for destructive conflict that their proposals might engage.

The final report was also criticised for making recommendations that were unclear, such as the setting up of an Academy of the Humanities and Social Sciences, with many questioning how such a body would be constituted, under which government department it would operate, and the relation it would have to the existing humanist membership of ASSAF. At the time many believed that humanities and social sciences sector should have insisted on the opportunity to engage formally and rigorously with detailed proposals for an institute, the virtual schools and the catalytic projects, and to place additional or counter-suggestions on the table for consideration. Failure to do this and allowing regulation of the fields to be placed in the hands of a government department was seen as a declaration of a dire crisis in the humanities and social sciences which would not ultimately invigorate them at all.

My challenge with the final report, and others that have emerged on the state of the fields in the South African context, is the inaccurate and incomplete characterisation of the nature of the challenges in these fields. The "weak" and "marginal" position of the humanities and social sciences identified by Dr Nzimande (DHET, 2011, pp. 4-5) is not just a South African concern, but a general condition in the global South. This challenge has less to do with a focus on the natural sciences and more to do with the nature of disciplinary knowledge within these fields, which leaves certain parts of the student population epistemically alienated. Like other societies in the global South, South Africa has relied on Western or Eurocentric epistemologies as a

result of colonisation, intellectual imperialism, and the experiences of the forces of modernisation and its dependencies. This reliance has left many not recognising that the local context has potential sources of humanities and social science theorising with the ability to provide alternative epistemologies relevant to the local context. Instead, predominantly Western orientations continue to dominate the intellectual landscape. My premise is that if this "weak" and "marginal" position is to be rectified and for the humanities and social sciences to "play a prominent role in the lives of students" (DHET, 2011, p. 5), the starting point should be addressing the issue of epistemic change.

5.5 Higher Education Transformation and Epistemic Relevance

In the post-1994 period, much has been achieved on the legislative policy front to transform higher education institutions and make them more socially responsive and critically engaged in deepening and broadening access. While impressive gains have been made, old patterns remain and continue to be reproduced within the higher education sector and in the relationship between the sector and society. So, while South African higher education in the present context is profoundly different from the apartheid inheritance, it has some distance to travel before it can be declared that past imbalances have been eradicated. This is particularly true in relation to transformation at an epistemological level. Due to the social structures inherited from the colonial and apartheid past, epistemological transformation is likely to remain a work in progress but should not remain stagnant.

Epistemological transformation is about the kind of knowledge that universities ought to distribute, which has been a contested terrain. These contestations have been about what and whose knowledge should be included in teaching and learning programmes. Feminists, post-colonialists and sociologists, among others, have questioned the dominance and relevance of Western epistemologies in university courses. This dominance was also questioned by students during the 2015-2016 protests when they demanded the decolonisation of the university and, by extension, the curriculum. While the issue of free higher education was directed at the government during the 2015-2016 student protests, the issue of decolonising universities and, by extension, the curriculum saw students holding those who teach directly accountable. While the individual academic has a role to play in deciding what kind of knowledge is included in the curriculum, academic practices in institutions of higher learning are conditioned by both structural and agential influences. These arise from particular academic, market and managerial orientations, and are influenced by the past, the present and views about the future. It is

therefore necessary to separate these structural influences from the intervening influences of agents due to their quite different causal powers as human beings. This separability is indispensable to the critical realist approach adopted in this study.

In the previous chapter, I argued for "a conception of structure as more than a pattern of material, objective, and external constraints engendering human passivity; for a conception of agency as more than action that is un-structured, individual, subjective, random and implying absolute freedom; and for a conception of culture as part of social structure" (Hays, 1994, p. 58). This conception makes it possible to understand how the policies which guide change in higher education constitute structural influences. Through this conception it is also possible to grasp how adopting epistemic relevance as a curricular and pedagogical principle which aides in epistemic change requires more than the willingness of individual academics. I want to suggest that in relation to enacting epistemic change, policies can be both enabling and constraining.

The post-1994 period began with large, participatory policy efforts within a context of optimism for wider participation and redress of past inequities. One of the key changes which has been the result of these policy efforts is the change in student enrolment numbers to reflect national demographics. While this is a meaningful stride, we cannot ignore some of the challenges institutions continue to face as a result of widening participation in higher education. Universities are struggling with the epistemic dimensions of transformation, and the national transformation policy machinery has proven to be vague and broad in this regard. Policies acknowledge the need for epistemological transformation but fail to adequately account for the inherent features of this transformation. This vagueness renders these policies constraining conditional influences due to a lack of detail. The broadness could be considered as enabling agency as it leaves room for differing interpretations of epistemic change.

In addition to being broad and vague about the epistemic dimensions of transformation, the policy documents continue to tie the issue of knowledge with the responsiveness to national needs in relation to economic and developmental goals. This is constraining as it creates a vicious cycle in which lack of engagement with knowledge supports a lack of examination of institutional cultures, especially in relation to the experiences of the Black student population. While these policies acknowledge the need for epistemic change, they do not adequately account for how this change ought to respond to the epistemological needs of those who enter the system as a result of transformation initiatives. This group of students continues to be

negatively impacted by the kind of disciplinary knowledge that is available at universities. This constraint presents an opportunity to ensure transformation at an epistemological level has a deeper dimension than what we have witnessed thus far, by engaging not only with knowledge but also the identities of those receiving this knowledge.

Statistics regarding university success reveal that Black students have the biggest challenge regarding epistemological access, which in turn impacts on their levels of success. The debate on what is taught in the classroom is unavoidably about enabling those who have the biggest challenge. Soudien (2010) notes that many of the commitments made by the South African government fail to address issues of student access and student success at university level. Statistics reflect that only 5% of Black students who enrol for tertiary education make it through to graduation, while 60% of white students achieve this feat (Soudien, 2013, p. 23). While numerous gains have been made regarding granting access to historically disadvantaged students, the issue of "epistemological access" (Soudien, 2010, p.18) remains the biggest challenge and perhaps the least addressed issue in the debate on curriculum transformation.

As emergent entities, structures are not only irreducible to people, they predate them; however, agents are not puppets of structures because they have their own emergent properties, which means they either reproduce or transform social structure, rather than creating it (Archer, 1995). As agents, higher education practitioners are faced with both practical and theoretical questions as to what selection of knowledge should be represented in higher education programmes and courses. This raises questions about how knowledge production and distribution should be organised so as to provide the most effective research, teaching and learning. The silence of transformation policies on these issues presents a significant constraint in achieving the wider societal goals of a socially committed citizenry that embraces the values of non-discrimination and tolerance. There remains a need to engage with the nature of knowledge being disseminated in higher education institutions. Teaching and learning should cultivate a greater awareness of Africa, improve academic success rates, and expand student support.

A substantial improvement in equity of opportunity and outcomes for students should remain high on the transformation agenda. Higher education can and should be a major catalyst for development in all its dimensions, and the wider transformation of society. To date there is no institution that can claim to have overcome these challenges, which are inscribed in differential forms of states of transformation across the institutional landscape. The challenge here is to produce something that is useful while at the same time not oversimplifying issues of great

complexity. Transformation is a multi-layered concept, which means to achieve it must be similarly multifaceted. A single programme will not lead to success alone – a multiplicity of programmes addressing different aspects of higher education taken together in a holistic way is necessary.

The driving forces behind policy developments in the sphere of higher education are issues of transformation and equity. Policy developments should pay attention to the epistemic dimensions of transformation. In doing so, policy should be concerned with more than the structure of the curriculum, which has become the site for significant clashes of epistemologies, and engage with the nature and relevance of knowledge contained in the curriculum. Transforming the university involves expanding the notion of epistemological access to give students access to knowledge comprising more than the Western canon, thus giving access to alternative ways of knowing. Despite numerous shortcomings, the higher education system has the capacity to respond to the challenge of enacting epistemic change. The persistence of these challenges is a reflection of policy weakness during the post-apartheid era.

5.6 Conclusion

Social structures and agents each possess autonomous emergent properties, capable of independent variation. The idea of emergence means that analytically we can separate policies from agents which are responsible for enacting epistemic change in higher education. This analytical separation highlights numerous policy challenges, which include funding, redress and capacity building. The biggest gaps, however, are related to capacity building for historically disadvantaged students, particularly in relation to knowledge. While policy implementation indeed remains weak or half-hearted, these policies also remain problematic, constraining epistemic change by failing to adequately engage with the idea of epistemological transformation, which continues to be a legislative ideal. While epistemological change is alluded to in some of the important policy documents on higher education transformation, the issue has not featured as a central concern. It has not been the subject of critical debate in the public sphere and continues to be the concern of individual lecturers or groups of lecturers located in particular institutions.

Any social structure is dependent upon people and operative only through people, for positions have to have occupants and situations are things that people find themselves in (Archer, 1995). The primary focus of higher education should be the education and socialisation of students, in turn preparing them to become critical and responsive citizens. The role of government in

making sure this happens is funding and policies. Funding ensures that higher education institutions have a basic income while policies provide a regulatory framework for the long-term strategies of higher education institutions. While there is evidence of a radical shift in policy content and direction, there is also evidence of interpretation and implementation, with most higher education institutions in South Africa seemingly opting for technical compliance, manifested in carefully scripted documents.

For meaningful transformation at an epistemological level, policies that guide higher education should provide clear guidelines. Measuring the successes and failures of teaching and learning is never straightforward, but transformation should not be reduced to the pursuit of demographic equity. While complete agreement is not necessary to achieve transformation, some broad agreement or consensus is necessary in relation to key indicators or benchmarks of what transformation entails. Pointing out the challenge of epistemological transformation does not diminish the strides which have been made thus far nor does it suggest that there is a final destination in relation to achieving an idealised state. The real measure of transformation should be how well higher education institutions respond to the needs of students both in terms of formal and epistemological access. The calls for decolonised curricula by students during the 2015-2016 student protests reminded us of the work still needed in this regard.

Chapter Six

Decolonialism and Africanisation as Epistemically Relevant Epistemologies? A Sociological Discourse Analysis of Meanings and Implications

6.1 Introduction

In critical realism, discourse is understood as constructing our social realities. These constructions are, however, theorised as being shaped by the possibilities and constraints in the material world. For critical realists, material practices are given an ontological status that is independent of, but in relation with, discursive practices. Bhaskar (1989) has argued for an epistemological position that combines the role of human agency in constituting the social world and understanding that people's actions will be influenced by personal and societal mechanisms that are independent of our thoughts or impressions. Following the examination of the interplay between systemic and institutional structures and agency in enacting epistemic change, I now turn my attention to the interplay between agents and discursive structures. This is important because the issue of epistemic change in the humanities and social sciences has been widely debated. This study offers a synthesis of these arguments and offers a different way to view them in an effort to move beyond the debates.

I turn to discourse analysis, which aims to reveal the ontological and epistemological premises embedded in language. Due to its interdisciplinary origins, discourse analysis is a multi-perspective approach with different emphases and understandings in use, depending on the position adopted by those making use of the approach. An important assumption which underpins discourse analysis as a form of inquiry is that language cannot be considered transparent or value-free. The language that we take to be the most "natural" does not have universal meaning but is assigned particular meanings (by both the writer and the reader) according to the situation in which the language is used. The definition of discourse in use at any particular time reflects its theoretical underpinning, and reflects where the authors of the definitions are situated theoretically as well as the body of knowledge that underpins their work. The orientation taken here therefore reflects my own subjective judgements and reveals one possibility for understanding discourse on enacting epistemic change. Structurally, the chapter is divided into four parts and takes on the following format: the first part briefly outlines the motivation for relying on discourse analysis as an analytical method, part two presents the content analysis of the discourse, part three traces the social conditions which have given rise to the discourse on these concepts and part four focuses on the informative

dimensions of the discourse on these concepts. This interpretation is guided by the notion of epistemic relevance and focuses on context, culture and identity.

6.2 Understanding Discourse as Evidence and Evidence as Discourse

The epistemic dimensions of inequality and exclusion which prevail at South African universities have been widely debated, even if not always explicitly characterised as such. Within the social sciences and humanities, this issue is commonly related to the fact that the fields were implanted into local contexts by colonialists and European scholars, during and after formal independence. This implantation to a different historical and socioeconomic setting could not take place without doing injustice and violence to these settings. In short, the problem of irrelevance and the need to generate relevant alternatives has long been recognised and a robust discourse has emerged. In this chapter, I present the interpretation of the discourse on decolonialism and Africanisation, and evaluate the pragmatism of these concepts as tools to bring about epistemic relevance.

In attempting to understand the conditions necessary for epistemic change in the humanities and social sciences, it is important to focus on the ontological and epistemological relations central to the development of any social theory: "between the individual and society, between micro, meso and macro descriptions of society, and fundamentally between agency, the structures of agency and external structures" (Scott, 2010, p. 97). I have intentionally separated the different forms of social structures to highlight potential causal powers that inhere in different types of structural relations. This chapter is concerned with the discursive structures which have different characteristics from the systemic and institutional structures discussed in Chapters Four and Five. They impact on other objects in different ways, and, more fundamentally, the methods that can be employed to gain access to them (objects in the transitive realm) are different. These structures cannot be created by individual agents, though they may contribute to them either through collective action of a specific type, or through penetration of and change to current ideational formations.

Discursive structures can potentially, but not necessarily, effect change in another object. While systemic and institutional structures allow only a low level of resistance to its affordances, discursive structures can be resisted with greater ease. These two types of structures therefore differ in the degree of shaping capability, in the sense that the agent is less able to resist the one than the other. According to Scott (2010), the powers that discursive structures (mechanisms) exert can be categorised into powers possessed, exercised or actualised. Powers *possessed* exist

whether they are triggered by circumstances or not. Powers *exercised* have been triggered and have an effect in an open system, interacting with other powers that result from other mechanisms within their area of influence.[13] Powers that have been *actualised* are generating their effects; within the open system they are working together with other powers but, in this case, they have not been suppressed or counteracted.[14]

Discursive structures signify any speech act which includes ideological, political implications. In other words, discursive structures encompass discourse written or spoken, which is ideologically laden. There is no mainstream definition of discourse within the social sciences nor is there any generally accepted understanding of what discourse analysis is and, as a result, the literature does not provide any concrete definitions. According to Scott (1990, as cited in Parpart & Marchand, 1995, pp. 2-3) discourse is a historically, socially and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms, categories and beliefs – the site where meanings are contested and power relations are determined. A discourse consists of a set of common assumptions that sometimes may be taken for granted as to be invisible or assumed. Talja (1999) described discourse as the scaffolds of discursive frameworks, which order reality in particular ways. They enable and constrain the production of knowledge in that they make certain ways of thinking about reality possible. In his use of the term, Fairclough (1992) wanted to highlight the connection between texts and their social purposes, thus putting forward the idea of discourse as social practice. Describing discourse as social practice is useful in the arguments for epistemic relevance as this implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it. The discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. That is because discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people (Fairclough, 1992, p. 282).

In CR, discourse is understood as constructing our social realities. These constructions are, however, theorised as being shaped by the possibilities and constraints inherent in the material world. From the critical realist perspective, material practices are not reducible to discourse, unless interpreted discursively; rather, material practices are given an ontological status that is independent of, but in relation with, discursive practices (Sims-Schouten, Riley, & Willig,

[13] These exercised powers may still not give rise to any observable phenomena as other powers may be acting against them.
[14] Discursive structures can be possessed and not exercised or actualised, possessed and exercised, or possessed and actualised.

2007). According to critical realist philosophy, while meaning is constructed in interaction, non-discursive elements also impact on meaning and understanding how language functions in constituting and transmitting knowledge. Critical realism encourages us to move from seeing discourse as abstract to seeing our words as having meaning in a particular historical, social and political condition. Language can be used to represent speakers' beliefs, positions and ideas in terms of spoken texts like conversations. Written or oral messages convey meanings if we analyse the underlying meanings of the words. Analysis of these underlying meanings can assist in interpreting issues, conditions and events in the social world.

The context of discourse is crucial as CR considers language as social practice. Critical realism therefore encourages the critical and constructive analysis of language, and making judgements about the value and truthfulness of texts and relevant documents is encouraged (Mogashoa, 2014). According to Locke (2004), discourse from the CR perspective is a coherent way of making sense of the world as reflected in human sign systems, including verbal language. Critical realists describe discourse as a concept that is in active relation to reality, with language merely referring to objects which are taken to be given in reality. Since language is a social and cultural instrument, our sense of reality is socially and culturally constructed. According to Fairclough (1995), language is a material form of ideology, and it in turn is invested in ideology.

Discourse analysis situates texts in their social, cultural, political and historical context. Texts are then interrogated to uncover the unspoken and unstated assumptions implicit within them that have shaped the very form of the text in the first place. Discourse analysis is therefore an approach rather than a method, and any approach to discourse analysis should involve rigorous methods of systemic and explicit analysis (van Dijk, 1997). The meaning of a text does not come into being until it is actively employed in a context of use. In other words, discourse can be seen as the process of activating a text by relating it to a context in use. Contextualisation of a text is actually the reader's reconstruction of the writer's intended message. Discourse analysis is part of the social constructivist approach within the humanities and social sciences. It is part of the linguistic turn in the social sciences and humanities which emphasises the role of language in social reality. With regard to basic assumptions about being, self and the world, discourse analysis maintains that these are produced and reproduced by speech acts. It pays attention to the way in which discourses produce and transform social reality, and makes it possible to evaluate the practical consequences of different ways of approaching a particular phenomenon (Talja, 1999).

At any one time there are several discursive frames for thinking, writing and speaking about aspects of reality. It is worth noting, however, that not all discourses will be afforded equal presence and even equal authority. As a result, at any time in history, certain discourses will operate in such a way as to marginalise or even exclude others. What is examined in this chapter can be viewed as the discursive frames which have been afforded presence in the debates on addressing epistemic harms at South African universities. These discursive frames have gained prominence as a result of sociohistorical influences operating on them. In the humanities and social sciences, text sequences are used as illustration, taken out of context without relating them to the entire textual material and without providing any justification for their selection. Here, I am not interested in analysing the content of texts for the ways in which they have been structured in terms of syntax and semantics. Instead, my interest lies in the way in which texts themselves have been constructed in terms of their historical and social situatedness. Discourse analysis situates texts in their social, cultural, political and historical contexts. Common questions include "Why was this said, and not that?", "Why these words?" and "Where do the connotations of the words fit with different ways of talking about the world?" (Parker, 1992). Here, texts will be interrogated to uncover the unspoken and unstated assumptions within them about the nature of knowledge.

My use of discourse analysis, although underpinned by critical realist philosophy, is not critical discourse analysis but sociological discourse analysis. The former focuses on the micro-detail of text and interaction, while the latter tends to train its sights on a much wider canvas. I also want to suggest that this analytical method is much more compatible with Archer's (1995) morphogenetic approach as it is based upon the historicity of emergence, therefore allowing for the analytical separation of discursive structures and agents. Sociological discourse analysis is utilised as a broad theoretical framework concerning the nature of discourse on enacting epistemic change. In my arguments for epistemic change, I have argued that epistemic relevance should be adopted as a curricular and pedagogical principle. To do this, some guiding principles are necessary. I believe the academic debates that have emerged in the attempts to understand and avert epistemic harms at South African universities provide a good starting point for formulating these guiding principles.

Sociological discourse analysis is based on an emergent logic, beginning with the real world and building an inductive understanding of it as events unfold and knowledge accrues (Ruiz Ruiz, 2009). From a sociological perspective, discourse is understood as any exercise by which individuals permeate reality with meaning (Ruiz Ruiz, 2009). Sociological discourse analysis

has been developed through adopting and adapting methods of analysis developed in other social science traditions such as linguistics and political theory. In order to interpret discourse from a sociological standpoint, the discourse must first be analysed from both a textual and contextual approach (Ruiz Ruiz, 2009). There are, therefore, three levels of analysis: a textual level, a contextual level and an interpretative level (Keller, 2009; Ruiz Ruiz, 2009).

6.3 Inductive Content Analysis: Discourse as Object

Due to the nature of this study, relying on documents appeared like a realistic approach to collecting and sorting through information. Documents have a major benefit over interviews and other data collection methods – that is, their lack of reactivity. In addition to this, documents were chosen as they contain text that has been recorded without a researcher's intervention (Bowen, 2009). Therefore, they can be viewed as "social facts", which are reproduced, shared, and used in socially organised ways (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004, p. 46). The use of documents as sources of evidence has a long and worthy tradition in the empirical social sciences (Bowen, 2009, Charmaz, 2008, Prior 2008). A document can be viewed as any symbolic representation that can be recorded and retrieved for description and analysis (Bowen, 2009). A qualitative approach to such description and analysis focuses on describing and tracking discourse, including words, meanings and themes over time. Documents in the form of journal articles, academic books and book chapters were collected and systematically reviewed for analysis. In selecting the documents for review the following questions were asked (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004):

- When were the documents produced?
- Where were the documents produced?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Information about the author

According to Prior (2008), documents always enter social affairs in two modes: (i) as receptacles of content and (ii) as agents in networks of action. Traditionally, the focus of social scientists has been on the former and such a focus is well established in the social sciences (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004). In the context of this review, documents were approached as sources of information, with the writing they contain being scoured for appropriate data. The use of these documents was selective because I was interested in conjectures and claims that had already been decided on. The selection of appropriate documents began with scanning

(superficial examination), reading (thorough examination), and interpretation. This is an iterative process which combines elements of content analysis and thematic analysis (Blair, 2015). It entailed a first-pass document review, in which the meaningfulness and relevance of each document was identified (Bowen, 2009). Here pertinent information in relation to enacting epistemic change was separated from information that was not pertinent. The final selection of the documents was guided by assessing each document for the following (Bowen, 2009, p. 33):

- Completeness – comprehensive (covering each concept completely or broadly) or selective (covering only some aspects of the concept);
- Evenness – containing great detail on some aspects of the concept and little or nothing on other aspects;
- The original purpose of the document and intended audience;
- Evaluation against other sources of information because documents are context-specific; and
- Information about the author

Reviewing documents yielded the data – excerpts, quotations and entire passages – that were then coded and organised into key themes through content analysis. This marked the first level of sociological discourse analysis, and I relied on inductive content analysis, which is useful if knowledge about a phenomenon is fragmented. Content analysis usually implies both enumeration and understanding of the various words within a text (Cavanagh, 1997). This approach moves from the particular to the general, so that particular instances are observed and then combined into a larger whole or general statement (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). Through inductive content analysis, it was possible to refine words into fewer content-related categories (Cavanagh, 1997). This can only happen through being absorbed in the data, which is why the documents were read through numerous times. No insights or theories can spring forth from the data without the researcher becoming completely familiar with them.

It was anticipated that when categorised into the same categories, linguistic units such as words and phrases share the same meaning. To classify the data, I made use of open coding (Price, 2012, p. 2), which consisted of two phases: initial coding and focused coding. Initial or open coding required a close reading and examination of the data (Cavanagh, 1997). Open coding was first introduced in grounded theory research, and refers to the "initial interpretative process by which raw research data are first systematically analysed and categorised" (Price, 2012, p.

2). This required an engagement in document collection while simultaneously analysing the documents. It is important to note that unlike the grounded theory method of coding for actions and analytic possibilities, I was much more concerned with themes (what is known as general qualitative coding). Initial coding was carried out by coding paragraphs. This was the commencement of a long process of working with raw data, through constant comparison, initial conceptual identification, and categorisation (Blair, 2015).

To begin the open coding process, I wrote notes and headings in the text while reading it. Themes were freely generated at this stage. To create themes, the data were classified as belonging to a particular group. This implies a comparison between these data and other observations that do not belong to the same category (Stemler, 2001). Creating themes provided a means of describing the discourse, to increase understanding and to generate knowledge. Coding was carried out manually for two reasons. Firstly, there were practical issues to consider, such as the time it would take to familiarise myself with coding software. Secondly, I was much more comfortable using highlighters and pens.

Having established initial codes which were most frequent and significant, I began to engage in focused coding. After the open coding, the lists of categories were grouped under higher-order headings (McCain, 1998). The intention here was to reduce the number of categories by collapsing those that were similar or dissimilar into broader higher-order categories. This process was not just about bringing together observations that are related, but rather providing a means of describing the phenomenon, to increase understanding and generate knowledge. Decisions are therefore guided by interpretation as to which things to put in the same category (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). In this case, I began the analysis by analysing the words used in the documents, as well as the number of times certain words were used. Each category was named using content-characteristic words. Subcategories with similar events or incidents were grouped together as categories, and categories were grouped as main categories. This process was continued as far as was reasonable and possible. I opted not to use any concordance programs for practical reasons, such as the time it would take to familiarise myself with such software.

Theme: *African Identity*	**Theme:** *Paradigm Shift*	**Theme:** *African Culture*
Codes	*Codes*	*Codes*
Integration	Alienation	Rich knowledge base already
Indigenous	Context	exists
The African experience		Oral traditions

Reclaim	African-culture based theories	African Philosophy
Theme: *African Renaissance* *Codes* Reclaiming what has been taken away from Africa Culture Valorising African scholarship	**Theme:** *Agency* *Codes* African agenda Reclaim history Destiny Social justice Capabilities Student voice	**Theme**: *The African University* Codes Learning from social context Rethinking the disciplines African culture Transdisciplinary
Theme: *Empowerment* *Codes* Agency Context Collaboration Bottom-up approach Language	**Theme**: *Enablement* *Codes* Give students means to transform their reality Student voice Indigenous knowledge Responsive citizenry Emancipation	**Theme**: *Indigenous Knowledge* *Codes* Legitimation Protection Integration African philosophies

Table 6: *Coding Table*

Qualitative content analysis emphasises an integrated view of texts and their specific contexts. It goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts to examine meanings, themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in particular text. This method was particularly useful given the large amount of textual data I was dealing with. It ensured that the different textual sources could be dealt with in a similar manner and utilised in corroborating evidence. Disadvantages of using this method include the fact that it is time consuming and the fact that excessive interpretation on the part of the researcher poses a threat to successfully carrying out content analysis.

6.4 Contextual Analysis: Discourse as a Singular Event

The second level of analysis centred on context, which is the space in which discourse has emerged and takes meaning (Ruiz Ruiz, 2009). For this phase of analysis, I made use of intertextual analysis. The implicit and explicit relations that a text has to prior, contemporary and potential future texts are known as intertextuality (Cheek, 2004). In its simplest sense,

intertextual analysis is a way of interpreting texts, which focuses on the idea of texts borrowing words and concepts from each other. Though intertextual analysis, it was possible to distinguish different levels at which each text invoked another text and relied on the other text as a conscious resource. These included:

- Drawing on prior texts as a source of meanings, which is visible when a text draws from another source as authoritative and then repeats that information for the purposes of the new text;
- Drawing on the explicit language of prior texts engaged in the discussion;
- Explicitly using statements as background, support and contrast. This is most visible in the use of quotations from a work of literature to support an analysis;
- Relying on beliefs, issues, ideas and statements generally circulated;
- Though using certain implicitly recognisable kinds of language, phrasing, and genres, every text evokes particular social worlds where such language and language forms are used.

Intertextuality is not always intentional and is often utilised inadvertently (Zengin, 2016). As a literary device, it creates an "interrelationship between texts" resulting in related understanding in separate works. I relied on intertextual analysis to identify which realm of sources a writer relies on and how they do this, as well as understand how writers attempt to characterise, rely on and advance prior work on the grammars of change. Texts were analysed for the following techniques of intertextual representation: direct quotations; indirect quotations; mentioning a person, text, or statements; and utilising recognisable terminology and jargon associated with specific people or groups of people or specific texts. Intertextuality asserts that when a text is read in the light of the texts to which it refers or from which it has traces, all the assumptions and implications surrounding those referred texts will shape the interpretation of the text in question (Zengin, 2016). Bazerman (2004) proposes the following procedures for analysing intertextuality, which were utilised during this second level of discourse analysis:

- Creating a list of all the instances of intertextuality in the text. This entails evaluating the relevance of the text;

- Listing how the instances of intertextuality are expressed, thus evaluating the degree of textual integration (whether it is through direct quotation, indirect quotation, paraphrasing or description);
- Identifying whether intertextuality can be attributed to a person or source; and
- Interpreting the intertextuality, which involves making comments on how or for what purpose the intertextual element is being used in the text.

Cheek (2004) warns of an ongoing tension in discourse analytic research between the text and the context in which that text is situated. The dilemma for the researcher is often how far one should go beyond the actual text being analysed to arrive at a contextual interpretation of what is being conveyed. In addition to this, discourse analytic research tends to give a great deal of power to the analyst to impose meanings on another's texts (Cheek, 2004). As a result of these issues, I constantly took into consideration that as an analyst, I was not only the reader but also a producer of discourse.

Intertextual analysis was first carried out with the texts related to decoloniality, which originated from Fanonism and the discourse on decolonisation. Decolonisation, the precursor of decoloniality, was initially a call for a dual process of destruction and restoration. Although not explicitly addressing issues related to education, Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), which has been hailed as "The Handbook of the Black Revolution", became a key text in articulating this form of destruction and restoration. Fanon, who is sometimes credited as the father of decolonisation, became an authoritative figure in the discourse on decolonisation. Interestingly, the analysis provided in *The Wretched of the Earth* was meant to be relevant to a particular time and place – Algeria in the 1960s. Fanon (1963) also warned that the analysis provided in the book was not intended to be applicable to every Black man in similar conditions. He did, however, call for people to respond to their time and place as he did with his Algerian context. He also acknowledged that one can perhaps identify some broad threads along the lines of the analysis he provided.

Another text commonly drawn on as a source of meaning in the discourse on decolonisation is Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's (1981) collection of essays titled, *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature*. This work by the Kenyan novelist was published in 1981 at the height of the Cold War and examines the relationship between language and culture. For Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, language and culture carry the entire body of values by which people perceive

themselves and their place in the world. The text is commonly drawn on to articulate the centrality of language and culture in both colonisation and decolonisation. In the book, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1981) argued that through culture, colonial domination controlled how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world. In short, colonialism was not just about physical spaces but also the mind of the colonised. In making this link between colonisation and the psyches of the oppressed, the Fanonian influence is clear. For Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1981), decolonisation was about the search for a liberatory perspective and finding alternative ways to see one's place in the world.

The debates also connect Fanon's and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's ideas on the psychological effects of colonisation to Steve Biko's ideas on Black Consciousness, which Biko described as an attitude of mind and way of life. These ideas were about liberating Black people from the inferiority complex they continued to experience as a result of the apartheid and colonial experience. Black Consciousness was an appeal to Black people to take pride in their own culture. The ideas on Black Consciousness are drawn from Steve Biko's book, *I Write What I Like*, which was originally published in 1978, and republished in 1987 and 2002. It is a collection of Biko's writings from 1969 when he took the role of SASO president. Similar to Fanon, Biko was not writing explicitly about education, but his ideas have become central in articulating the need to move away from Western universals.

In articulating the shift from colonialism to coloniality in the present moment and the need for decoloniality, a few Latin American scholars have emerged as central figures. These include literary critic Walter Mignolo, Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano and anthropologist Arturo Escobar. Here it is difficult to cite specific texts, as the idea of decoloniality in higher education has not been widely debated. The texts examined mostly make reference to Anibal Quijano's seminal essay "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America" (2000). However, I want to argue that most scholars writing on decolonisation are in fact calling for decoloniality. In the African context, Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, drawing on the work of some of the Latin American scholars listed here, has become a prominent voice in articulating the debates on coloniality and decoloniality in higher education. Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2013) book *Coloniality of Power in Postcolonial Africa* is widely cited in the texts examined and represents efforts towards interrogating the postcolonial condition in Africa, focusing on epistemological, economic and cultural dependence.

Similar to the ideas on decoloniality, the calls for Africanisation are rooted in the colonial experience, and applied to education, it is taken to signal a renewed focus on the African context and to render knowledge more African (Louw, 2010). In the academic debates on Africanisation, Malegapuru Makgoba's (1997) book, *The Makgoba Affair - A reflection on transformation*, has become a source of meaning. Makgoba, who is the former vice-chancellor at the University of KwaZulu Natal, has become somewhat of an authoritative figure in understanding the meaning of Africanisation. It is worth noting that all the documents analysed to understand Africanisation make reference to Makgoba's definition of Africanisation. In the book, Makgoba (1997, p. 66) writes that Africanisation is not a process of exclusion but of inclusion:

> [I]t is a learning process and a way of life for Africans. It involves incorporating, adapting and integrating other cultures into and through African visions to provide the dynamism, evolution and flexibility so essential in the global village. Africanisation is the process of defining and interpreting African identity and culture. It is informed by the experience of the African Diaspora and has endured and matured over time from narrow nationalistic intolerance to accommodating, realistic and global form.

The above quotation from Magkoba's (1997) book is commonly utilised as background, support and contrast in the effort to provide a definition of Africanisation. The danger of relying on this quotation is that a single and incomplete narrative of what Africanisation means has been created. In addition to this, the quote itself is commonly taken out of context without engaging with the entire text to understand the original context in which it was written. Many of the criticisms (Horsthemke, 2004) of Africanisation are based on this quotation and seem not to take into account other developments in the discourse.

The text was published in 1997, three years after the transition to democracy, which marked an impetus for change to a more open, inclusive, relevant and non-discriminating higher education system. In the post-1994 period, higher education was called upon to address and respond to the development needs of a democratic South Africa and to transform in response to post-apartheid policies. During this period, struggles over who played a significant role in determining the direction of institutional change were not uncommon. In the book, Makgoba (1997) addresses the topical issue of *transformation*, which was a key concern in South Africa following the 1994 democratic elections. The text also attempts to elucidate the role of the African intellectual in South Africa, a subject Magkoba (1997) described as central to institutional

transformation. There are several themes which can be highlighted in the text such as the notion of self-consciousness, agency and the idea of a unique "African identity". These will be unpacked in the interpretation of the discourse.

6.5 Interpretation: Discourse as Social Product and Information

There is no one mainstream definition of discourse, neither is there any generally accepted understanding of what discourse analysis is, or which method(s) its practitioners should use. Instead, the concept is a broadly-used and abstract term that is utilised to refer to written or spoken communication or debate. It is not produced without context and cannot be understood without taking context into account. Discourses are always connected to other discourses which were produced earlier, as well as those which are produced synchronically and subsequently. Discourse analysis is used to describe a number of approaches to analysing written and spoken language use. As an analytical method, it involves deconstructing and critiquing language use and the social context of language use. Some discourse analysts consider the larger discourse context in order to understand how it affects the meaning of a sentence. The final level of sociological analysis requires interpretation of the discourse, which, although characterised as the third level of analysis, is present in the prior two levels (Ruiz Ruiz, 2009, p. 7). At this final level of analysis, discourse is interpreted as *social information and as a social product*.

Interpreting the informative dimension of discourse entails providing relevant information about social reality. Discourses both enable and constrain certain ways of thinking about reality while excluding others. In this way, they determine who can speak, when, and with what authority; and, conversely, who cannot (Keller, 2005) Interpreting discourse as information attempts to explain discourse in terms of the social competence of subjects as informants, namely their knowledge of reality and their expository capacity (Ruiz Ruiz, 2009, p. 9). This type of analysis is prevalent in the analyses of expert discourses. Interpreting discourse as a social product considers the social conditions under which it has been produced. Discourse carries a heavy symbolic load; however, not all discourses are afforded equal presence or, therefore, equal authority (Cheek, 2004). The key questions for this type of interpretation are: Why have certain discourses been produced (and not others)? What social circumstances have allowed some discourses to arise and not others?

The interpretation is concerned with the social conditions which have given rise to these discourses as well as the strategies provided by these discourses to bring about epistemic relevance. While the concepts of decolonialism and Africanisation have gained popularity,

there is also some confusion around what they entail, especially for the individual academic. In what follows, I attempt to demonstrate that as instruments to ensure that curricula and pedagogy accommodate different representations of reality, they mean different things. Such distinctions are important because the manner in which we address epistemic irrelevance is unlikely to be uniform across contexts and the applicability of these concepts might be limited to certain disciplines.

Although there is awareness of the need to grant equal access to higher education both in a formal and an epistemological sense, the latter remains challenging. The plethora of available frameworks, which include decoloniality and Africanisation, is yet to give rise to epistemic and cognitive justice. It is worth noting that these discourses tend to be evoked whenever there is a crisis in higher education, and they are often forgotten when the system is relatively "stable". For instance, they gained popularity at the height of the transition to democracy, whenever racist incidents are reported and again during the 2015-2016 student protests. This continued resurgence points to the lack of change and evolution within the higher education system. In interpreting the informative dimension of the discourse, I was particularly interested in how these concepts which Mathebula (2019, p.1) characterises as "general (every day), often vague (ill-defined), uncritical and unargued (collective singular)", could assist in rethinking the purpose and form of higher education. This discussion is an endeavour to contribute towards unravelling some of the misperceptions that have ensued and, at times, concealed the possible impact each concept can have in addressing the epistemic dimensions of exclusion and inequality.

6.5.1 The Emergence of Decolonialism and Africanisation

Ruiz Ruiz (2019) warns that the interpretation level of sociological discourse analysis often raises great suspicion. This is the result of interpretation moving beyond the specific discourse being analysed. This can lead to the view that the interpretations are poorly founded or even arbitrary. This interpretative leap, however, is grounded in both the textual and contextual analysis carried out at the first two levels of analysis. The information about the discourse produced in the two previous levels provides a strong foothold for the interpretative leap. In practice, the sociological analysis of discourse was conducted simultaneously on the three levels (textual, contextual and interpretive) in an ongoing circular process between each of the levels. The first two levels of analysis (textual and contextual) are presented in the previous sections, and this section presents the last level of analysis. The interpretive level is concerned

with the social conditions which have given rise to these discourses, as well as the information provided by these discourse in relation to enacting epistemic change in the humanities and social sciences.

The social conditions which have given rise to the discourse on decolonialism and Africanisation can be traced back to Africa's colonisation. Educational institutions in Africa date back a thousand years. Al-Azhar in Egypt, Al-Zaytuna in Morocco and Sankore in Mali all existed prior to European domination of the continent (Mamdani, 2011). The institutions of higher education under which we currently labour, however, are those ordered by the type of disciplinary divisions that emerged in 19th and 20th century Europe. The emergence of universities of this order in Africa was mainly a post-colonial development during the 1950s and 1960s (Truscott & Van Bever Donker, 2017). During this period, the development of universities was a key nationalist demand and every country needed to show a national university as part of proving that the country had truly become liberated (Mamdani, 2011, p. 2).

Although emerging after independence, the colonial legacy remained intractably entrenched in these institutions. The general consensus among several African scholars (Adesina, 2006, Mamdani, 2011, Mbembe 2016, Wa Thiong'o, 1981) is that these institutions remain Eurocentric, based on a Western canon which attributes truth only to the Western way of knowledge production. The Western canon disregards other epistemic traditions and attempts "to portray colonialism as a normal form of social relation between human beings rather than a system of oppression" (Mbembe, 2016, p. 32). As a result of this colonial legacy, for some the academy can be an alienating, tremendously white, Eurocentric space and experience. For Black students in particular, there is an expectation to assimilate to unfamiliar norms, customs and academic language in spaces that are not quite accommodating of their presence. At historically white universities, there remains "a deeply embedded culture of whiteness that has yet to yield to substantive respect for and affirmation of difference and creation of inclusive institutional cultures" (Badat, 2019, p. 7).

Institutional culture has been a key impediment to epistemological transformation and remains "invisible and unmarked… the absent centre against which others appear as points of deviation" (Perry, 2021, p. 36). Neither the irrelevant Western canon nor this culture of whiteness and subordinate inclusion has gone unchallenged by students. South African students have an extensive history of asking various questions about the purpose and form of education they receive. These questions often arise out of day-to-day challenges around issues of race, class,

access, representation and recognition. In the university context, these questions have been expressed through various approaches that have included, but have not been limited to, protests, hostage taking of staff, boycotting of lectures and vandalism (Badat, 1999). Questions about representation and recognition were raised during the 2015 – 2016 #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall protests when students demanded decolonisation and Africanisation of the contents and practice of teaching.

6.5.1.1 Decolonialism: Epistemic Freedom

Although the emerging Latin American movement might beg to differ, as a school of thought, decolonialism[15] is tied to decolonisation. Decolonisation can be traced back to the late 1960s when several European empires had been largely replaced by dozens of new nation-states, and its application primarily political (Betts, 2012). Its central theme was the creation of independent nation-states, free from colonial rule. It was soon extended in meaning to include all elements incurred in the colonial experience, whether political, economic, cultural or psychological (Hargreaves, 1996, p. 244). It can be understood as an umbrella term for varying efforts to resist processes of colonialism and enact change and redress in relation to the effects of these processes (Stein & Andreotti, 2017).

Its definition can, if we want to describe it accurately, be summed up in the well-known words: "the last shall be first and the first last. Decolonisation is verification of this" (Fanon, 1963, p. 2). According to Fanon (1963, p. 35), decolonisation is quite simply the replacing of a certain "species" of men by another "species of men". "Without any period of transition, there is a total, complete, and absolute substitution" (Fanon, 1963, p. 36). Fanon (1963, p. 36) saw decolonisation as a programme of complete disorder, characterised by revolutionary violence which can be understood as a declaration of agency as well as a means to recover agency following years of colonial subjugation and humiliation. Similar to the political context, the discourse on decolonising higher education emanates from the experience of imposed European colonisation which was accompanied by epistemic violence. Mathebula (2019, p.7) has argued that the use of the concept in the South African context rests on the confusion between what he labels "popular (belief), on the one hand, and strict (knowledge), on the other". These varying uses can be attributed to the origins of the concept.

[15] Decolonialism and decoloniality are utilised interchangeably.

Decolonisation is a process which requires the examination of the relationship between knowledge and power. From this perspective, knowledge production does not reside solely in the West, and includes standpoints from the global South. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) has argued that in the African context, the worst form of colonisation has been epistemological, taking over the imagination and the mind. In the context of higher education, averting this epistemic colonisation was initially taken to require the "revolutionary" violence advocated by Fanon (1963). This meant a complete destruction of the Western canon, which can be viewed as praxis, an act of acting out, in which the Self is rediscovered. This destruction was seen as the only means of intellectual independence.

Noting that the decolonisation movements of the post-independence period failed because the revolutionary change they advocated for had not been achieved, Anibal Quijano introduced the notion of "decolonial delinking". His argument was that, on the one hand, an analytic of the limits of Eurocentrism is necessary, but the analytic was considered necessary rather than sufficient. Decolonial delinking leads us to decolonial options as a set of projects that have in common the effects experienced by all the inhabitants of the globe that were on the receiving end of global designs to colonise (Mignolo, 2011). "Delinking" becomes necessary because there is no way out of the coloniality of power from within Western categories of thought. The emerging Latin American school of thought, which has since expanded on the work of Anibal Quijano, argues that although epistemic disobedience takes us to a different place, to a different beginning, it is not a constant search for "newness". In relation to epistemic relevance, it is difficult to not regard decolonialism as a constant search for "newness" if knowledge which is appropriate and inclusive of particular contexts, cultures and social identities does not exist.

In the academic context, decoloniality speaks to the deepening and widening of decolonisation movements in those spaces that experienced the slave trade, imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, neo-colonialism and underdevelopment (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). Characterised as a new form (wave) of decolonisation, decoloniality is much more rooted in the present context and the university space. Decoloniality refers to the ongoing efforts to challenge and understand persistent forms of coloniality, not just in the legacies of imperialism but in the very organisation of the world (Zembylas, 2018). Decoloniality is different from the anti-colonialism movements that dominated the 20th century and does not advocate the destruction of canonical knowledge, because it is the knowledge of the powerful (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 488). The decolonisation that is spoken about in the current context "strongly advocates ecologies of knowledge/multiplicity of knowledges: not removal and replacement" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015,

p. 20). It is aimed at setting humanity free from racial hierarchisation and asymmetrical power relations in place since conquest.

6.5.1.2 Africanisation: Celebrating the Particular

The concept of Africanisation has become an established part of African political vocabulary as a result of the continent's colonial experience. It emerged from the struggle for political, social and economic justice. The Africanisation question is tied to reclaiming what has been taken from Africa, as the colonial experience resulted in the commonly held view of Africa as a continent with no history. Thus the original goals of Africanisation were related to this attempt to assert the viability of a distinct African history (Brizuela-Garcia, 2006). Over the years, the term has acquired a much wider meaning and has extended beyond political discourse, bearing both political and knowledge consequences.

In the post-apartheid context, the question of Africanisation in South Africa arose in the context of an assertion of values, cultures and identities that have been silenced. The colonial and apartheid projects were not simply political projects, they were also knowledge projects, marginalising notions of science, religion and a range of other elements found in the local context. They also included notions of identity: "Who is what and who belongs where?" During the apartheid period, the government employed ethnographers to assist in this identification (Suttner, 2010). The initial call for Africanisation was about recognising the historical legacy of apartheid and asserting the emancipation of African people from its political, intellectual and cultural control.

The initial call for Africanisation in higher education entailed a rejection of the colonial and apartheid knowledge projects. Its use in South African higher education can be traced back to the post-1994 period and the attempts to ensure that the system reflected the changes that were taking place in society which were related to redressing the inequalities of the past. During this period, offering an inclusive and contextualised education was key. Such an education is more deeply embedded in its social context. It is also responsive to the challenges that the local environment throws up for solutions. Suarez-Krabbe (2017, p. 69) argued that "Africanisation must be seen as an affirmation of existence; in itself, then, a negation of the negation."

In the context of postcolonial discourse, Africanisation was seen as a necessary counter-narrative to the historical and continuing hegemony of Western epistemological and ontological canons in higher education. It can be thought of as a counter-narrative, aimed at decentring Western descriptions of African identity. The colonial and apartheid projects shaped knowledge

and knowledge production in profound ways and no branch of learning was left untouched by these projects. Large parts of African history were edited, discarded and reshaped to fit Western epistemologies and ontological beliefs. In higher education, Africanisation can be understood as a mixture of cultural, political, social, epistemological and ontological initiatives to celebrate the local, the particular, the distinctiveness of being African and being in Africa. The colonial and apartheid projects were based on a systematic attempt to ignore and dismiss the intrinsic value of the African context as a source of valid and valuable knowledge. While the political conditions that gave rise to the calls for decoloniality and Africanisation are no longer a contemporary political issue, the same cannot be said for higher education. The centuries-long history of Western domination has yet to give way to alternative epistemologies.

The persistence of the discourses on Africanisation and decoloniality in higher education is tied to the quest for inclusion amid the continued marginalisation of particular identities, cultures and contexts. Beyond the acquisition of knowledge, higher education holds the promise of contributing to both cognitive and social justice. The former refers to a normative principle for the equal treatment of all forms of knowledge; this does not necessarily mean that all forms of knowledge are equal, but that the equality of the knowers forms the basis of dialogue between knowledges (Leibowitz, 2017). The latter is concerned with the way in which human rights are manifested in the everyday lives of people at every level of society. “Recognising other knowledge forms, bringing them into dialogue and tying these to an ethical commitment, such as social justice, not only broadens the knowledge repertoires available to students, but remedies vital absences from the public curriculum”. In South Africa, this promise of social justice accompanied by cognitive justice remains unrealised, with higher education being a powerful mechanism of exclusion.

6.5.2 Decolonialism and Africanisation as Liberatory Epistemologies?

The interaction of subjects with social reality means that they are familiar with and knowledgeable about that social reality. The discourses on decolonialism and Africanisation are understood as containing knowledge of social reality; hence this part of the analysis attempts to provide relevant information about that social reality. In his seminal work *Decolonising the Mind*, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1981, p. 88) grapples with a number of core questions which can be related to the epistemic dimensions of exclusion and inequality. These questions provide a valuable frame for thinking about decolonialism and Africanisation as instruments for enacting

epistemic change in the humanities and social sciences. The questions posed by Wa Thiong'o (1981, p. 88) are as follows:

- What should we do with the inherited colonial education system and the consciousness it necessarily included in the African mind?
- What directions should an education system take in Africa wishing to break with neo-colonialism?
- How does it want the "New Africans" to view themselves and their universe and from what base, Afrocentric or Eurocentric?
- What, then, are the materials they should be exposed to, and in what order and perspective?
- Who should be interpreting that material to them, an African or non-African?
- If African, what kind of African? One who has internalised the colonial world outlook or one attempting to break free from the inherited slave consciousness?

6.5.2.1 Disrupting and Contextualising the Canon

The interpretation in this section was guided by the themes generated through inductive content analysis at the first level of analysis. The first theme is the idea of Western canonical knowledge which has achieved classical status. The projects of decoloniality and Africanisation are not about the expulsion of the Western canon or Europeans and their cultures. There is recognition that the canon has become engrained in the very idea of the modern university. However, the two projects do offer differing perspectives on how to engage with the Western canon given its irrelevant nature. Decoloniality calls for what I will refer to as the disruption of the canon, while Africanisation calls for the contextualisation of the canon. The former is about creating something new, while the latter is about finding new and relevant ways to work with what already exists.

Decoloniality calls for a disruption of the Western canon to open up multiple other forms of being in the world. This should be followed by construction of a much more pluriversal canon which de-links from the Western canon because if another world is possible, it cannot be built with the tools inherited from the colonial era. The newly constructed canon should unravel, disobey and delink (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 2) from the Western canon, constructing a new path of "thinking, sensing, believing, doing, and living. This new path

> …cannot be built with the master's tools for the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change" (Lorde, 1984, p. 112 as cited in Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 7).

A central aspect of the Africanisation project, on the other hand, is ensuring that the Western canon is fit for the local context through integrating local epistemologies and cultures. Africanisation reinforces the idea that the Western canon is not superior to the rich knowledge base that already exists in the African context. Reclaiming the African knowledge base, however, presupposes a paradigm shift (Seepe, 2004) in relation to both content knowledge and the way knowledge is organised. A paradigm shift requires new ways of thinking about and working with the Western canon with the aim of ridding African academia of prejudices and limitations imposed by traditional European academia. This way, African scholarship is more than an appendage to Western scholarship.

The starting point of Africanisation is valorising, seeking to understand and transmitting to students the knowledge base on which African societies are organised (Matos, 2000). This is part of developing new praxis and rethinking the idea that Africans have no knowledge that is of value in education. This entails challenging the relevance of existing materials and content. Such a challenge should result in contextualisation through a careful consideration of sources, concepts, methods of research and the role of the community setting in which academics conduct their work (Msila, 2009). Course content ought to be informed by the local context and everyday realities faced by students.

6.5.2.2 Context and Culture

While disruption and contextualisation entail different things in relation to the Western canon, there are some commonalities in the attitude and treatment of the local context and cultures. To break with Western dominance, the discourses on decoloniality and Africanisation suggest that education on the continent should be embedded in the African context, addressing uniquely African issues. To aid in this, scholarship should rethink African problems beyond Western concepts and categorisations. Such moves make way for networks of knowledge that recognise Africa as more than just a geographic location. Education then essentially becomes geared towards the African Renaissance, which refers to reviving what is already alive and organic in Africa. What is alive and organic in Africa is embedded in African Philosophy (Higgs, 2012) which has a distinctive epistemic identity. The revitalisation of an African Philosophy allows

education to be pragmatic and render a service while contributing effectively to the amelioration of the African condition. Such an education system focuses on granting not just formal access, but also epistemological access.

While the idea of an African Philosophy is broad enough to accommodate indigenous/ traditional knowledge and culture, its revival does not mean reaching back to the past to an essentialised pre-colonial culture. The issue of culture has become rather contentious in the debates on decoloniality and Africanisation in higher education. Discarding the norms, customs and worldviews imposed by the coloniser is an integral part of both projects. Through violence and influencing how Africans thought and viewed themselves, colonialism resulted in the marginalisation of African ways of being, knowing and doing (Fanon, 1963). The coloniser stripped Black people in particular of anything that is African, and one way of doing things became the only way of doing things (Heleta, 2016).

The projects of decoloniality and Africanisation, while both advocating for cultural inclusion and awareness, appear to be doing so in different ways. The discourse on Africanisation strongly argues that students should be exposed to materials that have African culture as the focus. While it is important to refrain from exposing students to course content that relies on Western interpretations of the continent (Heleta, 2016), rethinking the purpose and form of education requires that we go beyond this. Decoloniality achieves this by advocating for multiculturalism, which is the idea that students should be exposed to a plurality of cultural values and beliefs. This includes cultures from various contexts, not just the African context. A pluriversal, and therefore multicultural, approach to culture is critical especially if we acknowledge that even within the African context, there is no single culture that subsumes various cultural beliefs and identities (Horsthemke, 2017). However, the commitment to multiculturalism requires that we proceed with caution. The approach to culture should be innovative and mindful because asserting an "authentic black culture is a simple reversal and re-appropriation of whites' essentialist construction of black culture" (Fanon, 1963, p. 86). Such an approach partakes in the same dualistic structure it seeks to invert. Any revival and inclusion of African culture should be dynamic and rooted in the present.

The discourse on decoloniality articulates much more clearly the link between culture and language. Language is a carrier of culture; it cannot be separated from culture. It is through language that culture develops, is articulated and transmitted from one generation to another (Farabi, 2015). Drawing on the works of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1981), the discourse on

decoloniality also raises the issue of using language as a means of reuniting the postcolonial subject with their history and culture. This is important because a crucial element of the colonial project was a deliberate disassociation of the language of conceptualisation, thinking, formal education and mental development from the language of daily interaction (Wa Thiong'o, 1981). Communicating in African languages is critical for cultural identity, cultural renaissance and destruction of imperialist tradition.

Issues of cultural diversity and language are intricately tied to those of identity and difference. I also believe that in the classroom context, these issues raise questions about the relationship between students and their lecturers, which is at the heart of education. The discourse on decoloniality recognises that the colonial experience had a psychological and mental impact, resulting in multigenerational trauma that did not end with colonialism. The postcolonial subject has not recovered from this psychological inferiority and remains a psychological cripple. A decolonised higher education addresses this psychological inferiority through "the veritable creation of new men" (Fanon, 1963). It influences the consciousness of individuals and modifies them fundamentally to bring about new men. In the South African context, Steve Biko's (2004) ideals on Black Consciousness have become central in the discourse on addressing this psychological inferiority. Biko and Fanon share a highly similar interest in the philosophical psychology of consciousness. Both Biko and Fanon saw the restructuring of consciousness as a necessary perquisite in allowing the "new African" to defeat the psychological feeling of inferiority (Oelofsen, 2015).

The Africanisation project approaches issues of identity differently from decoloniality, emphasising issues of self-worth. This is achieved by addressing the epistemic violence of the present, thus opening up different traditions of knowledge and knowledge-making, allowing students to no longer rely on others to locate their self-worth. This is important as the marginalised are often portrayed as having neither an epistemology nor a philosophy. From this perspective addressing epistemic violence can only be achieved through an Afrocentric education, which reflects the African continent. Emphasising the knowledge and intellectual contributions of Africa to academia assists the post-colonial subject to escape the belief that they are inferior. It starts from one's particular place, "not only geographically, but also contextually, to recognise that this could affect one's ideas" (Oelofsen, 2015, p. 140), and is crucial in addressing psychological inferiority. This conception of African agency challenges the notion of Africans lacking history and a relevant knowledge base.

6.6 Decolonialism and Africanisation as Epistemic Processes

Epistemic relevance is about paying attention to epistemological concerns arising out of non-Western contexts, which prompt reflection on the nature of knowledge and methods for attaining it. Decolonialism and Africanisation offer useful perspectives on how to foster inclusion; however, the views of *what* can be known about the world and *how* it can be known are not clearly articulated in the discourse on these concepts. The analysis conducted in this chapter therefore makes it difficult to argue that decolonialism and Africanisation are directly concerned with epistemology. In relation to disciplinary knowledge, a valid epistemology must articulate a clear theoretical position, methodology and concepts. The root meaning of the word theory is looking at or viewing, contemplating or speculating. Theory can be scientific (about the world), and philosophical (making epistemological arguments). Within the disciplines which make up the humanities and social sciences, theory dominates scholarly discourse, driving the questions asked, the phenomena investigated, and the insights produced. In addition to theory, methods are important in disciplinary knowledge as they reflect the epistemologies favoured by the disciplines. Methods dictate research approaches, data analysis, theory testing and procedures for creating new knowledge. Concepts are symbols expressed in language, representing a phenomenon or an abstract idea generalised from particular instances (Novak, 1998, p. 21). The disciplines that make up the humanities and social sciences allow diffuse interpretations of key concepts; however, these do need to be explicit, clear, and defined. In addition to articulating a clear theoretical position, it is also important that an epistemology can account for how it is possible to criticise our own practices.

In line with the distinction between popular (belief) and strict (knowledge) made by Mathebula (2019, p. 7), I want to suggest that the discourses on decolonialism and Africanisation do not articulate epistemological positions in the strict sense. The discourses do not dictate what counts as acceptable practice and how theory and practice should work together to yield legitimate disciplinary knowledge. In my, view this challenge arises from a focus on critiquing Western epistemologies and insisting on differences between Western epistemologies and "other" ways of knowing. However, we have to keep in mind that from the perspective of those in the margins, the encounter with dominant Western epistemologies might be overpowering, and the insistence on the "specificity of difference may provide the only possibility of resistance" (Lennon & Whitford, 1994, p. 13). Decolonialism and Africanisation do not represent uniquely African epistemologies in the strict sense and therefore do not solve the current crisis of Western epistemologies dominating the contents and practice of teaching.

Decolonisation and Africanisation cannot be regarded as epistemic positions as they offer no guidelines on matters such as the analysis of knowledge and its relationship to belief and truth, and how to respond to the challenge of local of scepticism. Decolonisation and Africanisation, however, might be characterised as epistemic processes, as they provide useful viewpoints on how we might go about creating theories, concepts and methods that are plural, and thus relevant.

As epistemic processes which guide knowledge generation, decolonialism and Africanisation are an important part of transformation at an epistemological level, which is about shifting a learning and teaching institution from one state to another. Epistemological transformation involves those who teach, those who generate knowledge, those who learn and those who are tasked with supporting the core functions of higher education institutions. At an epistemic level transformation is dependent on knowledge for transformation, which has to be relevant, shared, discussed and confronted in order to identify strategies for implementation. Higher education institutions are perceived as centres of knowledge, thus part of their major role in society is to engage, lead and implement transformation at all levels. Decolonialism and Africanisation are useful in ensuring that higher education institutions bring about positive change in society; however, in the current context we cannot discuss these approaches as epistemic positions. Any discussion on decolonising or Africanising the curriculum based on these discourses is premature.

6.7 Conclusion

My use of discourse analysis in this chapter is underpinned by CR which views language as understood as constructing our social realities. Discourse analysis is utilised here as an analytical method to unpack the academic debates on averting epistemic harms at South African universities. I have relied on sociological discourse analysis, which shares many of the procedures of other social sciences. As a result, I have not made use of one particular method for analysing the discourse, resorting instead to a series of practices. The analysis took place at three levels: a textual level, a contextual level and an interpretive level. Textual analysis allows for the characterisation of the discourse as it focuses chiefly on the utterance and considers discourse as an object of study. Contextual analysis, on the other hand, allows us to understand discourse as it centres on the enunciation, considering discourse as a singular event or act. The last level, interpretation, provides an explanation of the discourse as it addresses sociological

aspects and considers discourse as information, ideology or a social product. This last level is the ultimate level of analysis.

The contextual analysis traced Africanisation and decolonialism to the postcolonial period, during which they were viewed as instruments for creating uniquely African identities within colonial institutions. The premise of Africanisation and decolonialism was the belief that postcolonial institutions were the product of European colonial settings and did not represent the needs, interests and values of African people. In the current context the calls for decoloniality and Africanisation have largely been about inclusion and recognition. The starting point of this inclusion appears to be the local context and valorisation of the distinct contributions that have emerged from this context. In addition to this, the discourses argue that reimagining the purpose and form of higher education cannot dismiss issues of culture, language and identity. This argument takes into account that the disciplinary knowledge we teach and the practices that guide our teaching are not value-free. These have been shaped by the contexts which have given rise to them. As a result, we cannot assume that their relevance is universal.

The interpretive level of analysis reveals that the decoloniality argued for in the university context recognises the value of the Western canon, noting that while it should not be discarded, it ought to be disrupted. This entails a form of epistemic disobedience, delinking from the Western canon and recognising other knowledge cosmologies. Disruption calls for de-mythologising history and bringing to light the dominant perspectives embedded in leading theories and methodologies. In a quest for pluriversity, we ought to recover and circulate major examples of thought not only from the African context, but also include other Southern perspectives to ensure a much greater diversity of content. Decolonialism recognises that all students were born into knowledge systems that are valid and legitimate, and as part of achieving cognitive justice, it goes beyond removal and replacement.

The interpretive level of analysis also revealed that Africanisation requires in the first instance a critical interrogation of the Western canon. Such an interrogation should result in a paradigm shift, particularly regarding how we engage with the Western canon and the African context. Through a process of “rebirth”, Africa should be at the forefront of all forms of scholarship and, where appropriate, scholarship from the West should be contextualised to be relevant for Africa and reframed through an African perspective. Africanisation is a process of contextualisation rooted in the local context, cultures and identities of our students. Additionally, in Africanising

education, we ought to be mindful that the required tools may indeed be found in scholarship which emanates from the West, such as narrative inquiry and action research.

Although Africanisation and decolonialism are useful in thinking about enacting epistemic change, however, the quest for relevance in an epistemic sense is not about a naïve acceptance of perspectives because of their locality. In short, we cannot simply accept decolonialism and Africanisation as epistemic positions because they provide a necessary critique of Western epistemologies. The concerns raised in the discourse on Africanisation and decolonialism are valid, and contesting the dominance of Western epistemologies outside of their particular contexts is necessary. However, these concerns do not amount to an epistemic position in the strict sense and should instead be thought of as epistemic processes which can be utilised in the generation of epistemically relevant knowledge. To insist on Africanisation and decolonialism as epistemological positions that address epistemological transformation in their current form is an aversion of responsibility. Scholarship is critical practice and should be based on reason and argument which these perspectives lack.

Chapter Seven

Appropriating Epistemic Relevance: Towards Epistemic Pluriversality

7.1 Introduction

Adopting epistemic relevance as a curricular and pedagogical principle entails challenging the intellectual hegemony of Western representations of reality. This intellectual hegemony has a broad institutional underpinning, including universities but extending far beyond them into communities of practice, creating in these institutions a common sense in which other logics of knowledge seem exotic, objectionable or downright crazy (Connell, 2014). The alternative to dominant irrelevant and outdated Western scholarship is not scholarship without ideological bias, as such a kind is neither possible nor desirable. What is necessary are works that demystify the ideas that have become ingrained in the humanities and social sciences as a result of colonial dominance, prevailing Eurocentrism and Androcentrism. Collectively, these ideas should be counter-Eurocentric and demonstrate that there are different but equally valid ways of knowing the world. In short, they should be epistemically plural. They should insist that all cultures and historical experiences are regarded as valid sources of ideas.

In this chapter, I explore how enacting epistemic change in the humanities and social sciences ultimately rests on epistemic relevance which leads to pluriversality. Pluriversality is anchored by epistemic pluralism – the idea that there are different ways of knowing the world. This is a core tenet of epistemic relativism, a position which embraces different, alternative epistemic systems, but also argues that no epistemic system is more correct than others. The chapter proceeds as follows: the second part explores the idea of alternative discourses and how decolonialism and Africanisation may be characterised as alternative discourses. The last section provides a rationale for adopting a pluralist epistemic stance within the humanities and social sciences, and how decolonialism and Africanisation contribute to this project.

7.2 The Idea of Alternative Discourses

Although decolonialism and Africanisation are rejected as epistemic positions in this study, as a means of ensuring inclusion and averting epistemic harm, the project of epistemic relevance is not possible without alternatives. There are many challenges being faced by the humanities and social sciences in the global South. While others are not intellectual in nature and relate to management and administration, my concern here is with the philosophical and epistemological challenges that continue to plague the fields. These problems have been

identified in various theoretical studies on the state of the humanities and social sciences in developing countries and include Orientalism (Said, 1979), Eurocentrism (Amin, 1979), extraversion (Hountondji, 1995) and academic dependency (Alatas S. F., 2001). Although these problems are structural, dismantling these structures is possible.

The humanities and social sciences, like other forms of knowledge, are social and historical in nature, and looking beyond the global North can help to ensure that the social sciences in the various societies are made epistemically relevant to historical and social realities. This can be done by drawing on the philosophical traditions and discourses in these societies for relevant social scientific concepts, methods and theories. This forms part of creating humanities and social sciences free of academic and cultural dependency and ethnocentrism (Kim 1996 as cited in Alatas, 2009, p. 152). Embracing epistemic relevance achieves this by confronting the imposition of Eurocentric epistemes, and advocates rather a consciousness of our interdependence and diversity. The challenge with Western concepts, theories and methods is the inability to make space for different ways of explaining and making sense of the world.

In the humanities and social sciences, the organisation of knowledge seems to suggest that the European way of explaining the world is somehow close to how the world really is. Often put forward as the universal, this assumption makes for an incomplete and biased explanation about the world. This offering of Western recipes to the entire world serves to further spread Western ideology and delegitimise non-Western thought (Reiter, 2018, p. 7). Decoloniality scholars have argued that if another world is possible, it cannot be built using conceptual tools from the West. However, Mignolo and Walsh (2018) offer a different perspective, suggesting instead that we should turn our attention to the possibility of transcending rather than dismantling Western ideas through building our own houses of thought. When enough houses are built, the hegemony of the master's house – in fact, mastery itself – will cease to maintain imperial status (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

Alatas (2000) introduced the term "alternative discourses" as a descriptive and collective term referring to the set of discourses that have emerged in opposition to mainstream, Euromerican discourses. The notion of alternative discourses captures the idea presented by Mignolo and Walsh (2018) regarding the creation of "other" houses of thought. The idea of alternative discourses also highlights the epistemic contributions made by decolonialism and Africanisation. Although they are generally understood as constituting a "revolt" against

academic imperialism, the aims and objectives of these discourses should not be understood in negative terms. Neither of these discourses constitutes a total rejection of "Western knowledge" but rather constitute a contribution of non-Western systems of thought to theories, methods and concepts to dominant forms of knowledge. What is defined as *alternative* is that which is "appropriate to its environment, creative, non- imitative and innovative, non-essentialist, counter-Eurocentric, independent from the state and other national or international groupings" (Alatas S. F., 1995, p. 143). Alternative discourses set themselves in contrast to the mainstream, and collectively they can be understood as a set of discourses that have emerged in opposition to mainstream perspectives and can be viewed as a contribution of non-Western systems of thought to theories and ideas. Alternative discourses attempt to provide more realistic and relevant explanations of social phenomena in each society. This is because such discourses do not rely solely on the theories and methods that emanate from the social science powers. They draw on traditional intellectual resources and often take different approaches to those already available in dominant literature.

I argue that the inventory of responses associated with averting epistemic harms in higher education in the South African context can be viewed as alternative discourses because they contain features of alternative discourses identified by Alatas (2010, p.59), which can be itemised as follows:

1. Critique of Eurocentrism and extraversion;
2. Critique of the state of conformity and imitation;
3. Raising of methodological problems relating to the study of South Africa;
4. Concern with context and greater consciousness of their surroundings; and
5. Commitment to the reconstruction of the social sciences and recognition of all cultural practices as sources of ideas.

Alternative discourses contribute to pluralising the humanities and social sciences through an addition of alternative voices to already existing ideas and works. There are varying degrees of this alternateness and pluriversality. Whatever the level, there is in principle a commitment to the universal source of theories, concepts, and ideas in general (Alatas S. F., 2000, p. 145). The following levels of alternateness can be identified:

- Applying Western and non-Western theory to local reality
- Applying local and Western theory to local reality
- Applying local method and theory to local reality

- Locally-generated universal theory and method

I discuss in particular the discourses on decolonialism and Africanisation as well as the associated knowledge projects of indigenous knowledge and endogenous knowledge. I argue that these discourses (i) fit into the varying degrees of alternativeness identified by Alatas (2010), (ii) as a result of the nature of their alternateness, contribute to epistemic pluralism in the humanities and social sciences and (iii) this notion of epistemic pluralism has implications for what is taught and how teaching takes place. In this discussion, a distinction is made between local knowledge and Western knowledge. The concept of Western knowledge is traditionally taken to refer to "Western science", which is built on the ideas of positivism; here, it is used as an umbrella term to denote all kinds of knowledge which have emerged from the region. Local knowledge is also taken to refer to knowledge that is produced within a specific geographic location – in this instance, Africa. It is therefore not just informal knowledge based on everyday experiences, and could very well include scientific knowledge built on positivist ideas.

These alternative discourses move beyond the critique of irrelevance and move towards the active construction of the pluriverse through elaborating different representations of reality and corresponding epistemologies. While there are gaps in some of these perspectives, they do provide a map that we can all follow in the efforts to move towards tackling epistemic irrelevance. The other important contribution made by these various perspectives is that they can be applied in the study of local realities and utilised in the necessary evaluation of traditional and hegemonic viewpoints. Each of these perspectives moves us away from definitive meanings of transformation at an epistemological level and moves us towards having several critical frameworks for thinking and knowledge construction.

Advocating for epistemological relevance in the humanities and social sciences is not a call for an alternative system of dominance rooted only in the African or South African context nor should these alternative perspectives be treated as a distinct set of propositions erected in opposition to the mainstream. These perspectives are not simply different propositions, but are about different knowledge practices that are not rooted solely in Western traditions. Western representations have thoroughly conquered the world, suffocating all other approaches to make sense of, explain, and control the natural and social environment (Chakrabarty, 2000). However, it is possible to move away from the idea that there is one truth and one law to be discovered which can capture and explain all human behaviour and culture. The humanities and

social sciences should produce nomothetic knowledge, demonstrating that all knowledge is bound by place, time and positionality of those engaged in knowledge production and is hence ideographic.

7.3 Africanisation: A Creative and Cautious Application of Local and Western Methods, Concepts and Theories to the Local Context.

At what would be the least complex level of alternateness is a careful application of locally-generated and Western methods, concepts and theories to the local context. While not discarding Western theory, this level of alternateness requires that theories, methods and concepts are also derived from the historical experiences and cultural practices of non-Western cultures. This level is characterised as the least complex as it does not constitute a generation of new theories, concepts and methods. Rather it calls for a careful selection, and at times re-organisation of concepts, methods and theories that have been generated from the local and Western context to make them fit for the local context. This move calls for a critical interrogation of the Western canon and acknowledgement that certain concepts, theories and methods should be reframed to make them fit for the local context.

In the South African context, the calls to Africanise the humanities and social sciences amount to this first level of alternateness. The discourse on Africanisation does not call for a complete break from the mainstream. Rather, it is part of generating and redefining knowledge generation and dissemination standards in the South African context to ensure that teaching and learning take place within appropriate contexts of relevance. Here there is acknowledgement of the fact that the tools necessary to achieve Africanisation may be located in Western epistemologies and ontologies. As an alternative discourse, Africanisation is useful in helping us to think about the foundations on which our academic and African identities stand. It is also useful in helping us to guard against "epistemic deafness" (Dube, 2017) in order to grapple with and interrogate some of the complexities and complications encountered in the efforts towards transformation at an epistemological level.

The calls for Africanisation in higher education have been ongoing; however, despite the vigorous debates, the discourse has failed to engage adequately with how reality might be constituted in the African context and how this might differ from other contexts. Questions about identity and culture are considered polemical, making it difficult to characterise Africanisation as a perspective that can be utilised towards appropriating epistemic relevance. For some (Horsthemke, 2004), associating Africanisation with "African identity and culture"

is misleading as it appears to connote a single, homogenous, monolithic identity and culture. This argument, however, fails to hold as it is often based on the definitions of Africanisation provided by Makgoba & Tleane (1998), who viewed Africanisation as a reclamation of what was lost as a result of colonisation, affirm African culture and its identity in a world community. Africanisation does not suggest a parochial focus on only African concerns and cultures, only that these should take primacy. While in the South African context the notion of Africanisation has yet to advance beyond polemical position-taking, I reject the assertion that the notion of Africanisation articulates an essentialist politics of ethnic assertion.

To Africanise is to acknowledge that there are certain elements of Western theories, methods, concepts and language that are not informed by the local context and to find creative ways to contextualise these approaches. It encompasses a move towards understanding the African contexts and socio-economic realities of students at African universities, while working with epistemologies from other contexts. Africanisation considers the diversity of students and calls on educators to develop new praxis on the contextual realities of students. In doing so, it works with the existing knowledge base and praxis (often representing a Western perspective) and explores how this knowledge relates to the African context (van der Westhuizen, Greuel, & Beukes, 2017). Conceived of this way, Africanisation is seen as a cooperative process.

Africanising higher education requires a reflection of whether teaching relates to the African worldview, which informs how people in the African context deal with phenomena and challenges. It is a type of education that prepares students to engage with people, phenomena and challenges in the African context. As a worldview it reflects African cultural beliefs, praxis and values (Thabede, 2008). It therefore does not entail developing new theories and methods, but that we should effectively include the African worldview in existing knowledge when preparing students for praxis (van der Westhuizen, Greuel, & Beukes, 2017). Africanisation serves as a stimulus to create transformation at an epistemological level by critically examining theories of knowledge and ways of knowing.

Africanisation encompasses all the elements of a process whereby a university endeavours to establish and maintain an African character which is inclusive and achieves certain academic, economic, political and cultural aims (Witthuhn & le Roux, 2017). Africanisation is useful because it acknowledges that the university in the African context is neither a unified concept nor is it distinct from universities in other contexts in the manner in which it carries out its core business. It can, however, be adapted to the social structure and cultural milieu of Africa

and it should be expected to produce knowledge that takes the African condition and African identity as its central concern (le Grange, 2014). Africanisation acknowledges that we cannot reverse colonisation to return to old formulas that were relevant prior to colonisation, nor does it call for exchanging one model of teaching and learning for another, but rather responds to the local context.

The tools offered by the Africanisation approach to epistemological transformation allow us to accommodate the local context in the use of Western concepts, methods and theories. It can be understood as a vehicle to interpret, promote and transmit African thought, philosophy, identity and culture while working with Western epistemologies. It offers an inclusive approach to teaching and learning where students are viewed as potential carriers of knowledge as there is a belief that everyone can bring something to the "village" (Msila, 2014, p. 33). The notion of Africanisation can have either positive or negative connotations, and differences can also be seen in what meaning is emphasised and attached to the term. As a means to contextualisation and transformation at an epistemological level, Africanisation does not leave room for much originality.

The notion of Africanisation is inextricably intertwined with the idea of an African Renaissance which implies the renewal and rebirth of the African continent (Koma, 2018). At an epistemological level, Africanisation can be utilised to integrate African thought, philosophy, identity and culture into Western epistemologies. In the context of higher education, it is unlikely that Africanisation will result in a paradigm shift, but it can provide a means to affirm and identify African culture. As an alternative discourse or epistemic process, Africanising the humanities and social sciences may provide students with critical faculties but it may not be enough to overcome the challenge of epistemic alienation. The challenge highlighted in Chapter Six remains here; Africanisation is not an epistemic position nor is it a type of knowledge.

7.3.1 Indigenous Knowledge: Local Theory, Concepts and Method

As an alternative discourse to be utilised in enacting epistemic change, Africanisation ought to be accompanied by a knowledge project. In the South African context, the calls for the integration of indigenous knowledge systems provide a suitable knowledge project. The foregrounding of local knowledge is neither advocacy to be anti-West, nor does it discourage scholars from the South African context from learning from the West. Through the identification of local alternatives, it is rather an encouragement to learn from the West but in a

selective and constructive manner. This entails a critical interrogation of Western theory and grounding such theory in socio-cultural conditions of a locality. The calls for indigenisation have been ongoing in South Africa, although the understanding of what it entails have varied greatly. Indigenous refers to that which occurs naturally in a particular place rather than arriving from elsewhere. As a process, indigenisation refers to making something more "native" to fit local culture. Indigenisation goes a step further than Africanisation as it not only insists that local alternatives to Western theories exist but involves active efforts to identify such theories. The process involves foregrounding "indigenous knowledge" which is generally taken to cover traditional, non-Western beliefs, practices and customs. It also refers to alternative, informal forms of knowledge (Horsthemke, 2004, p. 30). Although some writers reject this contraposition, "indigenous knowledge" is commonly contrasted, implicitly or explicitly, with "knowledge from abroad", a "global", "cosmopolitan", "Western", "formal" or "world" (system of) knowledge.

Hountondji (2002) has argued that indigenous knowledges have not been forgotten, they are widespread, though probably less than they used to be in the precolonial era. These knowledges are still operational and efficient, to the extent that the bearers of modern or Western knowledge themselves refer to the practitioners of traditional knowledge as an alternative to their own failures (Hountondji, 2002, p. 23). Rather, the challenge has been the manner in which these knowledges coexist alongside knowledge and perspectives from the global North. In comparison to modern knowledge indigenous knowledges have been side-lined, pushed to the margins with no evidence of mutual exchange of methods or dialogue about intellectual procedures.

The indigenous knowledge project takes the project of integration further by integrating locally generated theories, methods and concepts into those that have emerged from the Western context. This knowledge project has similar aspirations to those of Africanisation in that it does not abandon the quest for an African identity and counteracting of colonial influences. It is well-suited to exposing the Eurocentric assumptions inherent in conventional ideas about knowledge making, and formal education in particular (Breidlid & Botha, 2015, p. 319). The tools offered by the IKS perspective enable equal coexistence of Western and African epistemologies, thus placing educators and students in a position to reconcile these two different worldviews.

The integration of IKS takes place in the context of a Western curriculum, into Western

subjects and in a Western-type setting. In this sense, IKS is still other(ed) and integrated into the norm (Seehawer, 2018). While not dismissing this view, I do want to propose that in some instances this may be a useful short-term approach given the amount of time it could take to substantially change curricula, subjects and educational settings from their Western orientations. Indigenous knowledge systems are about survival, identity and flourishing of the people holding these knowledges, the practical nature of indigenous knowledge calling for a hands-on learning-by-doing approach (Seehawer, 2018). As a knowledge project associated with Africanisation, indigenous knowledge takes an inclusive approach while remaining embedded in the cultural web and history of the previously marginalised.

As a framework, IKS seeks to embrace both the tangible and intangible aspects which have exchange value and which can be transformed into enterprises, cultural, scientific, philosophical and technological knowledge (Hoppers, 2001). It aims to be transformative in the way teachers engage learners in a form of knowledge construction in which they will recognise themselves and their contexts. The social contexts of students and their cultural life cannot be subsumed under the master narrative of Western epistemologies. As a critical framework, IKS can assist educators to be aware of the cultural space of learners and how they may be able to bridge the distance that separates them from their learners.

The idea of integrating IKS remains polemical, with some arguing that they are difficult to work with because of their tacit nature. Indigenous knowledge is largely understood as knowledge that resides in people's memories, only transmitted through word-of-mouth. It is largely taken as endangered knowledge due to being held by custodians who often fail to document this knowledge. Much of the criticism of IKS arises from dichotomising so-called traditional and modern knowledge as though they have no relation to or impact on each other. IKS is affected by and affects other forms of knowledge, emphasising the collaborative dimension of knowledge, which points to the possibilities of integration.

The methods, concepts and theories often associated with IKS are based on the philosophy of Ubuntu, the concept of common humanity. These methods, concepts and theories are viewed as holistic as they integrate theory and social practice, based on age and gender. Transmitted from one generation to the other in various ways – including participation in social practices, stories and ceremonies – the concepts associated with IKS encompass beliefs, values, experiences and insights of local people and their respective environments. In this sense, indigenous knowledge systems embrace a social epistemology which is distinct from what

might be referred to as an individual epistemology. As an epistemic position, IKS proceeds on the idea that knowledge can be acquired from others. The integration of IKS acknowledges that learning can take place in various ways and allows for the legitimation of the contextual knowledge that students bring into the classroom.

As a knowledge project, indigenisation is not unproblematic, particularly in the attempts to establish a distinctive African epistemic identity or unique African order of knowledge. The challenge emerges in the attempts to bring about an epistemological revolution and struggle for knowledge production that satisfies the demands for cultural identity (Higgs, 2012, p. 39). Embracing a uniquely African worldview calls on those who teach to embrace IKS and root education in indigenous African socio-cultural and epistemological frameworks. In this regard, curricula should have Africa as the focus and, as a result, be indigenous-grounded and orientated.

In the South African context, the integration of IKS remains an incomplete project with abundant shortcomings. IKS represents what Connell (2011) labels a *mosaic* epistemology, consisting of an array of distinct systems of concepts and data, grounded in local cultural traditions and local experience. These knowledge systems can speak to each other through translations and epitomes; however, they do not move outside the knowledge produced in the metropole. Instead, they argue for appropriating and modifying Western epistemologies. As something we can do in the present context, this is unproblematic; however, it is not a long-term solution as it does not solve the problems of epistemic injustice and alienation that persist in higher education.

The plausibility of such an epistemology can be observed in the discussion on 'indigenous sociology' launched by the International Sociological Association in the 1980s. Nigerian sociologist Akinsola Akiwowo (1980, 1986) contributed to this discussion by arguing for uniquely African perspectives in sociology, and attempted to provide social theory generated from Yoruba oral poetry. Akiwowo (1980, 1986) extracted sociological principles from the accumulated wisdom and observations of society by Yoruba community elders and intellectuals, as condensed in the myths of an oral literature tradition, which was never used by metropolitan social theory (Connell, 2007). Akiwowo (1980, 1986) proposed to find these concepts in Nigerian communities and export them to the rest of the world. Akiwowo (1980, 1986) endeavored to demonstrate how indigenous sociology might work at the level of theory

but instead argued for appropriating and modifying the knowledge of the metropole, not for moving completely outside it (Connell, 2007).

As argued by Hountondji (1995) this kind of theorising is problematic because it assumes that indigenous African cultures are silos – closed systems with separate logic. This is of course the traditional view in Western anthropology, the basis of old-style ethnography (Connell, 2011). The consequence of embracing such a mosaic epistemology is that the search for alternative and place-bound epistemologies and approaches is potentially endless, and it opens the doors to a sort of absolute epistemological relativism, where one approach to explaining the world is as good as the next (Reiter, 2018). Adding random non-western epistemologies from different places of the world is not what is advocated in this study. Such an approach faces major epistemological difficulties as Bakare-Yusuf (2004) pointed out in the critique of Afrocentric texts. Cultures and societies are dynamic, not fixed in one posture. Precolonial societies were not silos, but interacted with each other over long periods of time, absorbed outside influences, and had internal diversity. In relation to indigenous knowledge A mosaic epistemology is problematic as it largely reflects an essentialist treatment of culture.

I am also persuaded by Hountondji's (2002) argument that much of what is considered to be indigenous knowledge is neither fully autonomous nor is it good scientific knowledge. Instead, it reproduces the coloniser's gaze on indigenous cultures, functions as ideology and does not accept direct intellectual responsibility (Hountondji, 2002). The representations of indigenous knowledge also seem to suggest that African cultures possess a separate logic which is static and not open to change. These representations have to do with the internalisation of the discourse of former colonisers on African cultures and their denigrating views on African ways of life. The solution to these challenges has to do with the manner in which indigenous knowledge systems are appropriated or studied and not the knowledge itself. Hountondji (1989, 2002) has fiercely argued that indigenous knowledges should not be studied for their own sake, from an aesthetic point of view. Instead, we should interrogate these knowledges to validate whatever assertion or view can be validated.

7.4 Decolonialism: Locally Generated Universal Theories, Concepts and Methods Applied within and outside the Local Context

At an even more multifaceted level of alternativeness, only locally generated methods and theories are applied to the local context. This level of alternateness goes beyond Africanisation and indigenisation as it makes a complete break with methods, concepts and theories

generated in the global North. Epistemologically, this level of alternateness seeks to move away from the West as the epistemic locale from which the world is conceptualised, described and ranked to viewing other contexts as legitimate epistemic sites in the description and construction of the modern world order. The idea of only deriving theories from local traditions amounts to the aims of those who were championing the decolonisation movement between 1947 and 1970, as well as the decoloniality movement that has since emerged. The concept of decolonisation simultaneously evokes a historical narrative at the end of an empire, a particular version of postcolonial theory, a way of knowing that resists the Eurocentrism of the West (Barney & Mackinlay, 2014). It is also a moral imperative for righting the wrongs of colonial domination, and an ethical stance in relation to self-determination and human rights for those disempowered by imperialism. Decoloniality has its roots in the response to first- and second-generation colonialism. In the context of education, it can be linked with the quest for cognitive justice as it seeks inclusion at an epistemological level.

Decoloniality is not an event but a process which has proven difficult to achieve in relation to knowledge. In its original format as proposed by Fanon, the process entails the development of concepts, methods and theories rooted in the African context. This requires a fundamental reconceptualisation and reorientation of teaching and learning to ensure Africa is at the centre. Decolonising the humanities and social sciences strips them of their Eurocentric cognitive and civilisational conceits (Zeleza, 2009, p. 112). Decolonisation is about the rejection of values, norms, customs and worldviews imposed by the former colonisers. It entails a shift from regarding Europe as the centre of the universe to redefining the centre to include Africa. This provides the possibility of moving from Western epistemological domination, Eurocentrism, epistemic violence and views which degrade African people. A Eurocentric canon is a canon that attributes truth to the Western way of knowledge production. It is a canon that disregards other epistemic traditions and tries to portray colonialism as normal form of social relations (Mbembe, 2016).

Mignolo (2011) argues that one of the reasons for the failure of the decolonisation movements similar to the failure of socialism/communism in Russia is that, as socialism/communism, decolonisation movements changed the content but not the terms of the conversation, and maintained the very idea of the state within a global capitalist economy. As a result of the failure of decolonisation to change the “terms of the conversation”, what has emerged is the decoloniality movement. Decoloniality differs from decolonisation just as coloniality differs from colonialism. The interesting contrast made by Maldonado-Torres (2016, p. 10) is that

coloniality and decoloniality refer to the logic, metaphysics, ontology and matrix of power created by the processes of colonisation and decolonisation. If coloniality refers to logic, metaphysics, ontology, and a matrix of power that can continue existing after formal independence and desegregation, decoloniality refers to efforts at re-humanising the world, to breaking hierarchies of difference that dehumanise subjects and communities and that destroy nature, and to the production of counter-knowledges (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, p. 11).

The genealogy of decolonial thinking is planetary and is not limited to individuals, but instead incorporates social movements and the creation of institutions. Decolonial thinking continues brewing in a conflictive dialogue with European theories, methods and concepts (Mignolo, 2011). Numerous theories have emerged from this thinking and critique. Upon delinking itself from the frames of modernity, decolonial thinking escapes the traps of post-coloniality (post-colonial theory or critique) which was born in the trap of modernity. While the discursive abuses and impotent usages of decolonial language have been critiqued, as a way of challenging epistemological relevance decolonial language is an imperative which should be shared by all (Williams, 2020). Delinking contributes to an understanding and exposure of epistemic silences and conspiracies hidden within Eurocentric epistemologies.

Epistemic disobedience, or delinking, leads to decolonial options as a set of projects that have in common the effects experienced by all the inhabitants of the globe who were at the receiving end of global designs to colonise knowledges (languages, categories of thoughts, belief systems). Delinking makes possible different categories of thought, taking us to a different place, a different beginning rather than a new temporality within the same space (Mignolo, 2011). Decolonial thinking is a useful framework as it articulates other economic, political, social, subjective modalities. Decoloniality does not represent a new paradigm, nor does it reflect a new mode of critical thought. Rather, it should be viewed as a standpoint, analytic, practice and process (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 5). The goal of delinking is to re-exist, which implies re-linking with the legacies one wants to preserve in order to engage in modes of existence one wants to engage in. Here re-linking depends on the place of the individual in the local histories which were reconfigured by the narratives of Western modernity (Mignolo, 2017). The second move of re-existence cannot be based on one model because it operates on pluriversality. Decoloniality, while useful, does require further examination and conceptualisation.

7.4.1 Endogenous Knowledge as Locally Generated Universal Theories, Concepts and Method

Endogenous knowledge should be taken as the knowledge project associated with decolonialism. Endogeneity is the idea of locally generated universal theories, methods and concepts. These objects of knowledge are locally generated and integrated with other non-Western theories as well as Western theories to both local and other realities (Alatas, 2010, p. 10). Endogenous knowledge refers to knowledge generated from within and without one's own society, thus having applicability within and outside of one's own area. The discourse on endogenous knowledge is emergent and initially arose as a result of the perceived problems with the ideas on IKS, which has had a troubled and contentious history in South African higher education (Crossman & Devisch, 2002). Introducing the notion of endogenous rather than indigenous knowledge was regarded as a way of avoiding the "historic trap" which often sees indigenous knowledge and its derivatives being situated in an archaic primitive past. The indigenisation movement has also been labelled as an ambiguous attempt to demarcate and bolster an African identity, with its intentions perhaps being better captured by drawing on endogenous knowledge. In conceptual terms endogenous knowledge is sometimes seen as being identical with indigenous knowledge. In fact Hountondji (1997, 2002, 2009), one of the influential figures in interrogating the epistemological imperatives of endogenous knowledge, often appears to be utilising the two concepts interchangeably.

Despite the likes of Hountondji (1997, 2002, 2009) appearing to suggest endogenous knowledge is a substitute for indigenous knowledge, I argue that this should not be the case. The term endogenous does not refer to absolute interiority and therefore cannot be taken as a substitute for indigenous. The difference between the two terms can be seen in the field of Botany, where "indigenous" predominantly refers to a species native to a particular topography while "endogenous" refers to a plant's ability to grow on the basis of its own resources, or growing or originating from within (Letsekha, 2013). The term endogenous can be applied to any region because geographic location has nothing to do with the meaning of the term. The discourse on sustainable development also sheds some light on how endogeneity differs from indigeneity. Endogenous development aims to primarily depend on its own strength, but not automatically constitute autarky. It is a process of transformation "based on the mobilisation of internal social forces and resources using the accumulated knowledge and experiences of the people of a country" (Dembele, 2013). Indigenous development focuses on how indigenous knowledge and experience can help shape a sustainable path for development, rooted in the

culture and identity of indigenous people. The idea of endogenous knowledge is about education and scholarship derived from within, and herein lies the value and distinctive feature which sets it apart from indigenous knowledge. In addition to this, endogenous knowledge is relevant to contemporary society as a whole and not just those indigenous to a particular topography.

Joseph Ki-Zerbo one of the foremost theoreticians of endogenous development argued "if we develop ourselves, it is by developing from the elements of our own development. We do not develop, we develop ourselves". Ki-Zerbo (1990) established a crucial connection between endogenous knowledge and endogenous development. Hountondji (1997), attempting to understand in philosophical terms the elements of endogenous knowledge, contrasted such intellectual efforts with extroversion and appears to have drawn inspiration from the works of Ki-Zerbo (Arowosegbe, 2016). Building on the works of Ki-Zerbo and Hountondji, Adesina (2002, 2006) made a worthwhile and essential distinction between endogenous knowledge as source codes - and endogeneity - as a mode of social science, practice and as an imperative for the social community in Africa if it is to secure its epistemic autonomy (Arowosegbe, 2016). Adesina (2002, 2006) also popularised the idea of taking one's local ethnographic data seriously and understanding it on its own terms to bring about an epistemic rupture in the dialogue with the global social science.

In relation to knowledge production, the term endogenous evokes the derivation of the type of knowledge in question by categorising it as an internal product drawn from a given cultural background, as opposed to another category of knowledge which would be brought in from elsewhere. Hountondji (1997) acknowledged that one might object that such a distinction itself is relative altogether and only effective at first estimation, because what may seem endogenous today may have been introduced at a distant time in the past. However, rightly here lies the core of the matter: that cultural appropriation integrated to the point of being at one with the shared heritage thereafter means that such borrowing is fully mastered and integrated into the initial culture itself. Endogenous knowledge is, therefore, the type of knowledge that takes its locale seriously. It refers to Africa's autonomous efforts in pursuit of development and seeks a marked shift from the current situation to the desired state, which is grounded in the continent's local resources.

The idea of generating endogenous knowledge is important for thinking about epistemic change as it calls for acknowledging in the first instance the particularity of the Western epistemologies

(Adesina, 2006), what Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) inventively termed *provincialising Europe.* Provincialising Western epistemologies calls for recognising that they are a specific product of a "specific location (idiographic) rather than ideas and principles that are inherently universalistic in their explanatory powers (nomothetic)" (Adesina, 2010, p. 3). This is essential because Western epistemologies often wield so much power that their status as local knowledge often goes unrecognised. Western epistemologies offer a useful model for generating endogenous knowledge. These epistemologies are deeply rooted in the problems of their environment both in terms of time and locality. This rootedness guaranteed their international standing. As Adesina (2005) argued in his address to the South African Sociological Association (SASA):

> "It is precisely because Marx, Weber, and Durkheim were firmly rooted in their specific contexts that they produced the canonical works that we today consider essential for Sociology. [As] Kwesi Prah reminded us: If what we say and do has relevance for our humanity, its international relevance is guaranteed."

In relation to enacting epistemic change, endogenous knowledge responds to the crisis of ideas, calling for intellectual reclamation and averting the extroversion Hountondji (1997, 2002) identified in African scholarship. Advocating for an "active, lucid, responsible appropriation by African societies themselves of the knowledge capitalised by them", Hountondji (2009) offers the German social science model as an example of what we could build in Africa through endogenous knowledge production. In the first instance, the German tradition is rooted in its own language, German. Second, "it addresses primarily a German-speaking audience and evolves first and foremost as an internal debate with Germany and German-speaking countries" (Hountondji, 2009). Third, the issues debated hold relevance for, and are largely shared by, the German-speaking academic community. This move allows for the development of what Hountondji (2009) calls a horizontal and self-sustained debate. Such ways of conducting scholarly activity, promote a self-reliant and autonomous education system.

As an alternative discourse, decolonialism underpinned by endogenous knowledge challenges the way that the Western canon is presented as universal knowledge, and sees this as a closure and erasure of memory which silences non-western voices. The discourse on endogenous knowledge calls for the reversal of this erasure and alienation which is often experienced by students with no imperial legacy and tends to put certain people outside of history. Endogeneity moves away from a fixation with Europe, calling for an act and process of identifying the

producers of knowledge in the local context. Through generating and introducing endogenous knowledge in higher education, students are exposed to history not just as the stories of great men and women, but also ordinary men and women (Adesina, 2002). They should be exposed to materials that give them a sense of connection and are able to read their stories – told by their people. An affirmation of endogeneity in South African higher education calls for a valorisation of the rich archive of endogenous works that already exist. The works of Steve Biko, Ruth First and Bernard Magubane should make their way into the reading lists of courses in the humanities and social sciences. There are also a multitude of alternative canons that inform our present and future which we should take seriously. The logic and authority of an endogenous knowledge does not derive from the Eurocentric knowledge economy and endogenous knowledge systems can be considered as alternative universalisms as they are intended to have general and not just local application.

7.5 Embracing Partiality: Alternatives in "Other" Contexts

From the discussions on epistemic relevance in preceding chapters, it is clear that one of the biggest challenges with Western representations of reality is the claim or attempt to be universalist while in fact being biased, offering partial knowledge that is context-specific and limited. As a result, a large majority of the dominant Western epistemologies are irrelevant outside their specific contexts. However, the recognition of the problem of irrelevance and the adoption the principle of epistemic relevance does not entail rejecting knowledge that emanates from the global North, nor is it based on the assumption that the entire intellectual tradition is epistemically irrelevant. The idea, however, involves recognising the indigeneity of Western epistemologies to their own societies and opening up the idea of pluralising these bodies of knowledge.

Here I embrace the idea of plurality, as there is a recognition that the intellectual tradition emanating from the global North has become entrenched in universities in the global South. This thought has in many ways become part of all our intellectual heritage. However, we do need to disrupt the mythical figure of the global North as the original site of modernity. This imagery has been built into the humanities and social sciences, where the very idea of historicising carries with it some peculiarly European ideas about disenchanted space, secular time and sovereignty (Chakrabarty, 2000). The objects of knowledge we have come to rely on in the humanities and social sciences all bear the burden of European thought and history. Even the arguments presented in this thesis are written from within this inheritance. However,

the idea of adopting epistemic relevance in the present context is not a complete rejection of Western methods, concepts and theories; rather it is about creating "plural normative horizons specific to our existence and relevant to the examination of our lives and their possibilities" (Chakrabarty, 2000, p. 20).

Moving away from Western universals is a difficult task; however, it is important to recognise that this version of universality was part of the colonial project and that the universal cannot have a single owner: the universal can only be pluriversal. What should be universal is in fact pluriversal, and not a single totality (Reiter, 2018). Epistemic relevance rooted in pluriversality is therefore about changing the belief that the world must be conceived of as a unified totality in order for it to make sense. Largely developed by Escobar (2008) and de Sousa Santos (2014) among others, the concept of pluriversality calls for a world where many perspectives are possible. Creating such a world involves understanding difference not as something to be tolerated, but rather as a "fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic" (Lorde, 1984: 110). However, my use of pluriversality here differs from this original use slightly. While accepting that multiple epistemologies are possible, I reject the idea of multiple realities as a category mistake: reality is not the kind of thing there can be more than one of. There is only one kind of reality, although there are several discourses that act as interpretations of it.

The pluriversal proposed in this study opens up other geographies; and works to build dialogues and conversations with knowledges produced elsewhere, in other "Souths" and in the global North. The implicit assumption here is that there is a pluralistic and rhetorical dimension to truth, and that, therefore, the source of truth construction should not be restricted to one civilisation. Pluriversality as a universal project is not aimed at changing the world (ontology) but at changing beliefs (gnoseology) (Reiter, 2018). Western universals have a right to exist in this pluriverse of meaning and would be one of the many cosmologies, no longer the one that subsumes and regulates all the others. Therefore the quest for epistemic relevance does not involve discarding European thought nor is it a matter of postcolonial revenge (Chakrabarty, 2000). It is rather about exploring how this thought, which is in all of us, may be renewed from the margins. The humanities and social sciences are often interested in the majority of the world, and it is therefore imperative that perspectives in these fields do not emanate from the global North alone.

The notion of pluriversality can only be epistemic, meaning that there are different ways of

representing reality and not that there are different realities. There are three senses in which the literature speaks of the various ways of representing reality. The first is a form of epistemic relativism which argues that "different communities, often distant in space and in time but possibly also close to our present-day world, can have different, and incommensurable, conceptions of the epistemic properties of their beliefs, and in particular of what it takes for a belief to be true or to be known" (Boghossaian, 2005). The second is described as a version of epistemic contextualism, the view that the meaning of epistemic terms vary across contexts and circumstances depending on who attributes such properties and the epistemic situation of the subjects (Engel, 2017, p. 96). The third is a meta-epistemological view which comes from discussions about the nature of justification and knowledge. From this perspective, it is not possible to have a unified conception about these ideas.

My conceptualisations of epistemic relevance as a curricular and pedagogical principle are rooted in the first two perspectives because there are different kinds of knowledge, related to diverse sources, which do not call for the same kind of justification. For instance, factual knowledge, conceptual knowledge and metacognitive knowledge do not obey the same kind of justification. It is therefore possible to have a specific kind of justification and specific level of justification because there are competing accounts of justification. Conceived of this way, epistemic relevance contributes several crucial elements to averting epistemic alienation and marginalisation in the classroom. Firstly, it acknowledges that there are multiple ways of knowing the world. Secondly, it recognises how integrating various epistemologies can result in a more diverse understanding of the world. Lastly, it asserts that operationalising these different approaches may require continual negotiations.

The quest for relevance and plurality should not be confused with a call to contaminate the purity of disciplinary knowledge or transcend disciplinary boundaries. The humanities and social sciences are organised into various disciplines which provide the structure of knowledge in which those involved in the disciplines are trained and socialised, carry out tasks of teaching, and produce research and educational output. Elements that must be present to constitute a legitimate disciplinary field include the presence of a scholarly community, a history of inquiry, a mode of inquiry defining how data is collected and interpreted as well as defining the requirements for what constitutes new knowledge, and the existence of a communications network. Training in a discipline results in a system of orderly scholarly behaviour understood as characteristic of that discipline. These behaviours are critical in approaches to understanding and investigating new knowledge.

While advocating for relevance in the humanities and social sciences, we cannot move away from the idea that the effectiveness of teaching and learning in higher education in part relies on the discipline specificity. In other words, teaching in the social sciences and humanities has to take into account the characteristics of the discipline being taught. The quest for epistemic relevance has to take into account "discipline-specific pedagogical knowledge" (Berthiaume, 2007, p.56). A student does not naturally engage; he or she must learn the disciplines that "govern, or make sense of, the way in which we can approach and negotiate knowledge, and this learning could indeed be legitimately described as accomplishment in skills" (Berthiaume, 2007, p. 78). The kind of plurality argued for here works within the boundaries of disciplinary knowledge to look beyond the West and in so doing identifies epistemologies that do not claim universality from a dominant point of view, do not read from the centre and do not exclude the experience and social thought of most of humanity.

At an ontological level, embracing plurality requires that we move beyond merely tolerating forms of knowledge from non-Western contexts but rather understanding that knowledge is constituted by many kinds of worlds, many ways of being in the world, many ways of knowing reality, and experiencing those many worlds (Querejazu, 2016). Pluriversality, then, requires that we reconsider the ontological premises that have conditioned the development of knowledge in the humanities and social sciences where a one-world reality is accepted as a natural and universal fact. Pluriversality entails drawing from other perspectives and worldviews and acknowledging the existence of many worldviews which are connected.

In embracing plurality, it becomes possible to have different methods, concepts, languages and theories co-existing and not submitted in one reality. In this sense, what I and many authors from the global South are arguing for is not for something new but rather for the acknowledgement of something that already exists. Western forms of universality have been normalised, represented constantly in the academy and other spaces as a result of colonisation, but other ontologies and epistemologies do exist. Pluriversality goes beyond taking a critical stand against mainstream Western discourses and involves the inclusion and defence of other possible ways of being in the world. It offers the possibility of coming up with better, more logical and rational explanations, taking into account different realities that coexist.

Pluriversality changes the terms of intellectual production in the present, and places the glory of "other" intellectual traditions in the present rather than the past. The conception of the pluriversal presented in this chapter does not in any way suggest that theories, methods and

concepts must be monological. It does, however, address issues of inclusion, representation, and recognition. Centring white, European male experiences as the universal template has led to the denigration and erasure of representations of reality outside the Western context. Pluriversality is a fundamental imperative in the form of ongoing resistances, revolts and emancipatory efforts. In the classroom context, it creates spaces where students are put in a relationship with the material, "ecological, cultural, and social world around them" (Perry, 2021, p. 13).

7.6 Conclusion

The kind of plurality argued for in this chapter is based on epistemic pluralism, the proposition that multiple, fundamentally different interpretations of reality are both inevitable and desirable. This is because of the contingent, contextual and subjective nature of knowledge. Knowledge rests on human diversity, which is pragmatically useful, stimulating and ethically worthy. Being epistemically relevant through embracing plurality ensures a move away from received philosophy or artificial universalism to an intimate knowledge of the dynamics of the South African context in a contemporary setting. It is informed by knowledge projects which have emerged from the African context. Engaging these various knowledge projects and taking them seriously in the formulation of new theories and methods would allow South African universities and researchers to contribute towards genuine, multifaceted development of the country and its people. This entails not following trends, as has been our history in the humanities and social sciences, but a careful rethinking of South African concerns and priorities.

Every significant development in the humanities and social sciences in the periphery makes some use of the concepts or techniques from the metropole, making it rather unrealistic to imagine these fields without these concepts and theorists. Equally difficult to imagine is a set of indigenous sociologies, indigenous psychologies, and so on, all functioning independently. The project of epistemological relevance argued for here is not about imagining an African or South African knowledge tradition that is isolated from the rest of the world. Relevance is envisioned here as keeping both eyes open – one on contemporary Western sciences and their philosophies and the other on the African cultures' scientific practices and legacies. Where Western perspectives are applied, they should be linked to existing materials infrastructures, knowledge systems, and ethical and moral assumptions and practices.

The transformation project in higher education remains incomplete if we fail to take a fresh look at the knowledge shared in the classroom and avenues for dissemination. The most critical challenge we confront in relation to knowledge production and dissemination is the continued reliance on perspectives from the global North. This needs to change, and it can. To be truly transformative in our approach, higher education institutions must support the efforts towards decolonisation, Africanisation and indigenising the fields. Curricula and pedagogy at South African universities should be scrutinised in relation to their ability to accommodate diverse student groups, and whether they reflect the context in which they are located. The implications of rooting curricula and pedagogy in the project of pluriversality are discussed in the chapter that follows.

Chapter Eight

Grounding Disciplinary Knowledge in the South African Context

8.1 Introduction

Appropriating epistemic relevance as a curricular and pedagogical principle is about ensuring that the contents and practice of teaching do not embrace epistemologies which claim universality from a metropolitan point of view, read from one direction, and exclude the experiences and social thought of marginalised students. Adopting the principle also ensures that marginalised students are no longer subjected to systematic and material dispossession, and are no longer subjected to social, cultural and political alienation. This is possible because adopting epistemic relevance as a curricular and pedagogical principle leads to pluriversality where many worldviews and epistemologies fit. Rooted in critical realist philosophy, the conceptualisation of pluriversality presented in this thesis is about various representations of reality rather than multiple realities, therefore amounting to epistemic pluralism, which acknowledges that there are different ways of knowing the world.

Acknowledging that there are different ways of knowing the world is critical in the humanities and social sciences where curricula continue to be plagued with colonial, androcentric, Eurocentric and Orientalist representations of reality. These features aid in epistemic marginalisation and injustice, leaving particular groups of students struggling with gaining access to the disciplinary knowledge offered in the university context. While teaching and learning is indeed a co-operative process, and the student also has a role to play in gaining access to disciplinary knowledge, it is worth acknowledging that this task is difficult if disciplinary knowledge is presented as universal while it presents Western representations of reality.

In this chapter, I offer a synthesis of the multi-layered and intricate argument presented throughout the thesis. While the various layers may have contributed to the intricate nature of the argument, they are necessary in grasping the idea of epistemic relevance as well as the problems it can potentially address. The chapter also explores the implications of embracing the principle of epistemic relevance for the contents (curricula) and practice (pedagogy) of teaching in higher education. These implications are important, especially if the principle is to function within disciplinary boundaries and knowledge structures in the humanities and social sciences. In the classroom, it challenges those who teach to connect different knowledge formations with

each other, to ensure a move away from the erasure of the lived experience that marginalised students bring into the classroom.

8.2 Grasping Epistemic Relevance

The concerns expressed in this thesis are about the appropriateness of the transitive objects of knowledge in the humanities and social sciences, and emanate from my experiences of epistemic marginalisation and alienation as a student in these fields. The social construction of common-sense knowledge that students learn is not innocent or value-free. The mainstream curricula and pedagogical practices I encountered at university served to reinforce dominant conceptions of what counts as valid representations of reality. This was coupled with the absence of complex and critical knowledge about certain contexts, thus reinforcing stereotypes and biased knowledge about certain cultures and knowers. As a result of this biased teaching, as a student I was socialised into believing that events outside the Western context are more irrational, aberrant and violent.

Concerns about the appropriateness of transitive objects of knowledge were also expressed by students during the 2015-2016 protests when they critiqued the Eurocentrism of university curricula, demanding instead decolonised, Afrocentric and intersectional curricula. While my argument and analysis are not about the 2015-2016 student protests, I draw on the events to demonstrate that the concerns expressed here are not just the result of my own subjective experience. The #FeesMustFall movement (2016) called on the government to ensure that higher education is inclusive of Black people, "both in learning content, and how it is transferred". Black students from poor backgrounds may be able to register for a university degree but due to the type of knowledge (white, male and European) included in the curriculum, often struggle to gain access to this knowledge.

In many ways, the concerns expressed here can be located within the broader concern for epistemic and cognitive justice which remain absent in many university classrooms. As knowers, students suffer an epistemic injustice when their meanings or contributions are excluded and silenced in the classroom as a result of their social identities and socio-economic backgrounds. The exclusion and silencing of particular ways of knowing are attributed to cognitive injustice, which is the inability to recognise alternative epistemologies and treat these fairly. These injustices constitute harm as they obstruct the cognitive success of students who are unable to relate to content or how it is transferred because it reflects Western contexts, history and culture.

8.2.1 Grasping Epistemic Relevance: The Critical Element

Thus far, the academic and policy discourse on how to address epistemic harms at South African universities has been based on a lazy and emotive insistence that local knowledge should be taken as it is and integrated into curricula based on its origins. There is minimal engagement with how this knowledge can constitute the disciplinary content knowledge offered at university. The concept of epistemic relevance as a curricular and pedagogical principle is offered to remedy this gap. In order to make claims about the nature of reality, the conceptualisation of epistemic relevance is underpinned by critical realist philosophy. From the CR perspective, the social world is an open system whose existence is largely independent of any knowledge one may have or develop, and social science should be critical concerning the social world it aims to describe and explain.

The critical realist position adopted here is concerned with the idea of emancipatory social practice. From this position the world cannot be changed rationally unless it is interpreted adequately. In this account, ontology is prior to epistemology; the critical realist account of epistemology has its roots in Bhaskar's (1986) realist ontology. As a result, our interpretations of the world rest on the philosophical idea of a discourse-independent reality. Critical realists accept the possibility of alternative valid accounts of any phenomenon, thus denying that we can have any "objective" or certain knowledge of the world. My conceptualisations of being epistemically relevant as the acknowledgement that our representations of reality are context-dependent and situated begin from this position.

Following critical realist tradition, my conceptualisations of epistemic relevance are also based on the rejection of the idea of "multiple realities", in the sense of independent and incommensurable worlds that are socially constructed by different individuals or different societies. So, while epistemic relevance addresses the hegemony of perspectives from the global North, it does not suggest that these perspectives are based on a different reality. These perspectives, however, are different and valid within the contexts that have given rise to them. Their application outside these contexts should be accompanied by a critical interrogation and rethinking to make them fit for the local context.

Epistemic relevance proposes epistemic inclusion that accepts a judgemental rationalism, within an epistemic relativism, within an ontological realism; in short, the principle applies the three pillars of critical realism. Judgemental rationality means that we can publicly discuss our claims about reality, as we perceive it, and order better or worse arguments, we can arrive at

reasoned, though provisional, judgements about what reality is objectively like: about what belongs to that reality and what does not (Archer, Collier, & Porpora, 2004). This idea is extended to disciplinary knowledge to suggest that epistemologically, all judgements about relevance remain provisional, subject to new information or re-evaluation. The second pillar of CR applied by the principle is epistemic relativism, which is different from judgemental relativism which regards all judgements as equally valid. Similar to CR, epistemic relevance is committed to the idea of some judgements being objectively better than others. Epistemic relativism mean that all our judgements are socially and historically situated. These judgements are conditioned by our circumstances, by what we know at the time and by the prevailing criteria of evaluation. Epistemic relevance extends this idea to disciplinary knowledge, to highlight the positionality of those who generate what is considered to be disciplinary knowledge as well as those who receive this knowledge.

The third pillar is that of ontological realism which asserts the ontologically objective existence of reality, independent of our beliefs about it. It follows that something may belong to reality even if we remain mistaken about it or ignore it (Archer, Collier, & Porpora, 2004). In CR, ontological realism rescues ontology from absorption into epistemology, thus avoiding the epistemic fallacy. The fallacy involves the fallacious inference that because there is no epistemologically objective view of the world, there is also no objective world ontologically. The separation of ontology and epistemology is critical in understanding the idea of epistemic relevance, which is not concerned with the appropriateness of reality but rather the interpretations of reality. Maintaining ontological realism makes it possible to argue that although we embrace different worldviews, we do not inhabit objectively different worlds.

Epistemic relevance is about fostering plurality to include representations of reality from "other" cultures, contexts and social identities in the disciplinary knowledge included in the curriculum and how this knowledge is transmitted. The three pillars of CR are necessary as the plurality argued for here is one which adheres to disciplinary epistemic boundaries. In accepting epistemic pluralism and relativity, the principle holds that it is important to distinguish epistemological objectivity from ontological objectivity. This distinction between our beliefs or knowledge claim about the world (the transitive dimension) and what the world is actually like apart from us (the intransitive dimension) is important. Equally critical is the ability to judge between different positions and having criterion to do so.

8.3 Appropriating Epistemic Relevance

The identification of the ongoing epistemic harms at South African universities cannot serve to explain their origins. These epistemic harms are experienced in the domain of the real. However, from the critical realist perspective, social reality has three layers. Added to the domain of the empirical where epistemic harms are observed and experienced is the domain of the real, which contains social structures and generative mechanisms which enable or constrain the actions of agents which are observed at the level of the actual. The identification of the structures which operate at the level of the real is key in understanding the conditions necessary for appropriating epistemic relevance. Understanding the role of social structures in enacting epistemic change highlights the emergence of institutional and systemic social structures which accounts for the current state of affairs, and because we can neither assume that agents are determined by these structures nor are immune from them, the chapter accounts for the interplay between structure and agency. In doing so, parts are separated from people through a loose application of Archer's (1995) morphogenetic/morphostatic approach.

Thinking about epistemic change in cycles is useful because they indicate continuity: the end product of structural elaboration (T^4) then constitutes the new (T^1), thus beginning another cycle of change. The morphogenetic cycles suggest that structural conditioning can be located in the colonial conquest of Africa. The resulting structural interaction during and after colonisation gave rise to centre-periphery relations between scholarly communities in Africa and those in the metropole. These power dynamics left the humanities and social sciences in the African context in a marginal position dependent on perspectives from the centre, but also producing knowledge based on developments at the centre. The interplay of structure and agency points to intellectual dependence and extraversion which should be understood as structural elaboration. The appropriation of epistemic relevance is dependent upon dismantling these systemic structures. In addition to the systematic structures at a global level, there also exist systemic and institutional structures in the local context which influence the adopting of epistemic relevance as a curricular and pedagogical principle. This study has suggested that policy has an important role to play in this regard. The policies which guide change in higher education should be deliberate and precise.

In the South African context, a number of perspectives have emerged in the academic discourse on addressing the epistemic harms at South African universities. These are the concepts of indigenisation, Africanisation, decolonisation and endogenisation discussed in Chapters Seven

and Eight. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2016) labelled these concepts the grammars of change. I find this useful as the concepts refer neither to theoretical perspective nor to intellectual movements. Rather, they refer to the works of various authors from a variety of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences attempting to tackle the problem of epistemological irrelevance, although at times not explicitly characterised as such. These perspectives can be viewed as being part of the works in the humanities and social sciences that challenge assumptions about homogenous knowledge domains. As knowledge projects, they feed back into our understanding of knowledge itself and should not be viewed as a fixed set of propositions but rather a challenge to develop new ways of learning. These four grammars of change are presented as frameworks that might assist in rendering pedagogy and curricula epistemically plural, and thus relevant.

Epistemic pluralism is neither a rejection nor a negation of Western thought which has been built into the fabric of schooling and is therefore part of the pluriversal. A pluriversal approach provides a way of "re-existence which entails working to re-define and re-signify conditions of dignity on our shared planet" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 3). This thinking provides the possibilities to respond to the tendency of mainstream practices to reinforce an "us" and a "them" within a colonial imaginary (Pashby, da Costa, & Sund, 2020). So, while embracing pluriversality does not entail an outright rejection of Wester epistemologies, it does entail a rejection of the normalisation of Eurocentrism. In university teaching, irrelevance and the normalisation of Eurocentrism is most visible in courses on social theory, which is generally defined as the particular writings of a set of white, male European scholars. Some central figures have emerged and are viewed as founding fathers of the various humanities and social science disciplines. Sociology has the Marx, Weber and Durkheim trinity, philosophy has Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, while psychology has the likes of Freud, Erikson and Skinner.

Counteracting irrelevance and constructing the pluriversal involves reversing the subject-object dichotomy, bringing non-Europeans into the foreground, recognising non-European theorists, and turning attention to the non-European concepts and categories (Alatas, 2008). In relation to teaching and learning, plurality and correcting Eurocentric bias involve critically dealing with Western thinkers as well as dealing with non-Western thinkers that make up the humanities and social science disciplines. Courses should provide a focus on non-Western thinkers, particularly in instances when such thinkers had an impact on the development of social thought. Such thinkers should be discussed as sources of relevant theories and ideas.

Embracing plurality also entails changing the "ideology of knowledge" as well as the "sociology of knowledge" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p. 78). At the ideological level of knowledge, this entails refusing to accept only the Eurocentric colonial paradigm which continues to conceive of those from outside Western contexts as objects rather than subjects of knowledge. The latter enables scholarly communities in the global South to take charge of knowledge production, thus producing knowledge that is context-relevant. Changing the ideology of knowledge and the sociology of knowledge allows for the reversal of the epistemological invasion of African minds which began with colonisation. This move allows for the construction of a classroom experience which does not produce an identity crisis in students (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013)

In the classroom, plurality challenges the idea of a single worldview (Western) becoming the universal truth while other representations of reality have been labelled as either myths or simplistic beliefs. The universalisation of Western ontologies and epistemologies is limiting and excluding. A lot needs to be done to achieve pluriversality, and the project involves going beyond accepting different theoretical, methodological, linguistic and conceptual approaches. The pluriverse includes Western ontologies, which complement and are interconnected with other ontologies. An important part of appropriating epistemic relevance is a critical unpacking of the mainstream literature in a field of practice – textbooks and established paradigms – revealing Northern dominance of the discourse. Resecting intellectual traditions from the global periphery is very much connected with the project of democracy. The global South does produce theory in many genres and styles, and this theory has as much intellectual power as metropolitan thought, and more political relevance. Perspectives from the global South should be taken seriously as theory and texts to learn from, not just about. Since context is different, the form of theorising is often different too. Work can be done to develop connections, as well as contrasts, between these bodies of thought and those of the metropole.

8.4 Separating the Nomothetic from the Idiographic

I belong to a generation of optimistic, young, Black, women academics who have struggled in academia but also continue to challenge the traditions of the academy, even if we are still so few in number, an endangered species of sorts. Academia remains a "dreadfully white", male and epistemically Western place. Black students in particular remain trapped in a system that continues to exert epistemic harms on them. The policy efforts have not translated into material benefits or epistemic justice for these students, who join higher education as part of the need to

ensure access, equity and wider participation. As a result, the monumental gains made continue to reside alongside old patterns reproducing themselves within the higher education system.

Affective transformation premised on plural epistemologies is central to achieving epistemic and cognitive justice. Achieving epistemic and cognitive justice does not entail the transformation of the higher education system in the Fanonian sense of complete destruction and reconstruction. It also does not entail a dismissal of the idea of powerful disciplinary knowledge. As a student and lecturer, I have first-hand experience of what systematic disciplinary knowledge can do. It is useful as it provides reliable explanations and new ways of thinking about the world. However, acquiring and transferring this knowledge is difficult if its legitimacy rests only on Western history, social contexts, identities and cultures, thus making it knowledge of the powerful.

Averting epistemic harms entails a complete reconstruction of what it means to know. Adopting epistemic relevance as a curricular and pedagogical principle is useful in this regard. The formulation of this principle is guided by critical realist philosophy and begins with a distinction between ontology (what is real) and epistemology (what we know). Critical realism is a metaphysical ontology which does not imply anything about the existence of the self, society and social structures. In formulating and articulating the principle of epistemic relevance, I have attempted to adhere to the general principles and language of CR. This, however, is the beginning of analysis, not the end. In averting epistemic harms our concerns should be with the representations of reality (what it means to know) and not reality itself, because while multiple epistemologies are possible, multiple realities are not. The principle takes a weak relativist stance, acknowledging that our representations of reality are socially constructed, dependent on context and situated. We are, however, able to make judgements about which representation of reality is better or worse if we adopt the notion of judgemental rationality. This is necessary because epistemic relativism can lead to judgemental relativism. Following this logic, what is considered relevant is that which is plural, acknowledging both the situatedness and dependentness of representations of reality.

Recognising the situatedness and dependent nature of representations of reality is a necessary step in democratising the humanities and social sciences to ensure they function on a world scale. This move opens up room for alternative discourses which are informed by local historical experiences and cultures in the same way as the humanities and social sciences in Western contexts. These discourses turn to local philosophies, epistemologies, histories and the

arts other than those of the Western tradition. These discourses are more conscious of the relevance of the surroundings and the problems stemming from the discursive wielding of power by the humanities and social sciences.

These discourses, represented by ideas on decolonisation, Africanisation, indigenisation and endogenisation are necessary in creating a pluriverse where many epistemologies fit. Pluriversality should lead to teaching and learning that challenge Western and Eurocentric discourses. In relation to curricula and pedagogy, it should entail more than a change in teaching materials, and also encourage in students new ways of thinking and viewing the world. For those who teach, it entails new ways of thinking about students and what they need to achieve cognitive success. In interrogating curricula and pedagogy for relevant representations of reality, students are freed from Western epistemological domination and Eurocentrism. Charting new directions for education on the continent entails privileging local, practical, differential, site-specific and situated knowledges. Hountondji (2009, 9) describes what should be perceived as our final goal as:

> … "an autonomous, self-reliant process of knowledge production and capitalisation that enables us to answer our own questions and meet both the intellectual and material needs of African societies. The first step in this direction would probably be to formulate original "problematics," original sets of problems that are grounded in a solid appropriation of the international legacy and deeply rooted in the African experience."

8.5 Epistemically Plural Curricula: Towards a Model for Curriculum Transformation

It is through curricula that ideas of higher education are put into action. Through curricula, too, values, beliefs and principles in relation to learning, understanding, knowledge, disciplines, individuality and society are realised. The term is often used in relation to aspects of the structure or content of courses. In its Latin form, the concept was derived from the word 'currere', 'to run', 'the action of running'. In the context of education this relates both to the aggregate of courses of study, and to particular courses of study. In some instances it is seen as somewhat static and unplanned, but can also be understood as an emerging entity, 'the race being run', only fully being identifiable after the event. The curriculum should be clear about what has to be taught and what has to be learned in higher education, based on reasonable expectations of time and resources. The curriculum should therefore be one of the key major concepts in the language of higher education (Barnett & Coate, 2005, p. 25).

In the attempts to outline the implications of pluriversality for the curriculum, I use the concept of curricula in a broad sense to refer to an interrelated set of plans and experiences which a student completes under the guidance of the university (Marsh, 1997, p. 5). Such a conception is important for the project of pluriversality as it places the curriculum on a continuum, allowing for a distinction to be made between the explicit and the hidden curriculum. The explicit (or official) curriculum is that which is constructed around formally stated content or outcomes. What is learned, however, includes much more than this. It also encompasses the unstated norms, values and beliefs that are transmitted to students through underlying structure of meaning. It therefore embodies a tacit framework of meaning and grammar that is seldom explicitly spelt out, which is below the level of articulated consciousness, but which shapes what is learned in far more profound ways than the explicit outcomes: the hidden curriculum.

The notion of a "hidden curriculum" suggests that something else is going on beyond what is seen on the surface in classrooms and textbooks. The difference between the two may be conscious or unconscious, the cause of any mismatch being a deliberate attempt by the teachers, or the result of the fact that because teachers and learners are human, the realities of any course will never fully match up the intentions of those who have planned or designed it (Kelly, 2004, p. 6). The idea of a hidden curriculum embraces a strong bond with culture, teaching us to "pay attention to belief systems, values, behaviours, language, artistic expression, the environment in which education takes place, power relationships, and most importantly, the norms that affect our sense about what is appropriate" (Joseph, Bravmann, Windschtl, & Mikel, 2000).

8.5.1 Rethinking Curriculum Transformation

Writing on curriculum transformation in South Africa, Morrow (2009) compares the process to attempting to move a cemetery. Given the discourse on curriculum transformation in South African higher education, I believe this is a useful analogy. Cemeteries are the repositories of precious memories and traditions, some personal and some communal. These precious memories are not only links to past relationships but for some people they are also links to life thereafter. They are historical memorials of human lives once lived, places in which to reflect on the brutal fact that human beings have limited lifespans. As can be expected, moving a cemetery is always difficult and problematic, characterised by passionate conflict, anxiety and resistance (Morrow, 2009). Recognising that cemeteries may be sacred to some people may help to understand that humanities and social science curricula to some are symbolic bridges between the past and present. For some, the traditional curriculum is indeed held sacred, with

humility and reverence as the proper attitudes when we enter it. Some curricula are viewed as repositories of precious memories and traditions, as texts from which we can learn the lessons of history (Morrow, 2009). The traditional curriculum will therefore be viewed as a celebration of the work of those currently understood to be pioneers in that field.

Another reason curriculum change is so difficult is that any current curriculum embodies a set of intellectual habits and routines which have become comfortable for those who teach that curriculum. At a deeper level, committed teachers' self-images and professional identities, and their fundamental convictions about the values and standards of academic practice, are likely to be deeply embrangled with the curriculum they teach (Kelly, 2004). Asking them to change the curriculum, in effect, is to ask them to develop new professional identities, and maybe in their eyes, to fatally compromise their standards, and ask them to compromise their arduously acquired understanding of the disciplines they teach and the significance of their academic practice. For these reasons it may be advantageous to have a guiding principle which fosters inclusivity but does not require that those who teach abandon their commitment to the disciplines and disciplinary knowledge. The study suggests that epistemic relevance is a useful way to approach inclusivity while adhering to disciplinary epistemic boundaries.

Adopting epistemic relevance as a curricula principle recognises that issues of curricula are intertwined with the social and historical contexts of universities and the wider world in which universities are located. Therefore, any attempt at changing society, addressing inequalities and developing a just and healthy society rightly begin with a change in the content of the vehicle through which young people are taught and developed. Social transformation becomes embedded in curriculum transformation which is about the practices and processes that higher education institutions use to change teaching and learning content. Curriculum transformation therefore becomes, in itself, a vehicle towards wider transformational goals. This view is in line with the notion of curriculum in broad contextual terms, and takes into account that there is no single entity which is called "the curriculum" or "university curricula".

In adopting epistemic relevance, transformation and redress are conceptualised beyond issues of broadening formal access, representation, and the eradication of discrimination. Curriculum transformation is taken to include epistemological issues, addressing ideas and knowledge formulation. In other words, addressing the ongoing epistemic harms at South African universities becomes central to the curriculum transformation project. Epistemic relevance ensures that curriculum transformation is about knowledge and the practice of inquiry. A

conviction that is shared by the proponents of curriculum transformation is a deep scepticism about the kind of knowledge characteristic of higher education in South Africa. Scepticism about claims to knowledge is not a new phenomenon. Epistemic relevance acknowledge that knowledge claims are always provisional and are essentially open to challenge – but not any kind of challenge. This opens up a new way to think about curriculum transformation and a manner in which to deal with those who call for radical curriculum transformation.

Appropriating epistemic relevance ensures that curricula in the local context are epistemically plural, incorporating different ways of knowing and different epistemological methodologies thus allowing for a fuller description of the world. A curriculum rooted in epistemic pluralism requires explicit attention to the history and contemporary manifestations of academic dependency and extraversion discussed in Chapter Four, clearly explicating their origins and rejecting their historical consequences. To be truly pluriversal, curricula should introduce students to theories, methods and concepts that provide them with the relevant analytical tools to excavate history and examine the present. The content it describes are contingent, context-specific and relevant and concern curriculum as an envisioned process moving towards epistemic equality and inclusivity. It is situated and contingent and therefore open to continuous modification and expansion. Such a curriculum should provide all students with a toolkit for individual and social transformation.

The appropriation of epistemic relevance does not necessarily mean replacing or ignoring the "traditional curriculum". The traditional curriculum does, however, need to be interrogated and exposed for complicity with epistemic exclusion and inequality that emanate from the dominance of Western epistemologies. This critique, however, ought to avoid homogenising Western thinking. There are differences among the humanities and social sciences in terms of the nature of their imperial reach and this ought to be acknowledged. Recognising the patterns of academic dependency and extraversion, being able to identify the centre and register the different positions of centre and periphery, is critical for the humanities and social science to function on a global scale. The curriculum should therefore not embody a false sense of universalism by building a model on the experience of the most privileged 600 million people in the world, and then assume it accounts for the 7.2 billion who are actually in the world.

The neglect of non-Western sources and female voices in accounts of the formative period of the development of social theory should be addressed in the efforts for pluriversality. The dominant account of the development of social theory would have students believe that it was

only Western European and later North American white males who are capable of thinking in a creative and systematic manner about the origins and nature of the emerging modernity of their time. Here I want to stress that I am not arguing that classical theory should be removed from curricula in the humanities and social sciences. Rather, a fresh approach which includes non-Western sources and female voices that attunes students to the works of classical theorists in a meaningful manner is necessary. The inclusion non-Western sources and female scholars should not just be about broadening ideas of the past but also rethinking the way that the past "is embedded in the concept of classical theory and the pedagogy of classical texts" (Connell, 1997, p. 1512).

In summary, a pluriversal curriculum in the humanities and social sciences embraces three critical approaches: anti-homogeneity, critical reading, and moral solidarity. Curricula content that is grounded in Western knowledge often generalises cultural practices, enforces cultural stereotypes and generates racist representations (Subedi, 2013). Homogenous representations provide totalising views of a culture since what is common practice within a community is taken to be the whole. Moving away from this requires critically interrogating scripts of cultural difference that set up sharp binaries between Western and non-Western cultures. Anti-homogeneity takes into account the multiple experiences of people, acknowledging how these are shaped by questions of histories and experiences. The anti-homogenous curriculum critiques dichotomous perspectives on issues.

Critical reading moves away from conventional ways of framing comparative analysis, and focuses on relations between the global North and South. This focus allows the reading of dominant writings to draw out, extend, and give emphasis and voice to what is silent, marginalised or ideologically represented (Said, 1993). The works of colonial literature, which were often written for a Western audience, utilised non-Western settings or contexts, yet they remained silent about the questions of imperialism and colonisation. Critical reading is necessary given the fact that pluriversality demands that we find different ways of working with Western thought to make it fit for the margins. Being attentive to the politics and power of imperialism, critical reading makes explicit the relationship between societies considered "centre" and "periphery", revealing the value of rereading, reformulating and readdressing social thought from the perspectives in the margins. This perspective puts into perspective the historical context of relations among scholarly communities and puts global knowledge production dynamics under scrutiny. This perspective puts the relationships between local/global power formations under scrutiny and is crucial if we are to produce a generation of

scholars who are able to consider the relationships and interconnections regarding questions of power and knowledge.

The pluriversal curriculum is committed to analysing experiences that are complex and discrepant. It cannot ignore questions of ideology since there is a radical need to work through and interpret together the experiences that are discrepant (Said, 1993). This approach encourages educators to analyse complexities in teaching about experiences that are marginalised in the mainstream curriculum. This approach to curriculum highlights the complexity of developing curricula as well as the inherent tensions involved in addressing questions that relate to cultural differences (Subedi, 2013). A pluriversal curriculum recognises the limitations of engaging in cross-cultural dialogue and attempts to speak with the "Other" rather than to speak for the "Other". This can be messy and difficult to formulate, yet it is necessary. This kind of curriculum information reflects a commitment to the politics of changing social norms so that practitioners can work towards developing a more equitable society. Here there is a need to develop a curriculum that values cross-cultural solidarity, and it also calls for the need to avoid homogeneity of struggles, needs and desires across differences. This entails recognitions and inclusion of the histories and experiences of the marginalised, and active engagement with subjugated knowledges and how these can constitute a sense of transformative agency (Zembylas, 2018).

In the dissemination of knowledge, it is important to make students understand the historical trajectories of knowledge production that does not reside exclusively in the West, and includes rather multiple standpoints from the global South, such as those discussed in Chapters Six and Seven. Pluriversalising curricula opens up room to recognise the ways in which certain practices silence "other" epistemologies while privileging those emerging from the global North. Knowledge produced in other contexts then becomes the key point of reference in curricula that is rooted in the local context.

8.6 Pluriversalising Pedagogy

Meanings are never neutral; they are always situated socially, culturally and historically, and they operate with the logic of differing ideologies that imply differing sets of social practices. As discursive practice, pedagogy is encompassing of knowledge, ways of knowing, language and discourses, curriculum, the interactions and relationship between participants, motivation and prior knowledge (Leach & Moon, 1991). Any notion of pluriversal pedagogy should be

interrogated with the following questions: What ideologies underlie particular notions of pedagogy? Who benefits from the representation of those notions?

The ideas put forward by critical pedagogues are a useful starting point in answering the above questions and interrogating the notion of pluriversal pedagogy. Critical pedagogy has its roots in critical theory, and in the literature, it has been presented as a movement involving relationships of teaching and learning so that students gain a critical self-consciousness and social awareness (McKernan, 2013). The relationship between teacher and students is conceived of as one based on compassion, mutual understanding and common goals. From this perspective, the teacher understands their responsibility of preparing the student for more than the acquisition of skills but also the responsibility for equipping students with the capacity to transform society (Abraham, 2014).

Critical pedagogy is criticised for focusing heavily on a macro-level system critique rather than a focus on a micro-level system critique which takes into account classroom activity. Ellsworth (1989) presented a useful critique of critical pedagogy based on classroom activity, which may be useful in reinventing this form of pedagogy based on the idea of a pluriversal knowledge base. Following a review of the literature, Ellsworth (1989) argued that the discourse of critical pedagogy developed along a highly abstract and utopian line which does not necessarily sustain the daily workings of education as advocated by its supporters. Ellsworth (1989) developed a deconstructionist critique of critical pedagogues, arguing that they are implicated in the very structures they are trying to change. The crux of this argument is based on the observation that most of the literature on critical pedagogy is the work of dominant, middle-class white men.

Another challenge with the approach is the focus on describing the problem rather than finding feasible solutions or creating a "substantive vision" which can be applied in practical settings (Giroux, 2003). Critical pedagogy is concerned with teaching and learning that transforms the relations of power which are oppressive and lead to oppression. It does little to outline how this could be approached in practical situations, nor do proponents offer concrete suggestions taken from their own pedagogical practice. The result here is a rather abstract approach which is far removed from the realities of teaching and learning.

The critiques of critical pedagogy are useful and point to the need to revisit the assumptions underlying this framework, especially in the efforts towards cultural inclusivity and sensitivity. As with any theory, assessing the limitations and contributions of this framework does not necessitate outright dismissal. In relation to pluriversal pedagogy, I turn to critical pedagogy

and suggest that a critical application of this framework is sufficient. Here, I argue for the reinvention of critical pedagogy because there are particular assumptions, goals, implicit power dynamics and issues of who produces valid knowledge which remain unresolved.

Critical pedagogy emerged as a pedagogical framework of theory and praxis in which teachers engage students in critical analysis of their experiences, and advocate liberation from oppressive structures in schools and society (Zembylas, 2018). This framework encourages transformative social action in the lives of students. Critical pedagogy can therefore be reinvented to include a deeper understanding of the dynamic interplay between oppressed and oppressor, the complexity of the nature of oppression, and, finally, the idea that "transformative learning is more than a rationalist way of knowing and therefore it is important to take into consideration effective knowledge" (Zembylas, 2018, p. 408).

According to proponents of critical pedagogy, critical consciousness is the product of praxis. In the context of education, praxis aims at bridging the gap between theory and transformational action. It connects education which is liberatory with social transformation (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011). From this perspective, the pedagogical is political. It also puts forward the notion of classroom practice that integrates particular curriculum content and design, instructional strategies and techniques. These specify a particular version about which knowledge is of most worth, what it means to know something, and how we might construct a representation of our world and our place within it (McLaren 1998).

Pedagogy informed by a pluriversal knowledge system is guided by a context-sensitive theoretical heteroglossia that utilises theorisations and understandings from various contexts. Such pedagogy unmasks the logics, workings and effects of academic dependency and extraversion in our current contexts. These include postcolonial studies, critical pedagogy and critical race theory. Pedagogy in this sense is strongly informed by context. We cannot understand the distinction between David Ricardo and Friedrich List outside of the specificity of their locales; neither can we understand the profundity of the scholarship of Max Weber or Emile Durkheim, in Sociology, outside of the depth of their context (Adesina, 2008, p. 135).

Pluraversalising knowledge opens up room to provide students with knowledge that is grounded in the alternative discourses discussed in Chapters Seven, and not just those emanating from the global North. Those who are engaged in the practice of teaching should help to make explicit to students both their and others' ways of knowing and making sense of

the world. This has the ability to help students interrogate and analyse their own experiences in order to gain critical understanding of these experiences.

A significant aspect of the learning process is the context dependency of learners' knowledge (Murphy, 1996). Along with the learners' prior knowledge and understanding, context is an integral aspect of making sense. The implication here is that the opportunities that the students have to develop particular understandings will vary despite the commonality in classroom. The teachers' selections and those reflected in course content are likely to support the learning of some students while unintentionally disadvantaging others. If we accept this premise, then we also accept that some strategies are better suited to teaching certain fields of knowledge than others and some strategies are better suited to certain student backgrounds, learning styles and abilities (Bhowmik, Banerjee, & Banerjee, 2013). Another important element to consider here is that knowledge is not separable from the activity and situation in which it was produced.

Pluriversalising pedagogy therefore entails drawing from various frameworks rooted in critical pedagogy (intersectionality, critical race theory, Black feminism) to contextualise the practice of teaching. It creates spaces to draw from non-Eurocentric perspectives and the recognition of the multiple ways in which knowledge production is implicated in the relations between scholarly communities. If this is to be successful, it is important that both student and teacher view pluriversality as something we are all implicated in and responsible for. New pedagogies will require changes between the student and the teacher, in teaching strategies and in how learning is assessed. The idea of pluriversality can be useful in strengthening critical pedagogy and can assist in ensuring that this framework engages with affective knowledge in ways it has not sufficiently done thus far.

8.7 Conclusion

Academic work is affected by the cultural, and historical contexts of the scholars responsible for its production. Denying these influences constitutes a kind of epistemological ignorance. This ignorance has been and continues to be functional for scholars in the metropole and the empires that house them. Epistemological ignorance is maintained through the exclusive or nearly exclusive attention to a European canon of writings. Given the intellectual wealth of other locations in the world, an exclusive focus on the European tradition in teaching and learning amounts to epistemic injustice as it leads to an erasure of non-Western contributions. Epistemic relevance as a pedagogical and curricular principle addresses the exclusion of "othered" identities, contexts and cultures by presenting an ontology and epistemology rooted

in relativism and objective rationality. The appropriation of the principle rests on structural conditions and the actions of agents which will ultimately result in pluriversality.

The argument I have attempted to advance here is that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to pedagogy nor is there a set curriculum that can work for all populations. Curricula and pedagogical decisions in particular should be based instead on the needs and interests of students. These decisions should be framed through the use of diverse student experiences and the realities of their lives. The experience of acquiring a university education should be transformative and foster students' acquisition of the necessary skills to become committed citizens who are able to make decisions which affect their social, political, and economic realities. In embracing plurality, special attention should be paid to the cultural heritage, practices, knowledge and language of every student in the classroom. Embracing plurality allows the marginalised to gain their voices and become agents of social change.

Chapter Nine

Conclusion

The development of conceptual tools to investigate epistemic change thus averting epistemic harm accounts for the key contribution of this study, and has implications beyond the humanities and social sciences. The study calls attention to the knowledge that higher education in the South African context should deliver; it is about rethinking the explanation, and justification, of the purposes of such knowledge. To speak about epistemic change in the humanities and social sciences is about changing ways of knowing to move beyond Western epistemologies which are guided by the idea of objectivity, thus encouraging the idea of truth claims being free from subjective bias. Throughout the study I have argued that our views of the world are shaped by our social contexts, cultures and identities. The Western epistemologies encountered at South African universities are therefore subject to historical and cultural particularities of the contexts which have given rise to them. The dominance of Western epistemologies in the humanities and social sciences in the South African context highlights the need for both epistemic inclusivity and epistemic equality.

The study demonstrates how appropriating epistemic relevance as a curricular and pedagogical principle fosters epistemic inclusivity and epistemic equality in the humanities and social sciences. As an educator in higher education who remains committed to the idea of powerful disciplinary knowledge and disciplinary knowledge structures, I have struggled with appropriate ways to integrate "other" knowledge systems into the disciplinary knowledge that I teach. The study has relied on critical realist philosophy to explore these possibilities, demonstrating that epistemic inclusivity and equality lies in a form of pluralism which is guided by judgemental rationality. The notion of epistemic relevance therefore provides a means to engage with the various ways of knowing that students bring into the classroom while adhering to disciplinary epistemic boundaries and knowledge structures. As a principle which guides curricular and pedagogical decisions, epistemic relevance is valuable in thinking about incorporating social contexts, identity and culture in the knowledge that is disseminated in higher education.

In the narrow sense, "education" refers to a social structure organised to deliver teaching – in this sense, it is most associated with formal schooling (Kotzee, 2017). Broadly, education may be associated with a process or practice – in this sense, it means something close to "teaching". As a normative concept, education involves the idea that something worthwhile is changed

about a person and that this change would not have occurred through purely natural development or growth (Peters, 1966). The goods that education promotes are epistemic in the sense of true beliefs, justified beliefs, knowledge or understanding. Education not only makes certain cognitions available, it also has the ability to shape people's epistemic character – education can be *transformational* in the agential sense (Kidd, 2015). Teaching is the *activity sense* of education, and in formal schooling it is about allowing students to learn. *Learning* can be understood as the success condition of teaching. The teacher succeeds in "teaching the learner what is taught only if the learner learns" (Kotzee, 2017, p. 344).

This study was born out of frustration with the type of education and teaching I encountered at a historically white South African university. While the success condition of teaching was met, in that I was able to learn what was being taught, the teaching did not result in something worthwhile being changed. Added to the frustration of not being able to encounter any valuable transformation as a result of learning, was lacking the interpretive capacities to communicate this particular experience. The lack of interpretive capacities to communicate my experiences can be understood as hermeneutical injustice, a variety of epistemic injustice. Meaning-making and meaning-sharing are crucial aspects of a dignified human life, and hermeneutic injuries can go very deep, indeed to the very core of one's humanity (Medina, 2017).

Given that education is mostly evaluated positively, it is unsurprising that there is a gap in collective resources to articulate epistemic harms encountered during the teaching and learning process. The last decade has produced rich literature on the phenomenon of hermeneutical injustice, its causes, consequences and varieties. Fricker (2007) characterised hermeneutic injustice as a structural, large-scale phenomenon that happens at the level of an entire culture. The same can be argued about epistemic harms in general. Chapter One emphasises the structural elements of epistemic harms, calling attention to the fact that these are built into the very structure of South African universities as epistemic institutions. The structural element of epistemic harm is worth noting because it highlights that students can be epistemically harmed even when we cannot point to particular individuals acting in ways that are identifiably wrong.

The 2015-2016 student protests under the banners of #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall continue to serve as a constructive reminder of how the transformation agenda in higher education remains incomplete. The 2015-2016 protests took place 21 years after South Africa's transition to a democratic society, and the demands for an intersectional and Africanised education in particular raised critical questions about the knowledge that is included in the

university curriculum. These questions are important because intellectually, South Africa's higher education institutions universities remain stuck in the colonial-apartheid frame, excluding and alienating certain members of the student and staff population. The efforts to transform higher education have not sufficiently engaged with knowledge as ways of knowing grounded in the local context, and with knowledge as a creator of identity. The study addresses this gap making a case for grounding disciplinary knowledge in the local context in the fields of the humanities and social sciences.

Averting epistemic harms in higher education is understood as the primary aim of epistemological transformation, which is about how knowledge is conceived, constructed and transmitted (DoE, 2008). Tied to this idea is rethinking the contents and practice of teaching as well as questioning the very idea of knowledge production – "knowledge for whom" – and questioning what is relevant in the local context. The issue of relevance in higher education is crucial, because although the demographic composition of the student body has significantly changed, with Black students constituting a large majority of the student population, there continue to be significant inequalities with regard to knowledge. Chapter One emphasised how these inequalities are not the same across the knowledge fields, and what is presented in this thesis largely has implications for the disciplines that make up the humanities and social sciences.

Epistemological transformation speaks to the core function of higher education in relation to teaching and learning and should be at the heart of the transformation agenda. Chapter One argued that the lack of progress in relation to epistemological transformation can in part be linked to disciplinary knowledge structures and what constitutes relevant disciplinary knowledge. The pursuit of truth distinguishes disciplinary knowledge from other types of knowledge. The study has argued that there are different sources of truth in society and that culture, context and identity have their place in education. The disciplines which constitute the fields of the humanities and social sciences have what Bernstein (1997) characterises as horizontal knowledge structures, allowing for the inclusion of new language or theory to be added to the disciplines as new areas are researched. Due to their horizontal knowledge structures, the disciplines allow for new or additional areas of interest to be added to the base of the discipline. In Chapter One, I argued that due to these horizontal knowledge structures, disciplinary practices in the humanities and social sciences can be contested, and authentic disciplinary inquiry should not be equated with Western epistemologies. The notion of

horizontal knowledge structures is useful as it recognises differences about what may count as sources of disciplinary knowledge and does not allow this to be hampered by rigidity.

Chapter One also highlighted that ideas on disciplinary knowledge and disciplinary knowledge structure constitute a challenge for epistemological transformation because the rejection of Western epistemologies does not constitute a rejection of the disciplines and their epistemic boundaries. For instance, the majority of my disciplinary training has been in the discipline of sociology, and my rejection of Western epistemologies does not amount to a rejection of the subject matter of sociology, which is the study of social life, social change and other aspects of human behaviour. This subject matter is universal and not specific to Western contexts. Instead, I reject studying or teaching an untenable foundation story of great white men theorising European modernity. In any sociology textbook there will almost certainly be a discussion of the founding fathers, focused on Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim and how they created in response to dramatic changes in European society "the industrial revolution, class conflict, secularization, alienation and the modern state" (Connell, 1997, p. 1511). Curriculum knowledge is also backed by this disciplinary history in which sociologists account for their origins in the same way (Connell, 1997, p. 1512).

The idea of an origin history is not unique to the discipline of sociology, as most disciplines in the humanities and social sciences have a classical period set in the time when the founding fathers set the framework of the disciplines. Most of the disciplines that make up the humanities and social sciences have a set of classical texts which are widely cited, and it is not uncommon for scholars to identify themselves as having an approach aligned to the founding fathers and the classical texts they have produced. The classics have come to represent what is distinct about the disciplines, influencing what counts as theory, what theoretical language scholars are to speak in, and what problems are most worth speaking about. These classical texts represent a privileged set of texts whose interpretation and reinterpretation continues to define the fields (Connell, 1997). The idea an untenable foundation story of great white men theorising European modernity represents what is transitive and changing about disciplinary knowledge. Epistemic relevance presents a tangible way of thinking about and approaching this change.

This study arose from my own experiences of being epistemically harmed as a knower and speaker in higher education. In Chapter Two, this experience was presented through the lens of intersectionality to highlight the mutually constitutive relations among social identities. A consistent thread across the various understandings of intersectionality is that social identities

which serve as organising features of social relations, *mutually constitute*, r*einforce*, and *naturalise* one another (Shields, 2008). This means that one category of identity, such as race, takes its meaning as a category in relation to another category. A central tenet of feminist theorising, the framework has been useful in understanding how my particular experiences of epistemic alienation and marginalisation have been profoundly shaped by my social identities. By social identity, I am referring to the social categories in which I claim membership as an individual. The experience of being epistemologically alienated and marginalised is understood as being the result of my particular social location, and adopting epistemic relevance takes this location into account. In psychological terms, identity relates to awareness of self, self-image, self-reflection and self-esteem. In relation to epistemology, Chapter Two has argued that social identities influence how we create and obtain knowledge.

The theoretical foundations of intersectionality grew from the study of the production of inequalities, dominance and oppression. The evolution of intersectionality as a theoretical framework has been traced to Black feminist responses to the accumulated disadvantage model and the recognition that the intersections of gender with other dimensions of social identity are the starting point of theory. Chapter Two has argued that the lens of intersectionality is useful as it highlights both oppression and possibility in relation to identity and epistemic change. Being on the advantaged side of epistemic inequality and exclusion offers more than avoidance of disadvantage by actually opening up access to knowledge and opportunities unavailable to other intersections. In relation to acquiring knowledge an intersectional position may be disadvantaged relative to one group but advantaged in relation to another. For instance, the Black male may be disadvantaged as a knower because of race, however, relative to a Black woman, he enjoys patriarchal privilege.

The intersectionality perspective introduced in Chapter Two is useful in the arguments for plurality and multidimensionality made throughout the thesis. It is also central in the conceptualisation of epistemic relevance because creating conducive learning environments for marginalised students entails challenging established knowledge structures and systems in higher education. It means challenging everything academia holds dear: who teaches, the knowledges that are being taught, and learning approaches used. While this study has been the result of my own experiences of epistemic harm, Chapter Two demonstrated that epistemic harms are often impersonal, widespread and systematic. This was highlighted by the demands for decolonised curricula made by students during the 2015-2016 protests.

The study has argued that the calls for decoloniality made by students are tied to questions about the relevance of Western epistemologies outside their particular contexts, and represents the search for alternatives which is ongoing. In Chapters One and Two I have argued that the challenges and critiques of Western epistemologies have done little to change the way these epistemologies are embedded in higher education teaching and learning. Epistemic relevance addresses the dominance of Western epistemologies in relation to the contents and practice of teaching in the humanities and social sciences. The concept is rooted in critical realist philosophy which is discussed in Chapter Three. Critical realism is useful in social theorising but does not provide explanations, instead performing the role of philosophical underlabouring or conceptual regulation. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, CR has been utilised in this study to exclude and include certain explanations about epistemic relevance. The notion of epistemic relevance presents an account of epistemic plurality that relies on CR's "three pillars" for explanatory adequacy:

- Ontological relativism
- Epistemic relativism
- Judgemental rationality

Relying on CR, Chapter Three demonstrated that epistemic relevance is real regarding what exists, understands knowledge to be valid only relative to a specific context, society, culture or individual, and applies the criteria of judgemental rationality in evaluating competing positions. Following this logic, what is considered relevant is that which is plural, acknowledging both the situatedness and dependentness of representations of reality. Archer (2020, p. 135) and other critical realists have maintained that for any process to merit consideration of social change, it is necessary to account for (i) *context-dependence,* because action is always situated; (ii) *activity-dependence*, because all outcomes would not exist without the continuous actions of people; and (iii) *concept-dependence,* because all action requires some notion of that action. In short, all accounts of the social world must incorporate structure, agency and culture. The problem being investigated will always govern which of these three is given the most attention (Archer, 2020).

In Chapter Four, I argued that when we consider the issue of appropriating epistemic relevance to enact epistemic change, it is not possible to restrict ourselves to purely individual forms of responsibility such as the culpability of individual lecturers. I argued that it is important to take into account shared forms of responsibility as well as the interdependence between structure

and agency. Emphasising the structural elements of epistemic harm and epistemic wrongs, the agential components are not disregarded. Although some epistemic harms are without perpetrators, happening without being committed by anyone in particular, responsibility is a crucial aspect of epistemic justice and enacting epistemic change. Individuals cannot be left off the hook; they cannot be allowed to hide behind structural shortcomings. There are therefore some issues of complicity with respect to enacting epistemic change that need to be understood and theorised. At any given time, antecedently existing structures constrain and enable agents, whose actions produce intended and unintended consequences, reproduce (*morphostasis)* or transform (*morphogenesis*) these structures. Chapter Four argued that by taking into account the interplay of structure and agency, it is possible to understand how individual responsibility may be highly limited and diffused, but it does not disappear completely.

In Chapter Four, Archer's (1995) *morphogenetic sequence* was utilised to demonstrate that the dominance of Western epistemologies in the humanities and social sciences is the result of the actions of agents which delivered both intended and unintended consequences, which in turn led to the elaboration and reproduction of the current structure. In the same vein, the initially antecedent structure was the result of structural elaboration resulting from the actions of prior agents. The scheme of the morphogenetic sequences permits, via the isolation of the structural factors that afford a context of action for agents, the investigation of how those factors mould the subsequent interactions of agents and how those interactions in turn reproduce the initial context. The application of Archer's (1995) morphogenetic approach traces the reproduction of the initial context to the emergence of the fields in the Western context, initially practised in the peripheral societies by colonialists and European scholars, and then being implanted in these societies following formal independence. The fields which were implanted in peripheral societies were indigenous to their own settings and therefore inappropriate outside of these settings.

Relying on Archer's (1995) morphogenetic approach, Chapter Four argued that the social interaction arising from the initial structural conditioning resulted in centre-periphery structural relations among the scholarly communities in the global North and South. These structural relations are what give rise to the advanced or metropolitan centre which the less-developed scholarly communities in the periphery continue to depend on. The use of the centre-periphery model in this context highlights the marginalisation and underdevelopment of scholarly communities in the periphery. In this context, underdevelopment is not a descriptive term that describes the backward state of peripheral scholarly communities, but rather a concept rooted in

the theory of imperialism. Centrality and marginality have given rise to the dependent and extraverted nature of the fields. In line with the morphogenetic approach, extraversion and intellectual dependence are understood as structural elaboration.

The systemic and discursive structures discussed in this study exist in the domain of the real, distribute resources and authority to agents within a social setting, which in turn enables or constrains the actions people can take. The actions people take can be observed in the domain of the actual and can reproduce structures back in the domain of the real. In Chapter Four, systematic structures at a global level were examined and Chapter Five extended this argument to the local context by highlighting the role of policy in enabling and constraining epistemic change. The chapter focused on higher education policies and reports which were intended to guide change in higher education. Given the specific nature of the questions at hand and a limited time to conduct the analysis, framework analysis was used as an analytical method. This method of analysing qualitative data is systematic and allowed for comparisons between different policy documents and reports.

A critical point highlighted by the analysis presented in Chapter Five is the limited engagement with epistemological transformation or issues of knowledge in general in higher education policies. Chapter Five argued that this lack of engagement presents a serious impediment to enacting epistemic change. The chapter also argued that where engagement exists, there is a lack of understanding of the real nature of the knowledge problems at South African universities. This lack of understanding presents a serious constraint in relation to appropriating epistemic relevance. Thus far, policy in higher education has been vague about epistemic change, and this is also considered a constraining factor. The chapter argued for a clear and deliberate policy approach to tackling the underlying assumptions and practices that underpin the academic and intellectual projects related to teaching and learning. The policies are also broad, which is considered enabling as it allows for multiple interpretations.

The notion of structures which exist in the domain of the real and both constrain and enable agency was also taken up in Chapter Six. The chapter specifically examined the discursive structures which enable and constrain the appropriation of epistemic relevance. Attention was paid to decolonialism and Africanisation which were introduced in academia as liberatory epistemologies. Sociological discourse analysis provided the analytical method of investigating these discursive structures. Discursive structures signify any speech act which includes ideological implications. Here I have purposely avoided utilising critical discourse analysis

because my focus was not on the use of certain ideologies or reproduction of certain attitudes but rather on the discourse as a social product and as information. This method better complements the morphogenetic approach introduced in Chapter Four as it focuses on the historical conditions which have given rise to discourse as well as the information that the discourse provides.

The ideas on decolonialism and Africanisation discussed in Chapter Six can be traced back to the colonial experience and the quest for liberation. Chapter Six demonstrates that in the context of academia, decolonialism and Africanisation have been proposed as counter-narratives to tackle the problems associated with Western epistemologies. However, the analysis revealed some gaps in this proposal, especially in relation to disciplinary knowledge structures and epistemic boundaries. Chapter Six argued that decolonialism and Africanisation are not epistemic positions in the strict sense as they do not offer clear theoretical positions, methodologies or an organised conceptual language. Decolonialism and Africanisation do not make any propositions about how researchers should select their evidence, evaluate claims and judge their theories. Chapter Six demonstrated that on their own, these discourses do not ascertain what counts as acceptable practice and how theory and practice should work together to yield legitimate knowledge. The current discourse on decolonialism and Africanisation does not articulate liberatory epistemic positions and thinking about these concepts in this way presents a challenge to appropriating epistemic relevance.

The ideas on decolonialism and Africanisation do offer alternative ways to work with Western epistemologies to ensure that they are inclusive, and thus relevant. Chapter Seven suggested that in relation to appropriating epistemic relevance Africanisation and decolonialism should be considered epistemic processes because they can be utilised to generate knowledge that is epistemically relevant. In Chapter Seven, I proposed indigenous knowledge and endogenous knowledge as the knowledge projects that should be associated with Africanisation and decolonialism respectively. Through these discourses and their associated knowledge projects, it is possible to conceptualise alternative autonomous scholarship. Being alternative means turning to other philosophies, epistemologies, histories, and the arts other than those of the Western tradition in knowledge generation. As a curricular and pedagogical principle, epistemic relevance rests on plurality, to accommodate diverse context, cultures and identities. In short, epistemic relevance is not just about paying attention to how we teach, epistemic relevance also pays attention to who we teach and where we teach.

Chapter Seven argued that what constitutes disciplinary knowledge in the humanities and social sciences bears the burden of European thought and history. Even the arguments presented in this thesis have undoubtedly benefited from European thought and history. As a result, the idea of adopting epistemic relevance in the present context is not a complete rejection of Western methods, concepts and theories; rather it is about creating plural normative horizons, specific and relevant to the local context. In relation to epistemology relevance entails plurality and includes knowledge generated in the West and other contexts. Chapter Seven argued that relevance rooted in pluriversality is necessary if we are to change the belief that the world must be conceived of as a unified totality in order for it to make sense.

Chapter Eight explored the uniquely South African implications of relying on epistemic relevance to guide decisions about the contents and practice of teaching. Epistemic relevance is about fostering plurality to include representations of reality from "other" cultures, contexts and social identities. The three pillars of CR are necessary as the plurality argued for here is one which adheres to disciplinary epistemic boundaries in attempt to move away from complete epistemic relativism. Chapter Eight argued that a pluriversal curriculum is underpinned by three critical approaches: anti-homogeneity, critical reading, and moral solidarity. The chapter argues that any notion of pluriversal pedagogy should be interrogated with the following questions: What ideologies underlie particular notions of pedagogy? Who benefits from the representation of those notions?

Epistemological transformation is a challenge to go beyond renaming buildings after Black icons and increasing the number of Black bodies, to address the deeper issues of epistemic inclusion and equality. Addressing issues of epistemic inclusion and equality is vital because there is a sense in which Black students in particular cannot claim ownership of their universities in an epistemic sense. Enacting epistemic change in the humanities and social sciences is about creating a learning environment that is conducive for inclusion of "other" identities, cultures and contexts. In short, the answer to enacting epistemic change lies in the appropriation of epistemic relevance. The notion of epistemic relevance suggests that different knowers can have distinct epistemologies, which are tied to their contexts, cultures and social identities. Epistemic relevance suggests that epistemologies – not our use of them – lack relevance if they do not take into account the intersection of context, culture and social identity in what it means to know. The proposition then is that culture, context and identity have epistemological consequences; and that they influence the scope, nature and sources of what we consider to be disciplinary knowledge.

As a principle which guides curricular and pedagogical decisions, epistemic relevance requires accepting epistemic pluralism and a weak form of epistemic relativism. The principle holds that it is important to distinguish epistemological objectivity from ontological objectivity. This distinction between our beliefs or knowledge claim about the world (the transitive dimension) and what the world is actually like apart from us (the intransitive dimension) has implications for disciplinary knowledge. Questioning the relevance of epistemologies in the humanities and social sciences does not amount to questioning the nature of the disciplines which make up these fields. The appropriation of epistemic relevance represents a form of agency and is subject to structural influences. These influences are systemic and discursive; they exist in the domain of the real and are responsible for what we observe in the empirical domain. Appropriating epistemic relevance as part of enacting epistemic change requires that we understand the distinctive properties and powers pertaining to structure, culture and agency. The study has engaged with the distinctive properties of these three elements bringing attention to the need to avoid conflation (of structure, culture and agency) which rules out the (changing) interplay between them and their theorisation. While the forms of agency, systemic and discursive structures examined are specific to the dominance of Western epistemologies in the South African context, the conceptualisation is worthwhile in theorising about education and change in general.

To appropriate epistemic relevance is to be pluriversal, providing students with appropriate theories, methods and concepts to excavate history and examine the present. The pluriversal embraces multiplicity, coexistence, critical thinking and widens the geographical focus of what constitutes relevant disciplinary knowledge. Appropriating epistemic relevance challenges those who teach to envision an alternative to dominant Western epistemologies and to embrace an epistemology of multiplicity that encompasses diverse ways of knowing. Underpinned by CR epistemic relevance is a commitment to multiple representations of reality and not multiple realities. Critically engaging diverse epistemologies addresses epistemic inequality and exclusion making it possible to achieve both cognitive and epistemic justice.

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